

# ANTAR RASHTRIYA SAHA YOG PARISHAD BULLETIN

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## SATYAGRAHA V. PASSIVE RESISTANCE

(Continued from the Previous issue)



As the movement advanced, Englishmen too began to watch it with interest. Although the English newspapers in the Transvaal generally wrote in support of the Europeans and of the Black Act, they willingly published contribution from well-known Indians. They also published Indian representations to Government in full or at least a summary of these, sometimes sent their reporters to important meetings of the Indians, and when such was not the case, made room for the brief reports we sent them.

These amenities were of course very useful to the community, but by and by some leading Europeans came to take interest in the movement as it progressed. One of these was Mr. Hosken, one of the magnates of Johannesburg. He had always been free from colour prejudice but his interest in the Indian question deepened after the starting of Satyagraha. The Europeans of Germiston, which is something like a suburb of Johannesburg, expressed a desire to hear me. A meeting was held, and introducing me and the movement I stood for to the audience, Mr. Hosken observed, "The Transvaal Indians

have had recourse to passive resistance when all other means of securing redress proved to be of no avail. They do not enjoy the franchise. Numerically they are only a few. They are weak and have no arms. Therefore they have taken to passive resistance which is a weapon of the weak." These observations took me by surprise, and the speech, which I was going to make took an altogether different complexion in consequence. In contradicting Mr. Hosken, I defined our passive resistance as 'soul force'. I saw at this meeting that a use of the phrase 'passive resistance' was apt to give rise to terrible misunderstanding. I will try to distinguish between passive resistance and soul force by amplifying the argument which I made before that meeting so as to make things clearer.

I have no idea when the phrase 'passive resistance' was first used in English and by whom. But among the English people, whenever a small minority did not approve of some obnoxious pieces of legislation, instead of rising in rebellion they took the passive or milder step of not submitting to the law and inviting the penalties of such non-submission upon their heads. When the British Parliament passed the Education Act some years ago, the Non-conformists offered passive resistance under the leadership of Dr. Clifford. The great movement of the English women for the vote was also known as passive resistance. It was in view of these two cases that Mr. Hosken described passive resistance as a weapon of the

weak or the voteless. Dr. Clifford and his friends had the vote, but as they were in a minority in the Parliament, they could not prevent the passage of the Education Act.



✍ M K Gandhi  
That is to say, they were weak in numbers. Not that they were averse to the use of arms for the attainment of their aims, but they had no hope of succeeding by force of arms. And in a well regulated state, recourse to arms every now and then in order to secure popular rights would defeat its own purpose. Again some of the Nonconformists would generally object to taking up arms even if it was a practical proposition. The suffragists had no franchise rights. They were weak in numbers as well as in physical force. Thus their case lent colour to Mr. Hosken's observations. The suffragist movement did not eschew the use of physical force. Some suffragists fired buildings and even assaulted men. I do not think they ever intended to kill anyone. but they did intend to thrash people when an opportunity occurred, and even thus to make things hot for them.

But brute force had absolutely no place in the Indian movement in any circumstances, and the reader will see, as we proceed, that no matter how badly they suffered, the Satyagrahis never used physical



force, and that too although there were occasions when they were in a position to use it effectively. Again, although the Indians had no franchise and were weak, these considerations had nothing to do with the organization of Satyagraha. This is not to say, that the Indians would have taken to Satyagraha even if they had possessed arms or the franchise. Probably there would not have been any scope for Satyagraha if they had the franchise. If they had arms, the opposite party would have thought twice before antagonizing them. One can therefore understand, that people who possess arms would have fewer occasions for offering Satyagraha. My point is that I can definitely assert that in planning the Indian movement there never was the slightest thought given

to the possibility or otherwise of offering armed resistance. Satyagraha is soul force pure and simple, and whenever and to whatever extent there is room for the use of arms or physical force or brute force, there and to that extent is there so much less possibility for soul force. These are purely antagonistic forces in my view, and I had full realization of this antagonism even at the time of the advent of Satyagraha.

We will not stop here to consider whether these views are right or wrong. We are only concerned to note the distinction between passive resistance and Satyagraha, and we have seen that there is a great and fundamental difference between the two. If without understanding this, those who call themselves either passive resisters or Satyagrahis believe both to be one and the same thing, there would be injustice to both leading to untoward consequences. The result of our using the phrase 'passive resistance' in South Africa was, not that people admired us by ascribing to us the bravery and self sacrifice of the suffragists but we were mistaken to be a danger to person and property which the suffragists were, and even a generous friend like Mr. Hosken imagined us to be weak. The power of suggestion is such, that a man at last becomes what he believes himself to be. If we continue to believe ourselves and let others believe, that we are weak and helpless and therefore offer passive resistance, our resistance would never make us strong, and at the earliest opportunity we would give up passive resistance as a weapon of the weak. On the other hand If we are Satyagrahis and offer Satyagraha believing ourselves to be strong, two clear consequences result from it. Fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger every day. With the increase in our strength, our Satyagraha too becomes more effective and we would never be casting about for an opportunity to give it up. Again, while there is no scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand not only has hatred

no place in Satyagraha but is a positive breach of its ruling principle. While in passive resistance there is a scope for the use of arms when a suitable occasion arrives, in Satyagraha physical force is forbidden even in the most favourable circumstances. Passive resistance is often look upon as a preparation for the use of force while Satyagraha can never be utilized as such. Passive resistance may be offered side by side with the use of arms. Satyagraha and brute force, being each a negation of the other, can never go together. Satyagraha may be offered to one's nearest and dearest; passive resistance can never be offered to them unless of course they have ceased to be dear and become an object of hatred to us. In passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing the other party and there is a simultaneous readiness to undergo any hardships entailed upon us by such activity, while in Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person.

These are the distinctions between the two forces. But I do not wish to suggest that the merits, or if you like, the defects of passive resistance thus enumerated are to be seen in every movement which passes by that name. But it can be shown that these defects have been noticed in many cases of passive resistance. Jesus Christ indeed has been acclaimed as the prince of passive resisters but I submit in that case passive resistance must mean Satyagraha and Satyagraha alone. There are not many cases in history of passive resistance in that sense. One of these is that of the Doukhobors of Russia cited by Tolstoy. The phrase passive resistance was not employed to denote the patient suffering of oppression by thousands of devour Christians in the early days of Christianity. I would therefore class them as Satyagrahis. And if their conduct be described as passive

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resistance, passive resistance becomes synonymous with Satyagraha. It has been my object in the present chapter to show that Satyagraha is essentially different from what people generally mean in English by the phrase 'passive resistance'.

While enumerating the characteristics of passive resistance, I had to sound a note of warning in order to avoid injustice being done to those who had recourse to it. It is also necessary to

point out that I do not claim for people calling themselves Satyagrahis all the merits which I have described as being characteristic of Satyagraha. I am not unaware of the fact that many a Satyagrahi so called is an utter stranger to them. Many suppose Satyagraha to be a weapon of the weak. Others have said that it is a preparation for armed resistance. But I must repeat once more that it has not been my object to describe Satyagrahis as they are but to set forth the implications of Satyagraha and

characteristics of Satyagrahis as they ought to be.

In a word, we had to invent a new term clearly to denote the movement of the Indians in the Transvaal and to prevent its being confused with passive resistance generally so called. I have tried to show in the present chapter the various principles which were then held to be part and parcel of the connotation of that term. □

*(To be Continued)*

## MAURITIUS ELECTS INCUMBENT PM JUGNAUTH

Mauritius' ruling Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) has won more than half of the seats in parliament, securing incumbent Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth a five-year term, the final election results showed on Friday.

The election was dominated by calls for fairer distribution of wealth on the prosperous Indian Ocean island of 1.3 million people, which touts itself as a bridge between Africa and Asia and has a flourishing financial sector. MSM won 38 of the 62 seats while its rivals, the Labour Party and the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), garnered 13 and 9 seats respectively. Two seats on the island of Rodrigues were won by the Organisation of the People of Rodrigues (OPR) party.

Jugnauth, 57, became prime minister in 2017 when his father Sir Anerood Jugnauth stepped down from the post, and has already introduced a minimum wage to try and improve wealth distribution. He told his supporters after the count in his constituency. "I have obtained a clear mandate to continue to work toward progress and development in this country."

The three parties campaigned on further strengthening the welfare state and improving equality in one of Africa's most stable and wealthy nations. Some 723,660 voters, 76.84



percent of those eligible, turned out for the ballot.

The turnout was 2% higher than the last election. Mauritius expects its economy, which is dependent on tourism and financial services, to expand by 4.1% next year, up from a forecast 3.8% this year. Analysts expect economic diversification to proceed regardless of who wins the election.

In the meanwhile Sir Anerood Jugnauth after serving nation for 63 years took retirement from politics he has served Mauritius as President and Prime Minister. Sir Anerood Jugnauth has been closely associated with Antar Rashtriya Sayahog Parishad and he had inaugurated Pravasi Bhawan the Head Quarters of ARSP on 1st December, 2009.

**PM Narendra Modi congratulated and conveyed best wishes to Pravind Jugnauth on his emphatic victory and reiterated to work closely together to strengthen fraternal relations and development partnership between India and Mauritius.**

**Congratulating P K Jugnauth On his electoral victory, PM Modi said that :**

**We have worked closely together to strengthen fraternal relations and development partnership between Indian and Mauritius.**

**I look forward to speaking with you soon and to continuing our engagement.** □

# MAHATMA GANDHI'S MOVE FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE INDENTURED LABOUR SYSTEM—THE "GIRMIT"

As we commemorate this 2nd November, the 185th anniversary of the arrival of Indian Indentured workers in Mauritius, it is good to remember also that if there is one person who did his utmost to get rid of this ignominious system it is none other than Mahatma Gandhi. Is it a mere coincidence then that we are also celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of this great soul who was not yet then a Mahatma and who had set foot on this soil and spent 18 days from October 29th to 15th November 1901 in Mauritius?

From 24th June 1893 to 20th July 1914, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had seen and lived from close quarters the abominable and despicable treatment meted out to the "girmityas" in South Africa. He wrote in *Samalochak*, a Gujarati magazine in December 1915: "Girmit is a corrupt form of the English word agreement...The document under which thousands of labourers used to emigrate and still emigrate under girmit is a girmitya". Gandhiji writes in the same article that "indenture is indeed a state of semi-slavery." What is worse, this young barrister whose love (then) for sartorial dress and western (British) manners and etiquette is well-known, was treated as no more than a "coolie" despite his upper-class gait and trait and ejected from the first class compartment of a train at Pietermaritzburg on 7th June 1893 though he held a First Class ticket.

Everytime, young barrister Gandhi went to India, during those 21 years he spent in South Africa, there was only one thought uppermost in his mind: the plight of the "girmityas". He sought at every Congress Meeting to acquaint the Congress leaders with the sore and abject, humiliating, undignified conditions of the indentured labourers.

Young barrister Gandhi was horrified

and shocked by the dismayingly condition of the girmityas and their descendants. So disturbed was he by their trials and tribulations that he would certainly move for the abolition of the system. Even, at the cost of being beaten, kicked and humiliated several times in South Africa in defence of their cause and identified and treated as one of them.

In "The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi" by the Publication Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India (1st Edition 1964) one comes across several writings, letters, petitions, pleas and speeches of his relating to the abominable system of indenture. In quite a few of them, he refers to the plight of the Indian Indentures in Mauritius. He first made reference to Mauritius on 22nd May 1896. He would refer to the voting rights of the Indians in Mauritius. In a memorandum to J. Chamberlain, Secretary of State, Land, he would draw his attention to the fact that the population of the Island in 1894 consisted of 259,224 Indians and yet they had no voting rights as against 106,995 persons under the heading "general population". Here it is worthwhile drawing the attention of readers that the term general population was not coined by the Father of Nation, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and the makers of the Constitution in 1968, but existed much earlier since the 19th century.

In a letter to Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1911, an eminent freedom fighter and leader of Indian National Congress, he wrote that Manilal Doctor, young barrister (whom he had sent to Mauritius to take up the cudgels of Indian labourers, planters, traders and merchants (from 11th October 1907 to 1911) was proceeding to India to attend an important meeting of the Indian National Congress where he would try to have a resolution passed to abolish

the Indentured Labour System in the British Empire. He had even urged Shri Gokhale to visit Mauritius to familiarize himself with the dreadful conditions of Indians here.



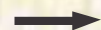
✍ Sarita Boodhoo

Again, on December 28th 1915, in his speech on India and its colonies, at the 30th Indian National Congress session held at Bombay he decried the system and submitted a resolution to the effect that the system of Indentured Labour is undesirable and urged its abolition because of its "highly injurious and immoral effects". He also petitioned that "the self-governing colonies would extend to the Indian emigrants equal rights with the Europeans."

Gandhi states in "The Leader" of 25th February 1916 that Gokhale had as early as in 1912, "in a speech full of fervor and weighted with facts and figures, moved his resolution demanding repeal of this form of labour." But this motion would be outvoted by the British members of the Imperial Legislative Council.

Gandhiji remarked then that "the yoke, if it fell from the Negro's black neck was transferred to the brown neck of the Indian." For him the Indentured labour system had persisted because "its bitterness like that of a sugared pill has been cleverly though consciously concealed."

Gandhiji says in his autobiography - "The Story of My Experiments with Truth" "India (then British) had tolerated the system through sheer negligence, and I believed the time had come when people could successfully agitate for this redress."





He continues: "I met some of the leaders, wrote in the press, and saw that public opinion was solidly in favour of immediate abolition."

Interestingly, he dedicated one whole chapter to "Abolition of Indentured Emigration" in his autobiography. He even strongly contemplated of having a Satyagraha to fight the system - "Might this be a fit subject for Satyagraha?" he mused. But he frankly admitted: "I did not know the modus operandi." Gandhiji referred to the fact that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, founder of the Banaras Hindu University, had moved a resolution in March 1916 in the Legislative Council for the abolition. But it was turned down. Again in February 1917, "Pandit Malaviyaji asked for leave to introduce a bill for the immediate abolition of the system". Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India refused permission. So, the Mahatma now growing impatient at the state of things decided, "it was time for me to tour the country for an all-India agitation."

"I began my tour from Bombay." He visited Karachi, Lahore, Calcutta "and various other places..." "There were fine meetings everywhere, and there was unbounded enthusiasm. I had not expected anything like it when the agitation was launched, said Gandhiji."

The "Bombay Secret Abstracts" of March 2nd 1917, state that under the "Citizens' Association" a public meeting was held in Khaliq Dina Hall in Karachi, to protest against the continuance of the Indentured Labour. Gandhi reiterated that Indians must insist on its abolition by 31st May 1917. At a meeting convened in Bombay by Mr Jehangir Petit, industrialist and great supporter of Gandhiji, under the "Imperial Citizenship Association" three proposals were submitted for the Government to abolish the system namely (1) "as soon as possible" (2) abolition by 31st July 1917 (3) "immediate abolition". Several ladies led by Mrs Jaiji Petit, Lady Tata and Dilshad Begam undertook to meet the Viceroy, in this connection, which was

positive.

The colonial planters, on the other hand attended a Conference in London and their delegation met the Secretary of State Mr. J. Chamberlain. Instead of the abolition of the system they pleaded for the indentured labourers, old and new and their descendants to go back to India. Gandhiji opposed this move. One recalls from press cuttings of the time how there was a hue and cry in this respect by the oligarchy in Mauritius. It was strongly upheld that the Indentured and their descendants were not Mauritians and they should go back to India! The fear of the "Asiatic Peril" was predominant and that the British may entrust the management of Mauritius to India for "more economical" administration... "Indian magistrates and officials would then be employed here at lower costs 'a vil prix'." (Le Mauricien of Friday 25th October 2019 forum page 14, Article - "The Action Liberal collapsed opposite the Oligarchy's "Parti de L'Ordre" (1911) by Anand Moheeputh.

Professor Hugh Tinker, noted historian wrote: "The Mauritians of Indian origin form over two-thirds of the population of the island, yet they remain an anonymous, uncommemorated mass of people, without any history, without any heroes - "The labourer was confined to the coolie lines on the estate." In 1901, the year MK Gandhi had landed in Mauritius, in the total population of 370,588 there were 255,920 Indians, but they had no voice.

So frantic and earnest was Gandhiji to get his voice heard on the fate of the Indentured labourers at the important Calcutta Congress, he did his utmost to catch a train to Calcutta on time: "I had to reach Calcutta on the date fixed for the meeting." He had to change trains from Karachi to Lahore and from Lahore to Delhi to be able to attend the Calcutta meeting. He could not get a seat even in the crowded third class 6 compartment from Lahore to Delhi. "No one was willing to accept me..." "When a porter discovered my plight, came to me and said: "Give me twelve annas and I'll get you a seat", Gandhiji

gave him the 12 annas! As the train was about to move, the young porter who had desperately tried in vain to entreat passengers to give Gandhiji a seat, shoved the frail Gandhi bodily...through the window... "for a standing seat." He was taken for a "fakir" or a "sadhu". "I stood for two hours, holding the chain of the upper bunk". When they came to know his identity, they felt ashamed...

Gandhiji had to reach Calcutta at all cost. Had he missed that train, he would have missed the Congress meeting which was so vital for him. Such was the determination of Gandhi in his march to abolish the system. Before 31st July 1917 the Government announced "that Indentured emigration from India" would be stopped. It was in 1894 that Gandhiji had drafted his first petition protesting against the system. "I had hoped then that this 'semi-slavery' would someday be brought to an end." After the great Satyagraha of South Africa, then the Champaran Satyagraha, followed by the Kheda Satyagraha and others, like Rowlatt Act protest, the British were weary and wary of Gandhi. Gandhiji was of strong belief that the threat of "potential Satyagraha hastened the end."

Years later, in 1924, Gandhiji as President of the Indian National Congress, could not help mentioning Mauritius and the semi-slavery system of Indentureship. At the same period, he was aware that some Mauritian white planters had toured India and recruited hundreds of indentured labourers for their sugar estates, despite the abolition of the system. It was then that a Commission of Enquiry headed by Maharaj Kunwar Singh was set up by the British Raj whose findings would definitely put a term to the system on 31st May 1924 in Mauritius.

**Dr. Mrs. Sarita Boodhoo is the Chairperson of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union under the aegis of the Ministry of Arts and Culture.**

**(Abridged form of Article Published in Mauritius Times in 31st October, 2019)** □

# INDIA—FEDERAL UNITS AND THE MAKING OF INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY—A WELCOME CHANGE!

✍ Prof. V. Suryanarayan

Speaking in Chennai on Sunday, November 3, 2019, Honourable Minister V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs, stated that the Central Government proposes to hold state level parleys to understand the interests and concerns of the States on issues of crucial importance to them. Referring specifically to the State of Tamil Nadu the Minister pointed out that Tamil Nadu has concerns about the living conditions and problems of identity of Tamil Diaspora scattered across the world; it has genuine apprehensions about the safety and security of Tamil fishermen fishing in the Palk Bay and how the political developments in Sri Lanka, after the Presidential elections, could affect bilateral relations, with its fallout in Tamil Nadu. The Minister's statement is extremely significant because for the first time the Government of India has openly declared that the federal units can and should make constructive inputs into India's foreign policy.

## **The Problem:**

India borders on Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives. India's relations with each neighbouring country will have its immediate fallout on contiguous Indian states. The vagaries of India-Pakistan relations will have its fallout on Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Twists and turns in India- China relations will affect Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. India-Nepal relations will spill over to Bihar, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and West Bengal; India-Bhutan relations will impinge upon West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam; developments in Bangladesh, both internal and external, has influenced and will continue to influence Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram; India-Myanmar relations will have its fallout on Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram; India-Sri Lanka relations are closely intertwined with the politics of Tamil Nadu and India-Maldives relations will have an impact on Minicoy islands. I have not mentioned Thailand and Indonesia because relations with these two maritime neighbours have yet to take off in a big way.

## **Era of One-Party Dominance**

During the era of one-party dominance, New Delhi pursued a neighbourhood policy which it considered to be in India's

national interest. On several occasions, the views, interests and sensitivities of the concerned Indian States were not taken into consideration. Two illustrations are given below, from Tamil Nadu perspective, to substantiate the point.

## **Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, 1964 and Sirimavo-Indira Gandhi Pact, 1974**

In the years immediately before and after independence a point of discord between India and Ceylon was the legal status of the people of Indian origin in the island. During the stewardship of Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister, New Delhi emphatically maintained that all, except those who voluntarily opted for Indian citizenship, were the responsibility of Ceylon. Taking into consideration their long period of residence and contribution to the economic development Nehru advised the Ceylonese Government to confer Citizenship on them. In the 1960's this time-tested policy was derailed. With Lal Bahadur Shastri as the Prime Minister and C S Jha as the Commonwealth Secretary New Delhi reversed its earlier principled stance and began to adopt a new approach to the problem of stateless people in Sri Lanka. New Delhi was eager to come out of the diplomatic isolation in South Asia, following the defeat in the Sino-Indian war of October –November 1962.

The astute politician that Sirimavo - Bandaranaike was, she made the best use of the situation and clinched a deal. According to the India-Sri Lanka Agreements of 1964 and 1974, India decided to confer Indian citizenship on 6, 00,000 persons plus their natural increase and Colombo agreed to confer Sri Lankan citizenship on 3,75,000 persons plus their natural increase.

In his book, From Bandung to Tashkent, C S Jha has given a detailed background to the finalization of the Pact. He does not mention whether the views of the affected people were ascertained. In his speech in the Lok Sabha Swaran Singh, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that he held consultations with the leaders of the Indian community but did not mention a single word about what their views were. As a result the two Pacts converted the people of Indian origin into "merchandise" to be divided between the two countries in the name of good neighbourly relations. It was not only a betrayal of Gandhi-Nehru legacy; it also constituted a bad precedent for the India's policy towards Overseas

Indians. All trade unions in the plantation areas, irrespective of political affiliations, opposed the Pacts. Of equal importance, all political leaders in Tamil Nadu – C Rajagopalachari, Kamaraj Nadar, C N Annadurai, P Ramamurthy and V K Krishna Menon opposed the inhuman agreement.

## **Ceding of Kachchatheevu to Sri Lanka**

The ceding of Kachchatheevu to Sri Lanka in 1974, like the earlier Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, is another illustration of New Delhi bending backwards to placate its southern neighbour. Kachchatheevu was a part of the Zamindari of the Raja of Ramnad, and after independence, when Zamindari was abolished it became a part of Madras Presidency. Nehru maintained that Zamindari did not mean sovereignty. Nehru was right. Zamindar was not sovereign; the sovereign leases the territory to the Zamindar for the collection of revenue and when the Zamindari was abolished it became a part of India. If Nehru's argument was accepted the very unity of India would have been at stake, for, at the time of independence, more than 75 per cent of the Indian territory was under Zamindari, Mahalwari or Ryotwari systems of land tenure.

More relevant, the principle of median line was accepted as the basis for the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Palk Bay, but when it came to Kachchatheevu a deviation was made so that the Island could fall into Sri Lankan waters. However, articles 4 and 5 of the agreement provided for the continuance of traditional fishing rights of Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan waters, but these rights were bartered away in the 1976 agreement which delimited the maritime boundaries in the Gulf of Mannar, Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.

M. Karunanidhi was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1974. He should have resorted to judicial remedy by filing a case in the Supreme Court and prove that Kachchatheevu was Indian territory, not a disputed territory and if Indian territory was to be given to Sri Lanka a constitutional amendment was necessary. Or he should have requested the President of India to refer the issue to the Supreme Court for its opinion. It is necessary to mention that legal luminaries like M C Setalvad maintained that the Island was a part of India. For reasons best known to himself, Karunanidhi did not resort to legal remedy. He took the issue to the Tamil Nadu



Legislative Assembly and the Assembly passed a unanimous resolution condemning the Pact. The resolution was completely ignored by the Central Government.

It will not be out of place to mention the fact that the veteran Congress leader, Dr. B. C. Roy, the West Bengal Chief Minister, approached the Supreme Court when the Central Government wanted to give Berubari to East Pakistan and got it stalled. B C Roy was able to prove that Beru Bari was not a disputed territory, but Indian territory and if Indian territory was to be transferred to East Pakistan a constitutional amendment was essential.

Years later when Jayalalitha was the Chief Minister the Tamil Nadu Government filed a case in the Supreme Court. When Karunanidhi became the Chief Minister again he did not lag behind. He also filed a case challenging the validity of the Agreement. The Supreme Court has yet to give a pronouncement on the two cases.

#### **Annadurai's Constructive Suggestion Ignored**

May I give an illustration of how a positive suggestion made by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister was ignored by the Mandarins of the South Block. Annadurai, who became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1967, was deeply concerned about the developments in Burma, especially the forcible repatriation of the Tamils in 1964 and the related issue of compensation to them. In a conversation with the author, Thomas Abraham, then Minister Counsellor in the Indian Embassy in Rangoon, recalled his meeting with Annadurai in the Chief Minister's residence in Mambalam. The meeting was arranged through the good offices of common friends. After discussing the pros and cons of the matter, Annadurai wrote a letter to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi suggesting that India enter into a long term agreement with Burma for the import of rice and the compensation due to the Burmese repatriates could be adjusted in the proposed deal. It may be recalled that in 1967 India was facing an acute shortage of food grains. On his return to Rangoon, Thomas Abraham also made a similar proposal to the Ministry of External Affairs. It is unfortunate, but true, that this concrete proposal did not elicit any favourable response from New Delhi

#### **IK Gujral's Shining Example**

If one compares the record of the Ministers of External Affairs, since the dawn of independence, I K Gujral comes out as a solitary exception to the general rule. He was very keen to associate the concerned State Governments with the formulation and implementation of neighbourhood

policy. Rahman Sobhan, the Bangladeshi economist turned diplomat, has provided glimpses into Gujral's eagerness to take along the West Bengal Government on the question of sharing of the Ganges waters with Bangladesh. Rahman Shoban has written that at the end of a dialogue in New Delhi, Gujral asked him to stay back for a private conversation. He said that since West Bengal has vital stakes on the sharing of the Ganges waters, it is essential to take the West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu on board. Gujral made the "quite extra-ordinary suggestion" to Rahman Shoban that the Awami League Government should open its own channel of communication with the West Bengal Government "drawing on our shared geography and cultural heritage". Instead of proceeding to Dhaka, Rahman Shoban went to Kolkata, met his old friend and class mate Asim Das Gupta, the Finance Minister. To quote Rahman Shoban, "Asim responded very positively to my suggestion and indicated that his leader was not unaware of the mutually beneficial opportunities on offer". Jyoti Basu and Sheikh Hasina displayed exceptional statesmanship. "The rest, as they say, is part of history". The Government of West Bengal was formally invited to be a party in the negotiations with Bangladesh. In fact, Asim Das Gupta led the Indian delegation. The statesmanship of Gujral and Jyoti Basu is in sharp contrast with several Chief Ministers including Mamata Bannerjee, Karunanidhi and Palaniswamy

#### **Working of Coalition Governments**

With the formation of coalition governments in the Centre and regional parties becoming alliance partners a qualitative change has taken place in the Centre-State equation with particular reference to India's neighbourhood policy. The regional parties began to make their inputs into foreign policy. For example, the inclusion of the Sethusamudram Project in the policies and programmes of the Manmohan Singh Government was due to the tireless efforts of the DMK. Of equal importance the Central Government exerted its benign influence and softened the hard-line stance of its regional partners. Thus, during the Fourth Eelam War, when the Tigers were decimated at heavy cost of men and materials, Karunanidhi was a "faithful ally" of the Manmohan Singh Government. For tactical reasons, New Delhi permitted Karunanidhi to indulge in theatrics so that he could continue to pose himself as the champion of the Overseas Tamils. His famous fast in the Marina which started after breakfast and ended before lunch is a good example. The fact remains that Karunanidhi did not rock the Central Government when according to UN

estimates 40,000 innocent Tamils perished. They were caught between inhuman Tigers and tiger-happy Sri Lankan army.

#### **Conclusion**

The Two Dravidian Parties – the AIADMK and the DMK – still continue to function in a world of make believe as far as developments in Sri Lanka are concerned. The Chief Minister and his colleagues still parrot like repeat the statements made by Late Jayalalitha that Mahinda Rajapakse, Gotabaya Rajapakse and their colleagues should be hauled up before the International Court of Justice for war crimes. The DMK wants to forget its own acts of grave omission and commission and is trying to compete with AIADMK in acts of one-up-man-ship. The fact should be highlighted that Karunanidhi, till the end of his life, did not even write an obituary note on Prabhakaran. If this policy continues, New Delhi's efforts to work with the Government of Tamil Nadu are unlikely to make much headway.

The silver lining in Tamil Nadu is the active functioning of well-known think tanks who can make their constructive inputs into the making of India's neighbourhood policy. In this connection mention should be made of the Chennai Centre for China Studies, Chennai Centre for Global Studies, Center for Asia Studies and National Maritime Foundation. The office bearers of these think tanks include distinguished former Indian diplomats, retired civil servants, former service officers, leading academicians and senior journalists. These think tanks can prepare policy briefs on introduction of devolution and participatory democracy in Sri Lanka, punishment to be meted out to those guilty of war crimes, conferment of Indian citizenship to Hill Country Tamil refugees of Indian origin, opening of shipping service between Rameshwaram and Talaimannar, encourage Tamil students to come for higher studies in Tamil Nadu Universities, how to beef up the security machinery (Tamil Nadu has the largest group of ISIS followers and is also a conduit for drug traffic) and bring about social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the Tamils living in Sri Lanka. Our objective should be to create a political system in Sri Lanka, where multiple identities can co-exist harmoniously - a Tamil can be a proud Tamil while, at the same time, he is also a loyal Sri Lankan citizen.

(Dr. V. Suryanarayan is one India's leading Sri Lanka specialists. He was the founding Director and Senior Professor, Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras. His e-mail id : suryageeth@gmail.com) □

## ARSP DELEGATIONS VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

An eight member ARSP delegation visited Durban, South Africa to participate in the international conference on 'The Confluence of Spirituality & Life-Gandhian legacy' organized by Gandhi Development Trust (GDT) from 3rd to 5th October, 2019 to commemorate Gandhiji's 150th birth anniversary.

Separately, a half day round table workshop was also organized by ARSP in collaboration with 'The 1860 Heritage Centre on 'Gandhi' and the Indian Diaspora' on 6th October 2019 in Durban.

Six members of the Indian delegation namely - Amb Virendra Gupta, Prof. Ajay Dubey, Shri Narayan Kumar, Shri Amit Gupta, Shri Rakesh Pandey and Dr. Rajni Sarin presented papers at the GDT's Conference. The other members namely Shri Sanjay Bhalla and Shri Mukesh Aggarwal also actively participated in the conference deliberations. The deliberations at the conference helped ARSP delegation better understand the circumstances of Gandhiji's work in South Africa and the challenges faced by him in developing the technique of non-violence which he subsequently used quite effectively in the Indian freedom struggle.

At the roundtable with the 1860 Heritage Centre, a wide range of issues concerning the role and contribution of the people of Indian origin in the struggle against apartheid and the socio-economic development of the country were discussed. It was noted that South Africa had achieved a remarkable degree of racial harmony after the abolition of apartheid and transition to democracy which was no doubt inspired by Nelson Mandela's approach of inclusiveness and reconciliation. The contribution of PIO community in that process also remains quite commendable.

Consul General of India in Durban participated in the roundtable. The



*Delegates of the conference with Mrs ILA Gandhi (fourth From The Left) at Phoenix Settlement (South Africa)*

Zulu Prince made a special appearance at the conference and his gesture was greatly appreciated.

ARSP delegation also had side meetings at Ramakrishna Centre (with H.H. Swami Sardaprabanandaji) and Divine Life Society (Sivananda International Cultural Centre at La Mercy). These organizations are at the forefront of a wide range of charitable and philanthropic activities undertaken by PIO organizations with underprivileged communities including PIOs in the field of health care, children and adult education, child welfare and old age homes. ARSP delegation also met members of HHS and apart from discussing various issues concerning the vast PIO community in South Africa also looked out for the opportunity to brief them, at their request, on the current situation in J & K.

Important points which emerged during various meetings are enumerated below:

1. Need for ARSP and other think tank/civil society organisation in India to have more intensive engagement with the academic community and opinion makers in South Africa. Efforts are under

way by the PIO community, to set up a new think tank and ARSP could consider having an institutionalized collaborative arrangement with that organisation.

2. ICCR to be requested to depute academics/experts for lectures on Indian studies/ Indian philosophy/ Indian economics etc to create a more positive understanding of India and goodwill with youth. This is particularly important since the youth in South Africa is not well conversant with India's sacrifices and support/solidarity for the apartheid movement.
3. Given the political structure in South Africa which remained dominated by ruling party ANC, it was important that India must explore party-to-party linkages.
4. South Africa still continued to play a crucial role in African affairs because of its large economy and extensive financial infrastructure. This should be factored by Indian Government while considering Government to Government as well as soft





power linkages.

5. Year 2020 would mark 160 years of arrival of Indians in South Africa. ARSP should be a part of commemorative activities being planned on that occasion.
6. Ramakrishna Centre, Divine Life Society and several other PIO organizations in South Africa have been doing commendable works with underprivileged communities including people of Indian origin. We advised them to ensure requisite publicity for these efforts for creation of awareness and goodwill. □



*ARSP Delegates at Maritzburg railway station in South Africa where M K Gandhi was pushed out from the First Class Compartment of the Train*

## PM ADDRESSES 'SAWASDEE MODI' IN BANGKOK

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the 'Sawasdee PM Modi' community event in Bangkok, Thailand on 2nd November, 2019. Thousands of members of Indian diaspora from all over Thailand attended the event.

Prime Minister welcomed the audience in several Indian languages, reflecting the diversity of the Indian diaspora in Thailand. Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister said that this was his first official visit to the country to participate in the India-Asean Summit. He reflected on the age old historic relations between India and Thailand which were forged thousands of years ago through trade relations of Indian coastal states with South-East Asia. These relations have only gained in strength over time reflected in cultural and lifestyle similarities between the two countries.

Prime Minister said that it has been his endeavour to meet people of Indian



community in the country he travels to. He appreciated the people present for being the perfect ambassadors of India culture and tradition.

**Prime Minister unveiled the Thai translation of Thiruvalluvar's Tamil classic 'Tirukkural'. He said that the book is a guiding light for living one's life. He also released commemorative coins minted to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, adding that the teachings of Guru Nanak are heritage for entire humanity. He said that from 9th November, direct connectivity will be established to Kartarpur Sahib via the Kartarpur Corridor, welcoming everyone to come and visit.**

Prime Minister narrated steps being taken to develop Buddha circuit for promoting tourism. He highlighted that India has jumped 18 ranks in the last 4 years in travel and tourism global index, stating that government has been focussed on promoting heritage, spiritual and medical tourism along with developing connectivity infrastructure for boosting tourism.

Outlining the contours of India's Act-East Policy, he said that India is focussed on deepening North-East's connect with Thailand. He said that the government is working towards developing the region as gateway of South-East Asia. Prime Minister added that the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway will establish seamless connectivity between the countries, which will boost the development of the entire region. □



## PM Modi, MONGOLIAN PRESIDENT JOINTLY UNVEIL STATUE OF BHAGWAN BUDDHA

Chanting aloud the Buddhist prayers, PM Narendra Modi and Mongolian President Khaltmaagiin Battulga, jointly unveiled the statue of Bhagwan Buddha at the Gandan Monastery in Mongolia via video conference. The golden statue with Bhagwan Buddha holding a bowl was unveiled at a brief ceremony held at the Pradhan Mantri's residence



*PM Narendra Modi and Mongolian President Khaltmaagiin Battulga unveiled the Lord Buddha statue from Delhi*

in New Delhi while the Gandan Monastery is located in Mongolia's capital Ulaanbaatar. It is back in May

2015, that PM Modi had visited the monastery where he presented a Bodhi tree sapling describing it as a

token of friendship from the Bharatiya people. He then had also announced to gift a statue of Bhagwan Buddha to the monastery, underlining the common Buddhist heritage and civilization links between the two countries and people. Gandan is the largest and most significant monastery in Mongolia. Built in the mid 19th century, it is the only monastery where Buddhist services continued to function even during the Communist period. □

## INDIANS LARGEST GROUP TO GET OZ CITIZENSHIP

According to recent statistics from the Australian Department of Home Affairs, in fiscal 2018-19 (which is the 12-month period ended June 30), a total of 1.27 lakh people, representing at least 200 countries of origin, were conferred Australian citizenship.

Of these, 28,470 or 22.3% were from India. Australia has seen a spike in the total number of people obtaining citizenship-this has increased by 58%

compared with the previous year, 2017-18. For the second consecutive year, Indians have emerged as the largest group to obtain Australian citizenship.

The year ending June 30, 2018 (fiscal year 2017-18) had seen India emerge as the largest group to obtain Australian citizenship, toppling the UK. In this period, Indians obtaining citizenship by conferral numbered

17,756, out of an aggregate of 80,649 (a ratio of 22%).

While the number of Indians acquiring Australian citizenship has gone up 60% in 2018-19 compared to the previous year, which is almost in tandem with the rise in total number of citizens, ratio of Indians obtaining citizenship has remained largely static in both years at 22%. □

## HINDI MOST POPULAR INDIAN LANGUAGE IN US

Hindi continues to be the most widely spoken Indian language in the US, followed by Gujarati and Telugu. In terms of absolute numbers, Hindi was the most widely spoken Indian language in the US with 8.7 lakh speakers as of July 1, 2018, reflecting a slight increase of 1.3% over the 2017 figures. Over an eight-year period, since 2010, the numbers have increased by 2.7 lakh, a rise of 43.5%. However, in terms of percentage increase, the number of Telugu-speaking individuals far outstripped speakers of other Indian languages in the US, rising 79.5% between 2010

and 2018. The American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2018 (it measures the US population as of July 1, 2018), recently released by the US Census Bureau shows that 67.3 million residents in the US, aged over five (which includes native-born, legal and illegal immigrants) speak a language other than English at home.

As a share of population, almost 22% of US residents speak a foreign language at home. The American Community Survey (ACS) survey is the largest undertaken by the US government each year and covers

over 2 million households. The Bengali-speaking US based population at 3.75 lakh has shown a rise by nearly 68% over the same eight-year period. This is followed by those who speak Tamil, showing a rise by 67.5% to stand at 3.08 lakh as of July 1, 2018. However, it should be noted that individuals from countries other than India also speak Bengali (predominately Bangladesh). Immigration experts say the spike in the Bengali speaking population may also be representative of a larger inflow to the US from Bangladesh. □

## NITA AMBANI BECOMES 1ST INDIAN TRUSTEE TO BE ELECTED TO BOARD OF NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Educationist, philanthropist and businesswoman Nita Ambani has been named an honorary trustee of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The announcement was made by Daniel Brodsky, the museum's chairman. Nita Ambani's election took place at a meeting of the Board on November 12. She is the first Indian to be so honoured. "Mrs. Ambani's commitment to The Met and to preserving and promoting India's art and culture is truly exceptional. Her support has an enormous impact on the museum's ability to study and display art from every corner of the world. It is a pleasure to welcome Nita Ambani to the Board," Brodsky said.



*Nita Ambani, Founder and Chairperson of Reliance Foundation joined by Metropolitan Museum of Art leadership*

Talking about her commitment of seeing Indian art and culture being represented on a global platform, Nita Ambani said, "It has been deeply rewarding for me over the past several years to support The Metropolitan Museum of Art in its desire to expand

and enhance its program of exhibiting the arts of India. I have been moved and impressed by The Met's keen interest, which enables our commitment to seeing Indian art and culture represented on the global platform. This great distinction inspires me to redouble my efforts on behalf of India's heritage, from the ancient to the contemporary." □

## INDO-AMERICAN CEOs IN FORBES' TOP 10 LIST

Forbes recently announced its 2019 America's Most Innovative Leaders list, with Satya Nadella and Shantanu Narayen among the Americans of Indian origin making the cut. Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, came in at No. 6. Forbes notes that the company, led by the Indo-American has had a 13.91 percent sales growth over the past year and a Company Innovation Premium of 31.59.

Narayan was just behind Nadella at No. 7. His company has seen 23.61 percent sales growth over the past 12 months and a Company Innovation Premium of 64.43. Narayan is the chairman, president and CEO of Adobe. In addition, MasterCard's Ajay Banga and Bangladeshi Omar Ishrak of Medtronic were in the top 50 coming at No. 18 and No. 19. □

## INDIAN MIGRANTS LARGEST IN THE WORLD

Indian is the leading country of origin of international migrants in 2019 with a 17.5 million strong diaspora, according to new estimates released by the United Nations, which said the number of migrants globally reached an estimated 272 million. The International Migrant Stock 2019, a dataset released by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) on September 18, provides the latest estimates of the number of international migrants by age, sex and origin for all countries and areas of the world. The report said that the top 10

countries of origin account for one-third of all international migrants. In 2019, with 17.5 million persons living abroad, Indian was the leading country of origin of international migrants. However over 31 million people of Indian Origin live abroad.

Countries with over a million Indian expats are as under :-

**US-4.4 million, UAE-3.1 million, Malaysia-2.9 million, Saudi Arabia-2.8 million, Myanmar-2.0 million, UK-1.8 million, Sri Lanka-1.6 million, South Africa-1.5 million, Canada-1.0million.**

## INDIAN DEPUTY MAYOR ELECTED IN NSW



*Reena Jethi*

Councillor Reena Jethi has been elected as the new Deputy Mayor of The Hills Shire in New South Wales Australia during the September 10 Ordinary Meeting of Council. Mayor of The Hills Shire, Dr Michelle Byrne congratulated her on her appointment. "I look forward to working with Councilor Jethi as we continue to build on The Hills' reputation as a great place to live, grow, do business and raise a family," Mayor Byrne said. The position of Deputy Mayor will last for a period of 12 months. □

## LONDON POLICE RETURNS STOLEN 12TH CENTURY BUDDHA STATUE

Almost a month after a 12th century Buddha statue which was stolen from the ASI Museum at Nalanda, was returned to the Indian High Commission by the London Metropolitan Police, Union Finance



and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman handed over the statue to Shri Prahlad Singh, Minister of State for Culture on 17th September. "The 12th Century AD Bronze image of Buddha seated in the Bhumi-pasara mudra was amongst the 19 bronze statues stolen from the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) Nalanda site museum in August 1961. After a gap of nearly 57 years, in early 2018, the image was spotted by Art enthusiasts at an auction organized by a London based dealer and eventually returned to India. □

## His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen Attended the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty The Emperor of Japan

His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen attended the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito at the Akasaka Palace in Tokyo on 22 October 2019. The ceremony was attended by Royalty and other State Guests and dignitaries from around 180 countries around the world.

The Enthronement Ceremony, known in Japanese as *Sokui no rei*, follows ancient rituals. His Majesty Emperor Naruhito is the 126<sup>th</sup> Emperor of Japan.



Following the Ceremony, His Majesty The King granted an Audience to the Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, at the Akasaka State Guest House. His Majesty also granted an Audience to President of India, His Excellency Ram Nath Kovind and H.E. Ms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor of Myanmar. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi lived in Bhutan for a while in the 1970's, along with her husband, the late Michael Aris, who was Royal Tutor to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

In the evening, Their Majesties graced the Court Banquet hosted by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress at the Imperial Palace.



## His Majesty The King Grants Dashain Tika



commemoration of Dashain, which is one of the most important Hindu festivals in Bhutan.

The festival of Dashain marks the victory of Rama over the demon king Ravana, representing the victory of good over evil.

Tika of rice and curds is an important part of the festival- younger family members receive Tika from elders, as a symbol of their blessings and protection.

"As Dharmaraja, His Majesty is the embodiment of King Rama, who is said to be the incarnation of Vishnu. The Dashain Tika that His Majesty



placed on the forehead of each and every person here today, represents the protection that the people of Bhutan enjoy. Therefore, it is a very special and intimate blessing from the King to His People," said Rabi C Dahal, of the Hindu Dharma Samudaya.

The Prime Minister and senior government officials joined the people to receive Tika.

His Majesty The King granted Dashain Tika to the people of the Hindu community at the Devi Panchayan Mandir in Thimphu Kuenselphodrang on 8th October 2019. Hundreds of people from across the country gathered at the Mandir to receive Tika and blessings from His Majesty.

The Mandir, which was consecrated on the 1st of October, was constructed as a special gift from His Majesty to the people of Bhutan. Following the consecration, Durga Puja was held at the Mandir, culminating in the

## PICTURE STORIES :



19 October 2019: His Majesty The King granted National Cadastral Resurvey Program Land Kidu to 8532 beneficiaries of Paro Dzongkhag at the Rinpung Dzong. The Kidu is part of a nationwide land reform initiated upon Royal Command in 2007. Following the National Cadastral Resurvey of the entire country, His Majesty has granted land and

exemption of fines in 18 Dzongkhags. Over 137,745 acres of land has been granted to 131,801 beneficiaries across Bhutan.



His Majesty The King granted an Audience to the students and lecturers of Sherubtse College in Kanglung on 14 October 2019.

His Majesty shared thoughts on nation building, and our national vision for a common, bright and better future.



His Majesty The King granted an Audience to the 36<sup>th</sup> Batch DeSuung volunteers on 13 October 2019.

The 36<sup>th</sup> batch has 125 participants. The training for this batch was specially opened to former monks. When the training is completed, they will be part of 4331 men and women from across Bhutan, who have become DeSuups. □

## UNFPA PRESENTS HER MAJESTY GYALYUM SANGAY CHODEN WANGCHUCK AN AWARD



Coinciding with the United Nations (UN) Day celebration on 24<sup>th</sup>

October 2019, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) presented an award to Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, in recognition of Her Majesty's role in helping advance the rights of women and girls in Bhutan as the Goodwill Ambassador of UNFPA for the last 20 years.

The UNFPA's Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem presented the award to Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck.

Dr Natalia Kanem acknowledged the contribution by Her Majesty and for being a driving force behind UNFPA's advocacy efforts in Bhutan. She commended Her Majesty for being a strong role model for women and girls in Bhutan and travelling to remote villages of the country to raise awareness on issues ranging from safe motherhood to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Her Majesty accepted the role of UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador in January 1999. Since then, Her Majesty has led numerous advocacy programs on HIV/AIDS, reproductive, sexual and mental health throughout the country.

Her Majesty also established a civil society organisation named, Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW) in 2004, to empower vulnerable women especially victims and survivors of domestic violence. □

## DAYS TO REMEMBER

in December, 2019

**December 01 : Romania - National Day**

**December 01 : World AIDS Day**  
(To raise awareness about HIV and AIDS - Preventive and curative Treatment)

**December 02 : International Day of Abolition of Slavery**  
(Against : Forced Labour, Child Labour & Trafficking)

**December 02 : LAOS - National Day**

**December 02 : United Arab Emirates - National Day**

**December 04 : Indian Navy Day**  
(Operation Trident was conducted by Indian Navy during India-Pakistan War in 1971)

**December 10 : Human Rights Day**  
(Universal Declaration of Human Rights to sustain peace and empower all human beings.)

**December 11 : Purnima** ●

**December 12 : Kenya - National Day**

**December 16 : Vijay Divas**

(It is celebrated to remember the martyrs, rejoice their sacrifices and strengthen the resolve of the armed forces to the cause of the nation.)

**December 16 : Bahrain - National Day**

**December 16 : Kazakhstan - Independence Day**

**December 18 : Qatar - National Day**

**December 22 : National Mathematics Day**

(It is celebrated in order to honor the birth anniversary of the famous mathematician Sir Srinivasa Ramanujan)

**December 23 : National Farmer's Day (Kisan Divas)**

(Birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Ch. Charan Singh. His policies helped in improving lives of peasants in India)

**December 25 : Christmas**

**December 26 : Amavasya** ● □

## गिरमिट की प्रथा

— मोहनदास करमचन्द गाँधी

अब समय आ गया है कि नये बसे हुए और भीतरी-बाहरी तूफानों में से उबरे हुए आश्रम को छोड़कर गिरमिटि प्रथा पर थोड़ा विचार कर लिया जाये। 'गिरमिटिया' उसे कहते हैं जो पाँच बरस या इससे कम की मजदूरी के इकरारनामे पर सही करके हिन्दुस्तान के बाहर मजदूरी करने गया हो। ऐसे नेटाली गिरमिटियों पर से तीन पौंड का कर सन् 1914 में रद्द कर दिया गया था। पर यह प्रथा अभी बन्द नहीं हुई थी। सन् 1916 में भारत भूषण पण्डित मालवीयजी ने यह सवाल बड़ी कौंसिल में उठाया था और लॉर्ड हार्डिंग ने उनका प्रस्ताव स्वीकार करके प्रकट किया था कि यह प्रथा 'वक्त आने पर' उठा देने का वचन सप्ताहों की ओर से मुझे मिल गया है। पर मुझे तो साफ दिखाई देता था कि यह प्रथा तत्काल बन्द करने का निर्णय हो जाना चाहिए। इस प्रथा को हिन्दुस्तान ने अपनी लापरवाही से बहुत बरसों तक चलने दिया था। मेरा ख्याल था कि अब लोगों में इतनी काफ़ी जागृति हो गयी है कि यह प्रथा बन्द कराई जा सके। कुछ नेताओं से मिला, कुछ अखबारों में इस विषय में लिखा और मैंने देखा कि लोकमत इस प्रथा को निकाल देने के पक्ष में है। इसमें सत्याग्रह का उपयोग हो सकता है, इस विषय में तो मुझे कोई शंका नहीं थी पर कैसे किया जाये, यह मैं नहीं जानता था।

इस बीच वाइसराय ने 'वक्त आने पर' शब्दों का अर्थ समझाने का मौका ढूँढ लिया था। उन्होंने प्रकट किया कि 'दूसरी व्यवस्था करने में जितना वक्त लगेगा उतने समय में' यह प्रथा उठा दी जायेगी। अतः सन् 1917 के फरवरी में भारत-भूषण पण्डित मालवीयजी ने गिरमिटि प्रथा तुरन्त उठा देने का कानून बड़ी कौंसिल में पेश करने की इजाजत मांगी तो वाइसराय ने उसे देने से इन्कार कर दिया। अतः इस प्रश्न को लेकर मैंने हिन्दुस्तान का दौरा शुरू किया।

भ्रमण आरम्भ करने के पहले वाइसराय से मिल लेना मुनासिब मालूम हुआ। उन्होंने तुरन्त मेरे मिलने की तारीख तैयार कर दी। उस समय के मि. मेफी (अब सर जॉन मेफी) उनके सेक्रेटरी थे। मि. मेफी के साथ मेरा समुचित सम्बन्ध स्थापित हो गया। लॉर्ड चेम्सफोर्ड के साथ सन्तोषजनक बातचीत हुई। उन्होंने निश्चयपूर्वक तो कुछ नहीं कहा, पर मुझे अपनी मदद की आशा दिलायी।

दौरे का आरम्भ बम्बई से किया। बम्बई में सभा करने का भार मि. जहांगीर पेटिट ने अपने मत्थे लिया। 'इंपीरियल सिटीजनशिप एसोसिएशन' के नाम से सभा हुई। उसमें पेश किये जाने वाले प्रस्ताव को तैयार करने के लिए समिति बनी। उसमें डॉ. रीड, सर लल्लूभाई शामलदास, मि. नटराजन आदि थे। मि. पेटिट तो थे ही। प्रस्ताव में गिरमिटि की प्रथा बन्द करने की प्रार्थना की गयी थी। सवाल यह था कि कब बन्द की जाये। तीन सुझाव थे—'जितनी जल्दी हो सके', '31 वीं जुलाई तक' और 'तुरन्त'।

31 जुलाई मेरा सुझाव था। मुझे तो निश्चित तारीख की जरूरत थी, जिससे उस अरसे में कुछ न हो तो आगे क्या करना है या क्या हो सकता है यह सोच लिया जाये। सर लल्लूभाई का सुझाव 'तुरन्त' शब्द रखने का हुआ। उन्होंने कहा '31 जुलाई की अपेक्षा तो 'तुरन्त' अधिक शीघ्रतासूचक शब्द है।' मैंने यह समझाने की कोशिश की कि जनता 'तुरन्त' शब्द नहीं समझ सकती। जनता से कुछ काम लेना हो तो उसके सामने निश्चयात्मक शब्द होना चाहिए। 'तुरन्त' का अर्थ तो सब अपनी मरजी के मुताबिक करेंगे। सरकार एक करेगी, जनता दूसरा करेगी '31 जुलाई' का अर्थ सब एक ही करेंगे और उस तारीख तक कुछ न हुआ हो तो हमें कौन सा कदम उठाना चाहिए यह सोचा जा सकेगा। यह दलील डॉ. रीड को तुरन्त जंच गयी। आखिर में सर लल्लूभाई को भी 31 वीं जुलाई पसन्द आयी और प्रस्ताव में वह तारीख रखी गयी। सार्वजनिक सभा में यह प्रस्ताव पेश किया गया और सर्वत्र 31 वीं जुलाई की हद रखी गयी।

बम्बई से श्री जायजी पेटिट के अथक परिश्रम से स्ट्रियों का एक डेपुटेशन वाइसराय के पास गया। उसमें लेडी ताता, स्वर्गीय दिलशाद बेगम इत्यादि थी। सब बहनों के नाम तो मुझे याद नहीं, पर इस डेपुटेशन का असर बहुत अच्छा हुआ और वाइसराय साहब ने उन्हें आशापूर्ण उत्तर दिया था।

मैं कराची, कलकत्ता आदि स्थानों में भी हो आया था। सब जगह अच्छी खासी सभाएं हुईं और सर्वत्र लोगों में भरपूर उत्साह था। इन सभाओं का सिलसिला शुरू करते समय ऐसी सभाएं होने और उनमें इतनी उपस्थिति होने की आशा मैंने नहीं की थी।

इन दिनों मेरी यात्रा अकेले ही होती थी। इसमें अलौकिक अनुभव होते थे। खुफिया पुलिसवाले तो पीछे लगे ही रहते थे। इनके साथ मेरा झगड़ा होने का कोई कारण न था। मुझे कुछ छिपाना नहीं था, इससे न वे मुझे तंग करते थे और न मैं उन्हें तंग करता था। सौभाग्यवश तब तक मुझे 'महात्मा' की उपाधि नहीं मिली थी। एक बार रेल में जाते हुए अनेक स्टेशनों पर खुफिया पुलिसवाले मेरा टिकट देखने आते, नम्बर वगैरा लेते रहे। मैं तो वे जो बात पूछते, उसका तुरन्त जवाब दे देता था। साथी यात्रियों ने मान रखा था कि मैं कोई सीध-सादा साधु या फकीर हूँ। जब दो-चार स्टेशनों तक खुफिया पुलिसवाले लगातार आये तब वे यात्री बिगड़े और उन्हें गालियाँ देकर धमकाया—'इस बेचारे साधु को नाहक क्यों सताते हो।' मेरी ओर मुखातिब होकर बोले—'इन बदमाशों को टिकट मत दिखाओ।'

मैंने धीरे से इन यात्रियों से कहा—'उनके देखने में मुझे कोई परेशानी नहीं होती है, वे अपना कर्तव्य करते हैं, इसका मुझे कोई दुख नहीं है।' यात्रियों के गले यह बात नहीं उतरी और वे मुझ पर ज्यादा तरस

खाने लगे और आपस में बातें करने लगे कि बेकसूर आदमियों को इतना हैरान क्यों किया जाता है।

खुफिया पुलिस वालों से तो मुझे कोई तकलीफ नहीं हुई, पर रेलवे की भीड़ के कष्ट के कडुए से कडुए अनुभव मुझे लाहौर से दिल्ली के बीच हुए। कराची से कलकत्ते लाहौर के रास्ते जाना था। लाहौर में ट्रेन बदलनी पड़ती थी। वहां की ट्रेन में मेरी दाल कहीं गल नहीं पाती थी। यात्री जबरदस्ती अपना रास्ता कर ले रहे थे। दरवाजा बन्द होता तो खिड़कियों में से अन्दर घुस रहे थे। वहां कलकत्ता नियत समय पर पहुंचना था। यह ट्रेन खो दूँ तो कलकत्ते नहीं पहुंच सकता था। मैं जगह मिलने की आशा छोड़ रहा था। कोई मुझे अपने डब्बे में जगह नहीं देता था। अन्त में एक कुली ने मुझे जगह ढूँढते देखकर कहा—'मुझे बारह आने दो तो मैं जगह दिला दूँ।' मैंने कहा—'मुझे जगह दिला दो तो जरूर बारह आने दूंगा।' बेचारा कुली यात्रियों से विनती कर रहा था, पर कोई मुझे लेने को तैयार न होता था। ट्रेन छूटने ही वाली थी कि एक डब्बे के कुछ यात्रियों ने कहा—'यहां जगह नहीं है, लेकिन इसके भीतर घुस सकते हो तो घुसा दो। खड़ा रहना होगा।' कुली ने पूछा—'क्यों जी?' मैंने 'हाँ' की और उसने मुझे उठाकर खिड़की में से अन्दर डाल दिया। मैं अन्दर घुसा। कुली ने बारह आने पैसे बना लिए।

मेरी यह रात कड़े कष्ट से बीती। दूसरे यात्री ज्यों-त्यों करके बैठ गये। मैं ऊपर की बेंच की जंजीर पकड़कर दो घण्टे खड़ा ही रहा। इस बीच में कुछ यात्री मुझे धमकाते ही रहे—'अजी, अब तक क्यों नहीं बैठता है?' मैंने बहते-समझाया कि कहीं जगह भी तो हो। पर उन्हें तो मेरा खड़ा रहना भी सहन नहीं होता था। यद्यपि वह ऊपर की बेंचों पर आराम से लम्बे हो रहे थे। बार-बार तंग करते थे। जब तंग करते तब मैं शान्ति से जवाब देता था इससे वे कुछ शान्त हो जाते थे। मेरा नाम—धाम पूछा। मुझे नाम बतलाना पड़ा, तब वे शरमाये। माफी मांगी और मेरे लिए अपनी बगल में जगह कर दी। 'सब्र का फल मीठा होता है' कहावत याद आयी। मैं थककर चूर हो रहा था, सिर घूम रहा था। बैठने की जगह की जब सच्ची आवश्यकता थी तब ईश्वर ने दिला दी। यों धक्कम-धक्के में कलकत्ते समय पर पहुंच गया। कासिम बाजार के महाराज ने अपने यहां उतरने का निमन्त्रण दे रखा था। वही कलकत्ते की सभा के अध्यक्ष थे। कराची की तरह कलकत्ते में भी लोगों का उत्साह उमड़ पड़ता था। थोड़े से अंग्रेज भी सभा में उपस्थित थे।

31 वीं जुलाई के पहले गिरमिटि की प्रथा बन्द होने की घोषणा निकली। सन् 1895 में इस प्रथा का विरोध करने वाली पहली दरखास्त मैंने तैयार की थी और यह उम्मीद रखी थी कि किसी दिन यह 'अर्ध गुलामी' जरूर रद्द होगी। पर इसके पीछे शुद्ध सत्याग्रह था यह कहे बिना नहीं रहा जाता।

(सत्य के प्रयोग से साभार)

## ब्रिटेन के हिन्दी छात्रों और अध्यापकों का सम्मान

18 अक्टूबर, 2019 को साहित्य और संस्कृति के लिए समर्पित संस्था अक्षरम् तथा वाणी प्रकाशन के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद और इंदिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र के सहयोग से ब्रिटेन से दिल्ली पधारने हिन्दी विद्यार्थियों और शिक्षकों का सम्मान समारोह आयोजित किया गया। विदेश में हिन्दी अध्ययन-अध्यापन से संबद्ध इस पंद्रह सदस्यीय विशिष्ट दल के भारत भ्रमण का नेतृत्व ब्रिटेन के प्रख्यात कवि डॉ. पद्मेश गुप्त और हिन्दी शिक्षिका सुश्री सुरेखा चोपला द्वारा किया गया। इन्दिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय कला केन्द्र सभागार में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम की अध्यक्षता करते हुए केन्द्रीय हिन्दी संस्थान के उपाध्यक्ष डॉ. कमल किशोर गोयनका ने संस्थान की ओर से विदेशों में हिन्दी अध्ययन और अध्यापन के लिए हर संभव सहायता का आश्वासन दिया। मुख्य अतिथि संसद सदस्य श्रीमती रीता बहुगुणा जोशी ने देश-विदेश में हिन्दी के अभियान को सशक्त बनाने पर बल दिया। इस अवसर पर नेपाल के पूर्व मंत्री श्री मंगल प्रसाद गुप्त ने भारत-नेपाल के भाषायी जुड़ाव को रेखांकित किया। राजभाषा, विभाग, गृह मंत्रालय के संयुक्त सचिव श्री जय प्रकाश अग्रवाल ने हिन्दी को संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की भाषा का गौरव दिलाने के लिए



ब्रिटेन के हिन्दी छात्रों के साथ अक्षरम् के पदाधिकारी

भारत सरकार के संकल्प को दोहराया। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद के महासचिव, श्री श्याम परांडे ने अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय जगत में हिन्दी की बढ़ती साख पर प्रसन्नता व्यक्त की। अमेरिका से पधारी प्रवासी साहित्यकार डॉ. मृदुल कीर्ति ने हिन्दी को आध्यात्मिक और वैज्ञानिक संदर्भों में व्याख्यायित किया। कार्यक्रम में विद्यार्थियों ने हिन्दी और भारत यात्रा के संबंध में अपने विचारों और अनुभवों को साझा किया। वाणी प्रकाशन की ओर से अदिति महेश्वरी ने इन छात्रों का अभिनंदन किया। राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी के जन्म की 150वीं वर्षगांठ के उपलक्ष्य में विद्यार्थियों को प्रतीक चिन्ह के रूप में चरखा भेंट कर सम्मानित किया गया।

अक्षरम् की महासचिव, कवियित्री-कथाकार अलका सिन्हा ने कार्यक्रम का कुशल संचालन करते हुए कहा कि विदेशी छात्रों के मुख से निकलने पर हिन्दी का आकर्षण और भी बढ़ जाता है। अध्यक्ष कवि-व्यंग्यकार अनिल जोशी ने ब्रिटेन और फिजी स्थित भारतीय दूतावासों में अपने कार्यकाल के दौरान विदेशी विद्यार्थियों की भाषा सीखने की ललक को प्रेरक बताते हुए सभी विदेशी मेहमानों और सम्मानित अतिथियों का आभार व्यक्त किया। कार्यक्रम में जाने-माने कवि लक्ष्मीशंकर वाजपेयी, नरेश शांडिल्य, प्राचार्य डॉ. रमा, राकेश पांडे, राकेश दुबे, विनोद संदलेश सहित संस्था के अनेक गणमान्य सदस्यों, साहित्यकारों और हिन्दी प्रेमियों ने शिरकत की।

गौरतलब है कि इन विद्यार्थियों को भारत की गौरवशाली विरासत, संस्कृति और पुरातत्व का दिग्दर्शन कराने के लिए इन्हें अपराहन में राकेश दुबे जी के सौजन्य से राष्ट्रपति भवन और अलका सिन्हा जी के सौजन्य से राष्ट्रीय संग्रहालय का भ्रमण भी कराया गया। राष्ट्रीय संग्रहालय में आगमन पर राजभाषा हिन्दी के प्रति उनकी निष्ठा के सम्मानस्वरूप उन्हें संग्रहालय की ओर से स्मृति-चिन्ह भेंट किया गया। □

## यू.के. हिन्दी सम्मान समारोह 2019

29 मार्च, 2019 को नेहरु सेंटर, लंदन में भारतीय उच्चायोग, लंदन द्वारा 'यू.के. हिन्दी सम्मान' समारोह का आयोजन किया गया। ब्रिटेन में हिन्दी के प्रचार-प्रसार को प्रोत्साहन देने और विश्व हिन्दी दिवस को यादगार बनाने के उद्देश्य से वर्ष 2007 में भारतीय उच्चायोग लंदन द्वारा यहां के हिन्दी सेवी संस्थाओं को 'यू.के. हिन्दी सम्मान' देने की परंपरा शुरू की गई। इस सम्मान समारोह में

उप-उच्चायुक्त महामहिम श्री चरनजीत सिंह द्वारा ब्रिटेन की जानी-मानी लेखिका श्रीमती उषा वर्मा को 'डॉ. हरिवंशराय बच्चन लेखन सम्मान' और ऑक्सफोर्ड विश्वविद्यालय में हिन्दी के प्राध्यापक प्रो. इमरे बंधा को 'जॉन गिलक्रिस्ट यू.के. हिन्दी शिक्षण सम्मान' से सम्मानित किया गया। समारोह के दौरान विश्व हिन्दी दिवस के उपलक्ष्य में उच्चायोग में आयोजित बाल हिन्दी कविता-पाठ

प्रतियोगिता के विजेताओं को भी पुरस्कृत किया गया। इस अवसर पर ब्रिटेन के कई प्रसिद्ध साहित्यकार और हिन्दी सेवी उपस्थित थे। इस अवसर पर स्थानीय कवियों के लिए एक कवि-सम्मेलन का आयोजन भी किया गया था। कार्यक्रम का संचालन श्री तरुण कुमार ने किया तथा कौंसुलर ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापन दिया। □

## चीन के 15 विश्वविद्यालयों में हिन्दी पढ़ाई जा रही

चौधरी चरण सिंह विश्वविद्यालय के हिन्दी के विभागाध्यक्ष तथा शंघाई अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय अध्ययन विश्वविद्यालय (सिसु) में आईसीसीआर चेयर के पूर्व विजिटिंग प्रोफेसर नवीन लोहनी ने बताया कि आज देश में ही नहीं विदेश में भी हिन्दी का प्रचार बढ़ा है। चीन में इस वक्त 15 विश्वविद्यालयों में हिन्दी पढ़ाई जा रही है। वहां के युवाओं को नौकरी देने में यह भाषा सबसे अधिक कारगर हो रही है। चीन भी अपना व्यवसाय पूरी दुनिया में फैलाने में हिन्दी भाषा को अपना माध्यम बना रहा है।



डॉ. नवीन चंद लोहनी मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री श्री रमेश पोखरियाल निशंक को पुष्पगुच्छ और शंघाई चीन से प्रकाशित हिन्दी पत्रिका 'समन्वय' भेंट करते हुए।

विद्यार्थियों के साथ भारतीयों के अनेक हिन्दी और सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों में भी रुचि लेकर कार्य किया। उन्होंने चीन और भारत के सांस्कृतिक संबंधों में प्रगति और विकास के लिए लेखन कार्य किया, रेडियो और टेलीविजन वार्ताएं प्रस्तुत की। भारतीय कौंसलावास के साथ ही शंघाई में भारतीय समुदाय द्वारा स्थापित अनेक सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं के

कार्यक्रम में निरंतर प्रतिभागिता किया। 'हिन्दी इन चाईना नामक वीचैट समूह' के द्वारा और चीनी और भारतीय समुदाय के बीच सौहार्द बढ़ाने के लिये निरंतर प्रयासरत हैं और चीन में पहली हिन्दी पत्रिका 'समन्वय हिंची' प्रकाशन कार्य किया। जो चीन में लोकप्रिय हुई। चीन के सियान, सियामेन, बीजिंग व शंघाई के विश्वविद्यालयों व संस्थाओं में वह शिक्षा, भारतीय सांस्कृतिक संबंधों व भाषा अध्ययन पर व्याख्यान देने गए।

उन्होंने बताया कि आज चीन में 50 अध्यापक हिन्दी के हैं। इसके अलावा अनुवादक के पद पर कार्य कर रहे हैं। इतना ही नहीं 400 बच्चे हिन्दी पढ़ रहे हैं। स्नातक से लेकर परास्नातक स्तर पर हिन्दी पढ़ाई जा रही है। वहां गूगल पूरी तरह वैन है। □

## विदेश मंत्रालय ने अयोध्या में राम मन्दिर के निर्माण पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले की जानकारी विभिन्न देशों को दी

भारत के विदेशमंत्री और विदेश मंत्रालय के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों ने शनिवार को अयोध्या विवाद पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट के आए ऐतिहासिक फैसले से विभिन्न देशों के राजनयिकों को अवगत कराया ताकि इस निर्णय के बारे में संसार के किसी भी देश में कोई गलतफहमी न फैलायी जाये। उल्लेखनीय है कि 134 साल पुराने अयोध्या मन्दिर-मस्जिद विवाद पर 09 नवम्बर, 2019 को चीफ जस्टिस रंजन गोगोई की अगुआई वाली सुप्रीम कोर्ट की पांच सदस्यीय संविधान पीठ ने सर्वसम्मति से यह फैसला सुनाया कि अयोध्या की 2.77 एकड़ की पूरी विवादित जमीन पर राम मन्दिर निर्माण होगा। शीर्ष अदालत ने कहा कि सरकार मन्दिर निर्माण के लिये 3 महीने में ट्रस्ट बनाए और मन्दिर बनाने की योजना तैयार करे। चीफ जस्टिस ने



का जन्म स्थान है।

6 अगस्त से 15 अक्टूबर तक इस मामले पर 40 दिन सुनवाई के बाद सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने अपना फैसला सुरक्षित रख लिया था। संविधान पीठ द्वारा शनिवार को 45 मिनट तक पढ़े गए फैसले ने देश के इतिहास के सबसे अहम और एक सदी से ज्यादा पुराने विवाद का अंत कर दिया। चीफ जस्टिस गोगोई, जस्टिस एसए बोबोडे, जस्टिस डीवाई चंद्रचूड़, जस्टिस अशोक भूषण, जस्टिस एस अब्दुल नजीर की पीठ ने स्पष्ट किया कि मन्दिर को राम के जन्मस्थान पर ही बनाया जाए। रामलला विराजमान को दी गई विवादित जमीन का स्वामित्व केन्द्र सरकार के रिसीवर के पास रहेगा। □

मस्जिद बनाने के लिये मुस्लिम पक्ष को 5 एकड़ वैकल्पिक जमीन दिए जाने का फैसला भी सुनाया, जो कि विवादित जमीन की करीब दोगुना है। चीफ जस्टिस ने कहा कि हिन्दुओं की यह आस्था निर्विवादित है कि ढहाया गया ढांचा ही भगवान राम

की पीठ ने स्पष्ट किया कि मन्दिर को राम के जन्मस्थान पर ही बनाया जाए। रामलला विराजमान को दी गई विवादित जमीन का स्वामित्व केन्द्र सरकार के रिसीवर के पास रहेगा। □

## भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने करतारपुर साहिब कॉरिडोर का उद्घाटन किया



प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने 09 नवम्बर, 2019 को ऐतिहासिक करतारपुर साहिब कॉरिडोर के उद्घाटन के अवसर पर गुरदासपुर के डेरा बाबा नानक में बोलते हुए कहा कि मैं भारत की भावनाओं का सम्मान करने के लिए पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान नियाजी को धन्यवाद देना चाहता हूँ। गुरु नानक देव जी की 550वीं जयंती से पहले करतारपुर साहिब गलियारे का उद्घाटन हमारे लिए अपार खुशी लेकर आया है।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी और उनके पाकिस्तानी समकक्ष इमरान खान ने अलग-अलग अपने देशों की सीमा में इस कॉरिडोर का उद्घाटन किया। करतारपुर कॉरिडोर भारत के पंजाब में डेरा बाबा नानक मन्दिर को पाकिस्तान के पंजाब प्रांत के नरोवाल जिले के

करतारपुर में दरबार साहिब से जोड़ेगा। इससे भारतीय तीर्थयात्रियों को पाकिस्तान में गुरुद्वारा करतारपुर साहिब जाने की सुविधा मिलेगी। उद्घाटन समारोह से पहले, प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने सुल्तानपुर लोधी में बेर साहिब गुरुद्वारा में श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की। उल्लेखनीय है कि भारत ने 24 अक्टूबर को पड़ोसी देश पाकिस्तान के साथ डेराबाबा नानक में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सीमा के 'शून्य बिंदु' पर गलियारे के परिचालन के तौर-तरीकों पर एक समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर किए थे और 22 नवम्बर, 2018 को, केन्द्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने गुरु नानक देव की 550 वीं जयंती के ऐतिहासिक अवसर को 'भव्य और दिव्य' तरीके से पूरे देश और दुनिया भर में मनाने का एक प्रस्ताव पारित किया था।

मंत्रिमंडल ने डेराबाबा नानक से करतारपुर साहिब कॉरिडोर के निर्माण और विकास को अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सीमा तक पूरा करने की मंजूरी भी दी थी, ताकि भारत के तीर्थयात्रियों को गुरुद्वारा दरबार साहिब करतारपुर की यात्रा करने में सुविधा हो, जो सुगम और आसान तरीके से हो। 15 एकड़ भूमि पर एक अत्याधुनिक यात्री टर्मिनल भवन का निर्माण किया गया है। पूरी तरह से वातानुकूलित इमारत, एक हवाई अड्डे के लिए, एक दिन में लगभग 5,000 तीर्थयात्रियों की सुविधा के लिये 50 से अधिक आब्रजन काउंटर हैं। इसमें मुख्य भवन के अंदर कियोस्क, वॉशरूम, चाइल्ड केयर, प्राथमिक चिकित्सा सुविधा, प्रार्थना कक्ष और स्नैक्स काउंटर जैसी सभी आवश्यक सार्वजनिक सुविधाएं हैं। □