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SHRI BALESHWAR AGRAWAL : A PERENNIAL FOUNTAIN OF INSPIRATION

✍ - Lakhan Mehrotra

Former President - ARSP. Former Secretary,
Ministry of External Affairs

Nearly four decades ago, sometime in the early 1970s, a person in his fifties met me in my office in the South Block. I was then head of the Northern Division in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi. Rather formally dressed in a close collar suit, he spoke in a soft voice but firm enough to suggest a lot of determination behind it. A renowned journalist, his main preoccupation was with India's relations with her neighbours which he was planning to visit. He also showed a great deal of interest in the well-being of the people of Indian origin in foreign countries and wanted India to establish a close liaison with them as valuable custodians of India's cultural and spiritual heritage. His protruding eyes harboured a vision of India's greatness which he wanted to see thriving and radiating all around. He appeared to be exploring ways to translate that vision on to the ground. I was profoundly impressed by his persona as one who was much rooted in the soil, notwithstanding his fondness to soar high in the sky. The person was no other than Shri Baleshwar Agrawal and I struck a rapport with him almost instantaneously.



In 1978, Shri Baleshwar Agrawal established a non-governmental, non-profit organization called Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (Indian Council for International Cooperation) with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as its motto. The motto, the world is but one family has constantly fired his imagination and whatever be his personal convictions or views, he endeavoured to raise the ARSP as a purely apolitical outfit dedicated to the idea of bringing the people of the world together as brothers and friends. That is why he was able to bring into it such eminent Indians as Dr. Dharma Vira, former Governor of West Bengal, Shri Bhagwan Singh, former High Commissioner of India in the Pacific

Islands of Fiji, and Shrimati Sarojini Mahishi, former Minister of State in the Government of India; all became ARSP's successive Presidents.

Shri Baleshwar Agrawal functioned as Secretary General of the organization since 1983 and nursed it with his blood, sweat and toil. He had been the fountain head of all its programs which included a large number of academic conferences, meetings and seminars involving seminal discussions on our relations in all walks of life with foreign countries and especially our neighbours as well as countries with sizeable Indian Diaspora. The ARSP has also sent a number of goodwill delegations abroad to foster people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges amongst nations. It is a tribute to his dynamism and flair for public relations that the organization he created maintains constant touch with diplomatic missions in India and with several departments of the Government of India including the Ministry of External Affairs and those dealing with Overseas Indians, ensuring their cooperation and participation on a continuing basis.

After I retired from the Indian Foreign Service in 1992, Baleshwar Agrawalji invited me to join the ARSP. I could not attend many of its functions due to my responsibilities as Honorary Professor in the School of International Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and as Coordinator (South Asia) at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and due to my work on South Asia as a Nehru Fellow but I attended some of them as a member which gave me a glimpse of the phenomenal contribution of ARSP in building bridges with countries in our region and on the wider global plane

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through links with Indian communities abroad. Gradually, I discovered many facets of Baleshwarji's remarkable personality which had gone into the making of ARSP, the most important of those being his unflinching and selfless devotion to its laudable objectives. At his request I accepted the responsibility of ARSP's Vice-President.

A senior member of the Working Committee of ARSP at that time was Shri B.P. Sinha, a very close associate of Baleshwarji. He had worked as a Hindi officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India and later as Officer-on-Special Duty in the office of the Prime Minister. A magnet that he is for talent, Baleshwarji drew Sinha closely into the activities of ARSP. I had come to know the latter when he was posted as India's Ambassador to Suriname in 1982 and I was India's Ambassador to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Later he became Suriname's Honorary Consul in India. Together with Baleshwarji, ever a champion of the Hindi cause, Ambassador B.P. Sinha represented ARSP in several World Hindi Conferences. His passing away in January 1996 was a huge personal loss to Shri Baleshwarji as also to all of us associated with him for long.

At a meeting held at Baleshwarji's initiative towards the middle of 1996, ARSP decided to set up a cell to cater to the needs and requests of the People of Indian Origin (PIO) living in different parts of the world. The meeting was presided over by Smt. Sarojini Mahishi, former Minister of State in the Government of India. I took an active part in it in view of Baleshwarji's keenness to institutionalize the ad-hoc work being done by the ARSP in the matter. It had been receiving a number of requests for assistance by PIOs whose forefathers had gone as indentured labour from India more than a hundred years ago and were very eager to explore their roots in India. Deeply

attached to India, the Indian Diaspora was about 15 million strong and Mr. P. Chidambaram, India's Finance Minister then, had urged the PIOs and the Non-resident Indians (NRIs) from nearly 25 countries at the first Indian Global Indian Entrepreneurs Conference in Singapore in May that year to participate enthusiastically in India's industrial and economic resurgence. India was looking forward at that time to a US \$10 billion foreign direct investment in its economy and we had that aspect also in mind while establishing the ARSP cell.

About the same time that year, I received a call from our dear friend Ved Pratap Vaidik inviting me to a function in South Extension to celebrate Baleshwarji's seventy-fifth birth anniversary on 17 July 1996. I gladly joined a large number of admirers and friends of the ARSP founder who had gathered together for the purpose. When Baleshwarji rose to thank them, he announced his decision to establish a trust in the name of ARSP with the purse of '75000 presented to him on the occasion. He did not retain a penny for himself out of it. Soon thereafter the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Nyas (Trust) was duly registered with a couple of us joining him as signatories.

In order to provide a platform for action to the Indian Diaspora under a single roof, Shri Baleshwar Agrawal became a major champion of the International Conferences of GOPIO, the Global Organization of the People of Indian Origin. One of its crucial meets was its Fourth International Conference in Mauritius in August 1996 inaugurated by the President of the country, Mr. Cassam Uteem. A hundred delegates from India led by Baleshwarji participated in the conference along with representatives from several countries of South and South-East Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean. It discussed the political, social, cultural and economic environment of the Indian communities abroad, their

opportunities and challenges and modalities of a Plan of Action to foster cooperation amongst them on the national and international plane that would lead to a 'renaissance', as Shri Baleshwar Agrawal put it. The Conference chose Mauritius as the permanent seat of GOPIO's International Secretariat. Since then International GOPIO Conferences have become a regular feature on the international scene. Later that year the Government of India appointed a Chief Commissioner for NRIs and now has a separate Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

Before the year 1996 passed out, Baleshwarji proposed me at ARSP's General Body Meeting to become its President in succession to Shrimati Sarojini Mahishi, and after its unanimous approval, I accepted the honour thankfully. I was International Director of the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan at the time. He had also insisted that I became the President of the ARSP Nyas as well. I served as ARSP's President till 2004 and was succeeded by Shri Ved Prakash Goyal, formerly Cabinet Minister in the Government of India and then by former Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shashank. At the insistence of Baleshwarji, I also remained President of the Nyas till 2006 when I handed over that responsibility to another of my distinguished colleague, Mr. J.C. Sharma, after his retirement from the Indian Foreign Service.

Thanks to his dynamic leadership, Shri Baleshwar Agrawal transformed ARSP during those years into a truly national organization with branches in 10 states of India and in twice as many cities, and its life membership proliferated to countries round the globe including USA, Canada, Britain, Germany, Indonesia, Kenya and Guyana, not to speak of countries nearer home. As for the Nyas, one of its main objectives was to maintain close contact with the Indian Diaspora. In course of time, it decided

to honour at least one person every year from the international Indian community with an award named Bharatvanshi Gaurav Samman for bringing glory to it.

In the year 2003 an international committee was set up by Baleshwarji under the auspices of the ARS Nyas comprising a dozen men of eminence including Shri Aneeroodh Jagnauth, President of Mauritius, Shri Mahendra Chaudhry, former Prime Minister of Fiji, and Shri Basdeo Pandey, former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to select awardees for the Bharatvanshi Gaurav Samman. The honour carried an award of one lakh Indian rupees. The first person to be honoured with that Samman was Shri Ranjith Ramnarain of South Africa in the year 2005 who received it at the hands of Shri Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of Mauritius at a function at the PHD Chamber of Commerce in New Delhi. In 2006, it was awarded to Shri Satnarain Maharaj of Trinidad and Tobago by Shri I.K. Gujral, former Prime Minister of India, at a function at the Hindi Bhavan in New Delhi, thus setting in motion a series of such awards year after year.

Of the foreign trips that Baleshwarji organized for ARSP members, two of them stand out very vividly in my memory. One was to Mauritius which synchronized with the Maha Shivaratri Festival there. It is a national event in which a very large part of the island nation's population walks on a pilgrimage for miles together before reaching the lake treated as an incarnation of the holy Ganga of India and then offering prayers there at the Shiva temple before breaking fast in true Indian fashion. Nothing could be a greater tribute to their Indian heritage by the people of Mauritius. The festival held us spell bound and I still hark back to it in my spare moments. The other was to Bhutan at the invitation of His Majesty Jigme Singe Wangchuk, King of Bhutan with whom we had a

most memorable meeting followed by visits to Bhutan's most ancient sites. That included the temple dedicated to the memory of Guru Padma Sambhava, existing in the thick of Himalayas right at the spot where he had lived in penance and preached the eternal message of the Buddha. The visit has a special significance for me since it was there that I received a call from the United Nations through our Ambassador in Bhutan, Mr. Dilip Mehta, about the decision of Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, to appoint me as his Representative in Cambodia. One of the high points of my association with Baleshwarji was also the day when Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of Pravasi Bhavan in New Delhi where ARSP's Headquarters are lodged now. Baleshwarji worked day and night thereafter to convert his dream to create a place of transit and stay for PIOs in search of their Indian roots into reality.

Every moment of my association with Shri Baleshwar Agrawalji thus has been very rewarding. I remain beholden to him for the affection he showered on me, for the high trust in which he held me and for the honours he bestowed on me in the echelons of his distinguished organization. He has been a perennial source of inspiration to me and would remain so for time to come. His zeal and devotion reminds me of a Sanskrit verse which hails the creative genius of people like him as those the body of whose renown knows no age and no end.

***Jayanti te sukritino rasasidhah
kaveeshwarh***

***Naasti yeshaam yashah-kaaye
jaraa maranajam bhyam.***

He illumined our lives with the supreme example of his character and conduct with which he had so strenuously built the edifice of the Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad, its Nyas and the Pravasi Bhavan.

BALESHWARJI'S CONTRIBUTION TO PROMOTING ACADEMIC STUDY IN INDIA ON THE ISSUE OF DIASPORA

*✍ - Dr. Ruchi Verma
Research fellow
DRRC- ARSP*

As Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad is commemorating the centenary year of its founding Secretary General Late Baleshwar Agrawal, a virtual webinar on Baleshwar ji's contribution to promoting academic study in India on the issue of diaspora was organized on 17 July, 2021.

Baleshwar ji was passionately committed to connecting with the diaspora and enhancing its outreach with the civil society in India. He always believed that this issue needed to be provided greater focus and attention in universities and other academic institutions. Keeping this in view, some of the noted Indian academicians working in diaspora studies were invited to present their views. Prof. Chandrashekhar Bhat, former Professor, University of Hyderabad, Prof Ajay Dubey, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Dr Anil Joshi, Vice President, Central Hindi Institute, Agra, were the notable speakers who presented their views on the subject.

Shri Gopal Arora, Secretary, ARSP initiated the meeting and welcomed the dignitaries. He paid his homage to Baleshwar ji and mentioned about the year long commemorative programmes undertaken by ARSP to celebrate his centenary year.

Amb. Virendra Gupta, President ARSP, also paid his tribute to

Baleshwar ji. Amb. Gupta mentioned that Baleshwar ji was very passionately attached with diaspora. He made unparalleled contribution to attach diaspora with India and India with diaspora during those unfavourable times. He knows that people to people connect is vital but connecting diaspora with government is also equally important. Through ARSP, he tried to make a bridge between government and diaspora. He also made sure to involve academicians in his efforts of establishing these connections through research and opinion making. Amb. Gupta also mentioned about Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC) in ARSP which is making an effort to do academic research on diaspora and also tying up with several universities and institutions.

Prof. Ajay Dubey, Jawaharlal Nehru University, recalled his personal experiences with Baleshwar ji. He stated that Baleshwar ji wanted to link diaspora with India during the times when the narratives, dimensions and policies were against it. There was a policy of active disassociation of government with diaspora. They take diaspora as foreign citizens. However, in 1962 during India-China war this policy was revolved. Prof. Dubey mentioned that diaspora linkages

under Baleshwar ji can be divided into phases. During first phase there was a need to create a transformative narrative and he created it though people to people connect and involving government. In IInd phase, he involved academicians. He organised numerous conferences with academicians, student communities and foreign students, helped PIO students to take admissions in Indian universities, even make arrangements for their stay. He utilized academicians to create a transformative narrative in public opinion making and policies and then for guiding this transformative narrative and narrating way forward in diaspora engagement. He encouraged academicians to also prepare diaspora as they were criticized in their adopted countries for their affinity towards their homeland. Prof. Dubey mentioned that Baleshwar ji always supported diaspora engagement through research, publications and dialogues. Prof. Chandrashekhar Bhat, former Professor, University of Hyderabad, fondly remembers Baleshwar ji. He mentioned about his efforts to involve academics through research, conferences in diaspora linkages. He highlighted that Baleshwar ji was not only focused on linking diaspora of the developed nations but also made efforts to link the diaspora of the smaller developing countries. Prof.

Bhatt pointed out that Baleshwar ji in one of his conferences focus on the diaspora who have travelled during indenture times, their data has been missing and there is no trace of their roots. He acted as the catalyst in the field of research on diaspora. He suggested that there must be slot for PIO in the esteemed Indian institutions for the enhanced linkages with diaspora. He also recommended opening a PIO university.

Dr Anil Joshi, Central Hindi Institute, Agra, while paying his tribute to Baleshwar ji s mentioned that he was a very far sighted man. He saw the need of attaching not only the existing generation but also the future generation for strengthening the diaspora linkages. One such programme Know India Programme (KIP) undertaken by government was the fruit of his efforts. But that is not enough, as there is still need to connect them with their roots and the number of KIP participants is also very low. Dr Joshi urged ARSP to work towards this and welcome delegates in large numbers on their part to make them feel associated with India. He also suggested that there should be efforts to increase connectivity with diaspora through appropriate and increased use of technology.

Programme was concluded by vote of thanks by Shri Narayan Kumar, Hon. Director, ARSP. Paying his tribute, he mentioned that Baleshwar ji always encouraged academicians who were working on diaspora or willing to do so and his contribution in establishing diaspora linkages through academic means are unparalleled. ■

REMEMBERING ROMA HOLOCAUST

*✍-Md. Zameer Anwar
Research Associate,
CRSCR-ARSP*



Shooting Gallery in the Auschwitz concentration camp

Romani people remain till today the rejected, alienated, burnt, gassed and most prosecuted community of slaughtered – mainly during the Nazi Europe and have been targeted with regime. Roma community was lost to more ferocity and savageness than the history of the Holocaust until 2015 any community. Almost everywhere, when the European Parliament their fundamental rights are through a resolution promulgated 2 transgressed and threatened. Racist August as the annual “European violence targeting Roma is Roma Holocaust Memorial Day” to commonplace. Discrimination against Roma in employment, education, genocide of 500,000 European health care, administrative and other Romani people including women and services is the order of the day in most children. For almost four decades the of the European societies, and hate German authorities and institutions speech intensifies the anti-Romani perpetrated by the Nazis on the stereotypes typical of European public opinion. ground of racial inferiority. In 1982, the West German government recognized

History demonstrates that the Romani people have always been the beau ideal of constructive and positive integration, living as equal among equals but keeping their cultural heritage alive – provided they are not

racially motivated massacre of Roma. In 2011, the Polish parliament officially adopted August 2 as a day of commemoration for the Romani genocide, the next year the Croatian government followed the suit. →

In 1926, Bavaria- the state of Germany initiated one of the first legislations against Roma that necessitated the registration of all Romani people with the authorities in order to regulate their movement. The same law was enacted throughout the country by the German government in 1929. This legislation gave way to a number of draconian legislations based on ideology of pure blood and German Aryan racial superiority.

In July, 1933, 'German Aryan racial superiority' law and in November of the same year, Law against 'Dangerous Habitual Criminals' were enacted which deemed Roma as racially inferior. As a result, Hitler ordered sterilization of Roma under the law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring. Finally, in September, 1935 Law for 'the Protection of German Blood and Honor' (Nuremberg Race Laws) was introduced which empowered the authorities to arrest and incarcerate the Roma in prisons and concentration camps. During twelve years of Nazi rule Romani people in Germany were incarcerated in prisons, labor camps and concentration camps. Around half a million Roma were killed in the Holocaust. Even thereafter, persecution continued particularly in Central and Eastern Europe where Roma constituted 10% of total population of Bulgaria and Romania.

De facto, World War II brought about the most horrendous troubles recorded in the history of Roma community who suffered the culmination of cruelty, bestiality and inhumanity in the twentieth century. The first mass genocide of Holocaust came about in January 1940 when 250 Romani children from Brno were killed in Buchenwald and their dead bodies were used as guinea-pigs to test the efficacy of the Zyklon-B cyanide gas crystals which were later put to use in the gas chambers (Proester, 1940). On 16th December 1942, Heinrich Himmler signed the order for sending Germany's Sinti/Roma to Auschwitz.

With connivance of Nazi authorities, the Pavelic regime in Croatia and Antonescu in Romania had implemented anti-Roma measures

amounting to genocide. The Nazi provided the framework for destruction to Pavelic regime, as result 75 per cent of local Roma was decimated in Croatia where as in Romania one third of Roma died of typhus epidemics on account of excruciatingly agonizing plight in Transnistria camp and besides Romanian policemen along with SS men occasionally killed Roma.

In Vichy France, the persecution of Roma persisted according to the earlier discriminatory legislation dealing harshly with nomads. In March 1942, Vichy government established a special camp for itinerant Roma at Saliers in Southeast France. As Vichy regime deemed internment as the best way of assimilation but it resulted in persecution and privation of Romani people.

Fixing the number of Romani people who were killed and murdered in the Holocaust has not been feasible or easy. As Bernard Streck (in Rakelmann, 1979) stated that any effort to determine the casualties and tolls in terms of numbers cannot be ascertained through the lists or camp files, because most of Roma died in Eastern and Southern Europe, shot by execution forces and Fascist gang members and many murders were not recorded as which took place in remote areas and forests where Roma were arrested. There are no correct figures of pre war Romani population in Europe, though the official census of 1939, conducted by Nazi Government, reported to be around two million that was certainly underrepresentation in terms of numbers. The figures of half a million of Romani tolls between 1939 and 1945 are too less to be tenable.

The Society for Threatened Peoples International (STPI) appraised the deaths of 277,100 Romani people during the Second World War. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum estimated the number of Sinti and Roma killed was between 220,000 and 500,000. Martin Gilbert reported that between 220,000 and 700,000 Romani people in Europe were killed, including 15,000 (mainly from the Soviet Union) in Mauthausen in January–May 1945. Dr. Sybil Milton,

a historian at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Research Institute, said the number of lives lost was between a half-million and a million-and-a-half.

It was Raphael Lemkin who coined the word genocide, was the first scholar who raised the issue of genocide related to Roma community. Lemkin stated, Roma along with Jews and Slavs were the victims of holocaust perpetrated by Nazi. He said in one of his speeches on Radio on October 1955 that almost all the gypsies/Roma were destroyed by Nazi. Another prominent Holocaust scholar Holler narrated how the members of Security Unit Police forced a group of Romani people to dance half naked in freezing temperature prior to killing them. He further noted that macabre torture and brutality of persecution were committed by German Filed Police unit against a group of three hundred Roma including women and children.

The gory massacre of Roma and Sinti culminated on 2 August 1944, when Nazi Germans went on killing spree across the Zigeunerlager ("Gypsy/Roma camp") at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps where 2,897 Romani people were annihilated as a part of Hitler's genocidal plan. However Roma genocide was masqueraded and less systematically pursued. The lack of recognition of pogroms reflects the long-standing discrimination against Roma. In recent years awareness of the Roma holocaust started accelerating and Roma community across the world observe 2nd August as commemoration of Auschwitz holocaust, known in Romani language Porajmos or Samudaripen, for paying tribute to the victims as well as a testifying the strength of the survivors, besides making advocacy of Roma rights, social inclusion and the improvement of the current economic situation of the community.

This commemorative event is a pledge to snuff out the historical amnesia and address the xenophobic sentiments by mobilizing the concerted efforts to raise awareness about Europe's darkest period in order to avoid repetition of such genocide. ■

Nepal PM Deuba Look forward TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH INDIA

Nepal's new Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has said that he looks forward to working closely with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to strengthen the relations between the two neighbouring countries as well as the people-to-people contacts. Prime Minister Modi immediately congratulated Deuba after he won a vote of confidence in the reinstated House of Representatives. In a tweet Modi said, "Congratulations Prime Minister @DeubaSherbdr and best wishes for a successful tenure. I look forward to working with you to further enhance our unique partnership in all sectors, and strengthen our deep-rooted people-to-people ties."

Responding to Prime Minister Modi's

tweet, Deuba thanked his Indian counterpart for his congratulatory message and expressed his desire to work closely with him to strengthen the bilateral ties between the two neighbouring countries. "Thank you very much, Prime Minister @narendramodi Ji, for your congratulatory note. I look forward to closely working with you to strengthen the relationship between our two countries and people," Deuba tweeted.



Deuba, the 75-year-old President of the Nepali Congress won a trust vote in the reinstated lower House of Representatives and comfortably won it, averting a general election in the Himalayan nation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deuba, who was appointed as the prime minister as per the Article 76(5) of the Constitution on July 12 following Supreme Court's intervention, secured 165 votes in the 275-member House.

Previously, Deuba has served as the prime minister on four occasions; first from 1995 to 1997, then from 2001 to 2002, again from 2004 to 2005, and from 2017 to 2018. ■

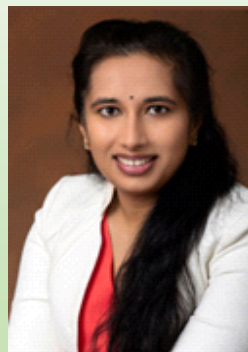
CONVERSATION WITH DR. SWATI MOHAN ON DIASPORA DIPLOMACY

U.S. Consulate General Chennai begins a Diaspora Diplomacy series by organizing a virtual conversation with Indian American Aerospace Engineer Dr. Swati Mohan on Wednesday, July 28 at 7 p.m. Dr. Swati Mohan is the Guidance, Navigation, and Control Systems Engineering Group Supervisor at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). She led the Guidance, Navigation, and Controls Operations for NASA Mars 2020 mission.

Through the Diaspora Diplomacy series, the U.S. Consulate General Chennai will present prominent Indian

Americans to talk about their journeys and their role in furthering U.S.-India relations. The series will also highlight the extraordinary contributions of the Indian American community to business, academic, innovation, health, and science sectors.

Dr. Mohan will interact with India's United Nations Space4Women



Network Mentor Deepana Gandhi and other students, journalists, and space enthusiasts during the program. She will discuss the Perseverance Mars rover mission, her Indian American roots, her U.S. higher education, and her perspectives on the role of women in STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics]. The second event in the Diaspora Diplomacy series will be a virtual music concert by Grammy-nominated Indian American singer Priya Darshini on August 18. On August 19, Priya and her team will lead a virtual workshop for emerging musicians. ■

COLLIERS APPOINTED RAMESH NAIR AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR INDIA BUSINESS



US-based property consultant Colliers announced the appointment of Ramesh Nair as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for India business, as part of its strategy to accelerate growth in the country. Nair, an industry veteran, will also be the Managing Director, Market Development for Asia.

As Managing Director, Market Development, Asia, Colliers said that Nair will use his considerable industry experience to add value beyond the boundaries of India and develop services, expand client relationships, and attract other talented professionals to the company.

On his appointment, Nair said he was attracted by Colliers' reputation as the fastest growing real estate services firm in India. "Colliers' decentralised operating model, enterprising culture, and service excellence mindset and global

brand, make me excited about what we can achieve for our clients in India and Asia," he said.

Nair said he was impressed by Colliers' strategic acquisitions including India's leading project management firm Synergy. As one of the most well-respected professionals in the Indian real estate industry, Nair has experience in working across diverse asset classes and markets, advising leading domestic and multinational owners, investors, and occupiers, the statement said. ■

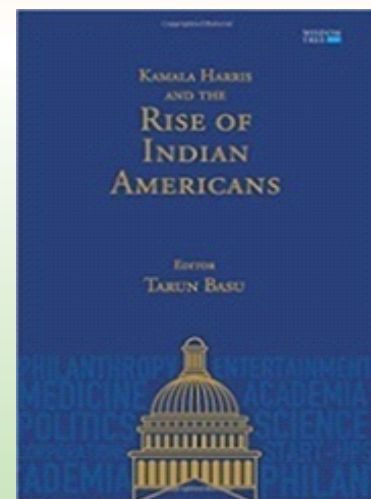
INDIASPORA LAUNCHED BOOK ON RISE OF INDIAN AMERICANS

Indiaspora hosted a virtual book launch to celebrate the release of Americans.

"Kamala Harris and the Rise of Indian-Americans," a perhaps first-of-its-kind anthology on the Indian American community in the US. "Kamala Harris and the Rise of Indian Americans" (released July 15th) was inspired by the US Vice-President and evidences the progress and accomplishments of the Indian-American diaspora, according to an Indiaspora press release. The anthology, compiled by veteran editor Tarun Basu and published by award-winning Wisdom Tree, explores the story behind these advancements through 16 essays

From politics to the new administration, entrepreneurship to technology, medicine to hospitality, science to academia, business to entertainment, philanthropy to social activism, leaders from various arenas detail their own paths to success and offer their perspectives on diasporic progress.

These stories culminate in a larger narrative of the Indian-American community's coming-of-age in the US. "A fascinating and inspiring story of how an immigrant population from a



developing country, with low education levels, became the most educated, highest-earning ethnic community in the world's most advanced nation in almost a single generation." says editor Tarun Basu. ■

13th CENTURY RAMAPPA TEMPLE IN TELANGANA BECOMES INDIA'S 39th WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The 13th Century Rudreswara Temple, also known as Ramappa Temple, in the state of Telangana has been inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list. This is India's 39th such heritage to be inscribed on the prestigious list. Just inscribed as World Heritage Site: Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana in India. Bravo! the UNESCO announced.



The decision was taken at the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO on Sunday. The Ramappa temple, a 13th century engineering marvel named after its architect, Ramappa, was proposed by the government as its only nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage site for the year 2019. Congratulating

everyone and especially, the people of Telangana, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi urged the people to visit this majestic Temple complex and get a first-hand experience of its grandness."

The Rudreswara temple was constructed in 1213 AD during the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by Recharla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva. The presiding deity here is Ramalingeswara Swamy. It is also known as the Ramappa temple, after the sculptor who

executed the work in the temple for 40 years.

The temple complexes of Kakatiyas have a distinct style, technology and decoration exhibiting the influence of the Kakatiyan sculptor. The Ramappa Temple is a manifestation of this and often stands as a testimonial to the Kakatiyan creative genius. The temple stands on a 6-foot high star-shaped platform with walls, pillars and ceilings adorned with intricate carvings that attest to the unique skill of the Kakatiyan sculptors. The sculptural art and decoration specific to the time and Kakatiyan Empire have an outstanding universal value. The distinct style of Kakatiyas for the gateways to temple complexes, unique only to this region confirm the highly evolved proportions of aesthetics in temple and town gateways in South India. ■

DIPLOMATIC POSTINGS

Shri Akhilesh Mishra (IFS: 1989), presently Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry, has been appointed as the **next Ambassador of India to Ireland.**

Shri Manpreet Vohra (IFS:1988), presently High Commissioner of India to Australia, has been concurrently accredited as the **next High**

Commissioner of India to the Republic of Nauru, with residence in Canberra.

Shri Binaya Srikanta Pradhan (IFS:2002), presently Deputy Chief of Mission in Embassy of India, Moscow has been appointed as the **next High Commissioner of India to the United Republic of Tanzania.**

Ms. Nagma Mohamed Mallick, (IFS: 1991), presently Additional Secretary has been appointed as the **next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Poland.**

Shri B. Nagabhushana Reddy (IFS: 1993), Grade-II of Indian Foreign Service, has been appointed as the **next High Commissioner of India to Malaysia.** ■

Third BHUTAN-INDIA DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION TALKS FOR THE 12TH FIVE YEAR PLAN



The Third Bhutan-India Development Secretary (Economic Relations), implemented outside the 12th FYP. Cooperation Talks for the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) was held virtually on Monday, 28th June 2021. The Bhutanese delegation was led by Mr. Kinga Singye, Foreign Secretary, and included senior officials from Ministries of Finance, Works & Human Settlement, Education, Labor, Health, Information and Communications, Home and Culture Affairs, Foreign Ministry, and Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat, and the Royal Bhutanese Embassy, Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by H.E. Shri Rahul Chhabra, Joint Secretary (North) and External Affairs, Government of India. The Bhutanese side expressed appreciation to the people and the Government of India for their unstinted support and cooperation extended to Bhutan during the difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the Talks, the two sides reviewed the progress of the projects supported by Gol under the 12th FYP and approved some new projects and reprioritization of some others whose implementations have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting also discussed progress of important projects that are being reviewed. The two sides agreed to hold the next Development Cooperation Talks in Thimphu at a mutually convenient date. The Talks were held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere in keeping with the excellent bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

BHUTAN PARTICIPATED IN THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Bhutan participated in the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), which took place from 6-15 July 2021. The participation is in keeping with its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Bhutanese delegation was led by the Hon'ble Foreign Minister and accompanied by officials from several agencies of the Royal Government. The Hon'ble Foreign Minister also participated in two side events entitled

“What works and What Doesn't: Reversing Poverty and Inequality in the Midst of a Global Pandemic” on 6 July 2021 and “Restoring the conditions for SDG progress in African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries” on 8 July 2021.

Bhutan will present its Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the HLPF for the second time this year. The delegation shared an update on progress made in implementation of

the SDGs, remaining issues and challenges especially considering the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and share the next steps in implementing the SDGs. Bhutan will be among the 44 countries to present the VNR this year.

The HLPF provides a platform for review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The forum is held annually under the auspices of ECOSOC.



Ambassador Vetsop Namgyel welcomed members of the Bhutanese Olympic Team at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi on their return from Tokyo. He congratulated the team members and the coaches for their hard work and representing Bhutan well at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Bhutan took part in Archery, Shooting, Judo and Swimming.

DAYS TO REMEMBER

in September, 2021

- | | |
|---|---|
| September 01 : Uzbekistan : Independence Day | September 09 : Tajikistan : National Day |
| September 02 : Vietnam : National Day | September 14 : Hindi Divas |
| September 04 : Canonisation Ceremony of Mother Teresa in Vatican City | September 15 : International Day of Democracy |
| September 05 : Teachers Day | September 16 : Mexico : Independence Day |
| September 07 : Amavasya ● | September 20 : Purnima ● |
| September 08 : International : Literacy Day | September 23 : Saudi Arabia : National Day |
| | September 27 : World Tourism Day ■ |

DIASPORA RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTRE ACTIVITIES MEETINGS FOR JOINT PARTNERSHIP

1. Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies, Madhya Pradesh

Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC), Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) had a meeting with Vice Chancellor Dr Neerja Gupta of Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies on 2 August, 2021 at 11 am via Google meet. Vice Chancellor and Dr Vijay Dubey, OCD Academics attended from Sanchi University. Amb. Anup Mudgal, Mr Narayan Kumar, Mr Gopal Arora and Mr Amit Gupta joined from ARSP.

Vice chancellor was delighted with this collaboration. She said that the practical knowledge of DRRC when merged with academic knowledge of Sanchi University, it would pave path for great research. Amb Mudgal said that one of the main aims of DRRC is to promote diaspora research as diaspora issues need to be integrated with the mainstream disciplines. DRRC would provide the road map and academicians can provide the

outcomes. Amb Mudgal also announced that DRRC will publish the work of researchers and students, provide them the honorarium and would also give the freedom to authors to retain the copyrights.

VC also suggested giving some name from ARSP as guides so that students can get directly attached to them and they can mentor them.

She also proposes to collaborate for an international conference, during which this collaboration on diaspora studies project will be announced. It will be an important initiative towards enrichment of diaspora studies. As a follow up draft MoU's will be exchanged for consideration.

2. Mahatma Gandhi Central University of Bihar, Motihari, Bihar

Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC), Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) had a meeting with Vice Chancellor, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Sharma of Mahatma

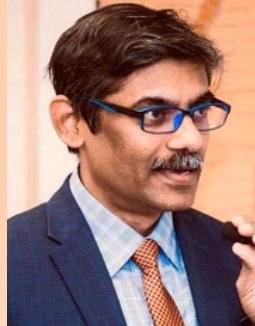
Gandhi Central University of Bihar on 3 August, 2021 at 3 pm via ZOOM app. Vice Chancellor was accompanied by Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. G Gopal Reddy, Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Tripathi, Dean Research and Prof. Rajeev Kumar, Chairperson, Diaspora Centre. Amb. Anup Mudgal, Mr Narayan Kumar and Mr Amit Gupta joined this meeting from ARSP.

Amb. Mudgal briefed that one of the main aims of DRRC is to support research on diaspora. He mentioned that DRRC would provide the practical knowledge to the professional researchers, for which DRRC want the structural support through institutions.

Vice chancellor was pleased with this collaboration. He said he will provide support at each and every level. Since they have recently opened a diaspora centre, it will be a great opportunity for the researchers to learn from the expertise of ARSP members and their partners. He said they are ready to sign the MoU and will send the draft soon. ■

INDIAN High Commissioner to Fiji holds VIRTUAL TALKS with DIASPORA

The High Commissioner of India to Fiji, Palaniswamy Karthigeyan held a Virtual Interaction with the Indian Diaspora in Fiji on 12 August, 2021.



The High Commissioner in his address highlighted the important role of the Indian diaspora in fostering a close and strong bilateral relationship between India and Fiji. He reiterated the commitment of the Government of India and the High Commission of India in Suva to engage with the diaspora closely and assured to

Cultural Centre in Suva.

He also encouraged the Representatives of the diaspora community to share their suggestions

to deliver the best possible services to the members of the diaspora by the Mission and Swami Vivekananda Commission for assistance in areas like promotion of Hindi, Sanskrit, bringing language experts and cultural performers from India to train the local population in the arts and heritage of the diaspora. ■

INDIAN DIASPORA 'CONCERNED' OVER SAFETY OF HINDUS, SIKHS AS TALIBAN INCH CLOSER TO KABUL

As the Taliban fighters are at the threshold of Kabul putting Afghanistan on the knife-edge, safety of nearly 300 Hindus and Sikhs raises a serious concern for the Indian diaspora. At present, Hindus and Sikhs are based in Jalalabad and Kabul. Though they have been granted visa by the Indian missions, they do not have any means to fly out to their home country.

The Ministry of External Affairs is closely monitoring the developments in the war-torn country. The spokesperson of the Ministry of

External Affairs had declared that India will ensure safety of the Hindu and Sikh citizens of Afghanistan. The situation in Kabul is “extremely fluid and unpredictable,” said officials as Air India operated a commercial flight that evacuated 129 passengers on 15 August, 2021.

Civil society initiatives have also come forth with Vikramjit Sahney, International President of World Punjabi Organisation, volunteering to send chartered aircraft to Kabul to evacuate Hindu and Sikh citizens of

Afghanistan. Last week, the Taliban allegedly removed Nishan Sahib, a Sikh religious flag, from a gurdwara in eastern Afghanistan, but it was restored after widespread criticism. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, while warning that Afghanistan is spinning out of control, also said he was “deeply disturbed by early indications that the Taliban are imposing severe restrictions on human rights in the areas under their control, particularly targeting women and journalists.” ■

OBITUARY

It is sad to learn that one of the senior most members of Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP), Shri Ashok Malhotra passed away on 15th July, 2021. We at ARSP extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to his family, relatives and friends.

अफगानिस्तान को खूनखराबे से कैसे बचाया जा सकता है?

जैसे कि मुझे शंका थी, अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान निरंतर आगे बढ़ते जा रहे हैं। कल तक उन्होंने आठ प्रांतों की राजधानियों पर कब्जा कर लिया है। ये प्रांत भी कौन से हैं? ये वे नहीं हैं, जो पाकिस्तान से लगे हुए हैं। ये वे प्रांत हैं, जो ईरान, उजबेकिस्तान और ताजिकिस्तान के आस-पास हैं। इन प्रांतों में ज्यादातर ताजिक, उजबेक, शिया और गैर-पठान लोग रहे हैं। तालिबान मूलतः पठानों का संगठन है। पठानों का निवास पाकिस्तान के सीमावर्ती प्रांतों में ज्यादा है। वे अभी उन प्रांतों तक नहीं पहुंचे हैं लेकिन गैर-पठान समझे जानेवाले प्रांतों पर उनके कब्जे का मतलब क्या है?

इसका मतलब साफ है कि तालिबान की फौजी ताकत जबर्दस्त है। अफगान सरकार यदि उनका मुकाबला गैर-पठान इलाकों में नहीं कर सकती है तो पठान इलाकों में उन पर काबू कैसे करेगी? उत्तरी और पश्चिमी अफगानिस्तान के जिन शहरों पर तालिबान ने कब्जा किया है, उनमें अफगान फौजों ने उनका मुकाबला उनसे लड़कर नहीं किया है बल्कि या तो पीछे हटकर किया है या पड़ोसी देशों में भागकर किया है। रूस ने अफगान-सीमांत से 20 किमी दूर अपनी फौजें, मिसाइल और टैंक डटा रखे हैं लेकिन वे अभी तक बस ऊंच ही रहे हैं।

तालिबान जहां भी कब्जा कर रहे हैं, वहां वे अपनी पारंपरिक सख्तीयाँ लागू कर रहे हैं। महिलाओं को अकेले बाहर नहीं निकलने दे रहे हैं। दुकानों, बाजारों और शिक्षा-संस्थाओं को बंद कर दिया है। हजारों लोग एक शहर छोड़कर दूसरे शहरों और गांवों की तरफ भाग रहे हैं। यहां तक कि काबुल से, जो अभी सुरक्षित है, लाखों लोग विदेश पलायन के लिए उतावले हो रहे हैं। कई प्रमुख अफगान मित्र ऐसे हैं, जो हमेशा पाकिस्तान का विरोध करते रहे हैं। वे अन्य हजारों लोगों की तरह पासपोर्ट और वीजा के बिना ही पाकिस्तान जा सकते हैं लेकिन वे भारत या यूरोप जाने की गुहार लगा रहे हैं। विभिन्न राजदूतावासों पर वीजा के लिए अफगानों की भीड़ लगी हुई है।

लेकिन सभी दूतावास भी खाली होते जा रहे हैं। मजारे-शरीफ का हमारा दूतावास खाली हो चुका है। उसे स्थानीय अफगान कर्मचारियों के भरोसे छोड़ दिया गया है। मजारे-शरीफ अफगानिस्तान के बड़े



डॉ. वेदप्रताप वैदिक

शहरों में माना जाता है। भारत सरकार ने अपने 1500 नागरिकों को विशेष विमानों से भारत ले आने का इंतजाम किया है। उसे पता है कि तालिबान इन शहरों पर कब्जा करते ही सबसे पहले भारतीयों पर हमला बोलेंगे। वैसे भी निमरोज प्रांत की राजधानी जरंज पर तालिबान काबिज हो गए हैं। जरंज वही शहर है, जहां से लगभग 200 किमी की पक्की सड़क भारत ने दिलाराम तक बनाई थी ताकि जमीन से घिरे अफगानिस्तान को फारस की खाड़ी तक पहुंचने का रास्ता मिल जाए। पाकिस्तान पर उसकी निर्भरता का विकल्प उसे मिल जाए। भारत ने करोड़ों रुपये इस सड़क के लिए खर्च किए और अपने लोगों की कुर्बानियाँ भी कीं। कोई आश्चर्य नहीं कि पाकिस्तान परस्त तालिबान इस सड़क को ही खत्म करना चाहें।

इधर तालिबान गैर-पठान इलाकों पर आसानी से कब्जा करते जा रहे हैं तो उधर पठान-बहुल इलाकों पर कब्जा करना उनके लिए ज्यादा सरल होगा। ऐसा लगता है कि रूसी फौजों की वापसी के बाद नजीबुल्लाह सरकार दो-ढाई साल तक टिकी रही लेकिन अशरफ गनी की सरकार अगले दो-ढाई महीने भी टिक जाए तो गनीमत होगी, क्योंकि अफगान सेना के ज्यादातर फौजी पठान हैं। वे कंधार, लश्करगाह, काबुल, जलालाबाद आदि के पठान तालिबान के साथ खून-खराबा क्यों करना चाहेंगे? उनमें अपने-अपने कबीलों के प्रति

भक्तिभाव अडिग होता है। यह भाव काबुल में बैठे नेताओं और नौकरशाहों को भी अंदर से हिला दे रहा है। मेरे कई मित्र काबुल से फोन पर पूछ रहे हैं कि वे भारत आ जाएं क्या?

यदि कुछ अफगान लोग आना चाहें तो भारत सरकार को उन्हें अनुमति देनी ही होगी, चाहे सीएनएन कानून के मुताबिक वे उसके पात्र न हों। वे लोग प्राणपण से भारत का सदा समर्थन करते रहे हैं। वैसे सुरक्षा परिषद के अध्यक्ष होने के नाते जो सुनहरा अवसर भारत के हाथ लगा था, वह भारत ने खो दिया। भारत कोशिश करता तो सुरक्षा परिषद एक शांति सेना काबुल भेजकर तालिबान के होश ठंडे कर सकती थी और साल भर के अंदर अफगानिस्तान में निष्पक्ष चुनाव करवा सकती थी। उसमें जो भी बहुमत से चुना जाता, चाहे तालिबान ही, वह ही राज कर सकता था।

लेकिन सुरक्षा परिषद में जो भी भाषण हुए और बाहर भी महाशक्तियों के जो बयान आ रहे हैं, वे शुद्ध) लीपा-पोती के अलावा कुछ नहीं हैं। वे तालिबान को यह कहकर डरा रहे हैं कि तुम डंडे के जोर से काबुल पर काबिज हो गए तो हम तुम्हें मान्यता नहीं देंगे। तालिबान को इस मान्यता की क्या परवाह है? 20-22 साल पहले भी उसने काबुल पर राज किया था और उसे सिर्फ पाकिस्तान, सउदी अरब और यूएई की मान्यता थी। अब तो अमेरिका, रूस, चीन, तुर्की, ईरान आदि कई देश सीधे उसके साथ संपर्क में हैं। आशा की अब एक ही किरण है। वह है, कतर की राजधानी दोहा में आज से फिर काबुल सरकार और तालिबान के बीच बातचीत शुरू हुई है।

अमेरिका के बाइडन-प्रशासन ने वादा किया था कि अपनी फौजी वापसी के बावजूद वह काबुल सरकार की पूरी मदद करेगा लेकिन अब उसके प्रवक्ता ने अपने हाथ ऊंचे कर दिए हैं। अब भी यदि सुरक्षा परिषद के पांचों स्थायी सदस्य तथा भारत और पाकिस्तान मिलकर शांति की कोई पहल करें और उस पहल के पीछे सैन्य-बल भी हो तो अभी भी अफगानिस्तान को रक्त-स्नान से बचाया जा सकता है।

(लेखक, अफगान मामलों के विशेषज्ञ हैं)
(दैनिक भास्कर (12 अगस्त) से साभार)

खेल की दुनिया का नया शिताश : नीरज चौपड़ा



नीरज का अर्थ होता है—कमल का फूल। कहते हैं 'जैसा नाम, वैसा काम'। बहुधा यह चरितार्थ भी होता है। आज सुबेदार नीरज चौपड़ा ने अपने नाम के अनुरूप धैर्य एवं संयम के साथ ओलम्पिक में स्वर्ण पदक जीत कर भारत को गौरवान्वित किया है। भारत का राष्ट्रीय पुष्प 'कमल' को भारत की पौराणिक गाथाओं में विशेष स्थान प्राप्त है। पुराणों में ब्रह्मा को विष्णु की नाभि से निकले हुए कमल से उत्पन्न बताया गया है और लक्ष्मी को पद्मा, कमला और कमलासना कहा गया है। आज नीरज ने इस नाम को पूरी दुनिया में अपने कर्म बल के साथ स्थापित किया है।

तोक्यो ओलम्पिक में भारत ने आजादी के अमृत महोत्सव वर्ष में महान धावक मिल्खा सिंह के सपने को भी पूरा किया। उन्होंने अपने पदक को मिल्खा सिंह को समर्पित किया। तोक्यो में लंबे समय के बाद इतिहास रचा गया। जो सुनहरे भविष्य का सूचक बनेगा। युवा एथलीट नीरज ने एक फौजी के रूप में देश को सम्मानित किया। नीरज चौपड़ा ने अपने पहले ही ओलंपिक में स्वर्ण पदक जीतकर इतिहास रचा है। फाइनल में नीरज ने 87.58 मीटर का थ्रो किया। ध्यान रहें कि भाला फेंक में पूर्व विश्व विजेता जर्मनी के जोहानेस वेटर ने नीरज को ओलंपिक से पहले चुनौती दी थी। वेटर ने कहा था कि नीरज अच्छे हैं, फिनलैंड में उनका भाला 86 मीटर की दूरी तय कर सका, लेकिन ओलंपिक में वे मुझे पीछे नहीं छोड़ पाएंगे। पर नीरज ने सिर्फ उन्हें पीछे ही नहीं छोड़ा, बल्कि स्वर्ण पदक भी अपने नाम किया। जर्मन खिलाड़ी तो खेल के 3 चरणों के बाद भी

नीरज ने पहले थ्रो में 87.03 मीटर दूर भाला फेंका। वे इस थ्रो के बाद ही विश्वास से भरे दिख रहे थे। नीरज पहले थ्रो के बाद ही समझ गए थे कि इस थ्रो पर कोई न कोई पदक जरूर आएगा। हालांकि इसके बाद भी नीरज ने कोशिश नहीं छोड़ी और दूसरे थ्रो में और बेहतर प्रदर्शन किया। उन्होंने दूसरे थ्रो में 87.58 मीटर दूर भाला फेंका। नीरज के थ्रो से ही इवेंट समाप्त हुआ। छठे राउंड में नीरज ने 84 मीटर दूर भाला फेंका।

यह इस प्रतियोगिता का अंतिम थ्रो रहा। इसी के साथ नीरज ने अपना नाम स्वर्णिम अक्षरों में लिखवा लिया। 2016 में भारतीय सेना से जुड़े नीरज ने आज एक सैनिक की तरह भारत का सिर गर्व से ऊंचा कर दिया है। नीरज एथलेटिक्स में ऐसा करने वाले पहले भारतीय हैं। नीरज ने ओलंपिक खेलों में 13 साल बाद भारत को किसी प्रतियोगिता में स्वर्ण पदक दिलाया।

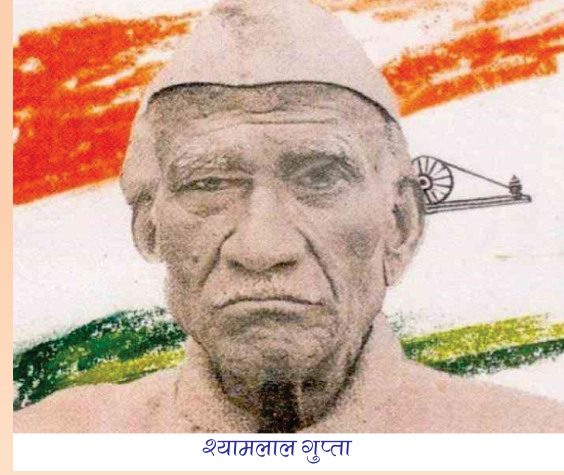
नीरज की सफलता भी संघर्षमयी है। सफलता संघर्ष से ही मिलती है। 11 वर्ष की आयु में इनका वजन 80 किलो था, जिस हाथ से भाला फेंकते हैं वह एक बार टूट चूका है। फिर भी चोट से उबरने के बाद देश को पहले राष्ट्रमंडल, एशियाई खेलों में स्वर्ण दिलाया और अब मात्र 23 साल की उम्र में ओलंपिक स्वर्ण। इनमें योद्धा, लड़ाकू प्रेरक गाथा, सौम्य, सुंदर, शालीन, मजबूत कद—काठी सभी कुछ हैं असली हीरो की माफिक। हमारा देश कभी

सबसे नीचे से योद्धाओं का देश था। कुश्ती, तीरंदाज, तीसरे स्थान पर तलवारबाज, भाले फेंकने वाले, हर ओर पाए जाते रहे। लेकिन विकृत शिक्षा प्रणाली ने सब कुछ खेल से बाहर हो गए। तहस-नहस कर दिया। हमारे खिलाड़ी आज विदेशों में प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त कर ये कलाएं सीख रहे हैं। वास्तव में ये सब हमारी प्राथमिकताओं के गलत चयन का उदाहरण है। अब वक्त आ गया है नीरज को हीरो बनाने का। हमारे देश को नीरज जैसे युवाओं की जरूरत है। हमारे—आपके बच्चे भी ऐसा कर सकते हैं। खेल को गंभीरता से लेने की आवश्यकता है। बच्चों की क्षमता पहचान कर उन्हें उचित खेल हेतु प्रशिक्षण देना हमारी जरूरत है। कल प्रधानमंत्री जी ने भी नीरज को भारत में और लोगों को अपनी तरह तैयार करने का अनुरोध किया। उन्होंने कहा कि आप सेना में हैं ऐसा कर सकते हैं। वास्तव में सेना एक कैरियर से अधिक आपको इंसान बनाता है।

हमें यह समझना होगा कि रोटी कमाना या मकान—गाड़ी खरीदना ही जिंदगी का एकमात्र उद्देश्य नहीं है। देश के लिए मान-सम्मान कमाना भी बड़ी कमाई होती है, आज के दौर में खेलों में सफलता सिर्फ आपका नहीं, बल्कि पूरे देश का नाम रौशन करती है। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण स्वस्थ बनाती है। नौकरी, व्यापार का अलग महत्व है, जीने के लिए चाहिए। पर इसके पीछे अंधी दौड़ में बच्चों की नैसर्गिक प्रतिभा दब-सी जाती है। इसी का परिणाम है कि आज हम एक-एक पदक के लिए तरस जाते हैं। अब हमें असली हीरो को पहचानना सीखना होगा, ताकि देश भी जाने की विजेता कैसे होते हैं। भारत ने एथलेटिक्स में पहला स्वर्ण जीता है। नीरज ने ओलंपिक के एथलेटिक्स प्रतियोगिता में 121 साल के बाद यह पदक जीता है। भारत का यह टोक्यो ओलंपिक में आखिरी प्रतियोगिता था और नीरज ने इसका स्वर्णिम अंत किया। नीरज ने धैर्य एवं संयम के साथ देश के 1 अरब 35 करोड़ भारतीयों के सपने को जमीन पर उतार दिया। नीरज ने देश की परंपरा एवं संस्कृति के खेल 'भाला फेंक' में स्वर्ण पदक जीतकर जाने-अनजाने यह भी संकेत दे दिया कि यदि देश को ओलंपिक खेलों में सिरमौर बनना है तो हमें युवाओं को उन खेलों से ज्यादा जोड़ना होगा, जो भारतीय संस्कृति के प्रतीक हैं।

भारतीय स्वाधीनता के अमृत महोत्सव वर्ष के अवसर पर विशेष

झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा



श्यामलाल गुप्ता

विजयी विश्व तिरंगा प्यारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।
सदा शक्ति बरसाने वाला,
प्रेम सुधा सरसाने वाला
वीरों को हरषानेवाला
मातृभूमि का तन-मन सारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।
स्वतंत्रता के भीषण रण में,
लखकर जोश बढ़े क्षण-क्षण में,
काँपे काँपे शत्रु देखकर मन में,
मिट जावे भय संकट सारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।
इस झंडे के नीचे निर्भय,
हो स्वराज जनता का निश्चय,
बोलो भारत माता की जय,
स्वतंत्रता ही ध्येय हमारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।
आओ प्यारे वीरों आओ,
देश-जाति पर बलि-बलि जाओ,
एक साथ सब मिलकर गाओ,
प्यारा भारत देश हमारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।
इसकी शान न जाने पावे,
चाहे जान भले ही जावे,
विश्व-विजय करके दिखलावे,
तब होवे प्रण-पूर्ण हमारा,
झंडा ऊँचा रहे हमारा।

श्यामलाल गुप्ता

9 सितंबर 1896 को कानपुर के नर्वल गांव में विश्वेश्वर प्रसाद और कौशल्या देवी के पुत्र के रूप में पैदा हुए श्यामलाल गुप्ता ने पांचवी कक्षा में पढ़ने के दौरान पहली कविता लिखी थी। 15 साल की

उम्र में श्यामलाल की लेखनी प्रखर होने लगी थी, लेकिन पिता अपने बेटे को बड़ा आदमी बनाना चाहते थे। ऐसे में उन्होंने श्यामलाल की रचनाओं को कुएं में फेंक दिया था। बावजूद श्यामलाल साहित्य साधना में जुटे रहे। बात है 3/4 मार्च 1924 की। एक साल पहले 1923 में फतेहपुर जिला कांग्रेस के अधिवेशन में आधुनिक तिरंगे का स्वरूप तय हो चुका था, लेकिन भुजाओं को फडकाने वाले एक प्रेरक गीत की जरूरत थी। बात श्यामलाल गुप्ता तक पहुंची तो उन्होंने कानपुर के फूलबाग अधिवेशन से डेढ़ महीने पहले एक रात जागकर झंडा गीत को रच दिया। पांच छंदों में लिखे इस गीत के पहले और आखिरी छंद को बेहद लोकप्रियता मिली। जालियावाला बाग नरसंहार स्मृति में पहली बार इस गीत को सामूहिक रूप से 13 अप्रैल 1924 को कानपुर के फूलबाग मैदान में गुनगुना गया था। इस सभा में जवाहर लाल नेहरू भी मौजूद थे। गुलामी के सख्त खिलाफ थे, इसलिए छोड़ी सरकारी नौकरियां श्यामलाल गुप्ता को पार्षद जी के उपनाम से भी जाना-पहचाना जाता था। क्रांतिकारी पार्षद जी ने पहली नौकरी जिला परिषद के अध्यापक के रूप में शुरू की, लेकिन जब तीन साल का अनुबंध लिखने का नंबर आया तो गुलामी से इंकार करते हुए उन्होंने नौकरी को त्याग दिया। इसके बाद नगर निगम के स्कूल में अध्यापक पद पर नियुक्त हुए, लेकिन कुछ समय बाद यहां भी अनुबंध की बात आई तो दुबारा नौकरी को तुकरा दिया। इसके बाद श्यामलाल गुप्ता ने आजादी के लिए खुद को समर्पित कर दिया। पत्रकारिता के

पुरोध गणेशशंकर विद्यार्थी और साहित्यकार प्रताप नारायण मिश्र के सान्निध्य में आने पर श्यामलाल जी ने जनसेवा शुरू करते हुए खुद को कर्मठ स्वतंत्रता संग्राम सेनानी के रूप में स्थापित कर लिया।

कानपुर की जिला कांग्रेस के बैनर तले क्रांतिकारी गतिविधियों में सक्रिय रहने के कारण अंग्रेज हुकूमत ने क्रांतिकारी श्यामलाल को 'नमक आंदोलन' तथा 'भारत छोड़ो आंदोलन' के दौरान जेल भेज दिया। असहयोग आंदोलन में सक्रिय भूमिका के कारण उन्हें गिरफ्तार करने के बाद आगरा जेल भेज दिया गया था। कुल आठ मर्तबा गिरफ्तारी के कारण श्यामलाल गुप्ता की जिंदगी के छह साल जेल में गुजरे। आजादी की लड़ाई के दौरान श्यामलाल ने संकल्प लिया था कि देश की गुलामी खत्म नहीं होने तक नंगे पांव ही रहेंगे। आजादी के बाद वर्ष 1952 में वह ऐतिहासिक क्षण आया, जब पार्षद ने लालकिले की प्राचीर से अपना प्रसिद्ध 'झंडा गीत' गया। 1973 में 'पद्म श्री' पुरस्कार लेनेके लिए श्यामलाल गुप्ता को दिल्ली बुलाया गया तो उधार की धोती पहनकर मंच पर पहुंचे थे। ईमानदारी की मिसाल श्यामलाल की इस स्थिति को देखकर तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री इंदिरा गांधी भावुक हो गई थीं। सरकार ने मदद करनी चाही, लेकिन श्यामलाल ने स्वीकार करने से इंकार कर दिया। 10 अगस्त 1977 की रात को 81 वर्षकी अवस्था में कानपुर के जनरलगंज मोहल्ले में श्यामलाल गुप्ता दुनिया को अलविदा कह गए।