

Lithuania: Bilateral Brief

I **Historical Background**

It is widely acknowledged that the Lithuanian and Sanskrit languages have much in common. Lithuanian, being the Indo-European language grammatically closest to Sanskrit, signifies possible close ancient links. Experts suggest that more than 100 root words (and 10,000 derivatives) may be common between the two languages. Until conversion to Christianity in 13th century, the people in Lithuania worshipped nature and had a trinity of gods - Perkunas, Patrimpas, and Pikuolis. In more recent times, the first direct knowledge about India reached Lithuania through Lithuanian Christian missionaries who started serving in India since the 16th century. A prominent Lithuanian philosopher and ideologue of the 19th century national movement, Vyduenas (real name Vilhelmas Storost, 1868-1953; also known as the Mahatma Gandhi of Lithuania) was extremely interested in Indian philosophy and he even created his own philosophical system, closely based on the Vedanta. He practiced Ayurveda. He argued that before the introduction of Christianity, Lithuanian spiritual culture had a lot of similarities with Hinduism, including the concept of Trinity.

2. In the 1930s and 1940s, two Lithuanian travelers - Antanas Poska and Matas Salcius - spent several years studying Sanskrit and Indian culture and travelling in India. They met Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. In his publications about studies and experiences in India during 1929-1937, Antanas Poska mentions that Mahatma Gandhi told him in one of the meetings 'I know Lithuania. I have read about it. It is our people who returned to the North. Your language is as old as Sanskrit. Lithuania has a lot of ancient tales and songs'. Antanas Poska published two volumes titled 'From the Baltic Sea to the way of Bengal'. In November 2014, Poska was conferred Honoris Causa D.Litt by the Governor of West Bengal in his capacity as the Chancellor of the University of Calcutta. A commemorative memorial board was also installed the university's library in January 2015.

3. Sanskrit became part of the academic curricula of the Vilnius University in the 1970s, when Prof. Ricardas Mironas started teaching the language in the Department of Philology. He translated 13 hymns of the Rig Veda into the Lithuanian language and became the third recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award (the first two were poets Vacys Reimeris and Eduardas Miezelaitis, who published their books of poems on India in the late 1970s). Another Indologist, Vytautas Narvilas, published a book "Distant, yet very close". He sees a number of references in Lithuanian folklore, which are similar to a number of incantations in the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda.

4. Such connections created an immense fund of goodwill for India in Lithuania; although direct contacts between the two countries were limited and maintained only within the space allowed by the erstwhile Soviet Union. This allowed India to carry out some cultural activities during Soviet times, but there was little interaction and exchange on a regular basis.

II. Political relations

5. India recognized Lithuania (along with the other Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia) on 7 September 1991, after acceptance of their independence by the erstwhile USSR. Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25 February 1992.

6. Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi on 1 July 2008, and has three Honorary Consuls in India i.e. in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata . The Ambassador in Warsaw is concurrently accredited to Lithuania and visits Vilnius periodically. Lithuania is keen that India should open its resident Embassy in Vilnius at the earliest. The Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius, Wing Cdr (Retd) Rajinder Chaudhary, has been functioning since May 2018. (He earlier also served twice as Honorary Consul from 2007-2010 and 2015-2018).

7. The first political contact between India and independent Lithuania took place in June 1992, when the then Prime Minister of India, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, met Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, the first President of Lithuania, during the Rio Summit.

8. Despite Lithuania's pre-occupation with building relations with the West and re-casting its relations with Russia and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), it has consistently expressed interest in developing bilateral relations with India, exemplified by two high-level visits from Lithuania, in 1995 and 2001.

Bilateral Visits

9. Hon'ble Vice-President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu paid an official visit to Lithuania from August 17-19 2019, leading a high-level delegation including Shri Sanjay Dhotre, Minister of State for HRD, Communications, Electronics and IT and three Members of Parliament - Shri Ramesh Bidhuri, Shri Manas Ranjan Bhunia and Smt Ranees Narah. This was the first high level visit from India to Lithuania since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992 .During the visit, HVP held delegation level talks with the President Nauseda and met the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas). The HVP addressed, the Indo-Lithuanian Business Meeting and members of the Indian community, at a Community Reception hosted by Ambassador. Hon'ble Vice-President also visited Kaunas which is the 2nd largest city of Lithuania. Aside from a meeting with the Mayor, he paid a visit to the Kaunas Technical University. Three MOU's, namely, cultural exchange programme (CEP), agricultural work plan and exchange of protocol for implementing the extradition treaty were signed during the visit.

10. A delegation led by the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar, visited Lithuania in May 2017 in commemoration of 25th anniversary of bilateral relations. The Minister addressed the ASEM Conference on Women's Empowerment in Vilnius, held bilateral discussions with the Foreign Minister of Lithuania, chaired a meeting of business leaders of Lithuania, unveiled two plaques in Hindi and Sanskrit languages at Uzupis in the Vilnius old town, delivered a lecture at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of the Vilnius University and participated in a Reception-cum-Indian mango festival hosted by the Ambassador in Vilnius on 26 May 2017.

11. On the sidelines of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Ulaanbaatar in July 2016, the Hon'ble Vice President held a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Algirdas Butkevičius and discussed bilateral cooperation, situation in Europe and Brexit.

12. Visit of MoS (Agriculture) to Lithuania: During a visit to Lithuania from 30 September to 3 October, 2015, MoS (Agriculture) Shri Mohanbhai Kundariya and PM of Lithuania jointly unveiled a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend, Hermann Kallenbach at Kallenbach's birthplace, Rusne, on October 2, 2015. MoS (Agriculture) also held bilateral talks in Vilnius with Lithuanian Vice Minister for Agriculture, Vilius Martusevičius, where both sides agreed that there was significant potential for intensifying bilateral cooperation in agriculture, particularly in sectors like food and dairy processing.

13. MoS for External Affairs, Mrs. Preneet Kaur, visited Vilnius in March 2011. She called on the President and the Prime Minister and met the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Economy as well as the Deputy Speaker and other Parliamentarians. MoS (External Affairs), Ms Preneet Kaur, again visited Vilnius in July 2011 to attend a Ministerial meeting of the Community of Democracies (COD).

14. Earlier visits from India include the following: Shri Salman Khurshid, MoS (External Affairs) in August 1995; Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MoS (External Affairs) in October, 2005 and Shri Anand Sharma, MoS (External Affairs) in March 2007.

15. **High Level visits from Lithuania**, the major bilateral visits to India include: (i) Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius in September 1995. (ii) State Visit by President Valdas Adamkus in February 2001, accompanied by his wife, as also by the Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis and a delegation of Lithuanian businessmen. President Adamkus met the President of India, Shri K.R. Narayanan; Vice President, Shri Krishna Kant; Prime Minister, Shri A.B. Vajpayee; EAM, Shri Jaswant Singh; and, Leader of the Opposition, Smt. Sonia Gandhi. He also addressed a business meeting jointly hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi and Mumbai. During the visit, three bilateral agreements were signed. He extended an invitation to our President to visit Lithuania.

16. The Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas, visited India in December 2009 and met EAM and the Minister of New and Renewable Energy. He was accompanied by the Minister of Economy and a 30-member business delegation to explore business and investment opportunities. Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Asta Skaisgirytė Liauškienė, visited India in November 2011 and met Secretary (West).

17. The Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Linas Linkevicius, visited New Delhi to attend the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM11) in November 2013. He met EAM on the sidelines of the meeting. The two Ministers signed an agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports.

18. The Lithuanian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mantvydas Bakevius, visited India in November 2014 to meet their Honorary Consuls in India and South Asia. He also met Secretary (West). They discussed the opening of the Indian Embassy in Lithuania, signing of various bilateral agreements, support for India's candidature for UNSC membership, EAM's visit to Lithuania, situation in Afghanistan, and Lithuania's relations with Poland, Ukraine and Russia. Vice Minister of Agriculture of Lithuania, Mr. Saulius Cironka, also visited India during this time. Lithuanian Vice Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Rimantas Vaikus, visited India from November 28 to December 1, 2014. MoS (VKS) met Lithuanian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Andrius Krivas, on the sidelines of Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies (COD) in Sal Salvador on July 23, 2015.

19. The Lithuanian Minister of Culture, Sarunas Birutis, visited New Delhi on 8-12 March 2016, to attend the World Culture Festival. During the visit, the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2016-18 was signed on 11 March 2016.

20. Visit of Lithuanian Vice Minister of Agriculture to India: The Lithuanian Vice Minister of Agriculture visited New Delhi in July 2016 on a bilateral visit and signed an MoU on Cooperation in Agriculture and Allied Sector along with MoS, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Sudarshan Bhagat. The two sides discussed cooperation in agricultural exports and knowledge & expertise sharing in agri-related sectors. The Lithuanian side offered cooperation with the Aleksandras Stulginskis University in the field of agricultural engineering, water management, biotechnology, sustainable agriculture development, the Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service for electronic system for farmers and the National Plant Service for research on plant variety value for cultivation.

21. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Linas Linkevicius, visited New Delhi in October 2017, on his second visit to India, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations. EAM held wide-ranging discussions with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister and also signed the Extradition Treaty and the Protocol amending the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BSA) with the visiting Minister. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister visited JNPT Port in Mumbai and attended, together with MoS(MJA), performance by the 83-member Orchestra of National Philharmonic Society of India at National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA).

Parliamentary exchanges

22. There have been three visits from the Lithuanian Parliament - the first in 1993 and the next in January 2003 when the Vice Chairman (Deputy Speaker) of the Seimas (Parliament), Mr. Gintaras Steponavicius, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas, visited India to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Parliament. A Lithuanian Parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker, Mr. Algis Kaseta, visited India in November 2010 as guests of Public Diplomacy Division. MoS (External Affairs), Mrs. Preneet Kaur, hosted a lunch in their honor. The Speaker of the Indian Parliament, Ms Sumitra Mahajan, met with the Chairperson of Lithuanian Parliament in October 2015 in New York.

Bilateral Agreements

23. The following agreements have been signed between India and Lithuania:

- (i) Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation (July 1993)
- (ii) Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the Foreign Offices (August 1995)
- (iii) Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services (November 1999)
- (iv) Agreement on Air Services (February 2001)
- (v) Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science and Education (February 2001)
- (vi) Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (October 2001)
- (vii) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA): signed during MoS(External Affairs), Mrs. Preneet Kaur's visit to Lithuania (March, 2011)

- (viii) Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA) (July 2011)
- (ix) Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports (November 2013) has come into operation on 30 July 2014.
- (x) Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for the years 2016-18: signed during visit by the Lithuanian Minister of Culture to New Delhi (March 2016)
- (xi) MoU on Agriculture and Allied Sector: signed during visit by the Lithuanian Vice Minister of Agriculture to New Delhi (July 2016).
- (xii) Extradition Treaty: signed during visit by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister to New Delhi & Mumbai (October 2017)
- (xiii) Protocol amending the Bilateral Air Services Agreement signed during visit by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister to New Delhi & Mumbai (October 2017)
- (xiv) Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2019-21.
- (xv) Agriculture Work Plan 2020-2022: During the visit of the Vice Minister of Agriculture, Saulius Jakimavičius, to India on 18-20 July 2016, the MoU on Agriculture and Allied Sectors was signed by him together with Shri Sudarshan Bhagat, MoS, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare on 19 July 2016. On 22 August 2017, the Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmers Welfare concurred with the Lithuanian side to extend the Biennial Work Plan 2017-2018, as per Article-IV of the MoU, until 2020 (instead of 2018). The Work Plan was formally signed during the visit of HVP to Lithuania in August 2019.
- (xvi) Extradition Treaty: Protocol of exchange of documents of ratification was signed during the visit of HVP to Lithuania in August 2019.

24. The following agreements are under consideration:

- Agreement for Gainful Employment of Spouses and Eligible Dependent Members of a Diplomatic Mission or Consular Post: This is pending with the Lithuanian side since 2017.
- Social Security Agreement: During talks with the Lithuanian Foreign Office in Vilnius in December 2016, Ambassador proposed signing of the Social Security Agreement and handed over a draft agreement to the Lithuanian side. In response, the Lithuanian side submitted a counter-draft, based on common position adopted by EU member-states. The Economic Diplomacy Division has shared its comments on the Lithuanian draft in track-change mode, which was forward to the Lithuanian side on 28 November 2018. Response from Lithuanian side is awaited.
- M-LAT in criminal matters: Lithuania had proposed to conduct negotiations on the text through VC, which was recommended by the Mission but no response has been received from CPV Division and MHA.

Foreign Office Consultations

25. Under the Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations signed in Vilnius on 30 August 1995, nine rounds of FOCs have been held so far. These talks have focused on bilateral, regional and international issues. The 9th round of Foreign Office Consultations with Lithuania were held in New Delhi on 16th March 2022.

India-Lithuania Forum

26. The India Lithuania Forum was inaugurated in the Lithuanian Parliament in September 2010. This was the result of the initiative taken by the Lithuanian Parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. This forum provides support to various NGOs, individuals and institutions that are interested in India to reinforce India's multifaceted relationship encompassing culture, education, business and science.

Support at multilateral fora

27. Lithuania generally supports India at all international fora. Lithuania's position on UNSC expansion has been to call for a broader representation in the Security Council for developing nations by giving them additional permanent as well as non-permanent seats. During his visit to India in February 2001, President Valdas Adamkus told our Prime Minister in New Delhi that India was a very big country with an important voice in world affairs and Lithuania would like to see India represented in the expanded Security Council. However, Lithuania's position on our latest G-4 initiatives is ambivalent and is often inspired by the US position. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Linus Linkevicius, reiterated their appreciation of India's position on this matter during discussions with MOS (MJA) in Vilnius during May, 2017. In 2020, Lithuania extended support to India for its Non-Permanent Membership of the UNSC for the period 2021-22. It has also supported India's candidatures at ICAO, WHO, and at the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative & Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in 2020.

Multilateral Export Control Regime

28. Lithuania is a member of the NSG, Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement, but not of the MTCR. Lithuania has reacted sympathetically to our demarche requesting support for our NSG membership bid. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Linus Linkevicius, expressed support for India's inclusion in the NSG, during discussions with MOS (MJA) in Vilnius during May, 2017.

Position on Article 370/NRC/CAA

29. Lithuania took the EU position on Kashmir that underlined the importance of avoiding an escalation of tensions in the region and supports a bilateral political solution between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, which remains the only way to solve a long-lasting dispute that causes instability and insecurity in the region. On CAA/NRC, Lithuania considers the legislation an internal matter of India.

III. Economic Relations

30. According to Lithuanian statistics, bilateral trade increased from €56 million in 2013 to €130.7 million in 2016 and was €97 million in 2019. However, Indian statistics show a higher level of bilateral trade, which would be on account of fertilizer export from Klaipeda port that is not shown in Lithuanian statistics. As per Indian statistics, the bilateral trade between India and Lithuania reached a record high of US\$ 367.15 million in the year 2016-17 before decreasing to US\$ 339.51 Million in 2018-19. In 2021-22, the bilateral trade stood at US\$ 487 million. Major Indian imports from Lithuania include: edible vegetables, wood and articles of wood, textiles, plastics and articles thereof, electrical machinery and equipment, iron and steel, optical, photographic and measuring instruments, copper, zinc and articles thereof. Major Indian

exports to Lithuania include: nuclear boilers and reactors, pharmaceutical products, fish, crustaceans and similar, organic chemicals, tobacco and manufactured tobacco, textile articles, iron and steel, plastic and articles thereof, miscellaneous chemical products, man-made filaments.

31. The bilateral trade figures as per Indian statistics for the period 2014-15 to 2021-22 are as under:

(in US \$ million)

Year:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
India's exports	103.23	88.09	95.99	103.84	127.38	110.76	163.66	292.54
India's imports	111.91	214.35	271.16	189.38	212.13	262.09	321.05	194.85
Total	215.15	302.44	367.15	293.22	339.51	372.86	484.70	487.39

Source: Ministry of Commerce, GOI statistics

Indian Investment in Lithuania

32. **HCL Technologies investment:** HCL Technologies Lithuania UAB, a 100% subsidiary of HCL Technologies Ltd., and engaged in business consulting, solution implementation and ongoing application management, started its operation in August of 2016. It announced in December 2018 an expansion of its strategic relationship with Barclays, including becoming Barclays' preferred partner for IT infrastructure services. HCL's Operation Centre was formally inaugurated on December 11, 2019 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The event was attended by Vice Minister of Economy and Innovation of the Government of Lithuania, Mr. Elijus Civilis. HCL has established two state of the art delivery centers in Vilnius. HCL's investment had a major growth push to add additional 350+ employees taking the overall headcount to 550 employees in Lithuania. About 60% of the headcount comprises of Lithuanian nationals and the remaining 40% from different nationalities both from within and outside of the EU. Their main customers are Barclays Bank, Kraft Foods & Mondelez Global LLC. It has two centers in Vilnius – a near shore site for Europe region and a language capability center for the global business.

33. **Indorama development:** An important development in the economic field has been the investment of about US\$200 million by Indorama, a Lohia Group company, from their Thailand branch, in the Klaipeda Economic Zone in a plant to manufacture plastic resin. This investment has given visibility to India in Lithuania. The Indorama Group celebrated the 10th anniversary of its Orion Global Pet plant in Klaipeda Free Economic Zone in Lithuania, set up in 2006 with an initial capital of €150 million and production capacity of 274,000 tons per annum. It is the largest single line PET resin plant in Europe with lowest carbon footprint.

34. **Tonbo Imaging investment:** In **September 2018** Indian company Tonbo Imaging entered Lithuania by opening office in Vilnius. The company develops advanced imaging and sensor systems for defense, security and intelligent transportation systems. The company plans to establish a research and development team of over 50 specialists in Kaunas, Lithuania.

India Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania

35. In October 2018, the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania (ICCL) was established. ICCL is a platform for representing Lithuanian business environment to the entrepreneurs from India and vice versa, relationship building and provide assistance, B2B meetings - are the priorities of the ICCL.

IV. Cultural Relations

36. **Cultural Exchange Programme:** The Cultural Exchange Program (CEP) for the years 2019-2022 was signed in Vilnius in August during the visit of HVP to Lithuania. A number of ICCR sponsored troupes have performed in Lithuania in the last few years, with the last Mizoram folk song and dance troupe participating in the VII International Folk Contest – Festival ‘Flowers of the Sun’ at Siauliai on 1-6 July 2017 and winning the bronze medal in the competition. An 83-member orchestra of the National Philharmonic Society of Lithuania gave two performances at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations. A 10-member Vilnius University Folk Ensemble ‘Ratilio’ participated in the 8th International Dance & Music Festival organized by ICCR at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi on 13-15 January 2018. The group also performed in Bangalore and Trivandrum, with the assistance of ICCR.

37. **Indology:** Study of Indian languages (mainly Hindi and Sanskrit) has been carried out at the Vilnius University for several decades. A separate center of Indian studies, under the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996. A chair of modern Indian studies is currently being set up at the Oriental Centre of the Vilnius University. MoS (External Affairs), Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, had announced a grant of US\$10,000 for promotion of Indian studies at the Centre of Oriental Studies of the Vilnius University in October 2005, and a language laboratory setup with this grant was inaugurated in February 2007. Vilnius University also hosted the 2nd Regional Conference of Central & Eastern Europe on Indian Studies (CEEIS) August 2006 under the auspices of ICCR. A compilation of 108 common words of Sanskrit in Lithuanian languages has been brought out by the Oriental Centre of the Vilnius University jointly with the Lithuanian Embassy. This publication was presented to the PM during the Make in India Week in Mumbai during February 2016, and to EAM by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister during his visit to New Delhi in October 2017.

38. **Cultural affinities:** Lithuanians have great interest in Indian cultural traditions, including Yoga. An estimated 70% Lithuanians visiting India have spiritual and yogic interests. There is special interest in Ayurveda. The Kaunas Ayurveda Centre arranges lectures on Ayurveda. The ISCON Movement has a very active temple in Kaunas. Yoga and Sanskrit is also taught in several Lithuanian cities.

39. **ICCR Chair:** In January 2011, the first-ever ICCR Chair of Indian Studies in the Baltic States was established based on the MoU signed between ICCR and the Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius). The visiting professor was with the University for two years - till June 2014. ICCR had signed an agreement with the Vilnius University in December 2014 for establishment of an ICCR Chair of Modern Indian studies. Prof. Kapil Kumar was deputed to join the Chair; however, he could not take up the offer due to personal reasons. The MoU has since lapsed. A new MoU for three academic years from 2018-19 to 2020-21 has been agreed to and ICCR’s formal concurrence is awaited for signing the new MoU.

40. **Centre for Baltic Studies in Haridwar:** A Centre for Baltic Culture and Studies was inaugurated at the Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya in Haridwar in August 2016 by the Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, Dr. Krishna Kant Paul, as Chief Guest and the Ambassadors of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as the Guests of Honor. The Centre will pursue two major research areas – (i) instruction of three Baltic languages - Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonia; (ii) research of the ancient Baltic traditions and culture. The Centre is housed in a separate building at the campus, with an office room, three study rooms and a library. Professor Sigma Ankrava from the University of Latvia was its first chairperson.

41. **Romuva movement:** The Lithuanian Romuva is an ethnic group which claims to draw from pagan traditions with no affinity to any particular religion other than “common linkages with the culture and traditions” practiced by the Hindus in India. Many of their ceremonies on the occasion of childbirth, marriage, festivals etc., have close resemblance to Indian traditions. There is a distinct influence of Sanskrit on their language. (Experts have identified at least 10,000 common words between Lithuanian and Sanskrit, making it the European language closest to Sanskrit. The Russian language for instance has 5000 words in common). An illustrative list of common words is at Annexure III. The Romuvas have nearly 5000-6000 followers, including some in foreign countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia, due to the transmigration from Lithuania.

As regards their common ancestral roots from among the Rajputs or even the Jains, as some claim, Ms Inija, the high priestess of Romuva, says that this is only a belief because of similarity in the folklore and in some Romuva customs and traditions, with those of the Rajputs in now Rajasthan. This linkage is not scientifically authenticated. Common customs include Sati in the olden days, marriage vows around fire (going round three times) and child birth celebrations, suggest to some that the origin of the customs belong to one Aryan root.

ICCR proposes to organize a conference on India's linkages with Lithuania in the context of the Romuva community with participation of experts from India, Lithuania and other Baltic countries.

42. **Yoga:** International Day of Yoga is being celebrated every year in Vilnius and several other cities of Lithuania. The 7th IDY celebrations were held across Lithuania, with main event in Vilnius in June 2021.

43. **ITEC:** Under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Program (ITEC), since 1993, over 400 Lithuanian nominees have attended various courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing etc. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC program.

44. **Scholarships:** Since 2008, several Lithuanian students have learned Hindi at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in Agra under the “Propagation of Hindi Abroad” scholarship.

45. **PCFD:** Under the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD), being conducted by the Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, several Lithuanian Diplomats have attended the course since 1993.

46. **Friendship Societies:** There are two friendship societies - Indian Cultural and Information Centre (ICIC) [established in 2005], and Indian Lithuanian forum (ILF) Vilnius

[established in 2010] - are currently operational in Lithuania to promote Indian culture through performing arts, cinema, literature and festivals. In the absence of Indian Mission and Cultural Centre in Lithuania, these friendship bodies play a crucial role as effective instruments in the projection and promotion of India in Lithuania through a number of outreach activities. These societies also provide invaluable support to various NGOs, individuals and institutions that are interested in India to reinforce our multi-faceted relationship encompassing culture, education, business and science. The Embassy in Warsaw provides annual financial grants, received through the Ministry of Culture, to these bodies to promote Indian culture.

47. **Visas:** Visa services have been outsourced since September 2010. There has been a surge in Lithuanian e-TV visa applications. Lithuania was included in the e-TV scheme of Government of India effective from 1st May 2015.

48. **Indian Community:** The Indian community is around 1000, including students. Many came to the erstwhile USSR to study and stayed back due to marriage or business. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have come to Lithuania to work on IT projects. 15 Indian families work in the Klaipeda plant of the Lohia Group. The Indian yogic and New Age movements also bring their Indian teachers to work in Lithuania from time to time. The number of Indian students studying full time in Lithuania has increased from 37 in 2011 to 357 in 2014 and now stand at around 900.

Annexure I

Visits from India

	Shri Salman Khurshid, MoS for External Affairs	August 1995
	Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MoS for External Affairs	October 2005
	Shri Anand Sharma, MoS for External Affairs	March 2007
	Ms. Preneet Kaur, MoS for External Affairs	March 2011
	Ms. Preneet Kaur, MoS for External Affairs	June 2011
	Shri Mohanbhai Kundariya, MoS for Agriculture	October 2015
	Shri M.J. Akbar, MoS for External Affairs	May 2017
	Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President	August 2019

Visits to India

	• Mr. Adolfas Slezevicius, Prime Minister of Lithuania	September 1995
	• Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania <i>[accompanied by his wife, Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis and a delegation of Lithuanian businessmen].</i>	February 2001
	• Mr. Gintaras Steponavicius, Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament and Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament	January 2003
	• Mr. Vygaudas Usackas, Foreign Minister of Lithuania <i>[accompanied by Lithuanian Minister of Economy and a 30-member business delegation].</i>	December 2009

• Mr. Algis Kasetas, Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament	November 2010
• Ms. Asta Skaisgiryte, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania	November 2011
• Mr. Linas Linkevicius, Foreign Minister of Lithuania	November 2013
• Mr. Mantvydas Bakevius, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania	November 2014.
• Mr. Rimantas Vaikus, Vice Minister of Education and Science of Lithuania	December 2014
• Mr. Sarunas Birutis, Minister of Culture of Lithuania	March 2016
• Mr. Saulius Jakimavičius, Vice Minister of Agriculture of Lithuania.	July 2016
• Mr. Linas Linkevicius, Foreign Minister of Lithuania	Oct 2017

Annexure II

MoUs/Agreements/Treaties/Joint Protocols/Joint Program of Cooperation etc. signed with Lithuania during the period 1993 - 2019:

No	Name of MOU, Treaty, Agreement	Date of signature
1.	Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation	July 1993
2.	Protocol of Consultations between Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania	August 1995
3.	Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services	November 1999
4.	Agreement on Air Services	February 2001
5.	Agreement on cooperation in spheres of culture, science and	February 2001

	education	
6.	Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation	October 2001
7.	Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement (BIPA)	March 2011
8.	Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA)	July 2011
9.	Agreement on abolition of visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports.	November 2013
10.	Cultural Exchange Programme	March 2016
11.	MoU on Agriculture and Allied Sector	July 2016
12.	Extradition Treaty	Oct 2017
13.	Protocol amending the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BSA)	Oct 2017
•	Cultural Exchange Programme 2019-21	August 2019
•	Agricultural Work Plan 2020-22	August 2019
•	Extradition Treaty	August 2019