

People are at the heart of any lasting bilateral relationship:

A living example

Would you have guessed there is a link between Cantabria, Bhubaneswar and Varanasi?

Alvaro Enterra, from Cantabria married Kujol, from Bhubaneswar and they live in Varanasi. Alvaro is a man of many curiosities, a writer, a part time restaurateur,

publisher and a storyteller. He writes intensively on multiple facets of India, its culture and religion.

For Alvaro Varanasi is his first love. As he tells, the city consumes you, the culture grasps your senses and the spirituality provides your soul with unmatched purity and peace.

Alvaro first visited Varanasi in 1983 as a tourist. Overwhelmed and touched he returned in 1989 to learn Hindi and to immerse himself in the Indian culture on the *ghats* of Varanasi. Well versed with Hindi he then explored the India in its varied dimensions. He travelled across India on train and became a local.

And when you take the help of the matrimonial section of Times of India to find your partner, you become a *desi*. Alvaro had an 'arranged

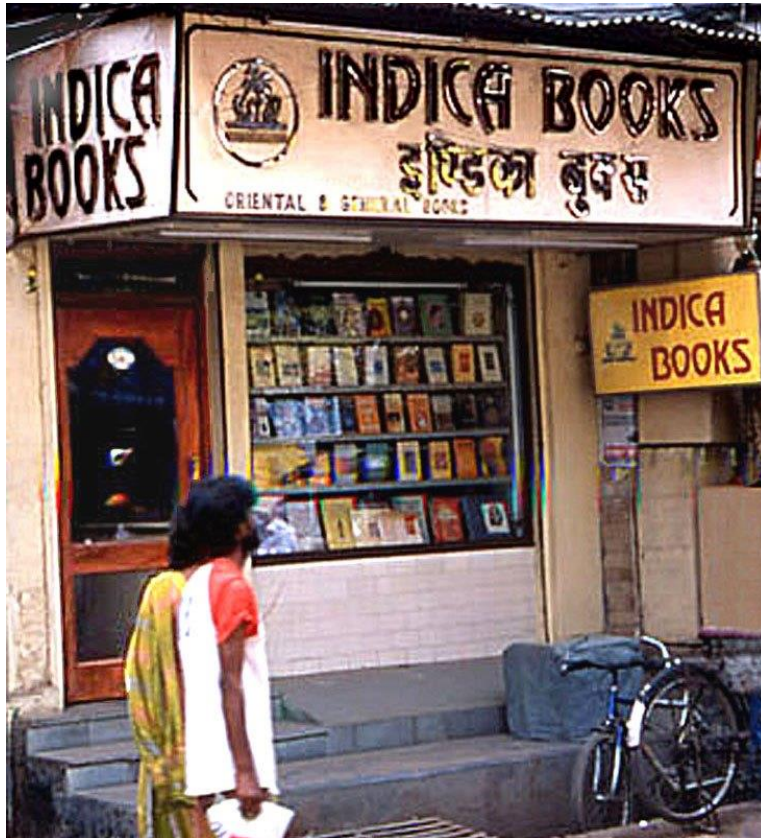
marriage' with Kujol 23 years ago.

Alvaro writes "it is not possible to understand a civilization without first understanding its 'religion', its vision of the world and man's role in it". This belief has made him explore Hinduism and its teachings. He became a follower of *Jagatguru Shankaracharya* and started his spiritual journey. He was so influenced by India that he has named his sons *Omkar* and *Arun*.

A bit concerned, over the years he feels Varanasi's culture and ethics are changing. Alvaro also feels that Sanskrit is the core of Indian civilization however, the interest of the young in Sanskrit over the years has reduced.

Alvaro gifted his book "*India from Within: A guide to India's history, religion arts culture and society*" to the Ambassador. The book covers religion, art, society, polity, culture and life in India. Prefaced by Sir Mark Tully, it is the highest selling book by any

Spaniard on India. Alvaro has also translated *Premchand* into Spanish. In Varanasi he has his own publishing house and a book shop, *Indica*. He has published more than 100 books mostly in Hindi including *Maha-Kavya Mahabharata* into a three part graphic novel. His other works in graphic format include *Pilgrimage to Kashi* and *Taj Mahal*. The *Indo-Spanish* couple is currently working on their autobiography.



(Indica book shop in Godwoliya, Varanasi.)

'Born a Spaniard but dedicated his life to India, to describe him as an expatriate would be wholly inaccurate. He is a citizen of two cultures, Indian and European. This gives him a deep understanding of the differences between the two cultures. He visits Spain every year in summer. Alvaro provides us with the best example of cultural co-existence and tolerance- truly a living example of India Spain cooperation.'

[The above paragraph has been taken from the Preface of his book 'India from Within', written by Sir Mark Tully]



(Alvaro Enterra, with his wife Kujol, gifted his book “Indian from Within” to the Ambassador Shri Sanjay Verma.)

This is my first work as an Indian diplomat in Madrid. I never knew that my job came with such variety. It was unexpected that a Spanish-Indian couple had settled in Varanasi, my home town! It was sheer joy to see the couple speaking fluent Hindi. I am here to learn Spanish and I hope I can learn the way Alvaro has learnt my language and my culture. I could really connect to him. It is an early lesson that the heartbeat of relation between two countries does not always depends on economic, commercial or security objectives, but it is also about bridges that individuals build.

Rav Praveen Singh

Third Secretary (EoI Madrid)