

INAUGURATION OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE

Dr. A Sivathanu Pillai

20 June 2014

His Excellency Mr. Sergey L Kotov, esteemed personalities on the dais, distinguished guests and viewers from Thanjavur and Salem, friends from media, it is my privilege to be here among the august gathering and share my thoughts with you. My congratulations to Indo-Russian Chamber of Commerce & Industries and Consulate of Russian Federation in Southern India for their initiative to organize course on Russian language through video conference to the student community. This will be of immense help to them when they want to pursue their studies at Russia and also to the scientific community who work in advanced research in collaboration with Russia. I have met many Indian students in Universities at Moscow, St. Petersburg and other CIS countries who were studying engineering, medicine, linguistics.

Pride of the Languages

Russian is the most widespread language of Eurasia and the most widely spoken of the Slavic languages. It is the largest native language in Europe, with 144 million native speakers in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and is the 8th most spoken language in the world by number of native speakers and the 7th by total number of speakers. The language is one of the six official languages of the United Nations.

Roots of Russian literature can be traced to the Middle Ages and the Russian literature experienced the golden age of poetry, prose and drama from the early 1830s. Alexander Pushkin, founder of modern Russian literature, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, novelist, short story writer, essayist and philosopher, Leo Tolstoy and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky to name a few.

Literature in India particularly Tamil Literature has rich and long literary tradition spanning for more than 2000 years. Tamil language is one

of the Classical languages of the world. The crown jewel of Tamil Literature – Thirukkural describes the code of ethics and the five great epics are all the examples of excellent Tamil literary works.

Also recently I met Russian Students who are learning Tamil literature. I find acute shortage of Tamil teaching scholars in Russia. If a person from this place who knows Russian and goes to Russia for teaching Tamil literature. Value of the language can be fully exploited if a person knows both the languages. Therefore, it is a great initiative which will provide adequate opportunities to the student and scientific community.

Russia-India Relation

The flourishing Indo-Russian relationship has been for more than half a century. The relationship exists almost in all areas - space research, cultural exchanges, economic cooperation, military weapon system sales, mutual politico diplomacy, etc. The bondage between the countries strengthened in 1950s with the Soviet Collaboration came in for the establishment of Steel Plant and aid for setting up of IIT Bombay. Deep rooted relationship in Space Research blossomed with the Russian Contribution in the launch of our first satellite Aryabhata and remote sensing satellites *Bhaskara-1* and *Bhaskara-2* through soviet launch vehicles. In the early 80s, a joint manned space program took place wherein Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma was the only Indian to go to Space.

Russia had established many design bureaus which provided research and development effort in high technological areas. Over a period Russia had a knowledge pool at different establishments looking for opportunities to carryout research in newer areas. India and Russia together introduced Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) to enable continuation of research work and sharing of knowledge. ILTP facilitates the direct interaction of scientists and scientific institutes. As part of the Programme, an important milestone was achieved with the setting up of Russian - Indian Centre for Advanced Computing Research at Moscow. Projects on development of software for the applications like Computational Fluid Dynamics, Seismic Data Processing and Development of Parallel Compiler were implemented.

Many civilian, space and military projects have benefited from such cooperation.

India and USSR signed an important agreement called “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation,” on August 1971. The treaty emphasised mutual respect and sovereignty for each other irrespective of the ideological differences. The erstwhile USSR and the present Russian Federation, has been a consistent supporter to India on many crucial issues.

Indo-Russian Joint Venture BrahMos

As you all aware that BrahMos is a joint venture between India and Russia for design, development, production and marketing of an advanced Supersonic Cruise Missile. Since, it is a joint project, scientists from both the countries had to interact with each other for exchange of ideas. It was a bit difficult as the Russians do not know English and we Indians do not know Russian. If we know the Russian language, it would have been easier to go ahead with the development tasks. Many new projects are coming in. BrahMos is now venturing into Hypersonic Regime. For this, the academia has been pooled in and Centres of Excellence in Hypersonics have been established at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Moscow Aviation Institute, Moscow to pursue research in the advanced technology areas. Proficiency in languages will definitely be an added advantage.

Importance of Russian Language

Cultural ties between India and Russia are age-old. To further deepen the cultural ties at a more meaningful level, a Cultural Exchange Programme have been signed between the two countries facilitating bilateral exchange of art exhibitions, works of folk art as well as delegations of painters, handicraftsmen, art critics and experts in traditional folk art. Training programmes are also organised for educational administrators and teachers and exchange of visits of lecturers/teachers of Indian languages and those of Russian language and literature on mutually beneficial terms.

The Government of India offers a number of scholarships every year to international students who wish to pursue their studies in India. Under

Cultural Exchange Programme, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) administers scholarships every year for international students for studying, training and research in various fields. In the same way, the Government of Russian Federation renders an opportunity for Indian students to start or continue their education in Russian higher educational institutions with different scholarships available for applicants every year, including scholarships for full professional education and scholarships for postgraduate studies.

Recently, Government of Russian Federation has initiated an Advanced Research Foundation with a funding of nearly \$70 Billion to carry out research and development projects in various fields like cybernetics & IT, materials, weapons and military technology, energy, bio-medicine, nanotechnology.

India is a knowledge house with more youth skill set. Exchange of youth skill set between the countries with knowledge sharing would be beneficial to both countries. About 5000 students are currently engaged in various medical and technical institutions of Russia. Students who are going for higher studies have to spend money and time to learn the language. It is a pre-requisite for any advanced courses. If they already know the language, it would result in enormous saving and will facilitate the dialect among the localites. Moreover, knowing Russian language facilitates the interaction between the scientific communities of the countries and the training of the ship crew. There are many classic engineering books available in Russian language. Translation of these books will disseminate the knowledge.

Learning of language through video conference will be the cost effective manner and will promulgate the inquisitiveness of learning knowledge among the masses.

I wish them every success.

Thank you