

**Laudatio von
Staatssekretärin Boser MdL
anlässlich Verleihung Staufer-Medaille an Frau Uma da
Cunha**

am 20.07.2022

im Neuen Schloss Stuttgart

Dauer der Rede: ca. 10 Min.

Dear Mr. Mahn,

Dear Consul General Yadav,
Honorary Consul Lapp,

Dear friends of Indian cinema,
And dear guests from near and far,

But in particular:
dear Mrs. Uma da Cunha,

The awarding of a Staufer Medal is always a very special occasion. It gives me the opportunity to acknowledge exceptional individuals and to reward them for their life's work, such as yours, Mrs. da Cunha.

And yet when an award ceremony is combined with the international setting and exchange of this kind today –
Along with the opening and return of a great film festival –
Then it is a particularly exciting event.

I am therefore very honoured to also welcome many of the people who help to make this event in Stuttgart possible –
From India to Germany, from Stuttgart to Mumbai!

One person who I know regrets not being able to attend is State Secretary Petra Olschowski, who you all know has long been a supporter of this festival and the partnership between Baden-Württemberg and Maharashtra.

She sends her best wishes and hopes to be healthy enough soon to maybe experience some of this year's festival herself. But as difficult as it is, her loss is my benefit today.

And in the end, our focus today is on you, Mrs. da Cunha, and all that you have done to make this international partnership and exchange grow over the years.

Because your dedication to Indian film goes back at least 50 years, starting with your work as a supporter of Film Festivals with the Indian Government.

Yet soon after this experience, you were very quick to head out on your own and begin organizing film festivals around the world, from Cannes to Berlin to Venice, eventually crossing over to North America starting in Toronto.

The largest Indian Film Festivals in the world have been influenced by you, from London to Los Angeles to New York.

So it is truly an honour then that you have helped put Stuttgart among this esteemed list of destinations for Indian Film, having served as a curator of this festival since its very first event back in 2004.

By helping support the Filmbüro Baden-Württemberg and Festival Director Mahn, along with long-time supporter of this exchange, Honorary Consul Andreas Lapp, you have made the Indian Film Festival Stuttgart into the largest celebration of Indian Film in Europe. And this is truly a gift from you both to the City of Stuttgart and the entire State of Baden-Württemberg.

Because the Indian Film Festival takes us on a journey every year to a country of great storytellers.

Since its founding, the Indian Film Festival Stuttgart had made a focus of showing films which, convincingly and fearlessly, and with honesty and without regard for taboos address the challenges modern India is facing.

The selected films focus on the most pressing issues of our time and show us a true reflection of Indian society.

Next to the magic that we all know from the world of Bollywood, these films deal with the true reality of life in modern India:

From dealing with a range of issues from the effects of digitalization to globalization, or modern politics in India, or the role of women and the tension between deeply rooted traditions, old role models and the wish for a modern life.

These are films which can be understood the world over – exciting, socially critical, and yet also truly entertaining.

This festival invites us year after year to take a journey through the world of Indian independent film and experience India and all of its diversity first-hand.

Yet an integral part of the Indian Film Festival goes beyond cinema and continues to be the Tea Talks.

And for you, Mrs. da Cunha, the Tea Talks have sometimes been a family affair, such as when your husband, Mr. Gerson da Cunha, was here to give us his own views of Stuttgart's twin city of Mumbai.

The “Tea Talks” show how the Indian Film Festival not only sees itself as a cultural event.

The Film Festival is rather a vital part of the continuous exchange between India and Baden-Württemberg –
A long-standing bridge between cultures and people.

This festival paves the way for cooperation between our states. I am convinced that the mutual understanding of a country's culture and traditions is necessary for us to work together in the future.

This festival provides a platform to make this exchange possible.

The entire program of the Indian Film Festival helps us to build trust and understanding for Indian culture.

This festival encourages us to cross borders, be curious about other cultures and ways of thinking, and to see the world from a new perspective.

Because of this influence, the Indian Film Festival is a key part of the partnership between the States of Baden-Württemberg and Maharashtra.

A partnership made official with the agreement in 2015 and one that continues to grow.

A partnership that you, Mrs. da Cunha, through your work with this exchange and this film festival helped to make possible. And that is why we are honoring you today.

Because you are not only an ambassador of Indian Film for the world, but also a connection between our states – from your home in Mumbai to here in Stuttgart, which I hope you see as a second home.

So that is why our Minister President, Winfried Kretschmann, has chosen to award you with this significant honour from the State of Baden-Württemberg, the Staufer Medal in Gold.

The Staufer Medal is awarded to those who do outstanding work for our State and community.

Yet it is not only a matter career accomplishments, but an honour of your identity and personality. It is truly a citizen's medal, one that honours those who go above and beyond for others.

Your work, dear Mrs. da Cunha, is an outstanding example of civic engagement for exchange between Germany and India, Baden-Württemberg and Maharashtra.

It is thanks to people like you that we live in a society where global understanding is possible.

For this, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude on behalf of the State Government of Baden-Württemberg.

And in addition, my personal admiration for your dedication and achievements over the years.

Now, if you will excuse me as I briefly switch to German to read the certificate aloud to award you the Staufer Medal of the State of Baden-Württemberg on behalf of our State Minister President, Winfried Kretschmann.

* (Verlesung und Überreichung der Urkunde) *