

INDIA'S UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Unity in diversity means the existence of integrity in spite of various disparities. India is a better example for this concept of Unity in Diversity.

We can see here very clearly that different religions, communities, castes, languages, cultures, lifestyles, ways of wearing clothes, belief in God, worship, live together in harmony on one land of India i.e. under one roof. People of the same way of teaching etc live together.

India is a famous and big country of the world where different religions like Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Christian and Parsi etc live together but all rely on one principle of religion and order. The people here are God-fearing in nature and believe in purification of the soul, rebirth, salvation, heaven and hell.

People celebrate their festivals Holi, Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Good Friday, Mahavir Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti etc. in a very peaceful manner without harming people of any religion.

We can never forget the freedom movement run by the people of all religions of India to make India an independent country. The struggle for freedom is the best example of "unity in diversity" in India. "Unity in Diversity" in India gives a strong message to all that without unity there is nothing.

India is famous for its rich cultural heritage which is due to the people of different religions. People of different cultures promote different lifestyles based on their interests and beliefs. These again encourage growth in various professional fields like music, art, drama, dance (classical, folk etc.), theatre, sculpture etc. The spiritual tradition of the people makes them more devoted to each other.

All Indian religious writings are great means of spiritual understanding of the people. Almost all religions have Rishis, Maharishis, Yogis, Priests, Fathers etc, who follow their spiritual tradition according to their scriptures.

Generally people living in different states differ in their language, culture, tradition, dress, celebration, appearance etc. (known as Bengali, Maharashtrai, Punjabi, Tamilian, etc.); Still they call themselves Indian which shows "unity in diversity".

People in India give importance to spirituality, karma and sanskar rather than their wealth which brings them closer. The people here have religious tolerance as their unique quality which does not allow them to feel difficulty in the presence of different religion.

Most of the people in India belong to the Hindu religion which has the ability to adopt and welcome all other good cultures on its land. Such characteristics of Indian people make Unity in Diversity famous here, and make India famous all over the world.

New Parliament gets timely message of all faith meet

■ VIVEK SHUKLA

As India got brand new and majestic Parliament Building on Sunday, the all religion prayer before the Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it proves a point that India will remain an inclusive country. A country where everyone will gets freedom to practise his/ her religion.

Gandhiji may not be with us but the practice of all-faith prayer meetings have stood the test of time. There are some who have attended these meets for decades. Take the instance of Katsu Saan. The diminutive 85-year-old, Japanese by birth, is an integral part of all-faith meetings. She was first invited to one way back in 1969. She recites Buddhist prayers on all faith prayers, Gandhi Jayanti (October 2) and Martyr's Day (January 30) at Rajghat and Tees January Road.

Katsu Saan came to India in 1959 to study Buddhism. In the process, she learnt both Hindi and Gandhian thought as well. "While exploring Buddhism here I started loving India deeply. That forced me to stay here for the rest of my life. I learnt Hindi and the life and times of Gandhiji from Kaka Kalkar [a social reformer and Gandhian] in Delhi," she says.

Father George Solomon, a priest, has also participated in all-faith prayers umpteen number of times in various places. He recites from the Bible during the prayer meetings. "Very honestly, it gives great joy and happiness when you take part in all-faith prayers. It gives out a strong message that we all have to live together to make India a truly secular country. Gandhiji came to know about Christianity while he was in South Africa. There he met Christian missionary Joseph Duke, who wrote his first biography. He also learnt about the religion from CF Andrews, a teacher in Delhi's St. Stephen's College," he says. Originally hailing from Tamil Nadu, Father George Solomon has been living here in Delhi since 1989, says, " I am part of the Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ society, which is also known as Delhi Brotherhood Society (DBS). It was started in 1877 under the title of the Cambridge Mission. We had established St. Stephen's college and hospital in capital. "

Rabbi Ezekiel Isaac Malekar is head of the Jewish community in New Delhi, he is the secretary of the Judah Hyam Synagogue at Humayun Road.

"I have been reciting the Jewish prayers since 1985. I don't think any other country in the world has anything similar to our all-religion prayers. Surely, only Gandhiji could think of such a gathering. When I reach the venue for the prayer, I feel very happy and there is a sense of fulfilment that I am sitting with scholars of other religions."

Sanskrit scholar and newsreader in both AIR and Doordarshan, Baldev Anand Sagar is a senior member of the all-religion prayer group. Sagar recites shlokas from the Bhagavad Gita and Panchdev mantra, which is dedicated to five gods in Hinduism - Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, Devi (Durga) and Surya. Panchdev mantra is a collection of five mantras and it should be chanted beginning with Ganesha and ending with Surya.

With the passage of time, prayers of Jain, Baha'i, Parsi and Buddhist faiths were also included in the all-religion prayer meetings. The Baha'i prayer was introduced thanks to the efforts of noted Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande in 1985.

AK Merchant, who recites the Baha'i prayers, says: "The purpose of prayer in the Baha'i faith is to grow closer to God and to help better one's own conduct and to request divine assistance." Merchant is also associated with the Lotus Temple in the capital. He has also prayed with others when Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pranab Mukherjee passed away.

A science teacher, Maqsood Ahmad, has been reading from the Quran from time to time at all-faith prayers. "The serene mood during all religion prayer cannot be described in words. One feels so good and connected to the Almighty while praying," says Ahmad. He has also prayed when Vajpayee passed away. Indu Jain, a teacher and motivational speaker and who has been reciting from the Jain scriptures, says, "I am really honoured that I have been part of the group of people who are invited to pray. Gandhiji was not a Jain. But he could be called one if one considers his actions and beliefs."

According to her, the central tenet of Jainism is ahimsa (non-violence) and Gandhi's philosophy rested upon it. He developed a method of political activism called Satyagraha which was wholly based upon truth and non-violence. It has been translated as non-cooperation and passive resistance.

D Bagli, a priest from Parsi Anjuman in Delhi and Jaspal Singh, a music teacher from west Delhi were also there during the all-religion prayer held on the occasion of inauguration of new Parliament.

G-20 Tourism Meet, Mirror Reflection of Peace in J&K

Gupkar in Tears-----Terror In Fears

■ ER. P.L KHUSHU



The G20 Working Group meeting in Srinagar concluded peacefully, with a voluminous applause all over the world. It has shown to world that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want peace and through the means of development want to grow and prosper both economically and socially. The element of hate and fanaticism brought in by certain elements is not their object and subject. They want to live peacefully like other fellow citizens of India. It should go as a testament and a warning signal to the silent abettors of terror and hate who both subjectively and objectively, have been adding fuel to this fire of terror, for their inherent stupid intents of remaining in power perpetually, cynically behaving as monarchs of Jammu and Kashmir, claiming it as their hereditary monarchial empire. However, it has been shaken now. They have been shown the door. The Mayor of Srinagar Junaid Mattu tweeted "The successful culmination of the Third Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting of the G20 in Srinagar with the participation of nearly 60 foreign delegates is a tribute to the people of Srinagar and their spirit of hospitality. G 20 working group tourism meet in Srinagar, should serve them with a warning that enough is enough and go and weep in your own dens of disdain about the imperpetual status of their toxic views, which kept the development of Jammu and Kashmir on the broil for decades.

The G20 or Group of 20 is an intergovernmental forum comprising of 19 countries and the European Union (EU). It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development. The G20 is composed of most of the world's largest economies finance ministries, including both industrialized and developing nations; it accounts for around 80% of gross world product (GWP), 75% of international trade, two-thirds of the global population, and 60% of the world's land area. India is holding presidency of G20, since 1st, December 2022, with its presidency's theme being "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", or "One Earth One Family One Future".

On this occasion, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the exporters of terror, a reference towards Pakistan, have been taken aback with the success of G20 meeting in Srinagar and maintained that displeasure of the neighbor won't make any difference, because the people of Jammu and Kashmir are sick and tired of their nefarious designs.

He said that all major G20 nations supported the idea of holding an international event in Jammu and Kashmir and naturally this event of such a magnitude is organized in J&K, when some people were bound to have problems with it. Describing presidency of G20 as a matter of pride for India, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensured that all regions get due representation while deciding venues of the meetings. Pakistan made threatening statements, which are not acceptable to any peace-loving nation. But their displeasure is not going to make any difference as the people of Jammu and Kashmir are sick and tired of their nefarious designs, he said. Taking a dig at Pakistan, the Lieutenant Governor said their first worry should be about the situation in their own troubled

country instead of interfering in our internal matters. Asserting that situation in Jammu and Kashmir during last three years has changed a lot; he said that the people have contributed to this as they don't want replication of the past situation when educational institutions and shops would remain shut. Now Jammu and Kashmir has moved on and so have our people. They just want peace, normalcy, development and prosperity which they are experiencing now.

It needs to be mentioned here that Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto had issued threats to disrupt G20 meeting in Srinagar. The hosting of the event, despite opposition from China and Pakistan, is certainly an indication of changed Kashmir, which has now evolved towards "peace and prosperity". People have left violence and negativity behind, when the stone pelting and major terror incidents have become history of past. Normalcy has returned to the beautiful Jammu and Kashmir.

Around 57 foreign dignitaries from 27 countries and over 100 delegates from union ministries and other organizations from Delhi were part of the meeting held in the picturesque Sher e Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) on the Boulevard Road built on Dal Lake. The dignitaries released a draft for the national strategy on film tourism as the Ministry of Tourism signed MoUs with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for film tourism promotion in the country. Throughout the event, the officials and delegates promoted Kashmir as a major tourist destination in India and called for further exploration. The G20-related event was one of the most high profile programs organized in Srinagar in years despite security challenges, especially in the aftermath of the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in August 2019.

Hosting an international event like the G-20 tourism group summit has put Jammu and Kashmir in the global spotlight. It manifests Jammu and Kashmir's potential as a tourist destination. It can prompt foreign tourists, investors, and travel agencies, to see Jammu and Kashmir as an international tourist destination. The summit has helped to promote Jammu and Kashmir as a safe and attractive tourist destination. The presence of delegates from G-20 countries highlights the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism opportunities. This exposure will lead to an increase in tourist arrivals, both domestic and international. The Government's focus on world-class tourism infrastructure, including discussions on 100 percent foreign direct investment, indicates a commitment to enhancing the tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Investments in infrastructure development can improve transportation, accommodation, and other facilities, creating a more appealing and comfortable environment for tourists.

Jammu and Kashmir is a picture of peace, as the days of fear have gone. Just last year two crore tourists visited Kashmir, which is an indication that the people have fully endorsed the policies and programmes of Narendra Modi government aimed at peace, development and welfare of masses.

G20 meeting in Srinagar, has not only been a key in promoting tourism of the union territory but may also expose the propaganda of Pakistan and China in post abrogation of Article 370. It has shown the actual position of Kashmir to rest of the world. In 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated Pakistan

took it as an opportunity to defame India, so raised the issue in various forums but could not muster enough support from any country/organization to pressurize India.

Not only Pakistan who is the web and the base of terror in Kashmir for so many years and is using it as a proxy war against India is responsible for unrest and war like situations in Kashmir, the home grown abettors of this terror are equally responsible for the devastation of Kashmir through terror. The other dangerous silent abettors of this terror, who in the name of asking for special status to Jammu and Kashmir, have equally destroyed Kashmir for remaining in power permanently as dynasty based politicians. They have been more dangerous in this regard to exploit Jammu and Kashmir for their personal benefits and interest, with a dynastic base. Sometimes such people would ask for talking to Pakistan for peace in Kashmir, when sometimes they would threaten to approach China in this regard. Such like entities have made unholy alliances like Gupkar Alliance, which is now being called as Gupkar Gang. In fact they have left no stone unturned to keep Jammu and Kashmir unstable perpetually for their personal interests to remain in power. They are the worst enemies of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in this regard. They want to keep things boiling. They opposed abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A, because it provided them an ample opportunity to rob the state exchequer for their personal benefits. This expo of G20 global meet in Kashmir has dashed their hopes of further exploitation of Jammu and Kashmir for their personal benefits.

A distinguished member of this gang raised the question why G-20 meet is scheduled for Kashmir and Ladakh only and not for Jammu? It was again a ploy to create unease within the two regions of Jammu and Kashmir, when such people have been the worst enemies about the growth of Jammu region in the past while being in governance. He forgot to admit not in ignorance but for chaos, that the proposed meeting is specifically meant to promote tourism in G-20 countries. Kashmir is a world-renowned tourist destination. Millions of Kashmiris are connected with the industry. PM wants Kashmir to be high on international tourism map.

Secondly, Kashmir Valley was the main target of insurgency and separation movements jointly sponsored by Pakistan in collaboration with its Jihadis among some of the majority community in Kashmir Valley. It had to be shown to the external world that Kashmir has developed during the terrorism as well, when the terror in Kashmir, is subject of past now in Kashmir. Thirdly, India wants the world to know that there is development by leaps and bounds in Kashmir in post-370 and 35-A era. That is the way how misguided people have been on over.

The summit will market Kashmir globally and thereby will increase employment and income of the Union Territory. It can make a good market for Kashmiri handicrafts, cuisines, winter sports etc. The effect on its economy will be multi fold if we can get more visitors from the developed countries. Today's Jammu Kashmir is not a land of civil curfews or stone palters. It is a land of peace and prosperity that responsible and responsive administration is trying too hard to bring in the people's lives.

As the event concluded, the delegates from member countries visited several spots in Srinagar city, including the famous Mughal gardens, Royal Springs Golf Course and the newly revamped Polo View market in the Lal

Chowk area, where the visitors also shopped for Kashmir's arte facts.

With the holding of the G20 meet in Srinagar, the tourism sector of the Kashmir valley is bound to get a big and a marginal flip, which is very good for the overall welfare of the people of Kashmir in particular. Similarly Jammu has a tremendous potential for tourism development and has abundant charming tourist's spots which could be exploited for the development. But Jammu was repeatedly ignored in this sector of development too, claiming that only Kashmir valley qualified for it, because of its natural scenic beauty. Just a max factor has been added to Jammu in this regard like Patnitop tourist spot, Mansar Lake, etc, when huge funds under central government schemes for tourism were utilized only in Kashmir mostly.

While coming to actual tourism potential in Jammu division , If Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg are considered as heavens on earth, as far as Kashmir Valley is concerned, Bhadarwah valley is no lesser a paradise as for as Jammu region is concerned.

Bhaderwah is a lovely cool valley as the valley of Kashmir is. Its perpetual natural beauty and scenic status has made it to be called as 'Chota Kashmir'. This Splendid Springing Valley is a beautiful valley situated at a distance of about 200 km from Jammu. If developed to the standard rationale of appropriate tourism standards, it can easily invite the foreign tourists in abundance, particularly for adventure tourism. It has enough potential to cater for the recreational tourism for the domestic and local tourists as well.

The notable places for tourism development in Bhaderwah are Chinta Valley, Padri, Jai Valley, Seoj Meadow, Bhal Padri etc. Chinta Valley is situated 6500 ft above sea level is a picturesque valley in Bhaderwah bounded by thick coniferous forests. The valley is surrounded by several tourist spots including Thuba which is located across the Chinta Nallah. It is superb location for adventure tourism as also recreational tourism. Padri have beautiful landscapes and lies on the ensuing Bhaderwah-Chamba road at a distance of about 40 Kms from Bhadarwah. The landscape runs in a vast area when it is an ideal location for adventure sports like Snow-skiing in winters and Paragliding in summers. It is also highest Pass on Bhadarwah Chamba road. Jai is a green Valley which lies on the North East of Bhadarwah town about 32 Kms. away connected to the town by beautiful Bhadarwah-Jai Link Road. This Valley has a large area under its command when a river known Jai River divides it in two meadows.

This Jai Nallah is popular for Trout Fish Culture. It is the ideal place for winter sports and trekking in the cool blue waters of this mountainous location. Seoj is flanked by a beautiful river on its west which emanates from hills surrounding Kailash Kund. The landscape across the river is replica of the beauty of Pahalgam, whereas on the eastern side there are long stretches of grasslands. On the south is the sacred Kailash Kund, surrounded by snow-capped mountains. On way to Kailash Kund, there is unique landscape at Shankh Paddar. This is just to mention a little of it about Jammu about the development of tourism in Jammu for want of space in this article. Government of day should consider on priority to boost the tourism sector in Jammu on equitable basis as that of Kashmir.

(The author is a chartered consultant civil engineer, who loves his mother land the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir).

Sengol-The symbol of India's culture and pride

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The Sengol is not a walking stick and a redundant thing as the congress party took it to be, but it is in fact the living symbol of our culture, tradition, heritage, virtue and national pride and to term the Sengol as a stick is very unfortunate.

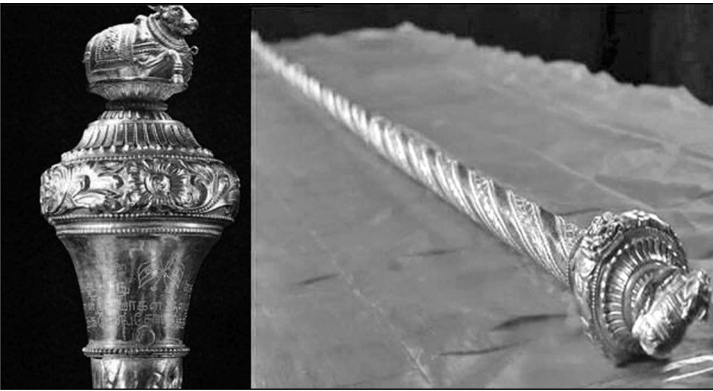
It is very disturbing that the grand old party congress whose role and contribution in the struggle of India's independence is next to none has termed the Sengol as a stick. The fact is that it is the symbol of our cultural legacy, virtue and national pride which had been handed over to the then prime minister Pt Nehru by Lord Mountbatten as a symbol and testimony of the transfer of power from British government to India and therefore there is great need to hold the Sengol in high esteem but the congress which had ruled India for a very long period did not accord required and due place to Sengol but regarded it as the walking stick and thus relegated it to a museum at Prayagraj which does not augur well for the country.

In fact Sengol is the symbol of our national pride, virtue, heritage and history and it has got much cultural and historical value.

For the seventy four long years of independence, Sengol was not accorded its due and required place in the country's history and culture and this is very unfortunate.

Now at last the BJP government under Modi which is correcting historical wrongs done to the country is on the job of giving proper place to Sengol giving it its due place.

The new Parliament building is



ready and Modi has on 28th May 2023 inaugurated the parliament building and has also installed Sengol near the speaker's chair and it is in fact the time of our national pride amid boycott from 22 opposition parties.

It is very disturbing as well as unfortunate that politics is played on Sengol which is our cultural heritage, thing of virtue and national pride.

All political parties should raise above petty politicking and cooperate with the government to give proper place to Sengol which is the symbol of our national pride and object of virtue and political parties of different hues and colours should learn to respect and revere the symbols of national pride and cultural ethos. The largest and oldest political party the congress should respect the objects of national heritage and culture and shun the baggage of dishonoring the national and cultural things and symbols of the country. It should learn to respect and honor the cultural and national symbols of the country. The Sengol speaks much about the long

standing ethics of democratic values and culture of nation. One should know about the history and memory surrounding the historical royal mace. In a momentous and historical occasion, Prime minister Modi on the morning of sundy-28th of May inaugurated and dedicated to the nation and parliamentarians the new building of parliament in the august presence of galaxy of personalities and leaders and the speakers and president also graced the occasion by their benign presence. In a momentous occasion Modi placed the historical golden sceptre, known as the 'Sengol' near the seat of Lok Sabha speaker: Union Home minister Amit Shah in a statement today emphasized the significance of the 'Sengol' in the history of the nation. This revered sceptre was originally handed over to India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru, symbolizing the transfer of power from British colonial rule to Indian self governance by the last viceroy of British India, Lord Mountbatten.

The 'Sengol' is derived from the Tamil word 'Semmai' meaning right-

eousness. It is believed that this sceptre, when conferred upon an individual carries the profound responsibility of promoting Just and impartial governance. The story behind the creation of the 'Sengol' dates back to a conversation between Lord Mountbatten. The last viceroy of British India and prime minister Nehru. Mountbatten had inquired about the symbolic gesture that would commemorate India's attainment of freedom.

Seeking guidance, Nehru turned to C Rajagopalachari the final Governor General of India, who shared an intriguing Tamil tradition with him. According to historical accounts, Rajagopalchari informed Nehru about the practice of high priest presenting a sceptre to a newly crowned King during Chola dynasty's rule. This tradition was suggested as a way to symbolize India's liberation from British rule. Rajagopalchari took on the task of procuring the sceptre for this historic momentous occasion. Amit Shah has said that there is no better place than the new parliament for housing the sengol. In a new announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah, it was revealed that the 75 year old sceptre known as Sengol will be placed in new Parliament building marking its significance of authority and democracy. The Sengol represents the values of fair and equitable governance.

It has been made to shine near the Lok Sabha speaker's podium as a national symbol of Amrit Kaal, an era that will witness the new India taking its rightful place in the world.

Sengol is a septre is made of gold

and silver and is decorated with many precious stones. The Sengol is five feet long and carries a golden orb at the top. The orb has a carving of Nandi, the bull that is precious to Lord Shiva. The Sengol is a powerful symbol of Chola Kings authority and their commitment to justice. Sengol is considered to be the symbol of Justice, transfer of power and good governance. It was presented to India's first PM Nehru on August ,14,1947.

This was marked as the transfer of power from British government to India. On May 28, after a gap of 75 years the very same Sengol was signified as the transfer of power symbol.

The sengol is currently kept at the Nehru Gallery of the Allahabad Museum, PM Modi decided to adopt it as a national symbol of the Amrit Kaal.

The sengol was presented and handed over to the PM Modi by the learned priests from Tamil Nadu amid chanting of Vedic hymns. The new placement of the sengol in the Parliament is a significant event that has the potential to motivate, unite and inspire the people of India.

In brief the Modi government has really done a commendable job in placing the Sengol in the new parliament as it is the symbol of India's culture, history and righteousness and above all virtue. It should be respected and revered by all political parties and the common citizens as it is India's national pride and symbolizes the transfer of power from British to Indians.

(The author is columnist, social and KP activist).