

ANTAR RASHTRIYA SAHAYOG PARISHAD BULLETIN

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April, 2022

बालेश्वर अग्रवाल जन्मशताब्दी के अवसर पर :

Baleshwarji-An Ideology and an Institution

✍ Kedar Nath Gupta



I will always remember and revere Shri Baleshwar Aggarwal as a man who infallibly implemented his vision with a passion. Baleshwarji turned his ideology into practice and accomplished an agenda worthy of an entire institution. I see him as an institution unto himself! He will be remembered by us friends and the generations to come as an icon of outstanding and dynamic social engineering in India. His dedication to the country's socio-political fabric, journalistic works and the bond he created between India and its Diaspora cannot easily be duplicated. In his youth, Baleshwarji tirelessly worked for the cause of journalistic ethics by strengthening Hindusthan Samachar, a pioneer news gathering agency in Hindi and other regional languages. Hindusthan Samachar spread across India and nurtured a band of journalists who went on to serve many leading newspaper in the country and overseas. He truly inspired young men to work for the country by joining mainstream media.

He was the tallest among his peers, yet he chose not to take any position in the Indian polity. He was a favorite of all who helmed the affairs of India after its Independence. The who's who of political, social and cultural fabric worked shoulder-to-shoulder with him. A devout RSS *Pracharak*, he was equally popular among his adversaries. In fact, he was often a bridge between the opposing sides. Even when he was over 90, people from all walks of life and many parts of the world strongly believed that their visit to the Indian capital would be incomplete without meeting him at the Pravasi Bhawan that he created in New Delhi's most coveted Deendayal Upadhyay Marg (erstwhile Rouse Avenue). His visionary organization, Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad—an apex body serving overseas Indians (PIOs/NRIs), is among the most respected and noblest.

It will not be out of place to mention that the late L.M. Singhviji, Baleshwarji and the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) International were the main forces that

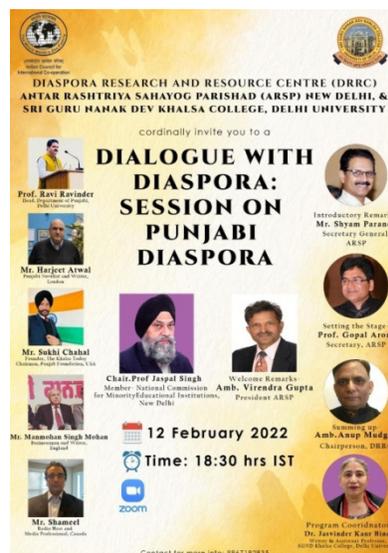
convinced Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayeeji to initiate the annual event, *Pravasi Bhartiya Divas* (PBD), which marked its 11 successful years in 2012. PBD led to the creation of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs by the UPA Government.

GOPIO International's India and GOPIO International, during their annual convention in New Delhi gave a standing ovation to their stalwart Baleshwarji, which he very humbly and shyly acknowledged. Baleshwarji will also be remembered for his initiative to travel to Mauritius by sea to interact with Indians there. He was a visionary and always came up with new ideas for the welfare of PIOs. He was very keen on setting up a library-cum-research center in the memory of Guyanese leader Chhedi Jagan.

Baleshwarji will always be cherished as the inspiration for the heartening and emotional events for India's Diaspora at the Pravasi Bhawan. He has been the dominant personality in India who drove the Pravasi movement and turned the Pravasi Bhawan into literally a pilgrimage for the overseas Indian.

Dialogue with Diaspora

Session on Punjabi Diaspora



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

Language is an important aspect of any culture. It should be preserved, promoted and propagated. Keeping this in view the dialogue with linguistic diaspora has been taken up and a session on Punjabi Diaspora was organised on 12 February 2022 in collaboration with Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, University of Delhi. **Prof. Jaspal Singh**, Member, National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, New Delhi chaired this session. **Prof. Ravi Ravinder**, Head, Department of Punjabi, Delhi University, **Mr. Harjeet Atwal**, Punjabi Novelist and Writer, the UK, **Mr. Manmohan Singh Mohan**, Businessman & Writer, the UK, **Mr. Shameel**, Radio Host and Media Professional, Canada and **Mr. Sukhi Chahal**, Founder, The Khalsa Today & Chairman, Punjab Foundation, the USA were the eminent panellists. **Shri Shyam**

Parande, Secretary General, **Prof. Gopal Arora**, Secretary, and **Amb. Anup Mudgal**, Chairperson, DRRC represented the ARSP. **Dr. Jasvinder Kaur Bindra**, Assistant Professor, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Khalsa College, Delhi University coordinated the programme.

Prof. Jaspal Singh in his opening remarks recalled the essence of Shri Guru Nanak Dev ji's message of solidarity, compassion, sangat (society), discipline etc. Shri Guru Nanak Dev ji went around distant geo-cultural centres having people with different faiths and way of thinking and had detailed dialogue and exchange of opinion with them. These experiences and exchange of ideas led to Shri Guru Nanak Dev ji's philosophy of humanity, societal brotherhood and inclusiveness. These values are also the core strength of India.

Prof. Singh also highlighted the contribution of Punjabi diaspora in Indian National movement. Gadar movement was an important platform for this struggle. The literature produced during this time demonstrates their willingness to sacrifice everything for liberation of their motherland. Many members of this movement paid a heavy price also including punishment and imprisonment.

Participants at the event while discussing the contribution of Punjabi diaspora everywhere in the world, raised some important questions like-issue of dual identity faced by diaspora, caste and gender dimensions, role of media, problem of generational shift facing the youth, lack of awareness about Punjabi literature etc. There is a need to seek adequate and appropriate answers for these questions through such dialogue.

Diaspora is widely recognised as source of soft power. Today, the migration of Indians to the advanced economies and the PIO communities are not purely jobseekers, but an important contributor to the development and progress of their adopted countries. The diaspora needs to work for establishing this fact with greater vigour and competence.

It was also mentioned that the US State of Illinois has declared the month of February as the Punjabi month in recognition of the contributions of Punjabi speakers in the Illinois community. The decision was taken as Punjabi is the ninth most widely spoken language in the world and it has a significant number of speakers in India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Some key observations of the session were:

- There was an effort to put in perspective the difference between Pravasi and diaspora. Evolution of Punjabi literature composed by members of Indian diaspora from 'Pravas' to 'diaspora'
- Institutions developed by the Indian diaspora become the source of education, training and adaptability for the new generations.
- Growing prevalence of Punjabi language in mass media channel especially radio. Diasporic experiences have an important component of empowerment and equity.
- Diaspora has given a new character to the Indian languages.

Participants were happy that such a dialogue has been launched. Lot of components of diaspora felt that that they have been left out from the mainstream discourse. They believed that such discourses should not be led only by a few groups. The outreach should be widened. They were of the opinion that wider the outreach better will be the outcome. There was a greater demand for continuation of these dialogues respecting the freedom and diversity of thoughts, and different viewpoints and faith.

Chair, Prof Singh also offered that there is a possibility of MoU between DRRC and Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab for academic research.

**** The full recording of the event is available at the link given below:**

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=PIDfMx2Wwwk&feature=share>

Indian Diaspora in Caribbean Countries

✍️ **Dr Ruchi Verma**

Research Fellow
DRRC-ARSP

Diaspora Research and Resource Centre (DRRC), Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP), New Delhi has started a fortnightly virtual programme, **'Dialogue with Diaspora'** in which, important members of Indian diaspora from different countries and relevant Indian experts are invited to share their ideas and experiences for deepening their engagement with India and for networking with global PIOs. As part of this series, ninth session on Indian Diaspora in Caribbean countries was organised on Monday, 18 April 2022. Dr Vishnu Bisram, who is a renowned Journalist, Academician, and Writer and also holds the position of Director of Indian Diaspora International Center in New York, was the key speaker. The programme was moderated by Shri Narayan Kumar, Hon. Director, ARSP. Shri Shyam Parande, Secretary General, Shri Mukesh Aggarwal, Vice President, Prof. Gopal Arora, Secretary, ARSP and Dr Rakesh Pandey joined in the discussion.

Dr Bisram shared his experiences in Caribbean countries especially in Guyana as a member of the Indian diaspora. He shed lights on the opportunities and challenges they faced in these countries as a member of Indo-Caribbean community. He mentioned that a major challenge faced by the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean countries is the declining population of them. For better education and livelihood, Indian community is moving to North America with no desire to move back, resulting in considerable reduction of population of Indo-Caribbean community over the years. Though with the new found wealth (oil discovery), reverse migration is seen in Guyana, but they are mostly coming back to invest not to settle there.

Dr Bisram pointed out that Indian diaspora in Caribbean countries donned multiple identities but still they are very proud of their Indian identity and their Indian connect is very strong. He urged the GOI and ARSP to take measures and play a greater role in enhancing and promoting the diaspora as a soft power as it will help in strengthening the relationship between India and Caribbean countries. He urged to build relationship with small Caribbean islands and the Indian population living there.

Dr Bisram mentioned that Indian foods, music and bollywood is extremely popular in the Caribbean countries, efforts should be made to familiarise the population with these cultural tools effectively. He also highlighted and appreciated the good will efforts of government of India during the Covid times towards the Caribbean countries especially for smaller islands of the Caribbean.

On the question of oil discovery and rising GDP of Guyana, Dr Bisram emphasized that local population is yet to get the full advantage of it but now the efforts are being made to percolate these benefits to them. Guyanese government is making efforts to diversify the economy. He also mentioned that Guyana is the largest recipient of aid from India under LOC's. He suggested that India should use this oil relationship for mutual benefits.

While discussing about the issue of language, Dr Bisram stressed that most Indian people in Caribbean countries have interest in learning the Hindi language but the opportunities provided are limited. He was happy to announce that through his and his group efforts, Guyana government has agreed to introduce Hindi in the regional CSE, so now there will be a curriculum and textbooks in Hindi language.

Some important suggestions emerged during the discussion are given below:

- Indo-Caribbean youth is migrating to United States for better education. Heightened efforts should be made by India via e- teaching and e-learning to provide opportunity to them to study in the higher educational institutions of India. More scholarships should be provided to them. Skill development facility should also be provided to them.
- For the promotion of Hindi, it was suggested that High Commission of India in these Caribbean countries can provide classes in conversational Hindi, which then shifts to rural areas, as Indians are mostly spread out in rural areas due to agricultural occupation.
- India should make conscious efforts to provide sessions of Indian cultural aspects like-music, food, language etc. in rural areas of these Caribbean countries. Various kinds of EXPO's of Indian products can also be organised in order to create awareness about them.

The participants praised this dialogue with diaspora initiative and suggested to have more such sessions with PIOs in Caribbean countries to address their needs and expectations.

**** The full recording of the event is available at the link given below:**

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=aGSqyYZIEZw&feature=share>

International Conference on

‘Mahatma Gandhi and Indian Diaspora under European Rule and Later’ (23-24 April 2022)

Dr Ruchi Verma

Research Fellow

DRRC-ARSP

An international conference on ‘Mahatma Gandhi and Indian Diaspora under European Rule and Later’ was jointly organised by Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad (ARSP) in collaboration with the Organisation for Diaspora Initiatives (ODI) and supported by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and Jean Monnet Project- Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, Centre for European Studies, JNU on 23 and 24 April 2022 at BHU, Varanasi.

This two days important conference has been divided into Inaugural session, one plenary session, 10 technical (parallel) sessions on several important themes which gave everyone the food for thoughts, and Valedictory session. Over 50 scholars and experts from India and Abroad deliberated in this conference physically as well as virtually. The conference has been attended by many fold attendees and it has also been covered by the local media channel.

The chief guest in the inaugural session was Prof. Santishree Pandit, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. The session was chaired by Prof. Shubha Rao, Head, Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. Prof. Tej Pratap Singh, Professor, BHU moderated the session. Prof. Ajay Dubey, Rector, JNU & President, ODI India, gave the key note address and set the tone of the conference. Distinguished

speaker in this session were Prof. Betty Govinden, Former Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Durban. Vote of thanks was presented by Prof. KK Mishra, Dean FSS, BHU.

Prof. Santishree Pandit highlighted the importance of diaspora as an instrument of soft-power & Indian Foreign Policy. The importance of Indic Narratives, the South-Indian narratives of Diasporic models and the Rajendra Chola model was also mentioned by her.

Prof. Ajay Dubey in his keynote address spoke about various phases of relationship between Gandhi & Indian Diaspora in South Africa. Gandhi also inspired and made South Africans realize the need of finding a leader for themselves.

Prof. Betty Govinden in her address spoke about the 21 years of Gandhi in South Africa, she said “South Africa gave India a political reformer and a social activist and India gave Gandhi to the world.” She stressed upon understanding Gandhi’s background in proper perspective, which got changed gradually over evolution.

Highlight of the conference was the plenary session which was chaired by Prof. Gopal Arora, Secretary, ARSP. He stressed the need to consider Indian Diaspora not just as an asset but as mother India’s children abroad. The distinguished panelists of this session were Dr Vasavi Chakka, Founder President, ARAALA Inc., USA, Dr Vishnu Bisram, Journalist, Writer, Guyana, Prof. Bidyadhar Sa, University of West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Navniit Gandhi, Author & Academician, Kuwait, and Dr. Sakul Kundra, Assistant Professor, University of Fiji, Fiji.

Dr. Chakka mentioned that there is a need of adopting the Gandhian values in Indian Education system. She also spoke that there is a requirement to counter the propaganda narratives against Indian civilization by world media and to increase the role of Indian diaspora youth abroad.

Dr. Bisram spoke about the plight of Indian indentured workers, though there are mixed feelings about Gandhi’s contribution among the masses; people question Gandhian methods but Gandhi’s contribution in addressing and eliminating the indentureship cannot be ignored as well as his methods.

Dr. Gandhi spoke about the problems of Indian Diaspora in Kuwait. Explaining about the three waves of migration she discussed the formation of perception about Indian Diaspora; how perceptions can be changed and what kind of communication must take place at individual, diplomatic and political level for resolution of problems faced by Indian Diaspora in Kuwait was highlighted by her.

Prof. Shah narrated the story of forced transportation of indentured labour to foreign lands and Gandhi’s role in its elimination.

Dr. Kundra spoke about Fiji & indentured system; path towards political independence (Indo-Fijian), Gandhi and indentured system and explained about various stages of constitutional development and conditions of Indians in Fiji.

The technical sessions deliberated on the relevant themes. The participants explained in detail as to how Mahatma Gandhi touched upon every important aspect of human society- political, social, economic, cultural, international relations, sustainability, etc. Wide ranging and contemporary themes were seen in full sync with the recognition of Mahatma Gandhi’s contribution towards the diaspora. The participants also recognise that the influence of the hardships faced by the Indian diaspora in Africa and elsewhere on Gandhiji’s political thoughts is equally impressive.

The conference culminated with an equally impressive valedictory which was presided over by Prof. Santishree Pandit, Hon’ble Vice Chancellor, JNU, whereas the chief guest was Prof. Sanjay Singh, Honourable Vice Chancellor, Baba Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Lucknow. Shri Shyam Parande, Secretary-General, ARSP gave the valedictory address. Shri Narayan Kumar, Hon. Director, ARSP, was the distinguished guest.

Prof. Sanjay Singh in his chief guest address spoke about how India attracted people from the world for various reasons and intentions, that Indians unlike others began migrating &

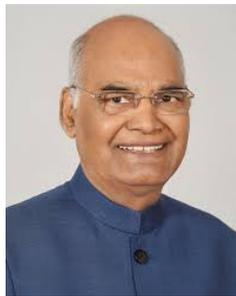
displacing specifically in search of peace and prosperity. Today, the Indian society and diaspora are valued as much for their skills as for their commitment to peace and tolerance.

Shri Shyam Parande in his valedictory address mentioned that Gandhiji's idea of development was based on essential need rather than greed. Concept of self sustainability was given by Gandhiji. He wanted everyone to be self sustainable. 'Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Je Peer Parai Jaani Re' was the favourite bhajan of Gandhiji. He always believed that one who is a vaishnav, knows the pain of others, does good to others, without letting pride enter his mind. He was a practical man and used to imbibe the values himself first rather than preaching to others. Shri Parande also mentioned that the Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence have left a deep impression on the larger national character of Indians, including the diaspora.

Shri Narayan Kumar mentioned that Gandhiji was convinced that without the mother tongue people would not be able to belong to their cultural roots and understand the society's problems in the right perspectives. He therefore, wanted the primary education to be in the respective mother tongue.

The participants also agreed that such conferences should be organized more regularly, as there is still a need to carry the Gandhian message to the younger generation through such kind of discussions. The conference ended with the vote of thanks.

Indian President lauds Indian Community Role in Changing Geo-Politics Abroad



The safety, security, welfare and well-being of all Indian citizens abroad is a priority for the nation, President Ram Nath Kovind has said as he lauded the achievements of the diaspora which has been taking small steps towards formulating the policies of their respective countries and playing a role in “changing the geo-politics of the region”. While addressing the members of the Indian community and ‘Friends of India’ at the Indian community reception in Amsterdam on 6 April, President said, “The Indian community abroad is our strength and pride”.

During his visit to the Netherlands from April 4 to 7 at the invitation of King Alexander and Queen Maxima, President Kovind also held discussions with Prime Minister Mark Rutte on bilateral issues.

“When I read about your achievements, when you occupy a big office or file a nomination, taking small steps towards formulating the policies of your respective countries, you are playing a role in changing the geo-politics of the region. Please remember that the land of your ancestors is very proud of you,” Kovind told the Indian diaspora. He said the safety, security, welfare and well-being of Indian citizens in all parts of the world is a priority for India.

Kovind noted that the Indian community in the Netherlands is the largest Indian-origin diaspora in mainland Europe with more than 200,000 members of Hindustani-Surinami community and more than 60,000 Indian professionals and students.

“The Indian community is the most important pillar of growing India-Netherlands bilateral relations and serves as a bridge between not just India and the Netherlands, but between India and Europe,” he said. “India is deeply committed to strengthen its bond with the diaspora and to attend to your needs. In the past few years, our engagement with and outreach to the Indian diaspora has grown manifold. We have taken several initiatives under the maxim of 4Cs Care, Connect, Celebrate and Contribute,” he said.

“To increase the participation of the diaspora youth and familiarise them with Indian youth and their Indian roots, we started the Know India Programme and Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children for the children of Person of Indian Origin to join Indian universities for higher education,” he said.

The president underlined that the Overseas Citizen of India cards have been issued to give status and privileges in many areas. The travel to India has been facilitated through issuance of long-term visa and E-visa.

4.4 million diaspora defined India’s image in US society: S Jaishankar



Underlining the transformation in India-US ties in the last two decades, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S Jaishankar said that a key driver in this change has been the human element which includes 4.4 million Indian diaspora that has defined India’s image in US society. He made these remarks during an event at the Howard University for India-US Education Collaboration.

Blinken and Jaishankar interacted with Indian students, scholars, and researchers who have worked in the United States, and US students, scholars, and researchers who have studied, worked, or conducted research at an Indian higher education institution.

The EAM noted that a key driver in this change has been the human element. “The 4.4 million Indian diaspora has literally defined our image in this society and helped forge relationships that are an enormous source of strength for us,” he said. “At its centre are students, academics, and professionals who have contributed to America’s progress even as they remained a bridge between the two societies,” he added.

Speaking about the India-US connect, Jaishankar said the most powerful symbol of the ties is the inspirational bond between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Junior. “That bond was forged through the relationship with Howard Thurman, the dean of the chapel and later by Dr William Stuart Nelson who was the dean of the school of the religion,” he added.

For India-US ties to grow, Jaishankar said that it is necessary that there is a better understanding of India and the world, on the part of young Americans. This event was seen as an opportunity to build off the formation of a 'Working Group on Education and Skill Training.

Parliamentary panel recommends preparation of database of Indians abroad

India should prepare a database of its nationals abroad to deal with any possible emergency situation, a parliamentary committee said on 23 March 2022, citing the implications of the recent crisis in Afghanistan and the conflict in Ukraine for the security of Indians.

The parliamentary committee on the Ministry of External Affairs, in a report, also recommended that a standard operating procedure (SOP) should be put in place for evacuation of Indian nationals from abroad in case of exigencies and the same may be made available at all Indian missions and posts. "The recent political crisis in Afghanistan and conflict in Ukraine is a gross reminder about the implications on safety and security of Indian nationals," the committee said.

In its report tabled in Parliament, the committee described as "commendable" the MEA's role in the evacuation of stranded Indians from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Last August, India launched an evacuation mission called "Operation Devi Shakti" to bring back the Indians from Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in Kabul following the withdrawal of the American troops from that country by the US. India launched "Operation Ganga" on February 26 to evacuate its nationals from Ukraine after Russia launched an attack on the eastern European country. India ensured the return of over 22,000 of its citizens from Ukraine following the conflict.

The committee said it was aware that during outbreak of conflict or any other exigencies, the evacuation of Indian citizens is planned on a case-to-case basis. "The committee desire that a database of Indian nationals abroad may be prepared and updated on a regular basis for emergency situations," it said. "Furthermore, a standard operating procedure (SOP) for evacuation of Indian nationals stranded in exigencies must also be chalked out and the same may be made available at all Indian missions/posts abroad," it added.

Days to Remember in May, 2022

May 01	:	International Worker's Day
May 08	:	Remembering World War II Victims
May 08	:	Red Cross Day
May 10	:	First War of India Independence
May 11	:	National Technology Day
May 12	:	Nurses Day

May 16: Purnima

May 15	:	International Day of Families
May 17	:	Norway - Constitution Day
May 22	:	Yemen - National Day

May 26	:	Guyana - Independence Day
May 28	:	Azerbaijan - Republic Day
May 28	:	Ethiopia - National Day
May 29	:	International Day of United Nations Peace Keepers

May 30 : Amavasya

वातायन (यू.के.) की 100वीं संगोष्ठी प्रवासी भवन में आयोजित



वातायन(यूके), अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद, वैश्विक हिन्दी परिवार एवं अक्षरम के संयुक्त तत्वावधान में आयोजित वातायन-यूके की सौवीं संगोष्ठी, दिनांक 05 अप्रैल, 2022 को प्रवासी भवन में आयोजित किया गया जिसमें देश-विदेश के लब्ध प्रतिष्ठित लेखकों, साहित्यकारों और हिंदी-प्रेमियों ने प्रत्यक्ष रूप में ऑनलाइन भाग लिया। इस कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ डॉ. एस के मिश्रा द्वारा संपादित एक लघु फिल्म से हुआ, जिसमें विश्व भर के हिंदी प्रेमियों ने वातायन-यूके की शतकीय संगोष्ठी के सुअवसर पर शुभकामनाएं प्रकट की। मनु सिन्हा द्वारा वंदना की प्रस्तुति के बाद विश्व हिंदी जगत की बेहतरीन प्रस्तुतकर्ता और पुरस्कृत लेखिका, अलका सिन्हा ने संचालन की बागडोर संभाली। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद के महासचिव श्याम परांडे जी ने अतिथियों का स्वागत करते हुए कहा कि हिन्दी एवं अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं का प्रसार विदेशों में भी हो रहा है। वातायन(यूके) की अध्यक्ष, मीरा मिश्रा कौशिक, ओबीई, ने अपने उद्बोधन में कहा कि वातायन गत 19 वर्षों से अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर साहित्य, संस्कृति, कला और भाषा से जुड़े हिंदी प्रेमियों के लिए एक सशक्त मंच बनकर उभरा है, विशेषतः लॉकडाउन के दौरान, दिव्या माथुर, डा पद्मेश गुप्त और अनिल शर्मा जोशी के मार्गदर्शन में वातायन(यूके)की युवा टीम के साथ उन्हें भी कार्य करने का अवसर मिला।

ऑक्सफोर्ड बिजनेस कॉलेज के निदेशक डॉ पद्मेश गुप्त ने वातायन की स्थापना, उद्देश्य एवं उपलब्धियों पर विस्तृत प्रकाश डालते हुए बताया कि प्रवासी भवन-दिल्ली में वातायन के 100वें कार्यक्रम का आयोजन ऊर्जा प्रदान करता है। 2 अप्रैल 2020 से लॉकडाउन संगोष्ठियों का आयोजन प्रत्येक शनिवार को होता आया है, इसके अतिरिक्त, प्रति वर्ष वातायन सम्मान समारोह, पुस्तक लोकार्पण, परिचर्चा, संवाद, साक्षात्कार, स्मृति-संवाद, लोक-गीत जैसी श्रृंखलाओं के माध्यम से विश्व भर के सैंकड़ों लेखकों और हिंदी प्रेमियों को जोड़ा जा चुका है। वातायन की सहयोगी संस्था यूके हिंदी समिति के हिंदी पाठ्यक्रम को 50 से अधिक हिंदी संस्थाओं ने मान्यता दी है।

अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद के अध्यक्ष, पूर्व राजदूत वीरेंद्र गुप्ता जी ने कहा कि कोविड काल में वातायन(यूके) ने हिंदी सेवा का जो कार्य अपने कंधे पर लिया है, वह बदलाव ला रहा है, वर्तमान पीढ़ी को भी अपने ही देश में हिंदी के लिए अपनी संकुचित मानसिकता का त्याग करना चाहिए। सुप्रसिद्ध लेखिका चित्रा मुद्गल ने अपने उद्बोधन में कहा कि विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन की परिकल्पना को साकार एवं सफल बनाने के पीछे ऐसे ही हिंदी प्रेमी संस्थाओं का अहम योगदान रहा है। भाषा के विकास के लिए सोचना होगा कि सिर्फ हम भारतीय ही केवल हिंदी में बोलें बल्कि इसे विदेशी मूल के लोग भी अपनाएं। राजभाषा राष्ट्रभाषा के प्रति जन जन की जिजीविषा हो इसके लिए वातायन यूके ने निरंतर सफल प्रयास किया है। सुविख्यात लेखिका नासिरा शर्मा ने ब्रिटेन में हिंदी साहित्य और शिक्षण के संदर्भ में कहा कि पाठ्यक्रम ऐसा हो कि लोगों को हिंदी से स्वयं मोहब्बत हो जाए। उन्होंने हिंदी गोष्ठियों और सम्मेलनों में विदेशी मूल के लोगों की सहभागिता सुनिश्चित करने की पैरवी की। कार्यक्रम के अध्यक्ष, पूर्व कुलपति प्रोफेसर सच्चिदानंद जोशी ने

हिंदी सिनेमा का उदाहरण देते हुए कहा कि फिल्म में किसी पात्र का शुद्ध हिंदी बोलना हास्य-परिहास का बोध कराता है, हमें ऐसे मिथक तोड़ने होंगे। हिंदी के प्रति अंदर से उत्साह पैदा हो और ऐसे सकारात्मक वातावरण का संयुक्त प्रयास से निर्माण होना चाहिए तभी हम हिंदी को आगे बढ़ा सकते हैं।

दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय के इंद्रप्रस्थ महिला महाविद्यालय में प्रोफेसर और 'वातायन' की स्मृति संवाद शृंखला की समन्वयक डॉ रेखा सेठी ने वातायन की साप्ताहिक संगोष्ठियों की भूरी भूरी प्रशंसा करते हुए कहा कि वातायन से जुड़े सभी लोग रचना करते हैं यह प्रयास सराहनीय है। उन्होंने एशिया, यूरोप और अमेरिका में हिंदी भाषा पाठ्यक्रम के विभिन्न चरणों को विस्तार से बताया। साथ ही अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारतीय रचनाकारों द्वारा हिंदी शोध पर आधारित कार्यों का भी उल्लेख किया। केम्ब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय में हिन्दी की परीक्षक डॉ अरुणा अजितसरिया, एम.बी.ई., ने ब्रिटेन में हिंदी शिक्षण को लेकर प्रारंभ, प्राथमिक एवं उच्च स्तर तक की शिक्षण व्यवस्था पर प्रकाश डालते हुए कहा कि ब्रिटेन में हिंदी शिक्षण अब तक एक लघु उद्योग के रूप में चल रहा है, इसे विस्तार देना होगा। ब्रिटेन से सुरेखा चोफला ने यूके हिंदी समिति द्वारा हिंदी शिक्षण के कार्यों का विस्तृत उल्लेख किया। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय सहयोग परिषद के मानद निदेशक नारायण कुमार जी ने भारतीय भाषाओं के साथ ही हिंदी के सतत् विकास पर जोर देते हुए कहा कि विश्व भर में हिंदी प्रेमियों के लिए वातायन एक सशक्त मंच के रूप में स्वीकारा जा रहा है। केंद्रीय हिंदी संस्थान के उपाध्यक्ष अनिल शर्मा जोशी ने भाषा में भविष्य की पैरवी पर बल देते हुए कहा कि पैन्डैमिक काल की चुनौतियों में वातायन-यूके ने हिंदी के प्रचार और प्रसार में जो पहल की, वह सराहनीय है। केन्द्रीय हिंदी संस्थान की निदेशक, डॉ बीना शर्मा जी के संक्षिप्त किन्तु सुंदर धन्यवाद ज्ञापन के साथ कार्यक्रम का समापन हुआ। सभागार में उपस्थित थे वातायन(यूके) की संस्थापक और लेखिका दिव्या माथुर, कोषाध्यक्ष शिखा वाष्ण्य, अरुण सबरवाल और शुभम राय त्रिपाठी, वातायन-भारत की प्रमुख डॉ मधु चतुर्वेदी, डॉ मनोज मोक्षेन्द्र, हरजेंद्र चौधुरी, डॉ एस के मिश्रा, आदेश पोद्दार, इत्यादि, विश्व के अनेक देशों से हिंदी प्रेमियों की वर्चुअल उपस्थिति स्मरणीय रहेगी, जिनमें सम्मिलित थे प्रो. तोमियो मिजोकामी, प्रो लुडमिला खोंखोलोव, डॉ तात्याना ऑरनसकाया, अनूप भार्गव, संध्या सिंह, आराधना झा श्रीवास्तव, डॉ प्रभा मिश्रा, जय शंकर यादव, डॉ के श्रीवास्वव, अथिला कोटवाल, विवेकमणि त्रिपाठी, डॉ निखिल कौशिक, जय वर्मा, डॉ शिव पांडे, डॉ सुनील जाधव, कादंबरी मेहरा, शैल अग्रवाल, इत्यादि।

भारत से काठमांडू के लिए लाइन



प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने बिहार के जयनगर से नेपाल के कुर्था के लिए रेल लाइन का उद्घाटन किया, जिसके कारण दोनों देश के बीच आवागमन और आसान हो गया। इसके अलावा बिहार से नेपाल के लिए एक और नई रेलवे लाइन बनने जा रही है। बिहार के रक्सौल से नेपाल की राजधानी काठमांडू तक 136 किलोमीटर लंबाई में इस रेलवे लाइन के निर्माण के लिए 2018 में स्वीकृति मिल चुकी है। फिलहाल इस परियोजना के तीसरे चरण के सर्वे का काम चल रहा है।

यह परियोजना 16 हजार 550 करोड़ रुपये की है। इसके अंतर्गत 13 स्टेशन प्रस्तावित हैं। प्रस्तावित रेललाइन में रक्सौल, बीरगंज, बगही, पिपरा, धूमरवाना, काकड़ी, चंद्रपुर, धीयाल, शिखरपुर, सिसनेरी, सथिकेल और काठमांडू सहित कुल 13 स्टेशन होंगे। इसमें 32 रोड ओवरब्रिज, 53 अंडरपास, 259 छोटे पुल तथा 41 बड़े रेल पुल भी होंगे। 39 छोटी-बड़ी सुरंगों का भी निर्माण होना है, जिसकी कुल लंबाई 41.87 किलोमीटर है।

रक्सौल से काठमांडू के बीच की दूरी सड़क मार्ग से करीब 150 किमी है। ट्रेन सेवा शुरू होने से दूरी घटकर 136 किमी हो जाएगी। अभी रक्सौल से काठमांडू जाने के लिए बस या निजी वाहन ही एकमात्र विकल्प है। बस का किराया करीब 600 रुपये (भारतीय करेंसी) है, जबकि ट्रेन का किराया अधिकतम 200 रुपये हो सकता है। यात्रा का समय भी छह घंटे से घटकर दो से ढाई घंटे पर आ जाएगा। रक्सौल स्टेशन प्रबंधक के अनुसार, काठमांडू की ओर से कोंकण रेलवे सर्वेक्षण कर रहा है। परियोजना को अगले पांच साल में पूरा करना है।

लंदन में पुस्तक मेले का आयोजन



लंदन में आयोजित पुस्तक मेले के अवसर पर यू.के. ने भारतीय उच्चायोग में एक विशेष कार्यक्रम का आयोजन किया। जिसमें वहां के साहित्यकारों के अतिरिक्त भारतीय उप-उच्चायुक्त महामहिम श्री सुजित घोष, मंत्री समन्वय श्री मनमीत सिंह नारंग, द्वितीय सेक्रेटरी श्री संजय कुमार एवं हिन्दी अधिकारी नंदिता साहू भी उपस्थित थे। महामहिम श्री सुजित घोष ने ब्रिटेन में हिन्दी की स्थिति पर विस्तृत जानकारी हासिल करने के लिये बैठक में उपस्थित साहित्यकारों से बातचीत की। डॉ. अरुणा अजितसरिया एम.बी.ई. एवं इंदु बैरॉठ ने उनके सवालों के समुचित जवाब दिये। याद रहे कि अरुणा जी केंब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय में हिन्दी की परीक्षक हैं। इंदु जी गुरुकुल नाम का ऑनलाइन हिन्दी प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र चलाती हैं और केंब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय में संस्कृत की परीक्षक हैं। बातचीत में स्वाति पटेल ने भी योगदान दिया जो कि केंब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय में मराठी की परीक्षक हैं। महामहिम श्री सुजित घोष ने बताया कि भारतीय उच्चायोग योग के लिये तो प्रमाण पत्र जारी करते हैं। अब हिन्दी भाषा के सिलसिले में भी प्रयास किया जाएगा कि प्रमाण पत्र भारतीय उच्चायोग जारी कर सके। इससे पहले मंत्री समन्वय श्री मनमीत सिंह नारंग ने पंकज चतुर्वेदी से भारत में हिन्दी की पत्रिकाओं के बारे में सिलसिलेवार बातचीत की। पंकज चतुर्वेदी ने बताया कि वे लंदन एक विशेष प्रयोजन से भी आए हैं। वे चाहते हैं कि भारतीय स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में लंदन के योगदान पर एक पुस्तक प्रकाशित की जाए। यहां के लोग, संस्थाएं एवं स्थान विशेष के योगदान को इन लेखों में शामिल किया जाए। उनका कहना था कि एन.बी.टी. इस पुस्तक को जुलाई तक प्रकाशित करने की योजना है। इसके लिये उन्होंने एक समय सारणी भी घोषित की। इस कार्यक्रम में काउंसलर के.सी. मोहन, आशुतोष कुमार, प्रदीप गुप्ता, नंद अजितसरिया, अलका राय आदि भी मौजूद थे। सभी ने चर्चा में सार्थक सहयोग दिया। कार्यक्रम का संचालन किया तेजेन्द्र शर्मा एम.बी.ई. (महासचिव-कथा यूके, एवं संपादक-पुरवाई) ने।

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Contact : Phone(O) : 011 23234432

Email-arspindia@gmail.com

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