



# Culture

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## **Address by Mrs Najma Heptullah, Vice-Chairman of Rajya Sabha, President, ICCR, and an MP from Maharashtra**

I am very happy to be asked to chair this Session because in my capacity as the parliamentarian and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I have dealt with the CPA and IPU and now with CSIR. I have travelled almost, I should say, the entire world. I have been to Fiji, your country, when Mr Bhavendra died and I represented India at his funeral.

I have gone to your country, Mauritius, which is very, very close, just a little ocean between us. So, there is no problem about it and I feel very happy that this special session is for culture, language, literature and the diasporic identity.

In the morning, I was speaking at the parliamentarian meeting, which was inaugurated by the Vice-President and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha and the Prime Minister from Mauritius. I said that we feel proud because all of you come from there. Of course, it is so difficult to get elected to the Indian Parliament. How these Indian people who went to those alien countries could manage to get elected to those parliaments and got positions as Prime Ministers and Ministers and others. My hats off to them.

Here, I am not going to give a speech, but here when talking about the culture, the language, the literature and the diasporic identity, it is very important because we have been reading a lot of books written by various important authors all over the world. The Indians know the name of Sir Naipaul and we all know the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Siddharth Ramphal and so many others, Amitabh Ghosh and many others who have written extremely well

I would say that the Prime Minister was right when he announced that we should have a kind of a translation centre where we can translate these very, very good books into various Indian languages so that they are known to everybody, and more people in India can read it.

We are talking about culture. We are very happy that you are here and there are many sessions that would be on information technology, films, etc. I feel that India is well-known for commercial films, which you see generally and which are very popular and I am sure are very popular in Mauritius and half of them are filmed in Mauritius. I am sure they would be filmed in Fiji too, but these films are a part of the Indian culture, which we show or the information technology, which we are so proud of that our people have done so well.

India, to me, as an Indian and to you as the diaspora whose roots are in India, must be, and should be, proud of our culture, which is not in the third millennium, but we are in the sixth millennium. India's cultural imprints have been both on the right side and on the left side whether it is the Far East Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, all those countries, but on the other side, we have left our imprints in Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran and the rest of the world.

I think the younger generation which is the second or the third generation or the fourth generation, should know also, proudly, that India has got this very, very strong

cultural background and we should be proud of it. I have travelled to Africa, travelled to Latin America, to the Caribbeans, to Trinidad & Tobago, to all the places where Indians have been. I have made it a point to try and meet Indians wherever I went. Specially today, as I mentioned, that a place in Canada which perhaps when for the first time I heard that I have to go to Saskatchewan I thought I am going to China, but when I was told no it is not in China, it is in Canada. It's actually the grassland of Canada where they grow the wheat and Saskatchewan and Regina are the two places where I went. Then, we did tour and go to such places like Moose Jaw and Medicine Hat and people don't even know them. I think it is very difficult to see them on a very magnified map of Canada.

There also, I found in such remote places the Indian people who are living there and the way we used to do it and at that time our Consul General in Vancouver was Mr Sharma who is now a Secretary. He used to go into the telephone directory and look at the Shahs and the Patels and all the Indian names and telephone them and say the Deputy Chairman of the Indian Parliament is here and she would like to meet you. Then, we would all get together and meet and try to interact with them and find out.

So, whether it is Chile, where I met a lot of people, or it was in Cote d'Ivoire, where I went, "aiyeeye, you are most welcome." The life and soul of the whole movement is Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

Why are you sitting there, Sir, come and sit here. That you do that privilege you always have in the house because you only look up to me in that house but I want to look at my side also sometimes. There is no problem of that privilege which you have.

I was just very briefly telling the wonderful work you have done by bringing all these hundreds and thousands of people from all over the world who have made us proud in every field. They have made us proud in the information technology. They have made us proud in politics. They have made us proud in literature. They have made us proud in every other thing, and we feel that, in spite of that fact that they have made themselves a part of that culture where they were.

To me, culture is much deeper and it is inherited from the father to the son or I should say from the mother to daughter. Because this is the Indian woman, it is quite possible but I would rather put it from the mother to the daughter, because it is always the Indian women who have kept the culture. I am wearing a sari very proudly.

Sir, you are not wearing the Indian dress.

We, in India in spite of being in occupation for 100 years continue to follow the culture and our women who have gone abroad to various parts of the world. They are the real carriers of culture. Look at her; she is wearing a lovely sari. So, with these few words, I would like to start and I would just say here a word for you, Sir. For your effort, the "Sanghat Sanjay Sandhi" that the "Unity Brings Amity" and you have done it in the real sense of it and you need a big clap.

Thank you very much, Madam Gayan. It is very nice that you are Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre which has all documented these cultural identities, because I remember there was a speaker of the Trinidad & Tobago Parliament, who was so keen to come to India to go to his village, and we invited him. It's long back, maybe 15 years ago. Then, he came to India and we sent him to his village and he was so excited to meet the people. But I did tell him at that time that I know that your grandfather went from here, the whole family, to Trinidad & Tobago as labourers, but I am sure if you had stayed back here in this village you might still be a labourer. Because you wouldn't have the opportunity, which you had to become a scholar because he studied in Cambridge and he became a lawyer in the Temple.

So, I feel that sometimes whatever the origin might be, you all had gone in very difficult situations at very different times not the ones young students who go to the big universities and colleges now. You went to a difficult place in difficult times, but you have survived and you have not only survived very well, but you have done very well and we are very happy.

Now, the Ambassador Mr Sharma I was talking to you. He is sitting here right in front of me. He is the one who was posted in Vancouver when he took us around to the part of Canada, which even some Canadians don't visit. So, I am very happy that he is here and he is the one who used to go in to the telephone directory to identify by their Indian names where they are, and in every town we found at least a dozen Indians living in far-off places. So, now we have finished the contribution from the two panellists, and they have given us a different picture. Definitely in every country where the Indian diaspora has got a different kind of atmosphere and culture and environment, you people have adapted accordingly and you have adapted very well over there while keeping your identity as an Indian.

I would like to say only one thing. Once I was in Zimbabwe, and there was the conference of the parliamentarians of the Commonwealth where the speakers from all the parliamentary assemblies had gone. I could see a Maharashtrian speaker being taken by a Maharashtrian gentleman, a Gujarati speaker was taken by a Gujarati, and a Bengali speaker was taken home by a Bengali. I was sitting in the hotel lobby and somebody asked me, "Well, you are not going anywhere, Ms Heptulla." I said, "I belong to a country called India. So, if there is any Indian who would come and take me, then I will go, because I don't belong to any state."

In any case, all women belong to the whole country. We don't have any states.

So, that's it. Because I was born in Madhya Pradesh, lived in Maharashtra and work in Delhi. So, we don't have any state identities. And then all the Indians living in Zimbabwe joined together as one group, because that may give us as much stronger strength. If we keep our identities individually, but as a one group, well this is very common to use the pressure group. We can form real pressure groups in those countries wherever you are if we join as Indians.

Thank you very much for your contribution and for your information. The ICCR runs two cultural centres in South Africa and those cultural centres started before even we started our diplomatic relations with that country. So, culture went before politics went or diplomacy went, but still whatever you have said we will take care.

Jagmohanji, I am doing the most difficult job and the most unpleasant person I might be in this whole gathering because I have to ring the bell. I have to make them stop at some point of time because we are running out of time. But we had some extremely good contribution and very good papers some people have given and all of them are going to give their papers which will be compiled and then we can find out from them what are their suggestions. Different countries have got different problems, views, and achievements that would help us later on to have an evaluation of it. I am very happy that the Maulana Azad Institute of Asian Studies has taken out this book, which was just released.

Well, in fact, I was responsible for getting this Institute established in Calcutta. I am happy that they have taken out this very good book because Maulana Azad was very keen to promote Indian culture all over the world where we have our footprints to communicate with them more and where we do not have our footprints. The word "footprint" is not a very nice word. But we have never talked about handprint. So, wherever we do not have our presence we should make our presence felt and I feel this Indian diaspora is doing the job very well for us. And we will need their support and

cooperation in promoting Indian culture and to show the Indian ethos and the depth of the Indian culture, which many of them talked just now. Because we are expecting some more people to come here from the neighbouring room, so before they arrive may I give a chance to one more person to speak so that you can also get the opportunity to listen to them.

Thank you very much for this very good overview of the Indians in America. I must tell you the first Indian Mayor in America was in the City of Tenancy which is somewhere in the north of New York City.

You talked about the girls. I must say, Sir, all the call centres which are being run in India and the girls who make a call to the American people from here have to acquire names like June, July, April, or whatever they choose. And they have to learn the American accent so that they do not reveal their identity that they are speaking either from a place in Gurgaon or in Noida where these centres are. So, the Indian girls at least are learning the American accent and also they are acquiring the American name. I am not that very happy about it, about the name part of it, though I am happy about the accent because they are understandable there.

When I started this session on culture that India is best not only in Information Technology, not only in our commercial movies. Well, I am sorry because one of our best actors is sitting over here. But he will bear with me.

He is a very well known actor of the... He is also our heritage. But I didn't tell, I didn't show.

That heritage could be shown in person. So, we needed the lights to focus on him. So, we have him with us. And what I wanted to say that India has much deeper culture. It is 6,000 years old. When I said we are in the sixth millennium, the Minister put it on the plan that we are in the sixth millennium and this is exactly what we would like the Indian diaspora. And somebody just now from Washington mentioned about ABCD, the American Born Confused Desi. So, though I don't believe in that, they are not at all confused. They are very well-educated Desis or Indian-Americans.

The people, the Indian diaspora the second, the third, the fourth generations should come and see what India's cultural heritage is, of which we all of us are so proud. Thank you, Mr Minister, for doing it so beautifully. I am very happy that you are going to improve Hampi because my daughter went there last year. She came all the way from America. She is also one of the diaspora. She came from America and she went to see Hampi. And she wasted so much time on the road. Because Hampi is one of the best sites and I am also responsible for Dholavera after the earthquake. We are also helping in building the Dholavera site in Gujarat, which, I am very happy to say, is coming up very well with your support. Thank you.

You know in Gujarat when I started helping to build Gujarat after the earthquake with the money the Members of Parliament have given, I insisted that there should be more toilets in every village, especially for women because for women it is the most difficult thing. Sometimes, they have to wait for the sunset or they have to go before the sunrise to the toilet and the whole day they cannot. When told this thing to a friend of mine from Canada, she was shocked because they had never visualized that these can be the problems in a large country like India. So, they are with us.

We will not only show our Indian to where the India diaspora is, but we will like to showcase India to where the Indian diaspora is also not there because we would like others also to come to India. So, we will see to it.

I think in this conference we had a lot of contribution from the Netherlands and I am very happy because I have visited that country. But as I said sometime before that if we

present a united picture of the Indians abroad it makes us stronger. If we divide ourselves like we divide in India that was the policy of the British to divide and rule. So we will never have that. I request you it is the Indian culture which all of us believe in. It is the Indian ethos we all believe in and let us go without the boundaries of region, language, states, etc. and be Indian.

This is a conference for the Indian diaspora for everybody. I am equally proud to be an Indian. I might be believing in any religion. That does not matter. But the thing is if you divide yourself, then it will be difficult for you to have a voice abroad. That is my sincere advice.

We are one people, we live in different parts of the world, we have made that part of the world our home and still we are related.

A child is born out of his mother, but the child does not cut its link with the mother when the placenta is cut down. The relation is the same. India is your motherland and you are all always welcome over here to come. I can understand that you must be living in Fiji before because I was telling the Minister that I had been to Fiji I went to Suva, I attended the funeral of Mr Bawandra, I met his wife. Then, on my way back I went to New Zealand and Australia and met all those Fijians who were out of Fiji at that particular time, and you know that was also a very difficult time for the Indian people living in Fiji.

I am always of the opinion that you live wherever you live it is your country there. From wherever you have gone, from whichever part of India you always will have the cultural link with India but the best thing is that you make as I was very happy when the African delegate spoke that he is an African. Yes, you are an African with the Indian origin and if you like you are most welcome to adopt the Indian culture but you are an African and you must say with pride as I say with pride I am an Indian, whatever religion or caste or creed I belong to. The same way you should say you are an African and you are proud to be an African.

Thank you, Sardar Saheb. (speech in hindi) I am very happy that you are building all these institutes over there and of course Sardars have gone from here. Those Sardars who are living in America who went in the Komagatamaru, you remember it, they have done a great service. Yes, you have known them, they are living there for maybe 100 years, more than 100 years in California. They went much before the Silicon Valley was formed. You really tilled the land over there. You are adventurous people. I have seen the Sindhi people in Cote d'Ivoire. They have done very good business. So, I am very happy now that we are at the end of the conference.

I thank my two Co-Chairs who helped me and started the discussions. I did not want to give a big speech. So, I have circulated the speech which I would have liked to say, but one thing I would like to say at the end is that we are all one, wherever we are, we are connected. There is some kind of a connection which is not visible, but it is there and you are always welcome to India and I hope that we will be welcome wherever you live. So, with these few words, I thank you. Thanks a lot, all of you.

## **Address by Mr George Shiu Raj, Minister of Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Fiji**

Thank you very much, the Chairman, the Chair-Lady for giving me this opportunity to speak in my motherland. But before I speak, ladies and gentlemen, when I came from

my Fiji Islands, I went to my mom and I asked her, "Mom, what gift should I bring you from my motherland." She said, "Son, you have given me everything in my life. Please do try to bring a piece of soil and water from motherland."

My grandfather came from Uttar Pradesh, from Kanpur and definitely I am going to visit it. I am so proud to stand here today in my motherland as a diaspora and a Minister in the Fiji Islands, the Island full of culture and tradition of different races.

The Chair-Lady, the Co-Chairman, panellists,

Government Officials, Diaspora, Delegates from Various Countries, Ladies and Gentlemen, I convey greetings to you all from the people of my beloved nation of Fiji. Kindly accept the message of best of luck to the Indian diaspora from the President, His Excellency Chaudhary Eloelo, and the Prime Minister, Hon'ble Liasenia Qarase of the Fiji Islands. They have saluted the Government of India for organizing this conference.

Before I talk on the subject of culture, language, literature, films, and the diaspora identity, I would like to bring to you the reality of life situation in Fiji, so that I can focus on the given subject from my perspective.

Fiji is a country consisting of 300 islands. Two main islands are Viti Levu and Venua Levu. The population of Fiji is about 8,00,000 or 0.8 million people. Of these, some 52 per cent are the native Fijians, 43 per cent people are of Indian origin and the remaining 5 per cent are the minority communities.

The first batch of Indians from the land of India were brought to Fiji under the indentured system in 1879. With them, they brought their culture; they struggled to keep their customs and traditions. It is heart-breaking to learn stories of the difficult times when they worked under the Whites.

However, they preserved the culture. We have inherited the values of our Indian culture. Today, we, the third, fourth and fifth and sixth generation of our ancestors, practise, preach, and promote our culture. We treasure our cultural heritage. In 1970, Fiji gained independence from the British. It is said that our Indian leaders then could not think to secure land for the future generation before asking independence of our country.

The native land is leased to the Indians. We had 99 years of lease period, which was reduced to 50 years, 30 years and now 10 years.

The Fijian culture has its own richness with the value of supreme respect. I believe lack of understanding of the Fijian culture slowly started leading to put the two communities of Indian origin and the native Fijians apart. I must mention that there is no racial tension, racial conflicts between the communities, but I would say political attitudes of some of our leaders led to create some feelings of mistrust in the native Fijians against the Indians.

The ill feelings towards the Indo-Fijians are somewhat hardened, but generally at a political level only. If the people of Indian origin at the grassroots level are suffering, it is mostly because of some of their own political leaders' relationship with the native Fijians.

I am pleased to share with you that at the grassroots level both the Indians and the native Fijians are living a much loving and caring life. To a good extent, they know each other's language and appreciate different cultures. With 71 seats in the Parliament of Fiji, the only multiracial seat is the Raopan seat where majority of the votes are Fijian votes with 14,000 and 6,000 and the Indian man enters the House.

In my opinion, blending cultures and riches are alike, but we must be careful not to lose our true identity. The Fijian culture, as I have said, values respect for one another. Our Indian culture has its own values in the land of Fiji. It is respected by the other communities.

As the only Indo-Fijian Cabinet Minister in the Government of Fiji, I am proud and I have led the Indian diaspora delegation from Fiji to this conference. My paper on culture and language is privately given. You have it in front of you. Culture is the complex that includes knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society.

Culture is a sum-total of art, science, social customs and educational aims of the people regarding its integrative hold. Language is an outstanding feature of one's culture. It is an effective and direct means of communication. Man is blessed with this faculty of speech. One's culture is linked with one's language learning and knowing one's language should be one's pride. One's language is one's sunshine of existence. Without the knowledge of language, one is in the world of darkness of ignorance and illiteracy.

In Fiji, Indo-Fijians have preserved culture, which our forefathers brought in from the land of India. Indians are proud of the values and literature on the culture, traditions, and customs. Hindi language is a cultural heritage of the Hindus. Culture consists of the social elan, behaviour, norms and values shared by the human group.

Fiji is a land of diverse cultures. The people of Fiji are proud to belong to a nation full of customs, traditions and beliefs. The people of Fiji are culturally and spiritually rich. There is a lot of cultural and religious tolerance within the communities. The Indo-Fijians have been living in Fiji for the last 123 years or more since the first batch of migrants under the indentured system arrived in 1879.

In the Constitution of the Fiji Islands, it is stated and I quote, "All persons have the right to practise their religion freely and to retain their language, culture, and traditions." The national holidays for various religious festivals make a reflection of the freedom of practising, promoting, preaching and preserving beliefs of different communities.

The first people to arrive in Fiji were the indigenous people. Naturally, they have the pride to be the first settlers. As such, they treasure their land the most. I have convinced the Indo-Fijians to have a place in Fiji where the indigenous and indentured labourers toiled in their early days.

The contribution of the Indo-Fijians to the social and economic development of the country is valued by the Government of Fiji. Fiji is proud to have organizations such as Fiji Muslim League, the TISI, Shri Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Arya Sabha, Gujarati Samaj, Sikh Samaj, minority communities and several more cultural groups, which are making significant contribution in nation-building.

Education is given a top priority by these organizations. But they have a number of schools; many of these are integrated schools. The teaching of mother tongue language is a battle for promoting cultural identity. Language bridges the gap between cultures.

In Fiji, the Ministry of Education has introduced the Fijian Hindi programmes in the primary schools. Children learn Fijian and Hindi languages, share cultural values and strengthen relationships for tolerance and peaceful coexistence. the teaching of Fijian and Hindi languages continues up to the Form of 7 in secondary schools.



Media plays a significant role in promoting different cultures. There are articles of cultural aspect published in the newspapers. Cultural programmes are shown on the television and programmes of traditions, customs and belief system by the guest speakers are on the air.

I believe cultural and religious organizations are to work closely in any effort to preserve the cultural heritage. With the passage of time, culture changes. We must ensure, that our Indian culture is not influenced so much by the western culture that we may lose the essence of our cultural values. No society for that matter should let its cultural values diminish at the expense of the modern civilization. One's culture is one's identity. It must be preserved.

Thank You.

### **Address by Ms S N Gayan, Director, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius**

Madam, Co-Chairs, Members of the Panel and Members of the Audience,

First of all, I am deeply honoured to be here this afternoon, representing a very, very small tiny country of 1.2 million, of whom about 67 to 68 per cent of the people are of Indian origin.

I will be brief. I will try to respect you, Madam Chairperson. I know the bell is going to ring like a guillotine falling and I will hope that you will bear with me for keeping very close to my country's experience to the extent that I understand it and I have lived it. I will also try and relate to the growth theme of this afternoon's session which is on culture, language, literature and diasporic identity.

I think it is Edad Sayyed who has written about the "Empire Writing Back". I would like to say that this particular function is the first in the history of the Indians abroad and in the history of India. The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is, in a way, an occasion where the diasporas have spoken and have spoken back to India and India has heard and has responded.

The history has not always been like this. There were times when there were Mauritians of Indian origin who came here in the 1950s and in a way there was a kind of a gap between the two through nobody's fault. Our histories are such that although the origins are same, the experiences are diverse, and, therefore, we know that we are brothers and sisters, but in the end do not find that we are alike. There are similarities, but there are also dissimilarities that are bound to affect us and it is as it should be.

Because in the construction of new identities, in the construction of our new nations, in particular, I am speaking of a country like Mauritius which itself has had to construct its national identity. It is still in the process of doing that. Recognizing the Indian-ness, recognizing that the diversity has to take on board the very fact that the nation itself continues to be in the process of construction and that's where the tensions arise.

We have been talking about Indianness, and it is as it should be. I probably would not be sitting here wearing a sari and a tika, if that was not the case. At the same time, when we look at our own experience at how the Indo-Mauritians have been constructed from the point of view of the Constitution. How it has been constructed from the point of view of popular deception. How it has been constructed from the point of view of our relations within the Indo-Mauritians community and between Indo-Mauritians and other communities constituting the Mauritian nation. We find that there are tensions.



I will briefly mention for example, the fact that there was a certain time in the political development of the country when the Indo-Mauritians used to refer to all the people of Indian origin at one point in the search for a political voice. We have had the emergence of other minorities. For example, the Muslims constituted a distinct minority referred to as such within the Constitution of our country.

The accommodation of these new emerging identities has been, I think, a hall mark of the Constitution of our nation. We have had to accommodate linguistic differences. The languages are in a situation of very peculiar realities. Very few Mauritians or a small percentage of Mauritians can claim only one mother tongue. We talk of first languages today. We don't talk of one mother tongue, because we are brought up by at least three languages being equally and equivalently important to us.

On the whole, the Indian languages, which are of relevance to Mauritius, are Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, and we have Mandarin, which has the official status. These are taught in schools. We identify with these as being languages of our forefathers. These languages also constitute a domain of tension, a domain of conflict.

Now, to relate back to the theme of today's session about language and literature, I am going to just hop from one idea to the other very rapidly and hope that this will trigger a thinking in all of us. Literature, creative writing, I think, are also a part of a becoming a nation. We have been talking about origins a lot. At the same time, the imagination and creativity are the two domains where our being and our becoming really take shape.

Now, Mauritians write in a variety of languages. We have people of Indian origin, since this is our focus today, writing in Hindi. One of them is here present today, my colleague from Mauritius, Abhimanyu Unnuth, who is very well known probably as much known in India as he is known in Mauritius. He writes in Hindi.

We have Indo-Mauritians who write in Urdu. We have Indo-Mauritians who write in French, who write in English and who write in Creole. The good news for us is that in each of these languages, we have Mauritians who have made an impact internationally. They have become known, they have received prizes, which suggests that the internalization of the language is one, and the use of the language to transmit what the imagination has in terms of its diversity is something that creates a reality that to be able to apprehend we should be able to look at all our writers.

If we talk about Francophono writers of Mauritius, we are missing a part of the picture. If we are talking about Hindi phono writers of Mauritius, we are missing another part of the picture. Yet, to be able to see what the Indian heritage has provided in terms of nurturing, in terms of inspiration, we must read those who have written in Hindi, we must read those who have written in Creole, we must read those who have written in French, and we must read those who have written in English.

This is the reality of Mauritius, which is always in danger of becoming fragmented. There is always that danger, and yet we are always finding those little traces of genius to be able to find the degree of compromise that does not dilute the identity, but helps it to construct something which is richer.

I think yesterday the Prime Minister of India said something. He said, speaking of Indians, we in India do not want your riches for us who are from the diaspora. He said we want the richness of your experience. And what I am saying is that in a very, very tiny country like Mauritius with 1.2 million population, in many ways, it is this richness of experience in a very, very small radius is what we can bring to you as a testimony. I believe what the understanding, of tolerance, of fraternity, of brotherhood that the Indian culture actually brings to us, because we are brought up with this almost unknowingly.

I sincerely believe that the pacifism, the peacefulness, the ability to respond to challenge knowingly, intelligently but without degenerating into conflict of long duration is one of the great gifts that India and Indian civilization have been able to give to us. This, I think, is something that we cannot take the risk of allowing us to forget. That is as far as my emotional testimony is.

Now, as far as the topic, which brings us together, is concerned, I would like to just briefly talk about origins again. My institute happens to be the repository of a unique collection of documents relating to Indian labour migration to our country. We have documents of notes, information, places of origin, the Zilla, the pargana, the ship on which the immigrants came, their father's name, their caste, their distinguishing marks for about 4,54,000 immigrants to Mauritius. Of whom about 150,000 re-immigrated and left Mauritius, and the other 300 who stayed back. We are the progeny.

These documents are also accompanied by a very, very rich collection of photographs which were taken from the 1860s onwards which show us how our forebears dressed. What kind of jewellery they wore, suggesting to us what particular regions of India they came from. And this is a rich source for researchers.

So, what I do hope is that as a result of this kind of meeting there we will be networking, it is the buzzword at the moment. There we will be networking, so that this kind of data can be put together for us to be able to read our history not as a generalization, but as a history of new answers, as a history that shows to us to what extent there was diversity right at the beginning-diversity of religion, diversity of region and diversity of cultural trades and cultural heritages. Well, I will stop there. I hope I have suggested enough for us to be able to take forward.

Thank you.

## **Address by Mr Wahid Saleh, ICT Consultant, Netherlands**

Fellow Panellists and Hon'ble Guests, or I should say Hon'ble Indians from India, as well as from outside India,

I begin with a handicap. Why? I prepared my presentation in Power-Point and informed the organizers and after arriving here, they have informed me no we are not providing you any Power-Point presentation possibilities. You have to present, as you want to present. So, here I am.

You may be wondering why an information and technology man is taking part in a programme dealing with culture?

For the last thirty years, I have been involved in the Indian culture in the Netherlands. About five years ago, I helped to create a Dutch-Indian Youth Association because the second generation is more important than our first generation. They are actually very actively propagating Indian culture. I was involved with the Netherlands Indians' Association for more than thirty years; for nineteen years I am on the board and for more than fifteen years as Secretary.

That is why I am standing here to present about the culture and for all my work which I have done for Indian culture and the Indian association. The Queen of Netherlands honoured me last year with a knighthood and I am the only Indian to receive a knighthood from the Dutch Queen.

I will try to improvise my presentation without Power-Point. If you talk about diasporic identity, I will begin with my own personal diasporic identity. Because if I don't know

myself, I cannot present a diasporic identity of the Indians. Moreover, I will be presenting the diasporic identity only about Holland as far as it is possible.

What is my diasporic identity?

After almost forty years in the foreign country, after living in Europe for such a long time, I do not feel that I am a European, and I do not feel that I am Indian. If I am in Europe, I long to come to home to Assam. I come from Assam, but once I land in Assam, I want to take the next flight and go back to Europe. If I see the infrastructure, if I see here the bureaucracy, and above all the corruption everywhere, without money you do not go any further.

But when I am in Europe, then I think I should go back to home. I am like a person who is trying to sail at the same time in two boats, one leg in one boat and another leg in another boat trying to keep the equilibrium. In my heart, I still look forward, still dream that one day I will see and hear and see the breeze of the bamboo trees actually dancing and see the setting sun and a truck passing by and the dust settling, but that is a dream and let us come to reality now.

We can divide the PIO and the NRI community in the Netherlands, two major groups. One is the PIO, that is, people of Indian origin coming from the ex-Dutch colony Surinam and the rest is from India. We have in the Netherlands about 100 to 60,000 PIOs and about 15,000 NRIs either directly coming from India or from different parts of the world who have settled down in the Netherlands. We have about 3,000 to 4,000 illegal Indians. We have also about 100 people from Uganda who came to Holland after Idi Amin, and we have also a number of Indian children adopted by the Dutch community and to that you can add a few Afghans who have come as refugees to the Netherlands. So, that is the picture of the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands.

The diasporic identity of the Indians in the Netherlands is a combination of culture, language, literature, and influence of audiovisual medium, mainly films. It is this constituent factor that plays a major role in keeping the identity alive and their influence determines the identity of the future generations. In other words, they decide whether one will remain attached to the roots of one's parents and forefathers, or will get emerged or assimilated in the culture of the country of the residence and acquire a new identity.

What is culture? Lisano Fisher is from Canada. She wrote a poem and that conveys my concept of culture in the following lines. "A piano playing is an art, a piano being played is culture. Culture is a recipe for good food and art is preparing the food." Today, I have heard also two different explanations of NRI. One is Non-Required Indians and the other is Now-Required Indians. That is also a change of culture.

The Surinamese Indians in the Netherlands and the NRIs have a common cultural base. Yet, there is an invisible wall between the two groups. There is an unseen barrier. In spite of their common origin and cultural heritage, the two groups of Indians in the Netherlands have different characteristics and cultural difference. They also differ in the level of integration with the Dutch society. Due to their colonial past and knowledge of the Dutch language, the Surinamese Indians are more integrated with the Dutch society than the Indians. They are also politically involved. No doubt, their proficiency in the Dutch language has given them sons to participate actively in politics both at the local as well as at the national level. Being born and brought up in Surinam, they are loyal to their motherland.

On the other hand, the Indians have also integrated well in their own ways. Religion plays a very important role. India is a land of many ancient yet living religions, and is

an ideal place of a journey into mysticism. This has resulted in a strong flow of religious and spiritual teachings from India into the Netherlands.

Another factor for this strong interest in the Indian religion and philosophy is the independence of Surinam in 1975 and the subsequent migration of a large population of the Surinam population to the Netherlands. Majority of the PIOs being Hindus, there are several Hindu community schools where religious teaching is a compulsory part of the curriculum.

Religion is a part of our culture. Religion or religious festivals play a major role in the Indian life. It is also a social binding factor.

I will conclude with one remark because the NRIs who have chosen the Netherlands as their home are professionally trained. No matter how we dress, where we were educated from, where we come from, the Indian flag, Gandhi, Nehru, our icons belong to us all. Neither language nor religion binds the PIO Indian community in the Netherlands together. We know that India being more of a continent in size, diversity, that the Urdu-speaking Muslims from Delhi and the Malayalam-speaking Brahmins from Kerala would have even less income than an Egyptian or a Nigerian. One speaks Bengali or Hindi, but still presents their Indianness in their diasporic identity. In their heart, they are all Indians. That is the Indian diaspora.

Thank you.

### **Address by Mr Rajendra T Govender, Assistant Director of Arts, Culture and Youth Affairs, South Africa**

Thank You, Madam Chair. Ladies and Gentleman: It is an absolute delight for me to stand before you, but I must make it very clear that I am speaking here today in my capacity as a South African and not as an Indian. I do not consider myself an Indian because it will be suicidal for me in my country South Africa to consider myself an Indian. I am of Indian origin, though my ancestors came from India, and so I just need to clarify that very important thing.

Ladies and gentlemen, the southernmost tip of Africa is one of the most treacherous coastlines, yet the most fertile and scenic geographical locations of the world map. This region holds the sizable Indian population of approximately 1.7 million with an Indianness that springs directly from the development of its cultural, educational and linguistic edifices. The bulk of this minority heterogeneous community endured a 142-year process of development, since the inception of the first human cargo as indentured labourers aboard the ships *SS Tour* and *SS Belvedere*.

These pioneers initiated a strong valve system coupled with the sense of community and family, authentic Indian cuisine, freedom, human rights, fighters, strugglers, etc. The perennial flow of indentured labourers, ladies and gentlemen, and a subsequent strong linkage between India and South Africa was clearly articulated by the former President of South Africa, Dr Nelson Mandela, who stated: "We were poised to build a unique and special partnership forged in the crucible of history with common cultural attributes and common struggle." That is why we consider ourselves in South Africa "One nation, many cultures".

Ladies and gentlemen, the Indian community is sustaining and perpetuating many of the ancient practices without any form of limitation, because our Constitution in our country makes it quite clear that all cultures, languages, religions must be perpetuated

and promoted without any interference. So, we in South Africa have that luxury. The community seems to construct great linkages with the Indian diaspora in many fields through the upliftment of the cultural boycott.

The infinite number of Hindu temples is a clear manifestation of the community that believes extensively in promoting the spiritual domain. The temples in their designs and actual character may resemble Indian prototypes. However, they lack the grandeur and architectural format of those found in Tanjavore or Khajurao.

The establishment of various organizations like the South African Tamil Federation plays a significant role in enhancing the development of the Tamil language in schools and cultural events. Tamils, by the way, are the majority of Indians in South Africa in percentage.

Other organizations like the Hindi Shiksha Sangh, Bazm-e-Adab, Gujarati Sanskriti Kendra, the Andhra Mahasabha of South Africa, and all the affiliated structures are developing creative avenues in the teachings and training of the languages. I must pause and acknowledge my gratitude to the South African Tamil Federation and we have the President of the South African Tamil Federation, Mr Mickey Chetti, sitting here and the Vice-President of the South African Tamil Federation, Mr Bala Naidu, who have made it possible for me coming here and presenting this paper. The development of Tamil and other languages is absolutely important and pivotal in the development and maintenance of our culture and heritage.

As the culturally distinct minority group, the Indians maintain their faiths, principles and practices to perpetuate their identities strongly in the first decades of their arrival. The first and the succeeding generations were Indians born to immigrant parents who maintained their identities too. In every sector, whether it is performing arts, visual arts and drama, theatre, the Indian community is doing an absolutely marvellous piece of work in promoting the cultural identities.

The Provincial Department of Arts & Culture, the National Department of Arts & Culture and other government structures provide financial resources and logistical support to all Indian organizations to promote their language and culture.

With regard to the film industry, this is a very new industry in South Africa unlike here the Bollywood industry. Shortly or in the last few years, film producers like Anand Singh, Junaid Ahmed and Shan Murli have played a very significant role in promoting the film industry.

The struggle for freedom and the total emancipation of the marginalized people of South Africa reflects a strong association with the people of India. M K Gandhi's 21 year stay in South Africa is flooded with a number of battles waged against the governing authority.

Out of there sprang organizations like the Natal Indian Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress and there were a lot of freedom fighters like A S Chetty, Z Z Dubey, Ila Gandhi, Dalima Murli, Nagappan, Bali Nair, George Shiu Prasad, Yusuf Dadu, Monti Naikker, and Dr Ghunam, who played a pivotal role in the freedom that we are benefiting nowadays.

Since 1994, the Republic of South Africa has had 23 per cent of its cabinet positions in the National Government allocated to South Africans of Indian origin.

Kader Asma, J Naidu and Mack Maharaj are all names that are of the Indians. What of the future, that South Africa is in a state of dramatic change? Yes, right! Throughout the world, the Indians display a tremendous sense of pride for their culture and religious



background and we need to continue that. But I would like to add a very, very important thing here. The new South Africa has only room for one nation, the South African nation. South Africans of Indian origin must see themselves fully as South Africans with a cultural ancestry from India. It would be suicidal for them to consider themselves as being patriots to India. However, nothing stops them from having a linguistic or cultural patriotism rather than a national patriotism.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we need assistance for our ancestral propagation of our culture and so on. We ask the Motherland to assist us in maintaining that identity. The ICCR must continue sending troupes of music and dance practitioners, but they must consult us rather than bringing people that have no semblance to South African or Indian culture. They need to consult us so that we can have music and dance and so on that will be more prone to be understood by the large South African Indian community.

I must at this point in time say that the South African Tamil Federation, for example, has initiated an international platform for the promotion of language. "Iyal Isse Nadagum" – "music song and dance". We would like the brotherhood, here that is seated, to participate in this international event because it is a very, very innovative way of promoting the language and culture.

I would now like to thank the Indian Government and the organizers of this Pravasi Bharatiya Divas for the opportunity of being part of this august audience and share with you the South African perspective on the arts and cultural sector. I would like to salute those founding fathers of India for their efforts and perseverance to travel the world and contribute towards the growth and development of the Indian diaspora and similarly the well-being of all mankind.

The South Africans of Indian origin are part of the global village and an integral part of this progress of diaspora. We pay tribute in this new millennium to those around the globe that stood side by side with us to overcome our social injustices of the past.

Today as we move forward, we need to always think locally but act globally.

Thank You.

### **Address by Ms Vasanta R Vaikunth, Bharatnatyam Dancer, Sultanate of Oman**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is, indeed, an emotional moment for me. And there was not one day in my life I didn't cry thinking about that. It took me a while to realize that India is my Matri bhoomi, but Oman is my Karma bhoomi. So, I knew why I was there and I reconciled to that compromise. But I could never compromise on the fact that I am a great lover of art. So, we started, not an association but a group called Ragavarsha. I and my husband single-handedly would invite all the artists from India so that my heart is filled with joy just watching them perform. I got back to my dancing with great difficulty in a place like Sultanate of Oman. However, I have to say that the diasporic identity as I received the leaflets from New Delhi I didn't know what they were talking about, because I never thought that I lost my identity ever. I didn't have to make any special effort to keep up my Indian identity.

My subject in dance is spirituality. So, I am really thankful and grateful to the Sultan of Oman for giving me that patronage to continue with that, which I am still doing. I am also a columnist writing for the newspaper on life and living where I write on Indian philosophy and also they gave me an opportunity to give my Satsangs and discourses on Bhagavadgita and Vedanta.

The strangest part is that all the cross-sections of religions, castes and creeds in Oman show deep interest in reading these articles, which I thought, is a great challenge. Also, I can't but mention Dr Kapila Vatsyayan who is here and who has been a great source of inspiration to me, though I have never seen her before. But I published a book called "*Spirituality in Dance*" and, Madam, I think most of my references are from your book.

Though I lived far away, and somebody said you get nowhere with your art and culture if you don't go to New Delhi. I said, "Here I am." Today, in front of you and I am so emotional, so moved by this moment that as I promised the Chairperson that I won't take more than three minutes. I would like to stick to that. And we have also raised, we were the first people in Oman to start "The Festival of India" from 1986, where we have collected \$100,000 for the handicapped people of Oman and contributed to them.

And we also have diversified associations of various languages. Probably, the Government of India can look into this. The Indian Embassies, which are there in these kind of countries, can be a little more proactive and try to unite these associations and make them into just one unit. What we lack is the national spirit, as I would put it.

We are all very, of course, fond of our own states and our own culture, but more than being individualistic, if they are a little more proactive in uniting all these Indians together in every country, that would be very much appreciated.

As our Hon'ble Prime Minister mentioned yesterday about sharing your rich experiences as the Co-Chairperson also mentioned that we are ever willing to share our experiences, not only experiences, but we would also like to contribute something. We are not going to look for any financial gains, as that's not our motive, because that's not the priority in our list. What we are looking for is an opportunity where we can share a common dais, people with common interests.

So, I would conclude it by saying that particularly the Gulf NRIs are geographically so close to India and also remuneration-wise also they contribute a great deal towards India. Since we are on the cultural topic, it would be well appreciated if we are able to work together with the cultural departments in Delhi.

I also write political articles when it comes to politics. I will talk about that, but right now it is culture. So, it will be very much appreciated and this is a great opportunity that has come from our country. We wish you to know that we love, we are passionate about, India. We have a dream for India no doubt, and we love our country beyond doubt, and want to participate in building up a new era that will make the world feel very proud of us. I think enough has been said about this subject right from the morning. I don't want to be repetitive about that, but definitely it is a great moment for me.

Jai Hind.

**Address by Dr M K Gautam Professor,  
Department of South and Central Asian Studies,  
Kern Institute, Leiden University, Netherlands**

Chairman, Co-Chairman and Distinguished Guests.

Time is too short at our disposal, but I think I would like to give you something, tell you something, about the theoretical part of the Indian diaspora where an identity is formed and in which way the mechanism works. I think this is the general thing which we have to know.

Now, I gave the name to this topic of this paper "In Search of an Identity". I took the case

of the Netherlands, where of course enough has been said by my colleague Mr Saleh about the NRIs and PIOs.

One thing is important. When anyone immigrates to a country he takes with him his localized identity. When a group comes, then they are confronted with many variations of localized identities.

Now, what happens? When these localized identities come together, there is some sort of social interaction. But in that social interaction you would see that people like to have certain words, part of the grammar or the speech, or some sort of functions or events where they can participate.

So, in that way, this interaction invokes some sort of imagined identity. They imagine the localized identity from their own home country, the root culture and they imagine it and it becomes an imagined identity. Once this imagined identity is there, then there is a process, an ongoing process. In that process, two things come together.

The family crisis, we say the sanskar and especially the recruitment pattern which is the marriage because without marriage you can't move further. So, that comes there. And then of course big death, the deceased in which way we should give respect to a person. So this is the part of the life crisis.

Then, you have the festivals like Diwali, Holi, and whatever they are. So, there you participate and invoke for the prosperity of your culture and for the prosperity of your economic growth. Once this is done, then we get another problem. And this problem is, we develop the contested identities because there are many groups. You are not the only group. You have to interact. So, in this contest, you try to save, you try to maintain your own identity. When we go through with this contested identity, and then comes a process, either you are integrated, or you are isolated, or you are assimilated.

Having said this thing from the theoretical point of view, I will give you some idea about the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, we have just now said that there are two groups-the Surinamese and the NRIs, the PIOs and the NRIs. NRIs are having direct connection with India, but PIOs are having certain concepts in their minds, because they are the twice migrants like from Kenya people went to England.

So, what are they doing? And what have they done? They had three notions in life, which have kept them alive. And that is Apan Log, our people. I am not talking in terms of the caste system, the Varna system Apan Log. People barriers are gone here.

And then the second thing which comes here is Apan Bhasha, our language. Because without language you cannot communicate, and the worst thing is, if you cannot crack the jokes you cannot laugh. You can have jokes only in your own language, the Apan Bhasha, the language.

The third thing is Apana Dharma. And by Dharma I mean the values and norms of the traditions because if they are not there, then you are gone. So, these three concepts are then translated into different ways. In the Netherlands, you have the wholly Hindi institutions. Mata is sitting here, he is the head of the Hindi Parishad. Then, you have the religious systems. There are many associations. There is the Hindu Council. Mr Shekhar is sitting here. Then, you have the political associations where Mr Rajendra Ramnath is sitting here.

So, in this way, the whole of the PIO is an integrated community. There is another person sitting here, Ramlal. He is a big politician of Surinam, I mean the Netherlands.



So, what I am trying to say? The PIO has become an integrated European community, NRI is not. And the distance somehow is growing. I only want to tell you if we are talking about the Indian diaspora, transnational Indian diaspora, we have to resolve our conflicts, and we have to come together.

I would like to appeal to you wherever you are, if you can help, see that the gap between the PIOs and NRIs should be minimized or taken away completely. If it is not done, I am afraid that there is going to be a rift and this rift is going to break our feelings of Indian diaspora and that means the feelings with India, that means the feeling of "Insaniyat" what we say the "humanity".

Thank you very much.

**Address by Ms Vishakha N Desai,  
Sr VP & Director, Museum & Cultural  
Programmes of Asia Society, New York, USA**

Good afternoon.

I am honoured to participate in this historic gathering. The welcoming vision of this conference fills me with hope. Here, I know I am not alone in wondering about its long-term impact. Indeed, there are more than fifteen panellists on this huge topic of culture, language, literature and the diasporic identity.

Collectively, we have been allocated now less than 70 minutes. Now allocating less than five minutes for each panellist as we have heard, almost two minutes have gone. One wonders if anything much of significance can be conveyed in such a short time frame and one wonders about its intent. But recognizing the clock is ticking away and the bell is only a few minutes away, I will put aside what I planned to say, and I limit my remarks to a single point.

My one point is this. It is time that we both NRIs and India itself fully celebrate and accept the potential of our dual identities. Indeed, we have heard and have been reminded that the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said yesterday, "We do not just want your money, we want your ideas. We don't want your riches, we want the richness of your experiences."

As I see it, if India genuinely wants to embrace the diaspora in a substantive way, it needs to fully accept the fact that it is our non-Indian experiences that are perhaps even more important than our common Indian ethnicity.

Our Bharatiyata, our Indianness is a given fact and indeed it offers a clear sense of identity and magnetism for all of us. But it is our deep immersion in other societies from the US to Uganda, from Burma to Belize that grants us special gifts material and creative to give back to this country of our origin. It is this vital dialogue between our Indianness and our non-Indianness that can contribute much to India in its dream of becoming a truly significant global player.

Homi Bhaba, the distinguished cultural theorist and an NRI himself, has forcefully argued that it is the very mixing of cultures, the inner processes of hybridization out of which emerges a potent new third force. Bhaba concludes that this powerful synergy born out of dual cultural experiences may offer fresh identities for the globalized 21st century.

No one explores the rich terrain of the hyphenated identities better than the artists, writers, film-makers of this diaspora. They perhaps give us more than all the speeches

we have heard so far as we heard from V S Naipaul this morning. They articulate the subliminal, the in-between space. Neither purely Indian nor solely non-Indian that we who live outside India feel deeply in our bones. We connect to India at a profound emotional, elemental level, but we also long to make a difference with our minds and our creative experiences honed in our adopted countries.

Inherent in this observation is the challenge for NRIs and for India itself. For NRIs, it means that we must more confidently embrace India not just for family ties, but also as crucial to our professional and creative careers.

For India, it means an addition to warm rhetoric and we have heard much of it. There must be significant changes in systems and attitudes that enmesh NRIs on their return. It must be a two-way street.

Frankly, I think the challenges for India are perhaps even more demanding than for most NRIs. I worry that if India is in a mindset to focus on singularity whether in political movements or religious groups it will be much harder to open its heart to hybrid NRI identities. But since that openness and multiplicity is the very essence of the NRI experiences it must also be fully understood and cherished by those in India. Most importantly it is crucial that we move beyond talk whether in 5-minute sound bytes or longer into the realm of action.

Gandhiji said it best. Speech and action don't go together. Look at nature, she is continuously in action, never rests for a single moment, yet is mute. All this talking can hardly be said to be of any benefit to the world, he says, if not followed by action.

I earnestly hope that we can heed Gandhiji's advice. I pray that this conference is the beginning of a new era of concrete actions and not just the first of several conferences, which I dare say we Indians no matter where we are do very well. We like to talk. In that spirit, I thank you all for allowing me this very brief comment.

## **Address by Dr Rajen Prasad, Member, Residence Appeal Authority, New Zealand**

It is quite amazing how many changes your speech takes while you are waiting here and seeing your time dwindle. However, I shall be brief. I have some material, which I will leave with you. They are more in the form of speech notes.

We live as never before in a culture-conscious world and that is very obvious to everybody. It is so, because no continent is spared ethnic strife in the present context. There is not one, maybe Antarctica is one where it isn't, but I don't know how the penguins are getting on these days.

Now, because that is so and because the images of ethnic strife are beamed into our homes no matter where we live everyday. These images and these experiences serve the purpose in the context of nation-states as messages of what to avoid in the future.

So, any country that has ethnic strife and that does not take into account what is happening in its own society will reap the benefits of what is now reported to us. That's not being prophetic, it is simply being logical. However, those countries in the world that do best are the ones that have spent some time thinking about where it wants to go. They have decided what the national perspective is and they have developed, crafted in some way, an inclusive non-discriminatory agenda for the present and for the long-term that gives a place to every ethnic group in that particular community.

I am very well aware of the Canadian experiences, probably one of the best that there is. I must refer to Mauritius and I articulated that exceptionally well today in terms of

how, over a period, you have put that through. So, I must visit Mauritius and talk to you about that.

Now, in the New Zealand context, we have 70,000 Indians. But in the last 10 years, it's double. So, it has come from somewhere just over 30,000 to about 70,000 in a 10-year period. So, it has doubled very, very quickly.

We also as a nation-state are going through some important changes which emerge, from the interests of our indigenous people. Now, what happens to indigenous people probably is the best indicator to what will happen to groups like us who are migrant groups etc.

Now, our nation-state is struggling with this issue and doing particularly well, but it has a long way to go. In this context, we as Indians can develop our own identities, because the nation-state puts a high value on it, because it is beginning to articulate what the New Zealand society ought to look like in 10, 20 and 30 years' time.

In that context, we have many opportunities to develop our cultural identities, our art and literature. However, it is not that sophisticated at the moment because we are small and precious for an Indian organization in New Zealand. However, all I wanted to say then is that in the New Zealand context we understand the international context. We are trying to design for the national development, where we want to go. We are focussing particularly on the indigenous issues on the present time, but that gives us our best chance as Indians to protect, develop and enhance our Indian identity. The linkage with India in all of that is particularly important, but you all know about that.

Thank you.

## **Address by Ms Sonal Mansingh, Padma Bhushana**

Namaskar. It's a great pleasure for me to be here and I will start with thinking about the word diaspora. It's a word of Greek origin, which means dispersal, dispersing, to disperse. So, something that disperses from the core is a diaspora. But, there has to be a core and that has to be understood. The bottom line is the core, the essence.

I was also thinking about the word Pravasi Bharatiya Day. The Pravasi is a journey, but it is not a journey outwards. Again, I would say that we are constantly moving away from our centre from what we are and may this be an occasion to remember to journey back to our own centres. So, this is not the outward space, but I am talking about the inside space, the internal space. That is what the Indian art always talk about, the traditions of performing arts to which I am connected.

I am a dancer, I try to teach dance. Whatever I know I share. I love the movement, I love the ideas and concepts behind the movement. I love the concept of time and space that is enshrined in Indian traditions. I love the universality of messages, which are both vertical and horizontal. For example, Oh my God! That is very vertical. For example, the idea "Namaste Sathe te Jagat Karanaya, Namaste teti sarvalokashryaya..." (speaks in Hindi) "that which is omniscient, omnipresent, eternal. I enshrine that in my heart. I take refuge in that idea. This kind of verticality which says — (speaks in Hindi) "that is Vidya, that is knowledge alone which liberates us from our own ignorance" or which says that \_\_\_\_ (speaks in Hindi) "that is yoga which gives us expertise in our chosen fields. These are all the ideas that take us upwards from what we are, ennoble us.

Then, there is horizontality that which is equally applicable to everybody like "vasudeva kutumbakam" the oft-repeated adage that "the whole world is like my family" or



(speaks in Hindi) "May everybody be happy. May everybody be without fear. May everybody be well." That kind of an idea that's very, very horizontal.

We talk about a holistic vision now. Some words become very fashionable at a particular time, but in our art traditions, these holistic ideas have always existed and these are the ones which have gone international, which have gone round the world since millennia, which are ever new. For example, if I say in Oriya that "those eyes of a young girl, they kill without killing without drawing blood, those glances which are so sharp. But these eyes don't want to kill. These eyes want everybody to live. How?" And then the poet says that Krishna Arjun (Hindi). These eyes are so special. Everybody's eyes, actually. But these eyes are so special because in her reside Krishna and Arjuna together, the epitome of the idea of friendship, the epitome of Nar Narayan. The dark pupil is Krishna. The whites of the eyes are Arjuna.

These create one vision of love, of friendship, of universality. Now, such ideas don't remain ideas alone in the Indian art. They become mobile, they become visual, they become movement. They become sentiments and moods and rasa and this is the key word that I would like to share with you which is universal rasa. Rasa means juice, rasa means flavour, sentiment, mood, taste, everything. There is rasa in cuisine what you eat. This is very nice, this gulab jamun is delicious, that was a rasa. But when you see or hear a wonderful piece of Bach or Beethoven, you hear Ravi Shankar, you see a beautiful dance, even a sari, Ah! Ah! That Ah is rasa. That is the experience of rassa.

And underlining that again is Ananda. The absolute experience of delight, aesthetic delight of joy, which has no reason beyond the reason of existence of being and of that imagery experience. So, these are the things that I would like to tell you, that we project, we dance to, we experience, we share, we communicate, and these have become universal.

I stop here before Najmaji rings the bell for me. I would again say that may everybody enjoy the kind of Santosh (Speaks in Hindi).

I wish you all a journey back towards your centre wherever you may be in the world that you may always remain a Pravasi, always a yatri, always a pilgrim. May you always experience and live in the realm of light, joy and delight.

Thank You.

## **Address by Pandit Permanand Prasad, Director of Swaha International, Trinidad & Tobago**

Namaskar, everyone. I am glad that you raised that, Madam Chairperson. Indeed, it was my dilemma. What should I wear to this conference and I was moved by seeing so many people of my own country.

We are one. So, again, firstly, I just want to state that, of course, I am very honoured to be here to address you and speak a little bit about my country and our struggle in that country, Trinidad & Tobago.

Firstly, I came here with 19 other members. Trinidad is a place that is very far, as you know close to South America. The airfare alone is 1,800 US dollars per person. I came here specifically to speak and I am told I am allotted five minutes, so that is 1,800 US dollars for five minutes. You get the point. But, nevertheless, I take this very seriously. This is how serious we took this conference and how serious we take our roots with India. We love India, India is we. And we have come here and we hope that in this conference there will be some follow-up that you have seen our commitment that we are here. We have paid. It is difficult for us to come. We are here. And we are very serious about India.

As Shri Ram said "speaks in Hindi" \_\_\_\_\_ in Lanka, in Ramayana. That he is comparing the wealth of Lanka with that of his homeland, Ayodhya. That Ayodhya, home is home. And that the wealth, devotees and friends, if you may permit me, the wealth of the west is of course comfort to us, but our real love is Bharat. This is the way we feel and this is why we are here, I am here.

And I want to let you know that in our land there is a struggle. That struggle in the sense that there are many East Indian diaspora of Trinidad & Tobago. We have got about 1.3 million about half of that population is Indians and we have struggled to preserve our Indianness. Why is this so? Because there is a question of a community who is physically isolated from India. We have had over 150 years of indentureship and in such a time what has happened? It is a people who started off with a little or no political power in that country.

We were seen in the beginning as aliens in that country of residence. Not now but we face pressures of overly Evangelical Western religions that seek uncultured, who seek to embrace us various inducements such as education or a sense of belonging in exchange for giving up our traditions. So, there are many who would like to see us totally westernized and give up our Indianness and even our love for India. And those pressures are no longer open, but you can see them it as underground pressures. And I am here because I represent my country, my organization "Swaha" which was formed by a set of young dynamic people in Trinidad who are very serious about our Indianness. And we are just about 10 years old. We have managed to build many million-dollar centres in our country. We have incorporated in the United States of America. We have a following all over and we continue to work hard to preserve something that you, many Indians here take for granted because the cultures are born here. To hear a Hindi Bhajan in our country was a problem at that time. Now, we have six Indian Radio Stations, 24 hours a day.

We are fighting now for an Indian TV Station to teach Hindi in our country. I was born and brought up in a culture, I can't speak Hindi fluently. I am a learner myself and where do we turn for support to get this support to learn, obviously our Motherland.

This is my tenth visit to India at my young age of 35 and I have been spending my money to come here to establish links and roots. I see this conference as a golden opportunity. So, as I conclude, I just want to appeal to all of you out there whoever may be hearing and whoever can help that there is something that we need to strengthen those cultural ties, the cultural roots so that they can grow full in Trinidad & Tobago and we can take the message of India and culture of India into the West deeper.

Hindi skills. I must thank the Embassy led by Mr Gupta and others who have been very supportive of us in the last two to three years. But much more needs to be done. Hindi is taught at the University of the West Indies and I started a Hindu Group at the University of West Indies Hindu Society about 10 years ago and eventually we have Hindi being taught in the University. There was a pressure group to do that. But that again is only for those who reach the University level. What about the grassroots in the society. There are organizations like us who have the community groups that we are reaching. But we don't have the manpower, we don't have the computer programmes that we understand India, has to teach Hindi. This is what we appeal for. Whatever way we can get help in that way, it is most welcome.

Secondly, there is a large number of Indians in Trinidad, who want to see Motherland. They have agreed to come to India. I see great tourism, inbound tourism to India. There are many Indians who want to come. I am currently with these twenty people who are with me. They are all moving around also, visiting various sites. If we can have anyone who can help us with these things, in terms of bringing down the cost and so on, indeed it will be appreciated.



Religious tourism is, in fact, very big because India is seen as Motherland and is a religious root, a place, a holy land. Also, Indian musicians and studios, we have six Indian stations now. The music is developing and we have many musicians in Trinidad, who want to record with Indian musicians and studios here. If there is anyone who can help us with that we are also looking for that. And then we look forward to developing some form of relationship with TV-Radio productions.

And then finally, we are also in publishing. If we want to have some form of communication with those who are in newspaper we can have swapping of articles and so on. I am myself a writer and there are many others who can send articles to you, you can send articles to us. We can keep something going where a dialogue continues at all times.

I want to thank you very much for your attentiveness and for your interest in us. And, of course, again I pray that may God bless all of us. May Bhagwan in whichever form we worship Him, may He bless all of us and maybe preserve this Indianness. And our love for Bharat be reciprocated by you. May you, of course, feel the same we feel about it. We have pressure out there, you are not. You are living in India. We have pressure and we need your help. So, I appeal to all to please, in whatever way, do your best for us also.

Thank you very much.

**Address by Mr Jitendra Kumar,  
President, Economic and Technical Consultants Inc,  
Washington, USA**

Respected Dr Heptullah, Respected Minister Jagmohan, Co-Chair, Sisters and Brothers from various parts of the World and India,

Besides my technical expertise, I was founder of "Hands of India Society International" in 1976. We have been involved with lobbying in the United States on behalf of issues related to India and the People of Indian Origin. In the United States, you can't do anything without lobbying. Even people who don't believe in lobbying they have also become lobbyists in Washington DC.

About identity, I will start with that. First, I went to France as a student in 1965 and then to the United States as a student in 1966. We did not have any identity. Things have changed since then. In April 2000, there was a conference in Madrid, Spain, Conference of Western Countries and one issue was why United States has made so much progress in Information Technology, and not Europe. And the conclusion was that they have more Indians. That's why they made the progress.

Then, Germany decided that they are going to issue visas to the Indians and the opposition took this issue and a slogan became there "Kinder, not inder". Whosoever knows German, literally it means "children, not Indians", meaning let's train our own children rather than invite Indians from India. So, we have come to that stage where one of the most powerful nations in the world slogan has to be something related to India. It speaks about our influence all over the world.

In the United States as a commonly known thing for the next generation I am going to focus on the next generation, though I belong to the first generation. Generally, they say ABCD, American Born Confused Desi, and some people add EFGHIJ, Emigrated From Gujarat House in Jersey. But this is not true.

Yes, there are some confusions. It is natural. Because in the United States, which is a very large country, three times the size of India, the Indians are generally spread all over the country. We don't have colonies and localities where Indians are concentrated.

So, we live in and among other people. So, our youngsters are raised in truly two cultures. One at home, and as soon as they move out they are in an entirely different culture. So, there is a conflict. Besides a generation gap with the first generation, there is a cultural gap, which creates confusion, which in fact affects their aspirations also.

They don't know and sometimes it is very difficult, how to deal with the parents, how to deal with the relatives in the United States, relatives living in India, how to deal with their colleagues, their friends, how to deal on a religious basis, social basis, cultural basis. These confusions are there. But somehow they have reached a good compromise with their parents, with their relatives and a good compromise with the other American population and they have their identity. You ask them especially in the United States, "Who are you?" They will not say I am an American Indian, they will say, "I am an American."

Still the colour is there. They can't get rid of their colour. So, they understand their roots. They understand where they come from. They understand their religion. Not only they understand in spite of what we hear, they love their religion, they love their country, they have affection. They may not express as much as some people from outside, especially from the first generation, but at the same time they are not obsessed with these things. They take their life and they try to see how to live in that society. Besides all these conflicts, United States is a highly competitive society, which has advantages and disadvantages. That's the reason we Indians made progress in spite of some discrimination because the bottom line is what counts in the United States, not the friendship, not whom you know. If we can help the bottom line we can rise and that's how lots of Indians had come, they have made a lot of progress in every field, in the United States.

The disadvantage is that there is no security. You have to always keep running. Some people say Americans don't know how to live. They always keep working, running, running, running. So, both things are there and our youngsters have excelled quite a bit in studies. But unfortunately in sports, in politics they have not done that well. Hopefully, as the time passes, they do well. In the last elections, there were 22 candidates of Indian origin. Some are born there, some are born outside. There are more than 20 Congressional Aides. Anybody who understands about the United States, Aides are more influential than the Congressmen themselves. Sometimes, they have been advisers of the White House. Indians have become a community, a very prosperous community, very well educated. One-time Senator Wyden, who was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, once mentioned that I switched on my computer and it is starting with Indian accent.

So, hopefully, the next generation will take care of their aspirations in such a way that they don't forget India. They come to India with their dual citizenship. Hopefully, they take Indian citizenship also and they invest money in India.

And lastly just one thing I have to tell the story even with the bell.

Once there was a boat. There were three people sitting there. One Cuban, he took a very expensive cigar. He took a puff, threw it in the ocean and the other said "What are you doing? This is a very expensive cigar. You threw it away in the ocean?" He said, "We have too many of them." One Scot, he took a bottle of Scotch, very expensive Scotch, took a sip and threw it in the ocean. "What are you doing? This is a very expensive Scotch." He said, "We had too much of it."

So, one American picked up one Indian, threw him into the ocean. He said, "What are you doing? He is one of the foremost software experts in the world." He said, "Don't worry, we have too many of them."

Thank you very much.



## Address by Mr Jagmohan, Minister for Tourism and Culture

Respected Chairperson, Respected Dr Singhviji, and Distinguished Friends,

The subject is so wide that I have taken a very small point of out of it. Only one small point, which I thought we should convey to the persons who are coming to us as our friends and who have their roots here. The simple proposition, which I have, is what we in India can do for the diaspora and what the diaspora can do for us, and what we both can do for Mother India. This is the small point of my presentation. I would begin by citing a story.

When I was the Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, I happened to reform what is known as Vaishno Devi shrine. Before this reform was undertaken, the shrine was in a very bad shape and it gave a very bad image of India's culture and religion and our sense of cleanliness. After it was improved and once I was coming back from the shrine and coming down, I met a middle-aged couple who were from Amritsar. They stopped me on the way. They said "Governor Saab, we are very sorry, we apologize for stopping you. But we want to tell you something, which has been in our mind for a long time". And what they told me I would like to relate. They said, "Look, we are the very ordinary members of a middle-class family in Amritsar and we decided to go to United States. And before we went our parents advised us that we should go and pray for our success at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. Accordingly, we went and prayed. Today, we are very prosperous. We have always attributed our success to the blessings of the Mata. This happened more than 25 years ago. And we took a vow to come every year to the Mata. But the conditions were so dirty, so insanitary that we were only trying to fulfil a vow. We never wanted to come. It was with so much difficulty and we never brought our children along with us. But last year when we came we saw the remarkable transformation and we decided to bring the children. These are the two young children, which we have brought with us. Then, they introduced their children to me and they said, "Look, Sir, we are very impressed with what has happened here." And it has given us a very good impression about our culture, our religion, even about our environment.

And that is the best way in which the two parents could keep their roots in India, culture and religion and also introduce them to their children. And previously they were not in a mood to bring the children because they thought the children will get sick or they will form very a poor impression about our native land. So, they never wanted to bring them. So, if we are able to bring changes in India, particularly at our tourist spots, our spots of cultural importance and we are able to elevate our surroundings, our environment, spiritually as well as environmentally, I think it will attract a very large number of people.

The 20-million people who have gone abroad will be able to come to these places, renew their contacts and in the process serve the country by bringing more tourists and giving a good impression about our culture when they go back to the country of which they are citizens now. And they will also be having some sort of enthusiasm to bring the children and get their roots also renewed. This is the best way of keeping contact with India's culture and its religion.

Now, I will present here some of the shots which we have in this direction. During the last few months, we have made special efforts and I will show you what we have done. Now, just a minute. I will skip through certain things because of time. When asked about what the impact Indian life and literature had on him, Romaine Roland, the great French philosopher, said, "I feel India within me." Such is the spiritual and emotional pull of India's culture. I have little doubt that every constituent of the Indian diaspora, feels India within him or her. The depth of this feeling may vary, but it is always there.



We in India owe an obligation to the Indian diaspora. They have brought a great name to India and put the Indian capacities and skill at the centre of the world stage. We could discharge these obligations by enabling the diaspora to realize their aspirations of remaining in touch with India and drinking occasionally from our vast cultural reservoir. The diaspora from its side could do a little more. They could serve as a smooth vehicle for creating more interest the world over in India's history and heritage and her unique and elevating cultural values. This is the Vaishno Devi shrine story, which I have told you.

Recently, it rang upon my experience of dealing with Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu & Kashmir. We have taken a new initiative to make the centres and citadels of Indian culture more attractive for the Indian diaspora, particularly the second and third generations. I am confident that once they come in contact with these centres and citadels they would be fascinated by the power of the Indian mind and the strength of the Indian civilization that produced them. In the process, they could fertilize their roots as well.

They may also take to the country of their settlement some of the flowers that may sprout from these roots and share their fragrance with their friends and thus create an urge amongst them to see the wonder that is India. Wonder, not only in terms of beauties and bounties of nature, but also in terms of civilization that was born, bred and beckoned here. A civilization that sprang up from the original mind evolved such unique sciences - Yoga, Siddha and Ayurveda - and created three of the five greatest thought processes in the world, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Now, this is the picture of these Caves, this Ajanta caves. This is the finest manifestation of Indian culture which you can boast.

I will present to you three sets of slides. The first set would show the condition prevailing at the site before the new initiative was taken. The second condition that emerged as a result of the plans so far executed would be presented in the second set. While the third set would indicate those contours of our blueprint which have yet to be translated on the ground. Unfortunately, I don't know whether you want to have this light. You will have a better picture.

These were the conditions before the change was made, the ravaged landscape. Quickly, we can show this as the ravaged landscape. This will give you some idea.

These were the conditions before they were there. Unfortunately the light is not so good. Just a moment, this is the vision inside the cave before we started.

Now, these were the conditions beforehand. These were the slums and stalls around all these monuments that you usually see.

Now, this is the theoretic parking and movement of vehicles. These were the signages. This was the insanitary condition. This was the degraded environment, disorganized entry.

This was the position inside the Ajanta Caves. It is a world-famous cave, but inside there was darkness before because the people could see it only by hand-held lamps. Now, what has been done we will show it to you because it was feared that if the normal light is put up then they will get damaged because of heat. Now, at a distance of 3 kms we have developed this layout plan. Now, at the cave complex there is no human activity, no stalls, no slums, nothing of the sort. This new complex has been developed. Now, this is the only road which links between the new complex and the Ajanta Caves. So, in the Ajanta ground there will be total silence and peace.

Now, this is the new complex which we have developed at a distance of 3.5 kms. They are the buses, which you see, they are all environment-friendly, only to be operated either by battery or by Euro II.

Now, this is the complex which has been developed. This is the shopping. This is the view of the shopping where instead of all those stalls and slums, which you saw in the earlier slide, they have been brought here, and they have been accommodated in the best environment.

This is another view of those environments. This is the shopping. Now, this is the position at night at the new site, which has been created. This is the organized parking and circulation space. These are the garages. This is the place for the children when they go to Ajanta and the type of experience I have explained. Some of the young children sometimes pester their parents to come back quickly.

So, this is the position now at the foot of the cave. Now, these are the dhabas where you can have very clean food also. These are the public conveniences which have been created. Now, this is the slide, which we have already shown you. Now, this is the condition inside the cave. You can really see the cave in the real glory now because fibre-optics modern technology has been used to produce cool light to light up these caves. This is the position inside the cave now. You can see all those things in a fine way.

This is the condition around the cave complex now. This is a very generous way of linking it with the Sahyadri Hills and the Bogoda River because there are the caves spread around. You can have a very short-cut and go and see all the caves and if you want to go and enjoy the beauty of nature you can go to the hills. You will find one of the finest spots in the world so far as peace is concerned. This is the position which I have shown here.

This is the overall plan. I have already shown to you that parking and shopping plaza and so on. There is the position where you see tourist huts. They are being created. About five huts are being built. And then there is a children park, which you have seen. There is also a place called Interpretation Centre. Here, it is very important to explain that in this Interpretation Centre we are going to put up all the march of the Indian civilization. It will show how the Indian civilization has moved from times immemorial to the present time and you will have all the tourist spots and all these spots of cultural significance in two or three rooms that will be visible to any of the tourists who go there. He can, if your child from the United States comes, have one view, he can have a complete introduction to the Indian heritage.

And also in these very things we will explain what is the importance of these paintings in Ajanta. How they were made? What is their significance? I can give you one explanation, one illustration. There is a painting in Ajanta, which shows the King. And the King has decided to renounce the world. It shows also the Queen. The Queen is looking at the King and she is worried about her future. She is worried about the future of her children. And then there are maids of the queen. They are all worried about their own future as well as about the future of the Queen. But at the same time they are all very appreciative of the fact that the King is motivated by a higher purpose and wants to renounce the world in the Indian tradition after having enjoyed all the material pleasures. He wants to serve himself as well as the society. So, if you know this background, then only will you be able to understand how the artist has been able to capture the internal conflict and the various sources that are operating on the minds of those whose figures that are depicted in that painting. So, this is the type of Interpretation Centre, which we like to create to everybody so that one can appreciate and see the painting in the true context.

Now, here is another example which I have briefly given in Ajanta, in Kurukshetra. Now, Kurukshetra is hardly 2-½ hours drive from this place. What we are doing in Kurukshetra? Kurushetra, as you know, is the birthplace of Indian civilization. It is the very life and soul of Indian civilization. And what we are doing here? It has been totally in a state of neglect. And what we are doing here, we will show you in some of the slides here.

Kurukshetra is the very soul of Indian civilization. It was here the great battle of right over wrong was won. It was here that the great message of Gita was delivered. It was here again that the integral nature of the universe was understood. The pattern of cosmic reality unfolded and the concept of one-and-all and all-in-one evolved. Nearby also flowed the great river Saraswati which was the origin of Indian civilization and which disappeared in the sands of time due to tectonic and other changes. We are in the process of injecting a new life in Kurukshetra and making it a symbol of a resurgent and reawakened India. We have embarked upon a great adventure of unearthing lost cities which once existed along the embankment of Saraswati river and left a number of signposts of Saraswati, Indus civilization from Adi Badri to near Kurukshetra to Dholavera in Gujarat.

This is the position of Braham Sarovar now. This is the position of Braham Sarovar at night. This is another view of that Braham Sarovar.

Now, this is the Jyoti Sarovar. This is a very important thing. This was a pond like this before, neglected. And this is the place where Lord Krishna who was we believe to have given message to Arjuna about the Gita. Here is the Gita. This is the place now we have transformed.

This is the waterbody which has been created after cleaning all that in the first place.

Now, this is very important. This is the light and sound show, which we have created at Jyoti Sarovar. Jyoti Sarovar is a place where the message was given and this message was delivered in the language which is understood by the modern mind. It is a message what I call Gita for the modern mind. So, if you go to Kurukshetra you will see a large number of signposts of Indian civilization of Dhaneshwar, of Kurukshetra and so many others. And also you will get the message of Gita, apart from Jyoti Sarovar and Brahma Sarovar and Tapovan Park and so many things that have been created.

These are the new roads which we have constructed. Four-lane road in Kurukshetra it's a small town. This is the Purushottam Park, Harshvardan Park. Very few people know Harshvardan. Dhaneshwar was the capital of Harshvardan Empire and he has built a very big fort there, which was encroached upon. This is the position now. This is the restoration work going on. This is the museum and library that are there now.

Now, this is the excavation at Dhaneshwar, which is giving a lot of information about our ancient civilization. This is the excavated site.

These are some of the *murtis* that have been discovered at Adi Badri near Dhaneshwar at Kapila.

This is the Adi Badri site, where Saraswati used to flow once. This is the excavation going on there.

Dholavera is in Gujarat. It is 7000 B.C. This is the origin of the civilization much before Harappa and Mohen-jo-Daro. This is the new hub that has been created in Dholavera. And the idea is to have a total march from Adi Badri in Haryana to Dholavera in Gujarat along the last bed of Saraswati. You will see this is the Saraswati bed and all those points, which you see there in the map from this Rakhigadi, and Hanumangad and this

is now a better thing. All these clusters will be developed into tourist spots. All these excavated sites will be there. All these murtis, which have been discovered, will be placed. A sort of museum will be created and the type of hub which I have shown in Ajanta, will be created there so that they become a spot for tourist attraction, as well as, for recreation, as well as for those whose modern needs of just going for an outing on Sundays or Saturdays are met.

So, what is the advantage of this. You will create great centres of attraction and also a great introduction to our ancient civilization which has been lost about which our children and grandchildren who are now living in America may not be knowing anything. But once they come and visit Kurukshetra, they will be totally thrilled to see what our great forefathers had done, what our conquerors of our civilization had done and what capacities we have got and what skills we possessed and what we are capable of doing now.

All these signposts are intended to be converted into news centres in which elements of culture, tourism and clean civic systems would synthesize and the message of Gita for the modern man transmitted.

Now, in Varanasi, similarly this is the thing which we are implementing a new cultural centre. Now just for the sake of variety I will show you some of the slides. In Red Fort, a very big work is being done. But I will show you a few slides only.

Now, this was the site which was there a few months ago, and this was what was known as the famous Chor Bazar of Delhi. This is another site of it and along the Ring Road this was the type of thing. Now, this has been converted into this spot and it is hardly believable. I took our Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Advani, the other day for some function there for the INA and so on. And it took me quite some time to convince that this is the same place. He could not believe it. He said, "Look, this is the geography of it" Then, he realized it is the same place.

And this is the back of the Red Fort. Now, this is as you see, the Red Fort at night. This is another view from there. This is the Red Fort. Now, this is just where I would like to stop for a minute. This is the Chor Bazar place now developed. And you see the jharoka there. This is from which the Mughal Emperor used to watch some of the games at this very spot, which you have there. At this spot, during the rainy season, Yamuna used to flow here during the 1638 or so. And during the rainy season they had a boat and they used to go to the boat on a recreation sort of thing. And later on it was during the winter season it would become a sandy track and they used to have the elephant fights, another sport, just like our cricket matches now. Many people would come and see these sports, while the Maharaja, the King, the Emperor would stay from jharoka and see it.

Now, down below you see where there is a small place. That is the underground space which was blocked for about 200 years which we have now dug up and opened this to this very ground. This is an entry from the Ring Road side to Red fort.

Now, this is the Red Fort at night from the Ring Road side.

Now, this is the total map of India, which I have shown you. This type of hub is being created at least one in every state from some of the areas, which I have shown you, Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, Hampi in Karnataka, Chittorgarh in Rajasthan. There are two/three sites in Rajasthan, Jaisalmer and other places and likewise in Gaya and all those places. At least, all around the country such hubs have been created.

Now, the idea is to tell you that all our friends, who are now living in other countries and who were once citizens of this country and now they have become citizens of another country and after this dual citizenship probably they will be citizens of both the countries. They can be a great help to India in giving this due message abroad,

giving a clear, elevated image of India's culture and also promoting our healthy and positive tourism. And in the process they will also fertilize their own roots and transmit the knowledge about India through their children and thus keep them also in touch with India's culture and religion and its heritage.

Thank you. Thank you very, very much.

(Interaction with the audience begins)

Question: (inaudible)

Now about the security aspect I took only one point. About the security, I would like to inform you that there is a lot of false propaganda about the Indian security. India is a very large country, you know. We have one billion people. If any small incident happens anywhere in the small corner of India, we should not say or feel that the whole of India's security is threatened or you are feeling insecure. After these advisories were issued by some countries, we undertook a survey not only ourselves, but also we got the survey done by an independent agency from Hotel Association, from other people, from independent bodies. All of them came to the conclusion after interviewing all those people who are here at that time that we felt far safer in India than we found ourselves in Fifth Avenue of New York Street.

And there was not a single case during the last one year or two years where a foreign tourist has complained to us that he or she felt threatened on account of security or she was apprehensive about her stay here. They were all very comfortable and this is the position. Unfortunately, these countries are not very clear about their objectives. If you issue advisories saying don't visit the country you will be insecure mainly because some bomb has got exploded here. Then, you are serving the cause of terrorism, because you are encouraging terrorism because they will feel that by exploding one bomb we can undermine the entire economy of the country.

So, you are actually helping those by issuing these advisories and by creating some sort of a fear psychosis in the minds of people who want to come. I think, everybody is safe here and of course you need not go to the border of Jammu & Kashmir for visiting India. There are so many places which I have shown you. You can even take two hours' ride and I have only shown you a few places. There are innumerable places, to which you can go and visit. If there is any other question, I will be happy to answer.

Question: (Inaudible)

No. I agree with you that there are many deficiencies and the experience which you have narrated, if you go by train you will find so many squatters and slum dwellers. Our intention is the same. If you follow this type of project, bring more tourists, more income, we will have the resources to deal with that type of problems. It is not that we are underestimating what is wrong with India in certain ways, but we should look to the positive side and try to remove those negatives. This is our view and we have done our best. At least, I have spent my lifetime in cleaning up and sometimes in the process I got cleaned up myself.

So, therefore there should be no apprehension about it. I would also like to inform you, I think it is a good thing that you have reminded me and my distinguished friend Mr Khanna was also telling me that I should inform you about all our positive aspects. We should have a more positive outlook. About our negative aspects, we should try our best to remove them as early as possible. How can we do that?

Now, it is an opportunity for you also. We have created some sort of a cultural fund. I am prepared to create another type of fund if necessary in which all donations made are



free from income tax. You can say that I want to make a contribution for the March of Indian Civilization project, which I have shown you from Adi Badri to Kurukshetra along the river Saraswati up to Dholivera. If you make that contribution, we will be very happy to receive that money in the cultural fund and send it, spend on it and give a due acknowledgement on this. So, like this, if you can make a contribution to the cultural regeneration of India and all sorts of economic advancement of India we would be grateful and you will also not see after some time the sight, which you were seeing along the railway track. Thank you.

## Participant

In view of the perfect presentation the Hon'ble Minister, Mr Jagmohan, made of all the plans that you have, is it possible that the slides that were presented are made available to some countries where you have enough descendants of Indian origin in order to be able to make contributions to your cultural fund? That was my question. Thank you so much.

## Mr Jagmohan

Yes, this is a very good suggestion. In fact, we are already doing it. Because of the shortage of time, I have shown you a very small part of it. In London, I went to the Tourist Mart and we showed the whole film to the Indian audience there, virtually who have settled there. Wherever we are going we are showing this. And after our project gets a little more deep in it, we will show it all over the world. In fact, that is part of our publicity campaign. And we will be showing it and we are trying to make arrangements with the Doordarshan also, not only here but abroad we will like to show you. And wherever we have the roadshow, we will show this thing.

## Participant

I come from Surinam in South America. 125 years ago, my great grandfather came to my country and I am happy to be home. One thing I want to ask you is I don't know if you will get to my country, but you have an Embassy in my country. Please make it available in my country. We have total 7 per cent of the population of Indian origin and we will take it on ourselves.

## Mr Jagmohan

Definitely, we will come and show you; we will invite you and we will do.

Thanks a lot for your contribution. We will not only show our India to where the Indian diaspora is, but we will like to showcase India to where the Indian diaspora is also not there because we would like others also to come to India.

## Address by Mr Anilkoumar Pala, President, Hindou Samaj of Antananarivo, Madagascar

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to share with you rather briefly some aspects regarding the Indian community in the Republic of Madagascar and also to have thought of Madagascar.

While there is a great deal of familiarity in India regarding the Indian communities in East Africa including Zanzibar and South Africa on the one hand and in the Indian

Ocean islands including Mauritius, Seychelles and Lara Union on the other, during my visits to India it always strikes me that the people are not very familiar with the situation in Madagascar. This is all the more a paradox because in the very ancient times India and Madagascar were joined together in one landmass.

Madagascar is the fourth-largest island in the world. Despite great deforestation, it is still a very beautiful island, full of greenery, beautiful beaches and unexplored mineral wealth. It is also blessed with a small population, a little over 16 million. Of this number, persons of Indian origin comprise some 20,000 or a mere 0.125 per cent. Despite the small proportion, persons of Indian origin of Madagascar control a significant proportion of the economy. Estimates for this range from 15 to 45 per cent of the GDP. Indians are to be found in all the areas of economic activities, but their involvement in professions such as medicine, law and teaching is not significant.

In the recent legislative elections, two persons of Indian origin have been elected as Deputies to the 160-member National Assembly, coincidentally in the same proportion as the population. The Indian community of 20,000 can roughly be divided into the following social and religious groups-Hindus 3,000, Bohras 7,000, Khojas 6,000, Ismailis 3000 and Sunnis 1,000. Of these, most Hindus are Indian nationals as are some of the Bohras and very few of the Khojas community. The rest are either French nationals or in some cases Malgash nationals.

There are perhaps more than 1,000 that are stateless. Perhaps, something can be done for those who wish to take Indian nationality. Most of these communities look after their cultural needs through religious institutions such as temples, mosques, etc. In some of these places, attempts are made to teach Gujarati, Urdu, etc. However, I feel there is a need for an Indian cultural centre in the capital Antananarivo so that the younger generation does not lose its cultural links with India. I also feel there is a need for more business and other visitors to come from India to Madagascar and also for visits by leaders from both sides.

Madagascar is only about 4,000 kilometres from India. Indians have been visiting Madagascar as traders for more than 500 years. There is no reason why a land that was so well known in India, particularly in western India, five centuries ago, should not merit greater attention now. While the Indian community in Madagascar is prepared to help in this increased interaction, it also needs to be given greater attention by India.

Thank you.

I would also like to add that the Malgash area territory is over 6,000 sq kilometres only and is only one-fifth of India. Madagascar was linked to India by the plateau so many centuries ago. The Malgash culture, you will see, resembles greatly to the Indonesian and Malaysian culture. For 150 years Indians have traded with Madagascar, but have never lived there. In 1900, when Madagascar became a French colony then the French Government told the Indians to stay back in Madagascar.

India being a British colony, the French did not like the Indians to come and go very frequently between the two countries. In Madagascar, 90 per cent of the population is Christians and 10 per cent Muslim. The communities have excellent relations amongst them and they share very good cultural relationship as well. In Madagascar, all the festivals like Janmashatmi for instance are celebrated and Shivratri as well.

In 1950, your Consulate was opened, in 1955 an Embassy. The Embassy was opened in the 1960s. It has been 40 years that Madagascar has entertained diplomatic relations with India, but however nobody from the Indian Government has so far visited Madagascar. I would like to request the Minister of Culture here to open a cultural centre in Madagascar.

Thank you so much.



## **Address by Mr Rajendranath Awasthi, Hindu Council of Netherlands, Netherlands**

Chairman, Co-Chairman, and Distinguished Guests: Talking about identity, I will say that I am a Dutch, my first language is Dutch, second language is Surinami, i.e., Bhojpuri in combination with some Creole and Dutch and Hindi etc. I prefer to talk in Hindi.

(Speech in Hindi)

My own country is Holland. We have a democratic system of high level. we have a guarantee from the Constitution that we have a right for our own religion, our union, our opinion, but also right of employment, right of social security, right of own house. But we have respect for the Dutch Constitution, for Dutch Norm and Felu in comparison with our identity and we have to defend the Dutch Constitution, Dutch Norm and Felu and Dutch society. And that is a great challenge for all Surinamese in Holland.

I am very proud to say that in the European society the Surinami society is more successful. Our employment, our teaching, our education are going very well. In the future, we can do more and I am pleased to invite, Chairman with your permission, my colleague Dr Biseh Salet for a small statement in English, please. Thank you very much.

## **Address by Dr Biseh Salet, Netherlands**

Dear Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: Of course, it is also an honour for me to speak today on this Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. I am the Chairman of the Hindu Council of the Netherlands. The Hindu Council of the Netherlands is an umbrella body of all Hindu organizations in Holland, mostly eighty organizations for 160,000 PIOs, Hindus that came from Suriname. The Hindu Council of the Netherlands is recognized by the Netherlands Government as a consultation, as a discussion partner for all matters about Hinduism in Holland.

It is a privilege, ladies and gentlemen, we have already listened to many lectures where every time we make statements about protection and upgrading the Hindu culture in a multicultural society. I have to make two statements: one is the challenge for the coming generation of Hinduism to protect Hindu culture and upgrading Hindu culture in the Netherlands. The other statement is that it is necessary that it will be a cooperation between the NRIs and PIOs to come for an institution like Hindu Centre for upgrading the Hindu culture in Holland.

I thank you very much.

## **Address by Prof Satendra Pratap Nandan, University of Canberra, Australia**

Madam, Distinguished and Hon'ble Chairpersons, and Friends: It is, a very hard act to follow after so many presentations and particularly by the Hon'ble Minister for Tourism and his actor-friend Vinod Khanna. I come from the Mahabharata tradition. Therefore, I need a lot of time. But I am also aware that the Gettysburg address was barely three minutes and it said more than even the American constitution.

I want to say very briefly about what is this idea of India we have and my theory is, my thesis is, that it is the idea of India in our imagination that is far more important than anything else. When I am here with you, listening very carefully to every word that has been said over the last almost two days, I am reminded what Mahatma Gandhi, my favourite human being in the world, has said that "when isolated drops meet they have the majesty of the ocean to which they belong."



Amidst you there have been moments when I really felt that majesty is here because you are here. Now, I think this India of one's imagination is the most powerful thing and it is a gift again I would go back to Mahatma Gandhi. I have been to Pietermaritzburg where, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 1893, he was thrown out of the train. It is there that I feel though the free India and the Indian diaspora's journey really begins. To me, it is a place of pilgrimage. I have not been to Varanasi or Kashi, but whenever I come to Delhi I always go to the Birla House where he was assassinated because there is a lesson for us and I always go to Rajghat.

But the real journey for me has always been Pietermaritzburg, this desolate station 80 kilometres away from Durban. And that is a gift the greatest of all Indians has given and I make no exception, I do not think Buddha or Christ had the battles to fight that he fought one and the kind of Mahatma Gandhi's ways have made more people free in the world than ever in human history.

Let us not forget that in 1907 he wrote Hindswaraj. Seven years later, you had the First World War and a few years later you had the Second World War. When we talk of European, Western, American civilizations and hear a lot about yesterday how we should be the first in the nations, we should be like America. I think if you look around you will find that at the time of Gandhiji there were people like Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, Mao Tse Tung, Stalin, but this man gave us a vision that will last longer than any of the empires have lasted. It is a very important gift to us because what he tried to do was to free the imagination of humankind and I value that most deeply.

Let us not forget that 160 million people in the last century were killed by the sophisticated weapons and the sophistry of the most civilized nations of this earth. It is to me something that we should remember and when V S Naipaul, one of my favourite writers who gave voice and face to the faceless and voiceless Indians of the indenture system through his writings.

Even the great IT technologists at the moment or the NASA scientists have yet not opened India because they gave a greater Mahabharata view of India. It seems to me that if I have to give one metaphor about identity, it is really that human beings are like rivers. They flow through many landscapes, many languages, many literatures, many relationships, many countries, many frontiers and they are enriched by those tributaries. They also enrich the banks by which they flow. But if you ever go in search of the source of a river, you will find it has myriad of sources, not a single source, and that of course is a kind of identity that India gives us.

I could go on talking and boring you, but I have to say simply one thing that of course India is very important in our imagination, in our consciousness because every time something happens in Fiji as my Hon'ble Minister said, "Fiji is becoming bit of a coup-coup land these days. We look up to India and when Indian cricket team finds its Waterloo in Wellington, my son and I always want to go and help Indian cricket team because he is a cricketer.

So, let us hope that it also becomes part of our culture where we can help each other.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.