

**Discours de Son Altesse Royale la Princesse Astrid
de Belgique à New Delhi**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,**

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today.

This visit is special for me,
as it marks my return to India
for a second Belgian economic mission.

My first visit in 2013 left me a lasting impression,
and since then,
I have followed the remarkable evolution of our nations.
Belgium and India share a dynamic relationship,
built on trade, innovation,
and a common vision for the future.

Belgium, though small in size,
is a nation of openness and expertise.

As the gateway to Europe, we offer Indian businesses strategic access to the EU market, while India's growing economy presents exciting opportunities for Belgian companies in key sectors such as renewable energy, port logistics, high tech, defense or life sciences.

We would like to strengthen EU-India Relations

Belgium is here not only as a loyal partner but also as part of a broader European vision.

Strengthening the ties between the European Union and India is crucial.

A trade and cooperation agreement will bring long-term prosperity, and Belgium fully supports this process.

Beyond trade, we must foster talent exchange. Scientists, students, and entrepreneurs should collaborate more to drive innovation. Belgium believes in the power of education and research to shape the industries of tomorrow.

We have a Relationship Rooted in History and Shared Values

Our connection goes beyond economics.
India's history of progress and education/ is inspiring.

In 1817, **Queen Rani Parvati Bai of Travancore**
pioneered free education for all, including girls
—long before similar movement took hold elsewhere.

India's wisdom has also influenced global thinking.
Your **Emperor Ashoka (300 BC)**,
after witnessing the devastations of war,
chose peace over conflict,
replacing the sound of the war drum
with the sound of *Dhamma*.
This message of justice and respect
remains relevant today more than ever.

Likewise, the words of **Rabindranath Tagore**,
India's first Nobel Laureate in Literature,
your writer-poet in 1913
continue to inspire us :

*"Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high,
Where knowledge is free..."*

These lines reflect our shared **aspiration** for a future built on wisdom, peace, and progress for all of us.

Now let us look towards the future

India's modernization is more than economic growth
—it is about embracing the future
while preserving its identity.

Belgium and Europe
are proud to support this transformation,
offering expertise and collaboration
in sustainability, technology, and innovation.
Belgium recognizes India's growing strategic role
and fully supports its aspirations
for a balanced and inclusive global order.

Let me conclude

Belgium and India share a strong, dynamic partnership.

As we embark on this mission,

I encourage all of you

-to **strengthen** ties,

-build new opportunities, and

-shape the future together.

**Let us work together, with trust and ambition,
towards a new horizon of opportunity.**

Let us be fellow travelers !

This is the spirit of our mission.

Thank you.