

# Train of Promise

There are moments in history when a single initiative carries meaning far beyond its immediate purpose. The approval of the Joint Parcel Product–Rapid Cargo Service (JPP-RCS) train from Budgam in Kashmir to Delhi is one such moment. On the surface, it is a logistics solution: a daily train with eight parcel vans to carry apples, saffron, walnuts, and handicrafts more swiftly to the markets of the nation’s capital. But in essence, it is something deeper — a declaration that Kashmir’s prosperity is inseparable from India’s progress, and that governance, when visionary, can convert challenges into bridges of opportunity. The Union Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas.” This train is that philosophy translated into steel and motion. For decades, the growers and artisans of Kashmir have been constrained by geography and circumstance. Their produce — exquisite, fragile, and perishable — had to battle poor road connectivity, weather interruptions, and prohibitive costs before reaching markets. Too often, by the time Kashmiri apples or handwoven Pashmina shawls arrived, they had lost both freshness and competitive edge. Now, with a journey time of just 23 hours from Budgam to Delhi, the valley’s treasures will travel with speed and dignity. This is not merely logistics; it is justice. It is a recognition that the farmer in Shopian and the artisan in Srinagar deserve the same access to markets as their counterparts in Maharashtra or Gujarat. Economically, the initiative promises multiplier effects — cheaper transport, better margins, and expanded outreach. But its true significance lies in symbolism. By linking Kashmir’s orchards and looms directly with the heart of India, this project says that the valley is not a periphery but a participant, not distant but deeply connected. It is a reaffirmation that development is the surest path to integration, that prosperity secures peace in ways that rhetoric never can. Prime Minister Modi’s government deserves praise for conceiving this initiative not as a one-off experiment but as part of a larger vision. The emphasis on infrastructure as empowerment — from highways and tunnels to railways and digital networks — has consistently aimed to dissolve the barriers that isolate communities. The JPP-RCS train, operated initially on a pilot basis, is another step in weaving Kashmir’s economy into the national fabric. Of course, much will depend on efficient execution: streamlined loading at Budgam, effective security arrangements, and consistent schedules. But the direction is clear. The Modi government has chosen to see Kashmir not only through the prism of politics or security but through the lens of livelihood, dignity, and opportunity. That shift itself is transformative. Philosophers often speak of movement as a metaphor for life itself. In that sense, this train is more than a carrier of goods; it is a carrier of hope. Each parcel van holds not just apples and carpets, but the aspirations of countless families whose work sustains the valley’s soul. By enabling those aspirations to reach markets swiftly and fairly, the Union Government has set in motion not just a train, but a journey toward a more inclusive and prosperous future. The Budgam–Delhi cargo train is a reminder that sometimes the most powerful expressions of nation-building do not come in grand speeches, but in the quiet, rhythmic certainty of wheels turning on a track.

## Fiji PM In India

# FIRMING STRATEGIC TIES

■ DR D K GIRI

The Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Liga Mamada Rabuka was in India to explore the possibilities of deepening and widening their partnership with India. It was his first visit after he came to power in 2022. And it was one year after the visit of Hon’ble President of India to Fiji Island, and the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014; 33 years after any Indian Prime Minister went there. The Fijian Prime Minister was accompanied by a heavy delegation and interactions in New Delhi covered a wide range of issues.

Evidently, from media reports, Rabuka’s visit from 24 to 26 August went off quite well. This was reflected in the customary post-meeting statement of Prime Minister Modi, “In our cooperation with the Pacific Island nations, we see Fiji as a hub. Both our countries strongly support a free, open, inclusive, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. We warmly welcome Fiji into India’s Indo-Pacific Ocean’s initiatives. The joint statement underscored the importance of “shared interests in advancing regional peace, stability and prosperity”.

The relations between India and Fiji go back to 1789 when both countries were colonies of the British Empire. During 1789 to 1916, the British Colonial Administration transferred indentured labour from India to work in other colonies, in their tea plantations and other industries. To Fiji alone, the Colonial Administration shifted 60,000 Girmityas (indentured labour) from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Today, Fijians from Indian origin constitute 38 per cent of about 930,000 population of Fiji. Ever since, people-to-people contacts between the two countries have been robust. Indian Diaspora in Fiji has been connected with India through education, culture, trade and tourism. New Delhi has leveraged the sizeable population of Indian descent in lobbying for or against Fiji in multilateral forums. The rift between two countries has happened during several coups that the Island country has experienced.

Formal relations between the two countries began in 1970 as New Delhi opened its High Commission in Fijian capital Suva, and Fiji opened its diplomatic Mission in New Delhi. Since then, in addition to people-to-people contacts, overlapping strategic concerns and economic interest have brought the countries closer, especially in the India-Pacific. The bilateral relations have covered healthcare, defence, climate, trade and so on. In this visit, India and Fiji signed seven MoUs that included agreements on building a 100-bed super speciality hospital in Fiji and one on migration and mobility. The other agreements covered cyber security, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Both coun-

tries strongly condemned terrorism anywhere in the world making a special reference to the terror attack in Pahalgam in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Fiji declared its support to India for the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. India has been supporting Fiji in multilateral forums such as Global South Coalition and Climate Change conclaves, namely in International Solar Alliance (ISA). In the health sector, in addition to the aforementioned hospital, Indian agencies will help deliver the tele-medicine through the e-Sanjivani platform at an affordable cost. Jan Aushadhi (Peoples’ Pharmacies) will be set up in Fiji. The Jaipur Foot, India-made prosthetic limb will be made available. Ten Fijians will be treated every year under ‘Heal in India’ programme. On climate action, India will help in capacity building, harnessing solar energy and in disaster resilience. New Delhi will leverage platforms like ISA and CDRI – the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and GBA – Global Bio-Fuel Alliance. Interestingly, Fiji has joined all of them.

In agriculture, India donated 12 drones, 2 soil testing labs, and 5 metric tonne of cowpea seeds and technical training for Fiji’s sugar sector. Agriculture received renewed focus in this visit. Fiji will extend market access for Indian ghee, help SME development and economic diversification. A Declaration of Intent was signed to facilitate professional and students’ visit. On people’s front, New Delhi will deploy a Hindi-Sanskrit teacher to the University of Fiji. India has also agreed to send a cricket coach to develop cricketing talents.

On security, the existing cooperation was expanded. A Joint Working Group on Defence was set up. New Delhi will help Fiji enhance its defence capabilities by providing training in cyber and maritime security. New Delhi will send two ambulances to Fiji’s military, establish a defence wing at its High Commission in Suva. New Delhi will also set up a cyber training cell. Much of these agreements were part of India’s plan to reach out to small Islands under its strategy of development-first. Remember that during Modi’s 2014 visit to Fiji, India had launched a forward-looking Forum for India and Pacific Island Cooperation (FIPIC). This was meant to engage the 14 Pacific Island countries - Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Nien, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. FIPIC has already hosted three summits – Suva (2014), Jaipur (2015), Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (2023).

The above reach-out to small Islands is part of India’s strategy towards small states. Paul Sutton and Anthony Payne in their impressive work, “Size and Survival – The Politics of Security in the Caribbean and Pacific” argue that small states face multiple security problems. They often have limited strategic depth and can be vulnerable to the pressures and manipulations of larger and more powerful states. They also face a wide range of non-traditional threats including terrorism, cyber warfare, disinformation, campaigns and pandemics.

Small states seek to alleviate their security problems by making strategic alliances and partnerships with other states and larger powers to offset their inherent military and economic disadvantages. New Delhi has correctly comprehended the structural deficiencies of small states, in this case Fiji and other Pacific Islands and is building their capabilities to deepen their confidence and autonomy.

All in all, Prime Minister Rabuka’s visit marked a new phase in their relations with India. To be sure, this has been a historical partnership which now aligns with contemporary challenges and opportunity. New Delhi will seek to situate this partnership in a cooperative India-Pacific order. Both countries have reiterated that India-Pacific should be free, open and inclusive. Note that Rabuka had opposed only last July China’s reported plans to establish a naval base in Pacific Island. So, both countries, characterising India-Pacific region as open and inclusive, is a signal to China. New Delhi continues to constructively engage the small Islands in India Pacific. It points to rays of sunshine in India’s foreign policy when the big powers of the world are making the global geo-politics dismal and dark. ---INFA

# Building a Vishwaguru: Bhagwat’s Blueprint

■ LALIT GARG

The centenary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was marked in New Delhi at Vigyan Bhawan with its annual lecture New Kshitij series. This was not merely a celebratory event but a profound proclamation of India’s soul and its future. In his keynote address, RSS Sarsanghchalak Mohan Bhagwat spoke with such clarity and seriousness that he not only dispelled long-standing misconceptions about the Sangh’s ideology but also opened up a new horizon in India’s journey to becoming a Vishwaguru—a teacher and guide to the world. The event was both a reflection on the Sangh’s hundred years of dedicated service and a declaration of its vision for the next century. Bhagwat emphatically stated that the essence of the Sangh’s work lies in the creation of a new human being. At first glance, this may sound simple, but its implications are deep and far-reaching. The roots of every societal and national problem lie within the individual. Therefore, the Sangh has resolved to unite all sections of society into one thread. Unless an individual’s character, perspective, and conduct undergo transformation, no system or structure can permanently change. Through the patient and long-term pursuit of character-building, the Sangh seeks to transform society and the nation. The fruits of this work cannot be measured by the number of shakhas (branches) or programs but by the invisible yet tangible moral force that is gradually reshaping the course of society.

One of the most significant parts of Bhagwat’s lecture was his explanation of Hindutva. He categorically clarified that Hindutva is not a narrow definition, nor is it a specific religion’s ritual or sect. Rather, it is the Indian way of life—a vast cultural

stream that integrates compassion, harmony, service, non-violence, truth, and self-realization. Hindutva unites; it excludes none. It is the very soul of India, and it is on this foundation that India earns the eligibility to become a Vishwaguru. This perspective firmly dispels the misconception that the Sangh’s idea of Hindutva is merely a political tool or a ladder to power. Instead, it is a worldview meant to bind humanity into one, leaving no room for discrimination.

On the second day, Bhagwat delved deeper, introducing the concept of Panchakarma for society. Just as Ayurveda prescribes Panchakarma for the purification of the human body, a similar fivefold process is necessary for the purification and reconstruction of society. He outlined five dimensions—character-building, organizational strengthening, social harmony, upliftment of the poor, and spiritual awakening.

He argued that a nation does not become great through political reforms or economic growth alone. True greatness emerges only when individuals are morally upright, society is organized, harmony prevails, the weaker sections are uplifted, and life is enriched with higher spiritual values. Bhagwat’s emphasis on the upliftment of the poor was particularly noteworthy. He asserted that India will be truly strong only when dignity and opportunity reach its last citizen.

His words echoed Mahatma Gandhi’s Antyodaya, Vinoba Bhave’s Sarvodaya, and Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism. The greatest challenge before modern India is the unequal distribution of development. The gulf between the rich and poor continues to widen. Unless this divide is bridged, the nation’s progress will remain incomplete. For Bhagwat, the greatness of a nation is measured by whether its weakest citizen can live with dignity and respect. Equally significant was his perspective on

religious unity. India’s history itself bears testimony to the coexistence of diverse faiths—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, and Jains—all of which flourished on this soil. At their core, all religions preach compassion, service, and humanity. Conflict arises only when religion is linked to the politics of power. Bhagwat stressed that if we focus on the essence of religions, there is no conflict. Love, truth, and service are the shared foundation. This shared foundation can enable India to build a society that becomes exemplary for the world.

While Bhagwat’s ideas provide clarity and direction, one must also question how easily they can be translated into action. India’s social complexities—caste tensions, religious divides, political interests, and economic inequalities—make the task of creating a “new human being” a long and arduous journey. Critics argue that although the Sangh has strong ideas, they have yet to deeply penetrate all sections of society. Suspicion among minority communities still exists. Therefore, trust cannot be earned by words alone but through transparent and concrete actions that demonstrate that the Sangh’s Hindutva is genuinely inclusive. Similarly, while the call for uplifting the poor and uniting religions is commendable, the question remains whether the Sangh and its affiliated organizations can deliver measurable results.

Critics further note that government initiatives have so far played a larger role in mainstream development than social organizations. Thus, if the Sangh is to prioritize these goals, it must move beyond moral appeals and design practical, actionable programs. Only then will its vision gain real effectiveness.

In the present global scenario, Bhagwat’s message becomes even more relevant. The world is reeling under violence, terrorism, wars, and the blind race of consumer-

ism. Environmental crises are worsening day by day. Mental stress and self-centered lifestyles are hollowing out human life from within. In such circumstances, India is perhaps the only nation capable of offering an alternative philosophy of life. Alongside material growth, India possesses the heritage of spiritual abundance—a heritage that qualifies it to be a Vishwaguru. The RSS centenary lectures were therefore not just an internal exercise for swayamsevaks, but a message to the entire nation and the world: build a new man, uplift the poor, unite religions, establish harmony, and guide the world on the foundation of Hindutva’s broad and inclusive vision.

For decades, the Sangh has faced criticism that its ideology is narrow, representing only the majority while excluding minorities. Bhagwat’s address has clarified that the Sangh’s vision is neither narrow nor exclusionary. Its Hindutva is inclusive, giving space to all faiths and beliefs. Its aim is not political power but moral and cultural reconstruction of society.

The Sangh’s centenary is therefore a historic opportunity. India today stands at a decisive crossroads: on one side lies economic growth, technological achievements, and growing global stature; on the other, internal challenges of inequality, caste tensions, religious discord, and value-less politics persist. The solution lies not in external reforms alone but in inner transformation. This, precisely, is the Sangh’s approach and Bhagwat’s central message.

The centenary lecture series thus leaves us not merely with a conclusion but with a question: Do we wish to make India powerful only in material terms, or do we truly aspire to make it a Vishwaguru? If the answer is the latter, then Bhagwat’s vision must be translated into action. We must cultivate a spirit of belonging to the world, not merely a transactional outlook.

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