

Remarks by Amb Sibi George at the Carol Evening, Celebrating
Diversity of India, Dec 15, 2023

Excellencies, Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Dear Fathers,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening and Welcome to the Embassy of India.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to today's carol evening, a celebration of India's diversity. I thank each one of you for joining us today. I welcome Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Excellencies Ambassadors our friendly countries and Ambassadors from MoFA and each one of you who have joined us today.

I thank Choir of St Ignatius church, Choir by the Malayalee community and our Embassy team for joining us today. I know the effort they have put in to perform today. I thank our beloved Fathers and teachers who took the initiative to organize this event today.

Dear Friends,

As Ambassador of India to Japan, I bring to you all greetings on behalf of 1.4 billion people of India, i.e. 1/6th of the total population of the world. I know it is a lot of greetings.

It's not just the number that I represent, it is also the diversity of India. It is an eye opener to most, when one gets to know the Indian civilization. A civilization that gave rise to ancient religions such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and also Sikhism. In fact, India is home to many other religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. India has the second largest Muslim population in the world, next only to Indonesia.

In fact, Christianity reached India and flourished in India since 52 CE, in the first century immediately after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when one of the disciples of Jesus Christ St. Thomas travelled all the way to Kerala. Christianity came to India much before it reached most parts of Europe. In fact, Christianity in India is older than Christianity in Rome. India today has over 40 million Christians much more than the total population of many of the countries. While talking about religions in India, let me quote from the speech that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered during his visit to Japan in May this year. He said and I quote: "Our relationship with Japan is that of Buddha, of wisdom, of knowledge. We have Mahakal, so there is Daikokuten in Japan. We have Brahma, we have Bonten in Japan, our mother is Saraswati and so we have Benzaiten in Japan. Our Mahadevi is Lakshmi, so there are Kichijoten in Japan. So we have Ganesha and Japan has Kangiten. If there is a tradition of Zen in Japan, then we consider meditation as a medium of action with the soul." Unquote.

Dear Friends,

In Japan, like every other part of the world, one comes across a vibrant diaspora from all over India. They are symbols of India's unity in diversity. We Indians come from different parts of India, we speak several hundred languages, we worship different Gods, we celebrate different festivals, we eat different foods, we wear different clothes, but there is a feeling of oneness and a common consciousness, a civilizational bond, that keeps us together, make us all proud as Indians.

In fact, in India, we celebrate all festivals, whether it is Onam or Bishakhi, Holi or Dusharah, Deewali or Rakshabandan, Christmas or

Easter, Eid ul Fitr or Eid ul Adha these are all celebrated as festivals of India, celebrated by one and all. This unity in diversity is something we are always proud of. When I welcome you today to this carol evening I proudly bring greetings to you from that ancient land of India, i.e. Bharat, an ancient but continuous civilization where all major religions and cultures thrive and flourish.

Today, India has transformed into a modern economy with significant achievements in several diverse fields, including atomic energy, space technology, agriculture, bio-technology, AI and, of course, information technology, for which India is well-known today the world over. It is under this constitution that India today produces some of the best professionals who go on to become CEOs of big tech companies like CEOs of Alphabet the parent company of Google, Microsoft, IBM, Adobe Inc, Novartis, millions of engineers, doctors, scientists. It is no surprise that India undertook the largest Covid 19 vaccination drive anywhere in the world, vaccinating all its 1.4 billion citizens, not once, but twice and some even thrice, that too with Made in India vaccines. India also supplied Covid related medicines to over 150 countries and Made in India vaccines to over a hundred countries. India has proved that it is the pharmacy of the world. It is a great blend of ancient civilization and modernity. It is this blend of civilization and modernity that gets reflected when India adopted “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or “One Earth One Family One Future” as the theme of India’s just concluded G-20 Presidency. There again, it was an inclusive effort that brought the Voice of Global South to the agenda of G 20. African Union was made a permanent moment of G 20. And when it comes to G – 7 Hiroshima Summit, I invite you all to visit the statue of Mahatma Gandhi which is unveiled by Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Hiroshima in May this year.

Dear Friends,

I am happy that we could organize this Carol Evening today in Japan, as part of our theme 'Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji'. In coming weeks and months we will continue to celebrate in Japan, every festival of India, we will remember and pay homage to every national hero of India and we will celebrate India every day here. Today, I conclude by joining my leadership and our 1.4 billion Indians in wishing all of you and all friends of India in Japan festive greetings, Merry Christmas and an advance happy New Year 2024.

Once again Excellencies, Dear Fathers, Dear Friends, Dear Children thank you for joining us today.

Thank you and good evening.

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