

Global Dialogue Foundation Unity in Diversity - OPEN FORUM

Strengthening the role of communities, business, non-governmental organisations in cross-cultural understanding and building inclusive societies

6 October 2011 - Northcote Town Hall

Address by:

Mr. Vasan Srinivasan, President - Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria

Thank you Wesa.

Your Excellency Jorge Sampaio, it's a great pleasure and privilege to meet you and to be part of this evening when you're here with the multicultural society and community of Victoria.

Peter, it's a great initiative of your Global Dialogue Foundation to bring such a high-powered person to the community, to link with us. I hope your step which you have taken today has taken you to the next step, to establish an Alliance with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations here in Victoria and Australia with the support of H.E. Jorge Sampaio. I wish you all the best.

We discussed inside the room, with Pino (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia), Lisa (Diversity Council Australia), Hass Dellal (Australian Multicultural Foundation). We all have the same feeling that you have taken the right step for you to take us along with you to establish such an organisation in Australia to show that Australia is a thriving multicultural society around the world.

Professor (President), you have raised a number of questions at the speech this morning as well as this evening. Especially the multiculturalism. If you look at it in Victoria, you have approximately 236 nationalities living together. 269 languages are spoken in Victoria and 180 faiths and beliefs in Victoria. We are one community. You can see that here. Such a colorful nationalities, from each and every part of the world are gathered together to respect your arrival in Victoria and Australia.

I come from a nation similar to the complexity, what you have seen here. I come from a nation where 26 major languages are spoken. Not dialects. Languages with scripts of their own. Approximately 260 faiths within India. Not 1 or 2. More than 3000 Gods and Goddesses we believe in.

If you look back at what Hindu mythology says, that within the Gods and Goddesses, we are created in different colors. No one created Hinduism to my knowledge. We don't know who created it. Hinduism is not a religion to me. It's a way of life.

Even within the Gods and Goddesses, there are black, green, yellow, blue. If we take Lord Krishna, we believe that's a main supreme for the benefit of Hinduism. He's in blue color. So, there must be some reason why, those days, few thousand years ago, they've created different colors. That shows this is our multicultural society.

And even if you look... initially we welcomed you with a didgeridoo player, who comes from the native Aboriginal community person played a didgeridoo. If you look at what he was wearing all around the body, he had 4 lines of ashes symbol.

Again, if you go back in Hinduism, we believe in love, belief and truth. So to support that, we have 3 main gods. Brahma who creates us. Vishnu who looks after us. Shiva who takes us away. This is love, belief and truth.

We used to have the three lines of ashes all around the body. There are 9 points within our body, which create and stimulate a person to perform better. So, this is practices years and years ago. I'm not creating something today.

And again, as you said this morning, when you were walking along yesterday in the city of Melbourne, you looked at totally different nationalities and different colors, that true multiculturalism works in Australia. I totally agree with you. Within the community, it works very well.

If you really want to put it to test, I would like to see.. that we have one Telmo (Member of Victorian Parliament) here, out of so many other South American nationalities. We as Indians, in this state are the 4th largest after Greeks, Italians, Chinese, then Indians. The day we see the proportion of our communities in the state parliament and the federal parliament, that's the day it's working 100%.

It may take some time, we have started this pathway. It is going to take some time to achieve that. How are we going to achieve that? As a community organisation, we have to start thinking and taking an active role in the mainstream politics.

Unless otherwise we reach and create a foundation in the Parliament of Victoria and each and every state as well as Australia, then it works 100%. I believe as community groups, we can achieve that. One day, you will hear that Australia is a real multicultural society. Look at their parliamentarians. They come from different walks of life. That's when we can see that it's definitely working.

Also, you mentioned this morning about leadership and politicians. How they can play a bigger role in the multiculturalism and the civilizations. Definitely. You actually nailed it. The one Kevin Rudd and one Tony Abbot is not enough to achieve that role. We need to lobby each and every politician in this country to take us to the next stage and show us the leadership to achieve what you want to achieve.

There are different colors, different languages, different beliefs, different faiths. To bring us together, we need many Mahatma Gandhi's. So, you've taken that role, to me as a Gandhi, trying to create the Unity in Diversity. I really appreciate your step. I really appreciate that you have taken the time to come here, to talk with us, to mingle with us, to understand the Australian multicultural society of Melbourne.

Thank you so much and we hope to see you again. Thank you.