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DEMystifying India's FOREIGN Policy

(Speech delivered by Amb. VIRENDRA GUPTA AT MIT, WORLD PEACE UNIVERSITY, JUNE, 2022)

Today the world is beset with so much of conflict and religious tension. Different countries seem to be in mindless pursuit of their narrow self-interest. People are becoming increasingly intolerant. In this situation, to talk of peace is quite a remarkable thing. A peaceful environment is required for the overall welfare and development of people around the world.

How can we bring peace into this world? There are certain attributes of our values, India's culture which I think can lead the way. India cannot solve all the problems India alone cannot bring in peace, but I think India certainly is in a position to show the way and the good thing is that lot of people are already talking about it. For instance, our principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' and the reason why I refer to it is that I am involved with an NGO Antar-Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad, whose motto is to promote cordiality and friendship in the world in the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (world is one family). It does not detract us from the pursuit of national interest. I believe that it is important for anyone, an individual or a family or by natural extension a nation to pursue its self-interest. It is the survival instinct of self-preservation. But the difference arises in how you define that self-interest. Do you look at it in a very narrow short term perspective? I believe that whenever you begin to apply longer term perspective to issues of concern, you would end up

doing the right thing for the larger community.

Take for instance, how USA funded and provided arms to the jihadi elements in Afghanistan thereby creating the Islamic radical movement there. The short term objective was to drive out the Soviet Union from Afghanistan because USA in those days and even now to a very large extent, looked at the world from this narrow and mono-directional perspective. This worked and the Americans thought that they had emerged the winner, until September, 2001 when the world came crashing down for them.

I went to Trinidad in August 2001 and couple of weeks later, I went to see the American Ambassador. I asked him, about an Islamic radical organization Jamaat al-Muslimeen which was quite active there and indulging in kidnappings, extortions and other activities impacting on the welfare of PIO community. Indian origin people there constituted roughly half the country's population. I asked the US Ambassador about what he thought about the activities of the Muslimeen and I was somewhat surprised when he told me point blank that US was not bothered about the Muslimeen because they had an understanding that Muslimeen would not act detrimental to their interests in any way. That was, in my opinion, a very short term understanding of what is your interest, since only ten days later Al Qaeda, which had

networking with radical organizations the world over, blew up the twin towers in New York. Short-term vision can sometime go terribly wrong.



Amb. Virendra Gupta
President - ARSP

Foreign policy must be understood in very simple terms because it relates to our commonsense and the easiest way to figure out how the nations would behave is to visualize how individuals would react in similar situation full of emotions and sensitivities.

Foreign policy broadly depends on two very important factors. First is the security factor - the threat perception of a country. If you look at an individual, he is also most concerned about his safety. A nation is similarly concerned about its territorial integrity. Today threats have also emerged from the non-State actors - the international terrorism being the most prominent one.

There are other non-traditional security issues, such as food security. Luckily, we do not have any food shortages now but there was a time when this factor was very important element in the making of our foreign policy since we did not have enough food to feed our people.

In today's context, energy is also important because if you do not have

requisite supplies, your development comes to a standstill. Look at what is happening in Sri Lanka. They don't have sufficient oil supplies. Supply of critical commodities, fertilizers is also extremely important.

An important factor is the issue of economic development. As such you have to look at where the investment is coming from, where the technology transfers can come from, which are our markets and where the remittances can come from. All these factors have to be taken into account for determining how you must approach relationship with any given country. Of course, one cannot treat all countries equally. We are living in a real world. Certain Western countries said with reference to Ukraine that

every country must have right to choose who it wants to be with and that this right must belong to everybody. But it does not happen like that in the real world. What is your right is limited by how others, particularly powerful countries, feel about it.

Our first Prime Minister, Pt. Nehru said once that India was friends with all the countries. It is actually somewhat unrealistic to expect that you can be friends with everybody. You can have relationships, which is different from being friends. Today Modi's government has changed that narrative completely.

During the 19th and early 20th century, the world was divided in rigid camps, and there was a tight balance of Power. Even during the Cold War there were two camps. Powerful countries believed that one had to be either with them or not with them - 'If you are not with me, you are against me'. That paradigm has now changed completely. You take decisions depending on what is the requirement with respect to any given country : how much do we need and how much that country needs us ; do we need essential commodities from it ; are our workers going there and sending remittance ; do we get technology from that country ; is that country able to supply military hardware or critical spare-parts to us, and so on end so forth.

All these factors have to be weighed in. And thereafter we try to optimize our relationship with diverse group of countries without bothering about what is the relationship between each one of them. We are only concerned with what is our relationship with each country, keeping in mind that the world today is multi-polar.

Before we get into specifics, another very important thing to understand while calibrating our foreign policy is to have an accurate assessment of our own capacity. A very common mistake which can impact negatively on our interests is the over-reach.

In Afghanistan, India spent nearly

three billion dollars. This is a lot of money and I am not sure whether there were commensurate benefits to us from that huge an expenditure. We have considerable problems of our own and I don't think that we can afford to fritter away such vast sums of money. However one good activity that we undertook under the Aid to Afghanistan Programme, was to educate Afghan students - two thousand students were given scholarship every year and that programme was coordinated by ICCR. This programme was very useful for Afghanistan.

Last year when Taliban took over in Afghanistan, in the midst of chaos and confusion there were suggestions in our media that India must mediate and help in resolving the situation. Anybody who suggests that shows basic lack of understanding of history, our capacity and indeed the current geo-political dynamics. America, the most powerful country in the world spent two trillion dollars and look at what has come out of that money. If Americans could not do it, how can you expect India to do it.

In the Ukraine crisis, as you are aware, we have maintained a neutral stance. Americans pressurized us in condemning Russia but we did not do so because of our long standing friendship with Russia and dependence on it for our military hardware and spare part supplies. People felt that India was in a good position for taking an initiative to resolve Ukraine issues given Modi's stature as one of the most respected world leaders. Well, Modi has indeed played his part very well. He has steered India's foreign policy in the last eight years in the most deft manner raising India's profile and stature. But Ukraine which has become the proxy battlefield for big powers is clearly beyond India's capacity.

Let us look at our relations with USA. At people-to- people level we have always had good relationship but at government level, this relationship was full of problems. We exploded

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the Nuclear bomb in 1998 and there was a strong reaction but soon enough within a period of two years - President Clinton came to India. Why did this happen? Indeed, USA began to realize emerging convergence of interest with India because of increasing threat from China. Since 2000 there has been a steady improvement in our relationship irrespective of which government came to power in either of the countries. There have been minor hiccups here and there, but if you look at the overall graph in the last two decades there is an undeniable upward movement.

Obviously, the role of Indian diaspora, which is four million strong in America and very influential and resourceful, is extremely important in this regard. But, it is the common threat from China (elephant in the room) which has brought America and India together. China has been increasingly assertive and willing to flex its muscles for intimidating its neighbours. USA began with formalising India's nuclear status. Civil Nuclear Corporation Agreement was offered. Initially the draft that was given to us was very poor, wanting in so many respects. It was strengthened because we understood that America needed us as much as we needed America.

A whole spectrum of policy framework has been laid out for military and defence cooperation. USA is now willing to make available sensitive technology and equipment to India at par with its military allies. There is exchange of strategic and sensitive information in diverse areas making US and India close strategic partners. In fact, American leaders have often offered to India as a natural strategic ally although we are not part of any formal military alliance. We were somewhat ambivalent with regard to USA initially. Our traditional friendship with Soviet Union, America's proximity with China and military ties with Pakistan - all these factors provided us valid reasons for reservation. In 1971 War, for instance, Americans even threatened to send the Seventh Fleet to the Bay

of Bengal to checkmate us. Actually, we never had very happy experience with America military, but our increasing threat perception from China coupled with repeated border incursion by the Chinese troops has impelled us to strengthen our ties with USA.

As far as China is concerned, we ignored the early warning signs so aptly flagged by Sardar Patel himself in a memo to Pt. Nehru, but latter's obsessive concern to strengthen friendship with China proved to be our undoing. In 1962, China attacked us and for over one and a half decade, we were sulking and did not want to do anything with them. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the first high level dignitary who went to China in 1979. Thereafter, Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister visited China. There was clearly a bi-partisan support in India to improve relations with China. I think by then a determination had been made by us that China was getting stronger and that there was no way for us to take back our territory from China through force. China was our neighbour and there could be benefits from making peace with China. There could be dividend in terms of investment and trade with China. We began to seriously develop relationship with China and even promoted China in the world fora. We were truly committed to the idea of simultaneous rise of China and India.

However, China never showed any warmth or reciprocity towards us. While we accepted China's rise and emergence as a big power, China did not give us even an inch in return. Take for instance, the issue of our permanent membership in the UN Security Council which is a high priority concern for our foreign policy because we do want to play a legitimate and due role in the international affairs. One country which has continued to actively frustrate our aspirations is China. I believe that China would never let India get this membership (not in the next 10-15 years, at least) and we would need to look at other fora, such as G-20 to exercise our legitimate

role and occupy the high table in the world affairs.

We also have a huge trade deficit with China. We periodically raise this issue with China but it has shown no inclination to redress the situation. China is one of our largest trading partners, but ironically that is hardly of any benefit to us. Influx of cheap Chinese goods has actually forced emaciation of our manufacturing sector and I have often argued in various fora that we should put restrictions on trade with China.

In the last 3-4 years, there have been border incursions by China and it has continued to adopt an aggressive posture forcing us to make a determination that our wishful thinking of having China as a friend would not work and that we had no option but to accept China as an adversary. In public domain our leaders may continue to say nice things about China and we might even continue to cooperate with them in several multilateral and plurilateral fora, but that is entirely different. Because of that assessment, we need countries that can offset the threat from China.

Pakistan is another country which has been of great obsessive concern to India. Happily, we are spending far less time and energy on it presently. I think our government has rightly determined that we would not be making much headway with Pakistan. We have in a way written off Pakistan. Because of Pakistan's negative approach, SAARC has also failed to take off and we have learnt to work with the rest of our neighbours in other regional fora such as BIMSTEC. Pakistan will continue to use terrorism as an instrument of state policy, as it has been doing as far. Every few years, it will sponsor terrorist activities. The military has excessive influence in Pakistan politics and it continues to spread mis-information and raise Kashmir bogey to keep itself in the driving seat.

The easiest way to comprehend our relations with neighbouring countries is to visualise a family where there is

an elder brother who is quite resourceful. He has got three-four younger siblings. Now one day one of the younger brothers tells the older brother that he had thought of a good scheme and he wanted to do business and for which he would need Rupees ten lakhs. His elder brother cannot provide the required money and he tells his younger brother that ten lakhs was a lot of money; as such he should only start a small business for which he would give him one lakh. Now, what will be his reaction? The younger brother would feel that elder brother was not letting him grow and become resourceful.

Now, let us look at Nepal as a case in point. Nepal went through long history of civil war and it required enormous resources for national reconstruction and economic redevelopment. Let us say, Rs. 50,000 crores would be required. Where would all those funds Rs. 50,000 cr. come from? India can, at best, provide, say Rs.10,000 cr., counting both private sector investments and government level grants. Balance funds would have to come from other sources unless we were to actively pressurize Nepal to make do with lesser resources.

We must understand that Nepal is a sovereign country and it has a legitimate right to decide its own destiny and the desired course of action for its economic development. If Nepal wants to take money from China that should not be a red rag for us. If Nepal wants to take money from European countries,

Scandinavian countries, that should also be equally acceptable to us.

If I were a Nepalese, I would resent being put in a dilemma to choose between India and China. I would say that I want to choose both India and China. Didn't we choose both America and Soviet Union during the cold war and that strategy helped our economic development? You would be surprised to hear that at a time when India was widely regarded as a Soviet ally, we were one of the largest recipients of American aid and that only happened because we maintained good relationship with both the super powers.

PM Modi has very wisely enunciated the policy of 'Neighbourhood First'. Surprisingly in the ten years preceding PM Modi's election, our PM had not found time to pay a bilateral visit to Kathmandu even once. That is not how you show respect or consideration to your neighbouring countries. May be, these countries are small; they have less resources but they also have pride and we should be extremely careful is not hurting their sensitivities

We have to first of all show them respect as equal States and give them a sense of comfort that we do not seek to dominate them or constrain their sovereign choices. Once we begin to do that, all problems would disappear. We have to understand that the relationship between elder sibling and the younger one is not an equal relationship and you cannot ask for reciprocity in the traditional sense.

In the short term, it might appear that we are only giving to the neighbours and that it does not serve India's interest. But if you begin to examine these issues in long term perspective then you will find that the economic prosperity in the neighbouring countries causes long-term security and other benefits for us. In Bangladesh today, there is a higher per capita income than India. All the government's efforts to check immigration from Bangladesh to India did not work in the past. However now that there is higher per capita income in Bangladesh nobody comes any longer from that country to India to seek employment. Hold of terrorist elements there would also weaken with increasing prosperity and development. Our border is so porous that we would not be secure unless the economic well being of our neighbours is safeguarded.

In overall terms, we are doing quite well. We have no pretensions of being a Big Power. We have huge challenges at home. We also have limitations and government is aware of that. Indeed, it has so far shown a very pragmatic approach to foreign policy. We have charted out an independent path for us, which secures our national interest in the broad long term perspective without being bound by any ideological restrictions. We are also aware of our responsibilities, such as with regard to climate change goals, and never fail to fulfill our obligations as a responsible country in the world.

Thank you. ■

DIPLOMATIC POSTINGS

Ms. Neeta Bhushan (IFS: 1994), presently Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, has been appointed as the **next High Commissioner of India to New Zealand**.

Shri Sanjay Kumar Verma (IFS: 1988), presently Ambassador of India to Japan, has been appointed as the **next High Commissioner of India to Canada**.

Shri Amit Kumar (IFS: 1995), presently Consul General, Consulate General of India, Chicago, has been appointed as the **next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea**.

Shri Nagesh Singh (IFS: 1995), presently Joint Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs, has been appointed as the **next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Thailand**. ■

DIASPORA AND HINDI HERITAGE

✍ **Shri V. Muraleedharan**

Hon'ble Minister of State of External Affairs

I would like to thank the Antar-Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad, who have taken this excellent initiative in collaboration with the Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Central Hindi Institute, Agra and Diaspora Research and Resource Centre to mark the celebration of Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas and World Hindi Day. ARSP has a long history of dealing with both the Diaspora issues and preservation and propagation of Indian heritage and Indian culture abroad, including the promotion and usage of Hindi.

Friends, it is a great coincident to celebrate of 9th January as Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas and 10th January as World Hindi Day every year. Both these celebrations draw their strength from our vast Indian Diaspora who with their 31 million numbers can be found in every continent and every nation. Our Diaspora is representative of what our society has taught us, whether in science or productive art, in technology or medicine, in enterprise or engineering, in spreading Indian values, traditions, habits of Indianness abroad. Members of the Diaspora have achieved great respect in terms of life and by doing so defined both India's capabilities and the inherent values. The success of Diaspora created a vast reservoir of goodwill for India; our Diaspora has occupied a life of values, identities, heritage and the very way of Indian life abroad and has maintained the physical and emotional links with India. It has facilitated the flow of resources, technology and best practices in a variety of ways and the Diaspora has helped improve global understanding of India and her aspirations.

Friends, the Government is deeply committed towards nurturing its relations with the Indian Diaspora living abroad which is also reflected by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji's regular interaction with them, whenever he travels abroad. We are

engaging the Indian Diaspora across the world through the celebrations of Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas, conferring of Bhartiya Samman Awards and many other programmes and schemes. We have special programmes for Girmitia countries, whereby we engage more intensely with the Diaspora through Know India Programme for Youth and Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana for middle aged and elderly; our Scholarship programme for Children, called the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora children provides opportunities to the Diasporic children to study in Indian universities and institutions through events like Bharat ko Jaaniye and the currently ongoing Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav. We seek our engagements with the young Diaspora children and their interest in India. The Ministry also encourages our Missions and Consulates and gives grants for organized cultural events to the Indian Diaspora.

Friends, today Indian culture has a wide and deep sense abroad, whether it is through the effort of ever increasing popularity of Indian festivals, Bollywood, performing arts or the association of philosophy, yoga tradition, medicine or languages these programmes have played an important role. But much of the credit for the promotion and propagation of languages, including Hindi and Indian culture abroad rightly goes to the efforts of the Indian nationals and today many of the Excellencies have expressed that.

Today, Hindi is the fourth most spoken language in globe after English, Spanish and Mandarin. Hindi is also the most spoken language and the official language of identification of India. Consulates around the world celebrating World Hindi Day in a befitting manner; this includes overseas training for promoting an awareness about Hindi, as it is done for the national language in their host countries and creating a passion for this language among the global audience. It is receiving global

acknowledgement and we know with the great efforts of the Government as well as our Diaspora, who have played the role of Ambassadors in their country.

Friends, the Government is making sincere efforts to promote Hindi and to fix it globally. I am happy to let you know that I have noted the suggestions made by many of the Excellencies and I can assure you that we will take up this in right earnest. International conferences on Hindi are held regularly, as now the Excellency the High Commissioner from Fiji mentioned about the World Hindi conference to be taken place in September 2022 in Fiji.

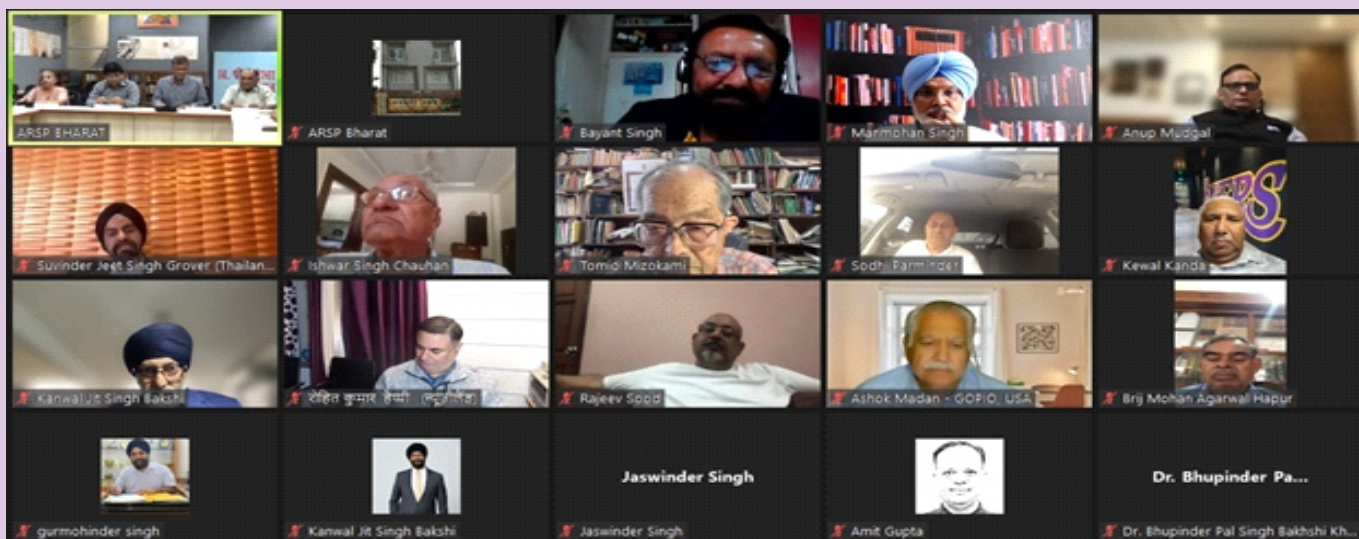
Friends, the International Conferences are held regularly. Efforts are being made for promotion of Hindi as one of the official languages of the United Nations. On several occasions, Indian leaders have delivered their statements in Hindi at the United Nations including the Prime Minister's Address at the United Nations General Assembly. We also have an Agreement with the United Nations Secretariat for increasing the volume and frequency of Hindi content produced by the United Nations to serve in Hindi in audiences across the world. I am happy to convey that the United Nations has launched the Hindi Social media account on Face book, Twitter and Instagram as well as the Hindi Website of United Nations News. In addition, the United Nations broadcasts its programme on the UN Radio Website in Hindi. This is a weekly news bulletin on Sound Cloud, publishes US Blog in Hindi and has provided a Hindi extension of service news module both for Android and IOS.

Friends to conclude, I once again appreciate efforts of DRRC, ARSP and the Central University of Gujarat and the Central Hindi Institute, Agra, for conducting this conference. Thank you. ■

Dialogue with Punjabi Diaspora: Session on Indo-Pacific Region

REPORT

Dr Ruchi Verma
Research Fellow DRRC-ARSP



Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC), Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP), New Delhi has started a 'Dialogue with Diaspora' series in which, important members of Indian diaspora from different countries and relevant Indian experts are invited to share their ideas and experiences for deepening their engagement with India and for networking with global PIOs.

Language is an important aspect of any culture. It should be preserved, promoted and propagated. Keeping this in view the dialogue with linguistic diaspora has been taken up. A session with Punjabi Diaspora in western region was organised on 12 February 2022 in collaboration with Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, University of Delhi. In continuation of this, another segment focussing on eastern zone was organised on 27 August 2022.

Dr Manmohan Singh, IPS & Writer chaired and **Dr. Jasvinder Kaur Bindra**, Assistant Professor, SGND Khalsa college coordinated this session. **Mr Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi**, Former Member of Parliament, New Zealand, **Mr. Parminder Sodhi**, Author & Writer, Japan, **Mr. Suvinder Jeet Singh Grover**, Director, Maharajah Enterprises Co. Ltd, Thailand, **Mr. Bayant Singh**, President, Lautoka Sikh Temple, & Community leader, Fiji, **Mr. Rajeev Sood**, CEO,

Innovative Gloves, Bangkok City, Thailand were the eminent panelists. **Dr. Gurmohinder Singh**, Principal, SGND Khalsa College has also graced the event with his presence.

Amb. Virendra Gupta, President, **Prof. Gopal Arora**, Secretary, and **Shri Narayan Kumar**, Hon. Director, represented the ARSP. **Amb Anup Mudgal**, former Chairperson of DRRC was also present along with the many fold attendees across the globe.

Highlight of the programme was **Prof. Tomio Mizokami** from Japan, who is an avid linguistic and a Padma Shree Awardee. He shared his experiences in Punjabi language and all were impressed by his skills.

Amb. Gupta in his opening remarks highlighted the intrinsic qualities of Punjabi diaspora. They are spread across the world. They are very industrious, compassionate and community serving people. They have truly embodied the motto "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" of Indian culture. Their sense of commitment to social service and towards local community is unparalleled. He mentioned that diaspora is not a monolithic entity. People are tends to come together as per their linguistic and regional interests. He emphasized that Indian diaspora has successfully kept these sub-cultural entities while keeping the oneness of Indian diaspora intact. So, these

language and regional affiliations should not be viewed from a negative perspective.

Amb Mudgal in his address briefly explained about the DRRC. He mentioned that Indian diaspora has always been an integral part of India's global image. Indian diaspora has shown both quantitative as well as qualitative growth. Today they have been looked upon as a very positive and constructive component of society. They carry with them the values of plurality and deals with diversity with great ease, which has been majorly appreciated all over the world. He highlighted that DRRC has been set up to carry the discourse with diaspora to more substantive areas and transform the way of engagement with diaspora. India's unity is a sum total of its diversity and this was the main reason behind DRRC's approach towards dialogue with sub national, regional and linguistic diaspora. There is a need to assimilate their perspectives into a larger vision and enable India to work towards it.

Prof. Arora in his welcome address highlighted the significance of dialogue since the ancient times. He quoted the texts from Vedas, Upanishads and Gurbani showing importance of dialogue. He mentioned that the focus on regional or linguistic diaspora should not be misconstrued as it is essential to

know the parts in order to understand the whole. Since every sub groups of Indian diaspora has their own needs, expectations and success stories it is required to study them individually to completely understand the whole entity i.e Indian diaspora. He also emphasized on the contribution of Punjabi diaspora all over the world in every fields and particularly during the freedom struggle.

Dr Gurmohinder Singh in his address mentioned about the migratory nature of Punjabis. They are very hard working and cooperative people. They aspire to go abroad for economic reasons but still they maintain their individual identity and even shared their language skills with them. Their contribution socio-economically, in literature, politics is immense.

Dr Jasvinder Kaur Bindra while coordinating the programme invokes some thought provoking aspects of Punjabi diaspora. She has touched upon several important elements related to them whether it is their contribution to society, literature, politics and economy. Keeping in view the country of residence and profession of the panellists she has tried to bring out their view points in a very effective manner.

All the panelists majorly discussed about the contribution of Punjabi diaspora everywhere in the world particularly in the countries of their residence.

Mr Bayant Singh from Fiji mentioned that Punjabi diaspora has completely integrated in the Fiji society. He mentioned that indigenous people of Fiji have the same cultural approach as Punjabi's. They both believe in peace and harmony. He praised the role of Indian High Commission in Fiji who is working proactively. He however shared a concern that in the Khalsa College in Fiji, there is a vacant position of language teacher. He urged the ARSP to raise this issue with the concerned authorities, which has been taken into consideration.

Mr Parminder Sodhi from Japan shared his views and experiences as a Punjabi diaspora in the island. He mentioned that there are no cases of discrimination faced by the other community in Japan. However, being

in an island, the native people have different perspectives. Though they don't discriminate yet they considered the diaspora people as outsiders. He also opined that there is distinction between different Indian subgroups in western countries but in Asian countries diaspora has completely assimilated. He also point out that Japanese are very fond of their language and language affinity is an important aspect of their culture. He urged that Indians should also preserve and propagate their languages.

Mr Suvinder Jeet Singh Grover from Phuket, Thailand shared his personal experiences. He mentioned that Punjabi diaspora lives in a very amicable way in Thailand and are respected and loved by the native people too. He also shared that as community service is the part of nature and culture of Indian diaspora, Punjabi diaspora community have helped the native Thailand people during the difficult times of covid. They have organised langars, provided free health services, education, and food to small villages.

Mr Rajeev Sood also from Thailand extended the same viewpoints of Mr Grover. He stated that Punjabi diaspora community contributions are immense and very significant. Punjabi 'kaum' is very enterprising, hardworking and cooperative community. Their contributions in Thailand are in every field whether it is business or economy. He mentioned that he himself is the highest taxpayer in Thailand. He mentioned that Thailand government and people are very supportive towards Punjabi diaspora.

Mr Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi from New Zealand shared his experiences being a Member of Parliament. He point out that Indians participation in politics is now rising. He mentioned that when in 2008 he became the Member of Parliament, he was the first one from the Indian diaspora community. He elaborated that Indians have influenced the New Zealand community immensely and Indians are present and contributing in every field.

Chair of the session, Mr Manmohan Singh gave his remarks towards the end. He praised the presentations of the panellists. He mentioned that

diaspora should be look beyond the perspective of emigration and migration. He briefed about the historicity and evolution of diaspora. He also stated about the origin of word 'girmitya' through 'girmit' meaning agreement. He illustrated that true mindset of any diaspora is reflected by the literature as it is mostly based on the real experiences, as each geographical region has its own history, culture and polity. He also pointed out that language and communication will be the key in global culture. He further emphasized that multiculturalism is essential and diaspora is the epicentre of it. He gave example of Creole language and chutney music which shows the true essence of multiculturalism and due to metamorphosis of culture diaspora will play a very important role in near future. In the end, he suggested to open a Diaspora University, as it is a very broad subject and need to be studied extensively.

Some good observations came during the question and answers. Dr Rakesh Pandey, Mr Avinash and Mr Shubash Gandhi made some thought provoking interventions. There was some concern raised about the illegal migration and abandoning of the aged parents in villages after migration. There was also a suggestion that Indian government should focus on the Indian diaspora in the Middle East Countries also. Suggestion to open a NRI bank was also given.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks presented by Shri Narayan Kumar, who acknowledged the contributions of Punjabi diaspora all over the world. They are playing an important role and have made contributions to every sphere of life. Their commitment to community services has been appreciated by India as well as their country of residence. They are in true sense ambassadors of Indian values and culture.

** The full recording of the event is available at the link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzfbU8NIXjA>

ROMA POLITICS AND INDIA

✉ Grattan Puxon,
General-Secretary,
World Romani Congress [1971-1981]

From that seminal moment at the now legendary 1971 Congress when the national flag had embossed upon it the red chakra a new dynamic entered Romani politics: the desire for a reconnection with India. However, in the half century since, whilst linguist, cultural and recently proven genetic ties bind Roma to northwest India, the political picture remains nuanced.

I am not qualified to give an overview of shifts in religious beliefs and adherences. Rather I prefer to stick to politics. A brief mention will be enough. Among the nominally Muslim of the former socialist-run Balkans, there has clearly been an Islamic revival; and everywhere Romani evangelicals are gaining converts. Yet there has long existed, here and there, the cult of Kali Sara, authoritatively traced to the Hindu Goddess Durga. Witness the annual May pilgrimage at Saintes Maries-de-la Mer in France and the Romani Union Kali Sara in Croatia, one can only stress that diversity and multiculturalism continue to characterize Roma communities across the global Diaspora.

A decade before the 1st World Romani Congress, Chaman Lal published *Gypsies: The Forgotten Children of India*. Holocaust survivor and scholar Jan Kochanovsky spent four years with the International Academy of Indian Culture researching Romani roots. But not much else happened to awaken the Indian public, let alone the political class, to the early diaspora and modern national stirrings.

A key player in the gradually unfolding process of that reconnection, as you will be aware, was the late and much

respected Weer Rajendra Rishi (lokhi phuv leske). In 1971 Mr. Rishi was an attache attached to the High Commission in London. He attended the Congress as a private person. Is it possible Rishi sought to participate in an official capacity? We shall never know. It has been misreported that the Indian Government, the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi underwrote the event. That's wishful thinking.

What I can tell you is that among the delegates, gathered from all parts of then divided Europe, the choice of the wheel had an electric appeal. What did the wheel mean? How many spokes should it have? Mr. Rishi was our guide and mentor in that historic decision.

Fifty years on, it's still not easy to assess the impact of the London Congress and what flowed from it. Suffice to say the Romani movement has grown exponentially. The flag has become the ubiquitous banner of national assertion, protest and, belatedly, a symbol of gadzikano recognition.

The question was, and is, what role will India play in the destiny of the Romani people?

After the Congress, at which I had been elected its first general-secretary, I moved to the one place where Romani political potency already counted; the township of Shuto Orizari in Skopje. Fajk Abdi had been elected to the Macedonian parliament from this constituency. The Congress-adopted flag, on his return from London, flew from every pole and lamppost.

Fajk had founded the Party for the full emancipation of Roma and confided his ambition to build a Continental-

wide party. Thus I had arrived, precariously, at an epicenter of the agitation by Yugoslav Roma for nationality recognition and rights.

From a base in this uniquely Romani-controlled municipality, Fajk was soon battling for a second term as Member of Parliament against house-to-house police raids and harassment of his supporters. Meanwhile, an ally of our cause had emerged in Belgrade, Alesh Bebler, war-time partisan commander and Deputy Foreign Minister, was circulating a radical memorandum. This urged the League of Communists to concede to mounting Roma demands for an upgrade in the constitutional status from ethnic group to nationality [narodnost]. Importantly, nationality status carried specific state-supported benefits in the areas of language, culture and media exposure.

In order to pressure the case, Bebler arranged a meeting with Ambassador P. N. Menon and the meeting had to have been facilitated by the well-established amity fostered between India and Yugoslavia through their common membership of the Non-Aligned bloc. Nonetheless, the gathering took on an almost conspiratorial air. Those of us from the Congress felt buoyant, flattered and delighted to be served Indian delicacies by Mrs. Malini Menon (daughter of Foreign Secretary K. P. S. Menon).

Soon after the Menons drove down to Skopje. On entering Suto Orizari they exclaimed that this town looked like that of India. But the atmosphere in Shutka was tense. Nobody from the municipal council appeared. Ambassador Menon waited in my

home, baffled. Eventually the visit was saved by young actors who put on an impromptu performance of the Pharlpe that was the latest production of theatre group. Fajk Abdi blamed the fiasco on local Macedonian hegemony.

I was suddenly ordered out of Yugoslavia. My wife suffered a miscarriage on the journey. The ban lasted for two years. Shortly after our return, Mr. Rishi came to spend a week in Shutka. On a hot June evening, he mounted a balcony to address a huge wedding crowd. The bijav fell silent. Dancing stops ! Faces turned wards. Ecstatic applause greeted his owning words, "Amaro rat thaj tumaro rat jekh si." Another three years lapsed before India's next major sortie into Romani politics. In 1977 the UN Sub-Committee on the Protection of Minorities opened its 30th session in Geneva. I hastened to Switzerland and sought out Former Minister of External Affairs of India Bali Ram Bhagat. Surprised and then won over - as much by words as my wife Sanije Ibrahim's features and manner - we talked till late night. A salient clause in the Resolution presented next morning to the Sub-Committee called for universal recognition of Roma's origins in India. It called for full rights in those countries hosting Romani populations. Before the vote, I rose to say Roma looked to the United Nations and to India for emancipation.

Voices from Eastern Europe, notably Romania, opposed its passage. A compromise saw the clause linking Roma to India was deleted. The Resolution then passed by a majority of one vote. Nevertheless, thanks to India, we had a resolution from a UN body which in effect affirmed the freedom of the Romani people to pursue civil and political rights as well as their own economic, social and

cultural development. All, theoretically, backed by international covenant.

It fell to the 2nd Congress, held at Geneva the next year and opened by Dr. Nagendra Singh, vice-president of the International Court of Justice, to look to the implementation of these collective rights. A message from Minister of State A. P. Sharma urged India to take a lead in improving the situation of Roma. Yul Brynner, at a closing press conference at the Palais des Nations claimed India fully supported the aims of the Congress. Mr. Rishi organized a First and then a Second International Roma Festival at Chandigarh. The second conference in 1983 was inaugurated by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Echoing Chaman Lal, the Prime Minister hailed the Roma as the children of India. Roma leaders, meanwhile, strove to uncouple from what India had left behind in 1947; the mentality of the colonized, the enslaved and the third-class citizen. Why should Roma not deal with government on equal terms? Dr. Emil Scuka in 2000 used the platform of the 5th Congress in Prague to define Roma as nation without territory. He then flew to New York for a meeting with UN General Secretary Kofi Annan.

Wholesale pogroms had broken out following the end of communist authority in eastern Europe. Two million Roma abandoned their settlements. In the case of Kosovo in 1999, expelled by Albanian militia, families left behind 14,000 burning homes. With hardly a respite, asylum refusals and deportations from Western Europe have created a circuit of suffering.

A new millennium Ushtiben and an attempted March of 100,000 marking the 30th Roma Nation Day, could not hope to turn the tide. As to Indian activity, a Conference on Roma

Culture, again at Chandigarh, took place in 2001 and copies of the journal Roma, editor by Mr. Rishi, continued for a short while yet to be circulate to diplomatic missions. He died at the end of 2002.

You will be well informed of the complex situation of more recent years. Racism is rampant. Throughout the Diaspora, a minority only escapes marginalization and permanent destitution. Among governments, the will to act lags behind, thus rising inequality.

On a positive note, celebration of this year's 50-year Congress Jubilee has raised some fresh hope among activists. But splits in the Congress-spurned IRU and rivalry among a myriad of NGOs continues to hinder mass mobilizations and a collective pushback against the tyranny of silence and neglect.

What then in these circumstances might India, and Indian institutions, be expected to do? You, sirs, are best qualified to answer that.

With clearer direction from New Delhi, diplomatic missions could increase their local involvement. Initiate action again at the UN? A current issue concerns the fate of Roma expelled wholesale from Kosovo. Could India take an interest here? Or must all await a formal decision concerning Roma status within the greater Indian Diaspora?

Two generations have arisen since Rishi, since the UN Resolution of Ram Bhagat. Leaders and scholars kneel and kiss the soil of Baro thaän. Can Roma ever expect protection as a national minority?

The chakra turns for fifty years
A banner over hopes and fears
Can it ever truly be
India will help set Roma free?

THE MONGOLS VENERATED THE BUDDHA'S RELICS

Lord Buddha passed away more than 2500 years ago but he still lives in the hearts of the devotees all over the world. His relics are preserved with great devotion in several countries. Twenty-two relics of the Buddha are preserved at the National Museum in New Delhi. Four out of them were carried to Mongolia for darshana by the devotees. They are from Kapilavastu. Buddha was received in his absence 'present in absence' as a State Guest on Buddha Purnima. Carrying the Holy relics to Mongolia on Buddha Purnima 2022 was a historical occasion both for the Indian delegation and the Mongols who had a chance to receive them as State Guest and venerate. They stayed there for and 11 day-exposition at the Bagsagaan temple at Ganden Monastery.

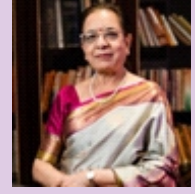


The Indian Airforce at its Hindon Airforce station presented a grand farewell to the relics. A special Air force aircraft flew the Hon. Minister of Law and Justice, Mr. Kiren Rijiju, accompanied by monks, scholars and administrators carrying the holy relics. In Mongolia state is parallel to dharma supported by monks and scholars as portrayed in their flag. When we were to disembark the aircraft reaching Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, there was a grand welcome given to the relics. Divine sounds of music resounded in the air as soon as the relics were brought to the specially arranged table. A red was spread, a huge umbrella was brought for the divine relics with great devotion. Hampo Lama of Ganden Monastery accompanied by several high-ranking monks, ministers, and bureaucrats offered prayers.

A special bullet proof vehicle followed by the official motorcade moved through the road that were blocked for a smooth passage. Thousands of devotees were eagerly waiting to have a view of the relics queuing up on the roadside holding Khataks to welcome. The Minister of Culture of Mongolia, Cabinet Minister of India Sh. Kiren Rijiju with high lamas offered prayers, and the members of the delegation venerated the relics offering khataks. Soon they were taken to the strong room because of security reasons. The people of Mongolia spent long hours waiting for their chance to enter the hall of the Ganden monastery where the relics were enshrined.

Our connections with Mongolia go back to the time of Mahabharata when two Indian Acharyas reached their court. The history of spread of Buddhism goes back to 3rd century BCE, the first dissemination of Buddhism to Mongolia via Khotan. Emperor Ashoka had governed Khotan and from the other direction Mongol empire extended upto Khotan. In 590-604 two Indian acharyas Sakyavamsa and Narendrayasas reached Mongolia. Following this propagation of Buddhism is accredited to the Tibetan Guru Phagspa who introduced the Sakya tradition. He was invited by the Emperor Kublai Khan (1259-94) who ruled as sagely within and kingly without. He honoured him as Rajaguru. During this period a number of monasteries were built.

Indian culture has permeated very deeply into the national lives of the people. Mongolia is one of the countries whose flag has a Sanskrit name. It is called Soyambo meaning Svayambhu. It has two vertical strips on the two sides representing state and Dharma—the two pillars of a country. A tringle on the means death of enemy and the lower one is for fairness and honesty; the two fish denote vigilance and wisdom; the two rectangle above and below the fish denote fairness, honesty, steadiness, let all the levels be righteous I the service of the people, Above all of them is the sacred om with fire atop for prosperity and upliftment. Sun and



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moon are the father and the mother. The holy water of Ganga has always been revered in Mongolia. Ganga jal was immersed into a lake in Mongolia which is called 'Ganga lake' located in Dariganga sum, Sukhebataar province. The lake lies on the transition zone between the southern steppes and the Gobi desert, giving it a unique landscape of lakes, steppes, and sand dunes. The Ganden monastery had received it more than four hundred years ago which was mixed in tea. Each time a portion of the tea was kept to be mixed with the next tea. We also carried Ganga water. I also presented it to the President of Mongolia.

When Buddhism was firmly rooted in Mongolia then more than 5000 Sanskrit texts were translated and divided into two compendia. One is Kanjur and the other is Tanjur. After my last visit to the newly built monasteries, I returned and took an initiative so that the Government of India would present the entire sets in 108 volume to the monasteries. Our Hon. The Prime Minister accepted it as an important step towards enhancing cultural relations between the two countries. The sets will soon reach there.

During this state visit the Catalogue of Mongolian Tanjur, edited by myself was launched and presented to the Speaker of the Mongolian Parliament, the Minister of Culture, the Hampo Lama of Ganden and other dignitaries. It comprises more than 4000 Sanskrit texts in Mongolian language.

There are many other examples that demonstrate close cultural linkages between the two countries which are geographically far but culturally close. ■

60TH KNOW INDIA PROGRAMME (KIP)

✍ **Dr Ruchi Verma**
Research Fellow DRRC-ARSP

On 12 of September 2022 (Monday) at the Pravasi Bhawan, Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC) – Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) hosted an interactive session for the 40 participants of 60th KIP batch from 10 countries namely- Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, Israel, Myanmar, South Africa, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji.

H.E. Mr Charrandass Persaud, High Commissioner of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, **H.E. Mr. Arunkoemar Hardien**, Ambassador of the Republic of Suriname, **H.E. Dr Roger Gopaul**, High Commissioner of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago, **Mr. Nilesh Kumar**, Counsellor, Fiji High Commission, and **Ms. Nishanthini Victor**, Second Secretary, High Commission of Sri Lanka, graced the occasion with their presence.

Prof. Gopal Arora, Secretary of ARSP introduced the works of ARSP and its linkages with diaspora for nearly five decades. He also informed them about the diaspora related activities organised by DRRC. He further elaborated on the important role played by civil societies in building bridges between people to people and people to government.

Amb Anup Mudgal, former High Commissioner to Mauritius provided a detailed briefing to the batch on contemporary developments in India and also the latest on the Diasporas activities and performances. He guides them briefly through the evolution of Diaspora. Diaspora have performed exceedingly well in all aspects of political, social, economic and technology fields and in changing world scenario the importance of diaspora will enhance. He highlighted that DRRC has been set up to carry the discourse with diaspora to more substantive areas and transform the way of engagement with diaspora. He also asked the participants to give their ideas and suggestions to DRRC for further development and betterment.

Amb Virendra Gupta, President, ARSP provided a broad view of the growth of Indian diaspora world over and its immense contribution. He recalled their expanding influence in all spheres and its positive impact on India's reach with many societies. He stressed that Indian diaspora remains attached to their cultural values which believes in humanity and added further that despite scarce resources, Indian diaspora can show the way to the world, through the values they cherish.

Amb. Manika Jain, Additional Secretary, OIA-II, MEA informed the KIP participants about the opportunities available for diaspora youth in India for higher education through scholarships, Study India programme, short term capacity building programme under the ITEC, the KIP facility, various schemes of ICCR and the government of India schemes for finding roots by the members of the diaspora. The participants were also provided with the details of the available channels for their engagement with the relevant organisations in India.

Heads of Mission and diplomatic representatives briefed the participants especially from the view point of their respective countries about the strengths of Indian economy, higher education, technology and the democratic institutions. They encouraged the participants that during the KIP attachment, they should learn about the way the Indian developmental processes were being carried out with significant opportunities and challenges. Some of these experiences would also be very useful in their own countries and societies.

H.E. Mr Charrandass Persaud, High Commissioner of Guyana, emphasized that Indian diaspora importance is widely recognised and the strength of Indian diaspora especially in the Giritiya countries is incredible.

H.E. Mr. Arunkoemar Hardien, Ambassador of Suriname, urged the KIP participants to use this KIP platform as a foundation to connect with diaspora youth. This is a great opportunity to engage and connect with India. He asked them to cherish these memories and share their wonderful experiences with others.

H.E. Dr Roger Gopaul, High Commissioner of Trinidad & Tobago, appealed to the KIP participants to embrace their traditional culture and values and rather than looking towards the west, try to find the solutions within the core values of pluralism, diversity and unity of Indian civilization.

Mr. Nilesh Kumar, from Fiji High Commission added that initiatives such as Know India Programme, help the youth to gain exposure and knowledge. He asked the participants to spread awareness about this programme so that more diaspora youth can benefit from this scheme.

Ms. Nishanthini Victor, Second Secretary, High Commission of Sri Lanka, briefed the participants that diaspora can play an important role in

every sphere of life. She further added that KIP helps the PIO's youth to connect with their roots and get exposure about the Indian way of life.

There was also a workshop conducted by the representatives of SEWA International. They shared about SEWA International initiatives keeping in focus the younger generations across the world. They also informed the KIP participants about their several schemes and scholarships especially for youth. During interaction, KIP participants also shared their views on betterment of community through several ideas like sustainability, effective methods for clean and green environment etc.

During the interactive session the participants provided their views about India based on their various attachments and also raised some issues for seeking clarification. The participants were quite impressed with their visit not only to reconnect with their roots but also to witness what India had achieved in various spheres of socio, economic development and technology. They said that they felt proud of these achievements, especially the economic growth, higher education, technology and management of a complex and pluralistic democracy. They expressed that they are going back with rich experiences and lessons learnt for better addressing some of their own socio economic challenges. They also suggested having an interactive session with their counterpart's Indian youths.

Heads of Mission, diplomatic representatives and the participants appreciated the efforts of ARSP and DRRC not only for their outreach initiatives but also for their campaign for creating an online database of diaspora organisations in India and abroad. They were also happy to learn that DRRC would support in publications of research and other articles by diaspora authors and youth.

In the end, **Shri Narayan Kumar**, Hon. Director, ARSP in his concluding remarks acknowledged the contributions of Indian diaspora all over the world. He further added that youth are important pillar of any society and diaspora youth will play an important role in enhancing the image of India around the world.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks presented by **Dr Ruchi Verma**, Research Fellow, DRRC and distribution of certificates to the KIP batch for their active participation. ■

CULTURAL TRIP TO PARIS & Sofia

✍ Zameer Anwar
Senior Research Associate-CRSCR



Under an initiative of Centre for Roma Studies and Cultural Relations-ARSP, supported by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), I had the privilege of traveling France and Bulgaria to observe the cultural practices as well as establish the contact with Roma Community in Europe. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has supported me with the flight tickets for New Delhi-Paris-Sofia-Paris-New Delhi while CRSCR supported boarding and lodging. I am highly obliged to ICCR for the travel grant.

The report offers the overview of my planned trip to Saintes Maries- de-la Mer at Camargue in Southern France for participating in the Saint Sara pilgrimage and procession that takes place every year on 24 and 25 May. I reached Saintes Maries- de-la Mer from Paris to Arles by train and subsequently by bus on 23 May, 2022. On the same day, I met a Romani French writer, sculptor and painter Mr. Gerard Gartner who has been continuously attending the Sara pilgrimage for the last sixty years. I had very informative discussion with him about the history and mythology of this pilgrimage as well as Indian connection of Saint Sara's

procession.

I paid a visit to the Church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer, popularly known as the church of three Maries, where the statue of Sainte Sara, donning the new white robes and white glittering tiara, is kept on the pedestal decorated with flowers in the church's crypt that is ablaze with devotional candles and votive objects. The written prayers for curing the sickness, bringing good luck and success in life and business are placed at the feet or near the feet of the Sara's statue by the Romani pilgrims and devotees who also touch and kiss the face and eyes of the statue for her blessing. The prayer vigils are also performed for the sick and in the remembrance of the dead.

The celebration, accompanied by mesmerizing Romani music and dance, began on 24 May when Roma and other Romani groups called Sinti, Gitans, Manouches, Tsiganes from France and other neighboring countries flocked there to revel in the celebration. The statue of the Saint Sara or Sara Kaliis taken from the crypt of the church to the shore of Mediterranean Sea. The statue is carried on the shoulders of four Roma/ Gypsy people, escorted by an honor guard of guardians, to the sea and is symbolically submerged and subsequently taken back to the reliquary of church.

The holy procession includes parading the statue of Ste. Sara and bringing out the relics of Maries and is replete with an emotional and religious fervor with musical fanfare. The 24 May has turned out to be Saint Sara's Day that is one of the most revered and important traditions of the European Romani people who treat her with the utmost devotion and she is reckoned as a paragon of hope, power and protection for all the

Romani people.

The event on 25 May began with two mass prayers in the church, followed by the procession of the Saintes Maries such as Mary Salome and Mary Jacobe. The statues of two Maries are brought out of the church to the shore for blessing the sea accompanied by the large congregation through the defined routes to the sea. At the seaside, the ritual reenactment of the arrival of Maries in France and particularly in Saintes Maries de-la- Mer is observed and subsequently the statues of Maries are taken back to the church. Ste. Mary Salome and Ste. Mary Jacobe became the patron saint of France whereas Saint Sara became the patron saint of Romani people.

It is now manifest that Christianity soaked up the old pagan beliefs and the church tried to change the style of Roma's traditional ritual and religious practices as the chaplaincy looks down upon the cult of Saint Sara. The catholic developed many of the rituals contrary to those of the Roma/Gypsy in 20th century. Introduction of non-Romani/ non-Gypsy music in the Sara pilgrimage seems to be recent development, as Santino Spinelli (celebrated Romani musician) remarked "Gypsy festival is without Gypsy/ Romani original music and dance". There is an attempt to appropriate and adapt the pagan mores and customs to the Christianity as supported by some Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical or Pentecostal Roma. Though several groups of Roma pointed out that it is an attempt to make Ste. Sara's role secondary and inferior as well as consider the church as a Gadje (non Romani) institution that intends to suppress rites and rituals of Saint Sara.

My visit to Bastille in Central Paris,



Montreuil in Eastern and Bondy in Northeastern suburbs of Paris to meet Cigani from Serbia and Kalderash from Romania in their squalid camps and residences unveiled the pitiable plight of Roma community who lives either on the street or in overcrowded residences in dilapidated condition, and without the basic amenities like water and electricity. Most of the Romani people are basically from Romania and Serbia. The Serbian groups of Roma are in good socio-economic position whereas Romanian groups are in the sorry socio-economic conditions. The female members of their families beg on the street of Paris and near the churches whereas male members have no work or employment and some do the repairing of copper vessels and tilted roofs. These downtrodden groups do not receive any aid or support from municipalities or non-governmental organizations which are supposed to support Roma in France.

The National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO), Paris, France organized a seminar on the theme of History, Civilization and Literature of Roma at its premises on 30 May, 2022. The talk brought together speakers like Ms. Jeanne GAMONET who spoke about the selected Romani poetry which categorically bespeaks

melancholy, suffering, agony, persecution and oppression of Roma community. Petre PETCU elucidated the slavery and emancipation of the Roma, besides Mr. Ray talked about the purported (not proven) and non-scientific Indian origin of Roma. Looking askance at the trappings of his speech, I made an intervention in order to substantiate the established fact and scientific hypothesis pertaining to Indian origin of the Roma community in historical, genetic, culture- anthropological, socio-linguistic context. I posited the historical and civilizational linkage of Roma with India. Ms. Aurore Tirard conceptualized and hosted the talk with her comments on the similarities between Romani and Indian languages. Ms. Diana Krilova also made a remark on cultural analogy and historical affinity of Roma with India.

The meeting with Amb. Jawed Ashraf, Ambassador of India to France and Monaco was centered to the socio-cultural and political situations of Roma in France with around half a million of Romani population. The discussion straddled the historical, linguistic and cultural linkage of Roma with India and their contribution to the French music and arts and circus, to a few to mention, renowned film director, Tony Gatlif and well known circus performer and

ring master, Alexander Romanes of Romani origin.

I visited two biggest Romani settlements of Roma community at Fakulteta and Filipovtsi in Sofia, Bulgaria. The former accommodates more than 60,000 and the later with 10,000. In both settlements, there is the open drainage and poor sewage system with inadequate electricity and shortage of potable water in addition to tatterdemalion roads replete with potholes. There is also a large number of residences are illegal in settlements, so the infrastructure is so poor. Both of the settlements have only Romani populations who are basically engaged in cleaning jobs and low-skilled, low-paid jobs, living in abysmal poverty. They are employed in the gray market without contracts or regulations.

I had also a remarkable meeting and discussion on Role of Roma in Cultural Diplomacy of India in Sofia with Indian Ambassador to Bulgaria and North Macedonia, Amb. Sanjay Rana & President of Political Party, Democratic Forces of Roma in North Macedonia, Dr. Shaban Sailu besides other Dignitaries of Diplomatic Corps. The discussion focused on the social and political situations of Roma in Bulgaria and North Macedonia. ■

DAYS TO REMEMBER

in October, 2022

October 01 : China- National Day

October 01 : Nigeria- National Day

**October 02 : Gandhi Jayanti - International
Day of Non-violence**

October 03 : Germany-Day of Unity

October 05 : Dussehra (Vijaya Dashami)

October 09 : Purnima

October 09 : Uganda- Independence Day

October 10 : Fiji -National Day

October 12 : Spain- National Day

October 23 : Hungary- Republic Day

October 24 : Amavasya - Dipawali

October 24 : United Nations Day

October 26 : Austria- National Day

सिंगापुर में हिंदी की धूम

हिंदी दिवस - 2022

डॉ. संघ्या सिंह
अध्यक्ष - संगम सिंगापुर

भारतीय उच्चायोग सिंगापुर और विश्व हिंदी सचिवालय मॉरीशस के सहयोग से संगम सिंगापुर हिंदी संस्था और सिंगापुर संगम हिंदी पत्रिका द्वारा हिंदी दिवस सिंगापुर 2022 का सफल आयोजन हुआ। हिंदी दिवस दो वर्षों के बाद पुनः आमने-सामने मनाने का अवसर मिला और हमें यह बताते हुए अत्यंत प्रसन्नता हो रही है कि सिंगापुर में सभी क्षेत्रों से सक्रिय लोगों के साथ अभिभावकों, प्रतिभागियों, हिंदी प्रेमियों सभी ने इस मौके को भरपूर जिया।

किसी भी कार्यक्रम की शोभा अतिथियों, सहभागियों और प्रतिभागियों से होती है और सिंगापुर संगम को यह बताते हुए गर्व महसूस होता है कि 200 से भी अधिक लोगों की इसमें भागीदारी रही। हॉल खचाखच भरा हुआ था और सभी में हिंदी के प्रति उत्साह दिखाई दे रहा था। भारतीय परम्परानुसार एन.यू.एस. की छात्रा अकारी मोरी ने विशिष्ट अतिथियों को तिलक किया और उसके बाद भारतीय उच्चायोग सिंगापुर से चांसरी प्रमुख श्री शिवजी तिवारी, उनकी पत्नी श्रीमती मीना तिवारी, आर्य समाज के अध्यक्ष प्रोफेसर राजेश राय, डी.ए.वी.हिंदी स्कूल के अध्यक्ष श्री ओपी राय जी और भारत से पधारे भाषा विशाखा डॉ. विमलेश कांति वर्मा ने सिंगापुर संगम के साथ दीप प्रज्वलन करके हिंदी दिवसका शुभारंभ किया, दीप प्रज्वलन के समय डॉ. लतिका रानी ने अपनी मधुर वाणी से मंत्रोच्चारण किया ताकि कार्यक्रम का शुभ और सांस्कृतिक प्रारंभ हो सके।

संस्था की सचिव अरुणा सिंह ने सभी सम्मानित अतिथियों और प्रतिभागियों के स्वागत के लिए स्वागत उद्बोधन दिया, विशिष्ट अतिथिगण के साथ निर्णायक मंडल में शामिल सुनन्दा वर्मा, हर्षावर्धन गोयल और नीरज कुमार जी को धन्यवाद दिया, अपने स्वागत उद्बोधन में उन्होंने सबके प्रति अपना आभार व्यक्त करते हुए सभी प्रतिभागियों को

प्रोत्साहित किया और मंच संचालन के लिए प्रतिमा सिंह को आमंत्रित किया। प्रतिमा सिंह हिंदी अध्यापिका के साथ ही बहुत उम्दा कवयित्री और लेखिका हैं, सिंगापुर संगम की अध्यक्ष डॉ. संघ्या सिंह ने मंच पर श्री शिवजी तिवारी और उनकी पत्नी को शॉल उढ़ाकर उनका सम्मान किया, श्री शिवजी तिवारी जी ने अपना उद्बोधन हिंदी सीख रहे छात्रों को समर्पित किया, प्रतिमा सिंह ने कार्यक्रम को आगे बढ़ाते हुए निर्णायक मण्डल का परिचय और कार्यक्रम के विषय में सूचनाएँ दीं, सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम का प्रारंभ चार साल की नन्ही बालिका आव्या सिंह ने किया, उन्होंने अपनी तोतली बोली में सरस्वती स्तुति और हिंदी कविता प्रस्तुत की, उनकी इस कविता का वीडियो आपको जरूर देखना चाहिए तभी आप आव्या की प्रतिभा की सही तारीफ कर पाएंगे।

हिंदी दिवस के आयोजन का उद्देश्य ही देवनागरी को बढ़ावा देना और भाषा से संबंधित भिन्न प्रतियोगिताओं का आयोजन करना है, पिछले वर्ष सब कुछ ऑनलाइन था तो हिंदी सप्ताह मनाया गया और कई प्रतियोगिताएँ रखी गई थीं (उनके वीडियो सिंगापुर संगम हिंदी के यूट्यूब चैनल पर उपलब्ध हैं) लेकिन इस बार आमने-सामने मिलने के लिए एक ही दिवस मनाने की योजना हुई और तीन अलग-अलग प्रतियोगिताओं का आयोजन किया गया था। प्रतियोगिताओं के लिए सिंगापुर के विभिन्न विद्यालयों को आमंत्रित किया गया था और सभी ने कड़ी चयन प्रक्रिया के बाद अपने प्रतिभागी प्रतियोगिताओं के लिए भेजे, कुछ विद्यालयों ने तो हमें यह भी बताया कि 50-50 छात्र एक कार्यक्रम के लिए आना चाहते थे। सिंगापुर के डी.ए.वी. हिंदी स्कूल सिंगापुर, हिंदी सोसाइटी सिंगापुर, ग्लोबल इंडियन इंटरनेशनल स्कूल सिंगापुर, एन.पी.एस. इंटरनेशनल स्कूल सिंगापुर, जी.आई.जी.

इंटरनेशनल स्कूल सिंगापुर, किंडल किड्स इंटरनेशनल स्कूल सिंगापुर, वाइज ओक्स इंटरनेशनल स्कूल सिंगापुर की प्रतिभागिता से हिंदी दिवस विशेषा बन गया, हम सभी विद्यालयों के प्रति आभार प्रकट करते हैं।

हिंदी दिवस समारोह में पहली प्रतियोगिता के रूप में भाषण प्रतियोगिता रखी गई थी, 10 से 13 वर्ष के विद्यार्थी इसमें शामिल थे, विद्यार्थियों को दो विषय दिए गए थे—पर्यावरण संरक्षण में हमारा योगदान और यदि मैं लेखक होता, दोनों विषयों के प्रतिभागियों ने बारी-बारी से अपना भाषण सभा के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया, भाषण के साथ कुछ विद्यार्थियों ने कलात्मक 'प्रॉप्स' का भी इस्तेमाल किया और कुछ ने अपनी वाणी के उतार-चढ़ाव से दर्शकों को इस प्रकार मोहित किया कि उनकी मधुर बातें लंबे समय तक सबके कानों में गूँजती रहेंगी, दोनों ही विषय उनकी आयु और इस आयु में सीखे हुए कर्तव्यों को ध्यान में रखकर दिए गए थे। यह वह समय होता है जब आप किसी चीज के प्रति जागरूक होते हैं और अगर आपके मन में वे बातें समा जाती हैं तो लंबे समय तक उनका बना रहना संभव होता है। नन्हें वाहक जब पर्यावरण के प्रति अपनी जागरूकता दिखाते हैं तो वाकई लगता है कि भविष्य में उजाला बाकी है। यदि मैं लेखक होता है या यदि मैं लेखिका होती इस विषय को छात्रों ने जिस रूप में प्रस्तुत किया वह अत्यंत सराहनीय था और स्पष्ट हो गया कि अगर मौके मिलते हैं तो साहित्य और भाषा के प्रति लगाव का बीजारोपण होना मुश्किल नहीं है। पहली प्रतियोगिता का मंच संचालन किया अकारी मोरी ने। वे जापान से हैं और नेशनल यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ सिंगापुर में हिंदी भाषा की विद्यार्थी हैं, अपनी विदेशी भाषा के रूप में सीखी हुई हिंदी में मंत्रमुग्ध करने वाला संचालन उनके द्वारा किया गया।

दूसरी प्रतियोगिता के रूप में 'भारत के विविध

रंग' प्रतियोगिता रखी गई थी। 9 वर्ष तक के बच्चों को इसके लिए आमंत्रित किया गया था। उन्हें भारतीय संस्कृति, साहित्य, भाषा, इतिहास, राजनीति और प्रकृति के किसी भी पात्र या चरित्र को चुनकर उसका रूप धारण करके प्रस्तुत होना था और उस चरित्र या पात्र पर 1-2 मिनट में अपनी बात रखनी थी। यह प्रतियोगिता वाकई में भारत के विविध रंगों को समेटे हुए थी। अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी, देवी सरस्वती, पंजाब की कुड़ी, कैलाश सत्यार्थी, महादेवी वर्मा, रानी पद्मावती, प्रकृति, साहित्य, किरण बेदी, रामप्रसाद बिस्मिल, भारतीय नारी, गुरु, झांसी की रानी, रवीन्द्रनाथ टैगोर, अहिल्याबाई होल्कर, भारत की बेटी, नरेंद्र मोदी जी आदि विभिन्न रूप धरकर नन्हें- नन्हें हिंदी के वाहक हिंदी की ध्वजा लेकर मंच पर उपस्थित हुए और उनकी वेशभूषा और प्रस्तुति ने दर्शकों को लगातार तालियों की गड़गड़ाहट से उनका प्रोत्साहन करने के लिए विवश रखा। इस कार्यक्रम की विशेष संकल्पना नीलिमा गुप्ते की थी, इस कार्यक्रम का मंच संचालन किया नेशनल यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ सिंगापुर के छात्र अमोन मारिया कैम्पर और तान छुआन जीन फ्रे ने ये दोनों विद्यार्थी भी पिछले चार महीनों से हिंदी सीख रहे हैं और इतने कम समय में ही हिंदी भाषा से इन्हें बहुत गहरा लगाव हो गया है। दोनों ने अपनी चुलबुली आवाज में बहुत सुंदर मंच संचालन किया।

14 से 18 वर्ष के विद्यार्थियों के लिए वाद विवाद प्रतियोगिता का आयोजन किया गया था जिसमें विषय दिया गया था "क्या हमारी युवा पीढ़ी भारतीय संस्कृति से दूर होती जा रही है!" विषय के पक्ष और विपक्ष दोनों में हिंदी के युवा वाहक अपनी अपनी दलीलें लेकर उपस्थित थे और दोनों पक्षों को बहुत ही खूबसूरती से सबके सामने प्रस्तुत किया। सिंगापुर में वाद विवाद का यह स्तर देख कर दर्शक दीर्घा, निर्णायक मण्डल, सभी विशिष्ट अतिथि न सिर्फ हर्षोल्लासित थे बल्कि कहीं ना कहीं अचंभित और हतप्रभ भी थे कि भारत से बाहर भी हिंदी का संसार बहुत ऊँचे पायदान पर है। वाद-विवाद के मंच संचालन की जिम्मेदारी उठाई सिंगापुर संगम से आराधना झा श्रीवास्तव ने आराधना मंच संचालन में इस

समय दुनियाभर में बहुत नाम कमा चुकी हैं, वह कवयित्री और लेखिका हैं और कई अन्य गुणों से संपन्न आराधना ने इस वाद विवाद भाग को बहुत ही सक्रिय और जोश पूर्ण रूप में पूरा किया आप उनकी सुंदर लिखावट विद्यालयों के नाम वाले कागजों पर भी देख सकते हैं।

विद्यार्थियों की भारी-भरकम शब्दावली और धीर-गंभीर दलीलों के बाद सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों के संचालन के लिए प्रतिमा सिंह ने कमान संभाली उन्होंने सबसे पहले बहुमुखी प्रतिभा की धनी भावना गुप्ता को नृत्य के लिए आमंत्रित किया कथक नृत्य शैली में प्रस्तुत नृत्य से मुग्ध दर्शकों की तालियों की गड़गड़ाहट से हॉल गूँज उठा, परीक्षित शुक्ला ने अपने चिर-परिचित अंदाज में काव्य-पाठ किया, उसके बाद बारी थी बॉलीवुड गीत की, क्योंकि बॉलीवुड गीतों ने भी हिंदी को विदेशों में अलग पहचान दी है। एन.यू.एस. की विद्यार्थी रविचंद्रन नित्यश्री अपनी मधुर आवाज में गीत प्रस्तुत किया, वह तमिल भाषी हैं और पिछले चारहफ्तों से हिंदी सीख रही हैं लेकिन कहते हैं ना गीत संगीत की कोई भाषा नहीं होती, अब कार्यक्रम अपने अंतिम चरण की ओर था और आखरी सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम में बारी थी कविता पाठ की, एन यू एस में हिंदी भाषा सीख रहे पीटर, आइजैक, टोनी, तियागो ने दो छोटी-छोटी कविताएँ सुनाई, इन चारों विद्यार्थियों ने भी चारहफ्तों से सीख रही भाषा को प्रयोगात्मक रूप से सबके सामने रखा जिसके लिए दर्शकों ने जोरदार तालियाँ बजाई।

मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में महामहिम श्री पी. कुमारन जी भारतीय उच्चायुक्त, सिंगापुर की उपस्थिति किन्हीं अपरिहार्य कारणों से अंतिम क्षण में परिवर्तित हो गई और उपउच्चायुक्त महोदय श्री सिद्धार्थ नाथ जी ने उनके स्थान पर आकर प्रतिभागियों का मनोबल बढ़ाया और अपना उद्बोधन दिया, उनका उद्बोधन सुनना सभी के लिए प्रेरणादायक था, इतनी बड़ी संख्या में हिंदी दिवस कार्यक्रम में उपस्थिति के लिए उन्होंने सभी का आभार प्रकट किया और हिंदी के प्रति प्रेम जगाने में अभिभावकों की भूमिका की सराहना की,

उन्होंने सभी प्रतिभागियों को प्रमाण पत्र और विजेताओं को ट्रॉफी प्रदान की। डॉ संध्या सिंह और श्री ओ पी राय जी ने शॉल उढ़ाकर सिद्धार्थ नाथ जी का सम्मान किया, उच्चायोग से उपउच्चायुक्त महोदय और चांसरी प्रमुख महोदय की उपस्थिति से कार्यक्रम की गरिमा अधिक बढ़ी और हिंदी भाषा के प्रति कार्य करने वालों में अधिक हर्षा और ऊर्जा का संचार हुआ। प्रमाण पत्र पर लिखे सुन्दर अक्षर प्रसून सिंह की कलम से निकले थे तो घंटी की आवाज पूनम चुघ की उँगलियों से, मनोज सिंह जी और नीलिमा गुप्ते ने मंच और माइक सम्भाला तो सौरभ श्रीवास्तव जी ने तस्वीरों में सब कैद किया, मनोज सिंह, नीलिमा गुप्ते, अरुणा सिंह, प्रसून सिंह, प्रतिमा सिंह, आराधना झा श्रीवास्तव, पूनम चुघ, डॉ लतिका रानी, सौरभ श्रीवास्तव, परीक्षित शुक्ला और सभी ने पूरे समय कमर कसकर इस कार्यक्रम के गठन को ढीला नहीं पड़ने दिया, हम सभी ये कार्य समाज और भाषा सेवा के रूप में कर रहे हैं, अपने निजी समय को हिंदी को बढ़ावा देने में लगाकर हमें अत्यधिक संतुष्टि मिलती है, अंत में सभी के लिए जलपान की व्यवस्था थी।

निर्णायक मंडल में सुनंदा वर्मा, हर्षवर्धन गोयल तथा नीरज कुमार जी ने अपना बहुमूल्य समय और अपनी सूझबूझ से तुरंत निर्णय दिया और इतने कठिन चुनाव के बीच विजेता निकालने में सफल हुए, डॉ लतिका रानी का भी इसमें सहयोग रहा, हम उनके आभारी हैं, डॉ विमलेश कांति वर्मा जी जो भाषा विशेषज्ञ हैं इस समय सिंगापुर में प्रवास कर रहे हैं और विशिष्ट अतिथि के रूप में उन्हें भी आमंत्रित किया गया था। उनकी उपस्थिति से कार्यक्रम को और ऊर्जा मिली, साथ ही आर्य समाज के अध्यक्ष प्रोफेसर राजेश राय जी उपस्थित थे। डी ए वी हिंदी स्कूल के अध्यक्ष ओपी राय जी का हृदय से आभार जिनके कारण आर्य समाज भवन का हॉल सिंगापुर संगम के कार्यक्रमों के लिए उपलब्ध हो पाता है और हिंदी भाषा के प्रति उनके इस सहयोग के हम हमेशा आभारी रहेंगे।



भारतीय स्वाधीनता के अमृत महोत्सव के अवसर पर विशेष



रामधारी सिंह दिनकर

(23 सितम्बर 1908 – 24 अप्रैल 1974) हिन्दी के एक प्रमुख लेखक, कवि व निबन्धकार थे। वे आधुनिक युग के श्रेष्ठ वीर रस के कवि के रूप में स्थापित हैं। राष्ट्रवाद अथवा राष्ट्रियता को इनके काव्य की मूल-भूमि मानते हुए इन्हे युग-चारण व काल के चारण की संज्ञा दी गई है।

दिनकर स्वतन्त्रता पूर्व एक विद्रोही कवि के रूप में स्थापित हुए और स्वतन्त्रता के बाद राष्ट्रकवि के नाम से जाने गये। वे छायावादोत्तर कवियों की पहली पीढ़ी के कवि थे। एक ओर उनकी कविताओं में ओज, विद्रोह, आक्रोश और क्रान्ति की पुकार है तो दूसरी ओर कोमल श्रृंगारिक भावनाओं की अभिव्यक्ति है।

दिनकर जी का जन्म बिहार के बेगूसराय जिले के सिमरिया गाँव में हुआ था। उन्होंने पटना विश्वविद्यालय से इतिहास राजनीति विज्ञान में बीए किया। उन्होंने संस्कृत, बांग्ला, अंग्रेजी और उर्दू का गहन अध्ययन किया था। वे अध्यापक हो गये, बिहार सरकार की सेवा में सब-रजिस्टार और प्रचार विभाग के उपनिदेशक पदों पर कार्य किया, वे लंगट सिंह कालेज मुजफ्फरपुर में हिन्दी के विभागाध्यक्ष रहे, भागलपुर विश्वविद्यालय के उपकुलपति के पद पर कार्य किया और उसके बाद भारत सरकार के हिन्दी सलाहकार बने। उन्होंने सामाजिक और आर्थिक समानता और शोषण के खिलाफ कविताओं की रचना की। एक प्रगतिवादी और मानववादी कवि के रूप में उन्होंने ऐतिहासिक पात्रों और घटनाओं को ओजस्वी और प्रखर शब्दों का तानाबाना दिया।

उन्हें पद्म विभूषण की उपाधि से भी अलंकृत किया गया। उनकी पुस्तक संस्कृति के चार अध्याय के लिये साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार तथा उर्वशी के लिये भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ पुरस्कार प्रदान किया गया। अपनी लेखनी के माध्यम से वह सदा अमर रहेंगे।



रामधारी सिंह दिनकर

(23 सितम्बर 1908 – 24 अप्रैल 1974)

कलम आज उनकी जय बोल

जला अस्थिराँ बारी-बारी,
चिटकाई जिनमें चिंगारी,
जो चढ़ गये पुण्यवेदी पर,
लिए बिना गर्दन का मोल,
कलम, आज उनकी जय बोल।

जो अगणित लघु दीप हमारे,
तूफानों में एक किनारे,
जल-जलाकर बुझ गए किसी दिन,
माँगा नहीं स्नेह मुँह खोल,
कलम, आज उनकी जय बोल।

पीकर जिनकी लाल शिखाएँ,
उगल रही सौ लपट दिशाएँ,
जिनके सिंहनाद से सहमी,
धरती रही अभी तक डोल,
कलम, आज उनकी जय बोल।