

DIOGEN pro culture magazine & DIOGEN pro art magazine -ISSN 2296-0929; ISSN 2296-0910
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Dr. Kishor Kumar Tripathy

Azerbaijan: The Land of Fire



1. Is this the first time you have been in Azerbaijan?

Yes. I would like to mention, in 2011, our organization, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in Association with Embassy of Azerbaijan, India organized “India and Azerbaijan-Nizami Gunjavi Celebrations”. During that event, I came to know about the rich cultural tradition of Azerbaijan. I visited Azerbaijan during 4th Baku International Humanitarian Forum and explored that Azerbaijan is my dreamland. I wish to visit again and again to Azerbaijan to discover the spirit of the ‘Land of Fire.’

2. Could you share your opinions about Azerbaijan and what did you like most about Azerbaijan?

Azerbaijan has a rich and vibrant cultural tradition which synthesizes different aspects of culture, i.e. art, aesthetics, philosophy, architecture, music, dance, sculpture and various manners of life-style. Azerbaijan is a vast country having different geographical features, cultural traditions, manners and customs, which have close linkages with some of the most ancient civilizations of the world. The value system of Azerbaijan has assimilated much of the thinking of the major traditions, which is enriching the characteristic of culture unique and potential. The Greatness of Azerbaijan lies in its grand cultural system and there are few countries around the world which have such an ancient and diverse culture as Azerbaijan has. The manners, way of communicating with one another, tolerance, spirit of unity, co-operation, peace, and harmony etc. are the greatest gift of Azerbaijan to the world.

3. What do you consider as the most important issue in the policy pursued by Azerbaijan?

I feel, the important issue in the policy pursued by Azerbaijan is Humanitarian problems. Contemporary world, developed with scientific advancement and technological challenges, where materialism has challenged the spirit of human civilization and there is also a great question for the survival of humanity. There are global challenges in the context of unity in diversity, universal brotherhood and harmony. The contemporary world is under the grip of conflicts and has created anxiety, excitement and thrill everywhere. It has also led human society towards hatred, competition, destruction and domination. Is it the outcome of the modern world? How can human spirit be regained? How humanity will be saved? I have explored that Azerbaijan has addressed this crucial problem of twenty-first century. Azerbaijan has opened the “International Humanitarian Forum” in a vision to continue “dialogues, discussions and exchange of views on wide range of global issues in the interest of all humanity.” The forum has also created a platform for constructive debates and discussions and opened an international platform to conduct Comparative Research into Multiculturalism, which is an important factor of twenty-first century.

4. Would you share your general opinion of multiculturalism? How do you evaluate the multiculturalism policy of Azerbaijan?

Multiculturalism is the policy response to different cultural practices and also a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity. The policy of multiculturalism has given an extensive effort to cope democratically with diversity, developed in the very short time-span time. Multiculturalism as a policy recognized the contribution to the nation of the many ethno-cultural groups, and it encourages values of equality and mutual respect with regard to race, national or ethnic origin, color and religion. The objectives of multiculturalism are to acknowledge the freedom of all the members of society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. A multicultural society includes very distinct cultural

groups with equal status and it does not allow for exchange between the cultural groups, and tends to only focus on representation. As far as the multiculturalism policy of Azerbaijan is concerned, I realized that Azerbaijan is playing an important role in the field of multiculturalism, International cooperation, consultation and coordination with the world community to face the global challenges of twenty first century related to human development and social welfare based on culture of peace. The important factor regarding multiculturalism policy of Azerbaijan is that it is not a desirable concept; it is a practical approach, which should be maintained for the sustenance of human civilization. In the words of H.E. Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan- “Multiculturalism is a state policy of Azerbaijan. It's also a way of life. And the recently held third Baku International Humanitarian Forum mostly discussed multiculturalism. Today Azerbaijan is already recognized as one of the world centres of multiculturalism. And we focus on these issues, because there are different approaches to the subject. Unfortunately, there is a view that in some countries, multiculturalism has come to grief, did not work, and there are very alarming statements and trend. If this is the case in reality, it is a topic for serious discussion. In Azerbaijan, we believe that the politics and the state of the society prove that multiculturalism is alive. It lives, it gets stronger and it has deep roots. It is the only way for the development of mankind in the future, because in the age of globalization, when the exchange of information and, in general, the processes of integration is active, engaging in self-isolation is simply disastrous.” Multiculturalism policy of Azerbaijan in the twenty-first century is a positive approach which aims to create a better world based on unity in diversity, peace and co-operation.

5. Is Azerbaijan important for Europe and for the world in terms of energy security or is there any significance of it in the cultural context as well?

Of course, in terms of energy security, Azerbaijan is important for Europe and for the World. But apart from the context of energy security, Azerbaijan has also to play an important role in the area of culture. The beliefs, practices, manners and moreover the humanistic approach of the cultural tradition of Azerbaijan contained in the teachings of diverse cultural practices are the essential factors for the establishment of universal peace and harmony. It emphasizes that cultural practice is an ethical approach based on the principles of Integral Unity of all human beings. It emphasizes that culture is the philosophy of humanism and should be applied for global peace and harmony. There are also several components of cultural identity which highlights the historical and cultural linkages between Azerbaijan with the cultural community of the world. Over the past time, relationship between Azerbaijan with rest of the world grounded by unshakable faith and the fine sentiment is time tested and also in the recent years, the relationship between Azerbaijan with the world community was upgraded to a new height. To strengthen the age-old historical and socio-cultural relationship, promotion of cultural relations and awareness of cultural values to strengthen international cooperation, intercultural dialogue with the objective of intercultural respect and the spirit of building bridges among the people, promotion of study, research, exploration, academic exchange and dissemination activities in the unexplored areas with a view to achieve the goal of social unity and cooperation, promotion of cultural policies and measures considering the characteristics of concrete and cross-cultural relationship are some of the perspectives for future course of action.

6. Azerbaijan was alone during the war in Soviet time, however nowadays friends of Azerbaijan increases rapidly. Do we change or does the world change? What might be the reason?

Azerbaijan was alone during the war in Soviet time, but nowadays friends of Azerbaijan increases rapidly. I do believe that with the courage and spirit of the Nation, Azerbaijan has created its place in the international community. In this context, I feel there is a great change in the world level as well as in the context of Azerbaijan also. The history of human evolution demonstrates that socio-technological evolution of man changed his cultural identity, social ethics, moral beliefs and values. The survival and sustenance of human race on the earth depends on cultural values, which thrive on peace, cooperation, good will, love, loyalty and friendship have to be given more importance than anything else and have to be maintained at any cost. In this connection, I believe, Azerbaijan is playing an important role in the global context. The idea of shared ideal of humanity and the oneness of all the creatures strives to spread peace, unity and compassion on the world stage and can be utilized as solutions to global issues related to the survival of cultural identity and human values. The objective of Azerbaijan is to promote cultural expressions and multiculturalism can play an important role in this regard.

7. What are your wishes to Azerbaijani people?

Azerbaijan, as the 'Land of Fire' has a special attraction for everyone. During my visit to Azerbaijan, I found the people are simple and honest. With its long and rich history, the people of Azerbaijan have preserved the great historical and cultural tradition of their nation. What Azerbaijan gifted to the world is the spirit of Humanism and Multiculturalism, which will definitely play an important role to face the global challenges of twenty-first century.

8. **Would you share your general opinion of the relation between India and Azerbaijan?**

India recognized Azerbaijan in December 1991 and Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Azerbaijan was established on 28th February, 1992. In the words of Dr. Manmohan Singh, former Prime Minister of the Republic of India regarding 20th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship between India and Azerbaijan: “we have watched with admiration the manner in which the people of Azerbaijan have successfully dealt with the economic and social challenges they faced as a newly independent nation, and we are now embarked on a path of rapid growth and transformation. I look forward to deepening and strengthening our warm and friendly relations”. Socio-cultural relation between the Republic of India and Azerbaijan is centuries-old, multifaceted and the basis for cultural linkage is historical, cultural and trade relations between the people of the two countries. Cross-cultural relationship between India and Azerbaijan is very important and has deep historical roots. Cultural relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Azerbaijan go back to ancient times and there are close cultural affinity, age old historical relations, shared cultural traditions, and amazing cultural linkage between India and Azerbaijan. Cultural linkage between India and Azerbaijan has deep historical roots and connected through the Great Silk Road from time immemorial. One of the important factors of Indo-Azerbaijan Cultural relation is the Silk Route, which connects the great civilizations of the world. Be it poetry, literature, dance, cinema or music, India and Azerbaijan are closely related to each other. What is perhaps most amazing is that cultural linkage between people of the two countries remains strong. There is also a rich and prosperous approach for the socio-cultural development of both the countries and emphasizes cultural cooperation, tolerance, social unity and mutual respect between peoples and cultures. It promotes that cultural relation as a strategic element for the cross-cultural relationship between both the countries.

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