

# THE SPEAKER

2001 04 20

NUMBER # 46

2001 04 11

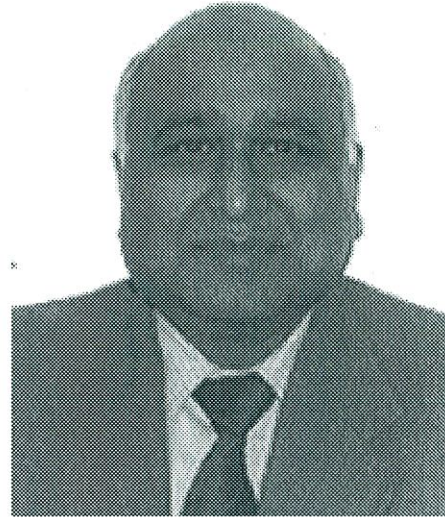
## INDIA: THE JOURNEY OF ITS CIVILIZATION

**BAL ANAND**

*Ambassador, Embassy of India  
Yerevan, Armenia*

I am indeed grateful to the American University of Armenia for providing me the opportunity this evening to share some of my reflections with you all on the milestones, events, and the processes that have molded the civilization of India. I am acutely conscious of my inadequacies and limits in dealing with this topic of seminal significance; I have, therefore, no pretension to deliver some scholarly discourse laced with learned formulations. What I propose to undertake is simply to take you along the route of my personal journey in learning and understanding the prime factors, the motivational forces, and the evolving processes, which have gone into the evolution -- and still continue to shape -- the lives of the people of the country of my birth: India (also called Bharat). I have consciously chosen the word journey -- the Persian word for an ambassador is, 'safeer', which literally means, 'one who undertakes a journey'. Diplomats surely do travel places to perform their duties. Civilization itself would seem to connote a collective journey of the communities of mankind into an ever-evolving and ever-receding realm of renewal. This is as much true for the individual as for a nation or the community of nations inhabiting Earth.

The ancient civilization of India differs from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, in that its traditions have been preserved without a break, down to the present day. The earliest Europeans to visit India found a culture fully conscious of its antiquity - a culture that even exaggerated that antiquity and claimed not to have fundamentally changed for many thousands of years. To this day, the humblest of Indians recite the sacred couplets of hymns composed thousands of years



before Christ. So, let us, ladies and gentlemen, go along together to cover the long path, and the several routes traversed by, the civilization of India during the recorded period of almost five millenniums. It is clear that we would have to rush through several centuries and would be able to halt only at the main junctions of the history and civilization of this ancient land.

We should begin with the assertion that in the beginning there was no India. According to established scientific opinion, it was around 170 000 000 years ago that this cluster of continents of the landmass of the earth began to

break up and drift apart under the geological process called plate tectonics. In this process, some hundred million years ago, a huge and roughly triangular chunk of land broke off from the super continent called Gondwana, exactly at the eastern flank of modern Africa, above Madagascar. Eventually, after about a forty-million-year long ocean journey, it docked into the soft underbelly of the sprawling Asian landmass, to become the land that would be

known many eons later as India. The underthrust of that impact, in the course of several million years, upheaved and reared the Himalayas, the youngest, largest and the highest mountain range on earth. Then as the snows and glaciers that covered the Himalayas melted, the great rivers with hundreds of tributaries, bringing millions of tonnes of silt, gradually, over millions of years, built -- layer by layer -- the Indo-Gangetic

**India alone, totaling 1.2 billion people at the turn of the new millennium, represents 16.7% of the world's population.**

plain, the great gift of the Himalayas to the people who would inhabit this land millions of years later.

These mind-boggling events happened in comparatively very recent geological times, long, long after the formation of the earth some 4.6 billion years ago - it all happened, as if, in a wink of cosmic time, though over many millions of earth years. It has been between only a million and ten thousand years ago that the present broad physical features of India became finally established. The geo-dynamic forces involved in the making of India would remain active forever - Kashmir, once a vast lake, has since turned into a garden valley; many centuries later, the forest land around the present area of Bombay subsided into the sea (perhaps, creating the offshore oil ridge of Bombay High today) and it was as recently as 1890 AD that an extensive tract of land in Gujarat slid into the sea. The devastating earthquake exactly 78 days ago in Gujarat could be interpreted as a grim reminder of the convulsion of the Indian plate which continues to push and grate against Asia. The Himalayas are estimated to be currently growing at the rate of about seven millimeters a year and eroding by one millimeter.

The land thus enclosed by the mountains and the seas is indeed vast and of such great geo-biological diversity that it has been rightly described as a subcontinent. From Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari at the southern tip, India stretches some 3200 km and it has a width of about 2900 km from the Hindu Kush in the northwest to the Assam Mountains in the north-west. India has an area of about 3.1 million square km while the other four nations of the subcontinent Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh account for 1.1 million square km. It needs to be underlined that the present political division of the landmass of India are mere accidents of history and have no physical and civilization-based rationale whatsoever. The early Aryans in India were conscious of the geographic distinctiveness of their homeland calling it Himachala Setu Paryantam: the land stretching from the Himalayas to the southern Sea and in their proprietary pride they named the land, Bharat, after their legendary royal hero. Ancient Sanskrit writers usually spoke of India metaphorically as a lotus flower. The other great civilizations of the ancient world - the Chinese in the east, the Persians, Greeks and Romans in the west had

some knowledge of India's topography - an ancient Chinese writer stated, 'this country in shape is narrow towards the south and broad towards the north and the people's faces are of the same shape as the country'. This landmass has the densest population in the world with India alone totaling 1.2 billion people at the turn of the new millennium, representing 16.7% of the world population.

The story of early man in India remains obscure, as archaeologists arrange and rearrange shreds of evidence -- often sharply disagreeing with each other -- about what happened, where and when. It is, of course, certain that human progress in the Old Stone Age was extremely slow with life barely distinguishable from that of animals. It is believed that sometime between the 9th and 7th millennium BC, among the fertile crescent arching from Egypt to the Persian gulf, man had started to take charge of his environment, the domestication of animals, followed by village habitation, led to the discovery of wheels, carts and boats. It is widely believed that around the 6th millennium BC, the

settlements of farmers spread from the Middle East to the Iranian plateau and Central Asia and later to the Indian subcontinent. The racial composition of the early Indians also remains uncertain: it is generally believed that the people who first brought farming to India and developed an urban civilization were a Caucasoid sub-race speaking a proto-Dravidian language, the precursor of present Tamil. Still later, several other races came, turning India into one of the greatest ethnographical museums of the world. All these races have blended together so thoroughly over the centuries that today it is impossible to find any pure racial type in India. India has been subjected to successive waves of migrations and invasions, resulting in a teeming linguistic jungle so that today, according to a linguistic survey, it has as many as 225 distinct languages in addition to dialects.

It is intriguing that in the long recorded history of India there has not been even a faint hint of the Indus valley civilization until the celebrated metropolises of the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro civilizations were first excavated in the 1920s. At its height, the geographical reach of the Indus civilization covered about 1.3 million square kilometers. The Indus civilization reached its peak around the 3rd millennium BC. Writing is said to have been first developed in Sumeria

**Writing is said to have been first developed in Sumeria around 6000 BC, but we do not know when it was adopted in the Indus valley- the earliest date assigned to the Indus Valley inscriptions is 2600 BC**



**H.E. MR. BAL ANAND** was born on November 15, 1943. He has Master's degrees in English Literature and in Political Science.

He was a Lecturer in English Literature in College and joined Indian Foreign Service in July 1971. He trained in the Ministry of External Affairs and in other institutions of the Indian Government. From May 1974 to July 1975, he was an Under-Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs. From 1975 to June 1978, Mr. Bal Anand was second, then first, Secretary at the Embassy of India in Tehran. From December 1978 to June 1980, he was First Secretary/Charge d'Affairs at the Embassy of India in Mali. From July 1980 to September 1982, Mr. Bal Anand was a Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs. From October 1982 to March 1986, he was a First

Secretary/Counselor at the Embassy of India in Bucharest then, from April 1986 to July 1989, he was Counselor at the Indian Embassy in Madrid. From September 1989 to July 1992, he was posted as Minister to the Embassy of India, Riyadh.

From September 1992 to November 1994, he was Deputy High Commissioner, in the High Commission of India, Islamabad.

From December 1994 to July 1999 he was Ambassador of India in Panama with concurrent accreditation to Nicaragua and El-Salvador. From October 9, 1999 to the present, Mr. Bal Anand is the Indian Ambassador in Yerevan, Armenia.

around 6000 BC, but we do not know when it was adopted in the Indus valley-the earliest date assigned to the Indus Valley inscriptions is 2600 BC. The next phase of India's civilization history starts with one branch of the tribes of Central Asia who had adopted the name of Aryans and lived in the Iranian plateau. The Rig Veda records the life and time when the Aryans made the present Punjab their homeland. In the second millennium BC they moved further into the Gangetic valley. For a long span of over a thousand years, from the collapse of the Indus civilization and the establishment of the Magadhan Empire, we have no material relics for the study of Indian history. Even after the Indians acquired the art of writing, sometime between 800-500 BC, the Vedas were not written for many centuries. The broad period of 1200 to 500 BC is assigned to their composition. The two epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata are set in a time in which Aryan tribes had moved into the Gangetic plains - the war of Mahabharat probably took place sometime between 1400-800 BC. The Puranas, like the Mahabharat, called Itihaas are a vast miscellany of material on religion, society, and history. Actual recording of Puranas began only from about the 3rd century AD and took their present form in the 5th century, during the rule of the Guptas. The Puranas are valuable references for history, assuming the form of prophecy and providing the valuable list of kings after the Kurukshetra war.

The period around the 7th century BC is reckoned as the time of challenge and opportunity in India which also brought tensions and anxieties. It was during this phase that the Upanishads, Buddhism, Jainism and a host of other radical philosophic and religious systems arose. The Upanishads - literally the wisdom learned from the Gurus - marked a radical transformation in the religion of Aryans by shifting the emphasis from gods and rituals to abstract concepts and mystic knowledge. Only thirteen Upanishads, composed roughly between the 7th and 4th century BC, are generally acknowledged as authentic appendices of the Vedas. The goal of Upanishads was, as for all philosophy, to unravel the enigma of life and examine the relationship between man and universe - 'whence are we borne? Whereby do we live, and wither do we go?' We now enter the period when peripatetic polemicists known as privrajakas (wanderers) dominated intellectual life. They constantly toured the land to propagate their radical doctrines and to engage rival theorists in public debates. The defining characteristic of the age was rationalism, not faith, and the greatest religious reformers of the age, i.e. Mahabir, Buddha, and Gosala were all rationalists who ignored or rejected the concepts of god and the authority of the Vedas.

We will have to jump across a few centuries to come straight to Emperor Ashoka, one of the most admired monarchs in the history of the world, who ruled between 273-236 BC. Ashoka who assumed the title, 'The Beloved of the gods' was the grandson of the first Indian Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. According to H G Wells, more living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the name of Constantine or Charlemagne. Ashoka was indeed the role-model of the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru and free India have adopted the symbol of his rule in the National Flag and the National Emblem. The edicts of Ashoka carved on the iron pillars have survived to this day. In one of the edicts, Ashoka states that the only true conquest consists of the conquest of self and men's hearts by the Dharma, i.e. Duty or Piety. Another edict reads, 'All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting, a man exults his own

sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people'.

To cover the long journey of the civilization of India, we will again have to skip many more centuries. It may be mentioned that after the glorious era of Buddhism in India under the Mauryan and the Kushan rulers till the first century AD, Hinduism made a remarkable comeback during the period of the Gupta rulers, reckoned as a golden era of the history of India. The decline and disintegration of the empire of the Guptas in the last quarter of the 5th century was followed by various Hindu dynasties. The course of history was changed with the invasion of the Muslim warriors from the region of present-day Afghanistan. Several dynasties of Turkish and Afghan descent ruled over Delhi until Babar, a descendent of both Chingez and Timur, was invited to invade and he defeated the Lodhi Sultans of Delhi in 1526 AD. Babar proved a man of destiny in establishing the rule of the Mughal dynasty in India. If Emperor Ashoka defined the ultimate best of Indian civilization before the advent of Islam, it is Emperor Akbar, grandson of Babar, who has come to embody the essence of the civilization of India borne out of the interaction between

***'The inquisition flourished in Spain and the Netherlands and elsewhere, and both Catholics and Calvinists thought tolerance of the other a deadly sin'.***

Hinduism and Islam. The story of the innocent lad, who came to the throne at the young age of 13, symbolizes all that India would represent for a long time to come. He personifies the best of synthesis not only between the Hindu religion and Islam but almost all beliefs prevalent during his time. This unlettered monarch was the most magnificent patron of learning and arts. To

quote Jawaharlal Nehru again, 'for nearly 50 years Akbar ruled India, i.e. from early 1556 to the end of 1605; it was the period of revolt in the Netherlands in Europe, and of Shakespeare in England. Akbar's name stands out in Indian history, and sometimes and in some ways, he reminds one of Ashoka'. It is a strange thing that a Buddhist Emperor of India in the 3rd century BC and a Muslim Emperor of India of the 16th century AD should speak in the same voice. According to Jawaharlal, 'One wonders if this is not, perhaps, the voice of India herself, speaking through two of her great sons'. Jawaharlal further reminds his daughter, Indira Gandhi, in a letter written on September 4, 1932 that there was the most extraordinary intolerance in Europe at that time in matters of religion, 'The inquisition flourished in Spain and the Netherlands and elsewhere, and both Catholics and Calvinists thought tolerance of the other a deadly sin'.

The Mughal Empire declined after the death of Akbar's powerful great grandson, Aurangzeb, who ruled from 1658 to 1707, and adopted policies that annoyed the majority of the Hindus and other religious minorities of India. The advent of the British as a political force started in the middle of the 18th century and culminated in India becoming the part of the British Empire in the middle of the 19th century. According to Nehru, 'India became, for the first time, a political and economic appendage of another country'. The process of political reawakening among the Indians was the result of a serious introspection on the part of a cross-section of people representing the masses of India. While European scholars established that there was so much truly great and unique in the past of India, many Indians were convinced that India had also to reckon with so many new realities created in the western world by the advancement of learning, developments of industrialization, and the popular institutions of governance. The poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore; the saint-politician Mahatma Gandhi and the thinker-statesman Jawaharlal Nehru created a vision of new India. This vision sought a synthesis of all that had contributed to the composite cultural heritage of

India and also the incorporation of the relevant elements of the value system of the resurgent west. Muslim separatism, encouraged by the retreating foreign rulers, however, resulted in partition as the price of India's freedom. The unfolding of developments during the last half of the past century has underlined how the fate of the people of the subcontinent was altered in contradiction to the unique and long-shared common heritage.

The success of Parliamentary democracy in India since independence in 1947 would seem to underline the long civilization heritage of India, the foremost being the tolerance of the views and opinions of others. It was certainly a triumph for the heritage of India that the man behind the creation of the constitution of free India, which guaranteed equality of all before law, had himself faced the worst type of discrimination in his life. It may also be mentioned that the political freedom of India started the whole process of de-colonisation in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Now, everybody is a democrat but there were few takers and backers of India to survive as a democracy, much less making a success of it. India is proud to be the largest democracy in the world and has been setting its own standards in democratic practice and governance.

Coming to the essential elements of the foreign policy of free India, I may again submit that the historical and cultural roots of the civilization of India that advocated peace at home and friendship abroad have been a predominant factor in following a consistent and principled policy in the international arena. The political concept of the Non-aligned Movement played a vital role during the difficult period of the dangerous rivalry between the two super powers. India has been in the forefront to support the development and the strengthening of the newly emerged democracies and the developing countries. India has made a solid contribution in the forums of the United Nations and has always focused on the issues in terms of the larger interests of humanity.

On the domestic front, India has made rapid strides in various fields, particularly in the priority sectors of social development. It is to the credit of India's peasants and dedicated scientists who ushered in the green revolution and removed the specter of hunger forever. India has to do much more to raise the standard of living of her people. India has, however, been able to create the third largest pool of technically trained manpower. It is interesting that the country is in the forefront of the information technology that is sweeping the world in the new millennium. This, again, would seem to reflect the heritage of learning and knowledge in the civilization of India.

Coming to the literature and the arts, there has almost been a great renaissance in these fields. The historical legacy of the English language has been transformed to the fullest advantage. The traditions of Indian dance and music are winning recognition in the world as never before. The long forgotten disciplines of Yoga, meditation, Ayurveda, along with the whole gamut of India's traditions of spirituality have been receiving more widespread attention and respect in the world. Traditional and classical Indian music is transforming world music and is also getting transformed in the process as never before. Indian cuisine is getting more and more popular in the world with vegetarian dishes getting more medical recognition.

India had always enjoyed a strong tradition of the performing arts including the epic drama with Ramayana staged every year in the hundreds and thousands of Indian villages since times immemorial. It is no wonder that the film industry of India has become the largest in the world and has been attracting talented people from all the other related fields. Indian films represent the composite culture of India while

reflecting on its wonderful varieties too. The films have always been used, apart from wholesome entertainment, to convey strong social and political messages - recently, the heroes and heroines of Hollywood, with their immense popular following, have started playing roles in politics also. The popularity of the recently launched TV serials on the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics have not only underlined the continuity of the ancient culture, but have also been used to transmit powerful ideas with telling contemporary relevance. The film world, above all, represents India at its secular best.

India, like all the other countries, has entered the new millennium with the inevitable and irreversible phenomenon of globalization. The new era, while generating so many hopes, causes some serious fears also. India had undertaken the process of economic reforms and liberalization about two decades back in the face of the emerging free market economy of the world. The Nobel Prize winner economist of India, Prof. Amartya Sen, is optimistic about India's capability to make the best of the new opportunities in the new global economic order and avoid its pitfalls. According to Prof. Sen, 'globalization is evident in the history of the world and India has been an integral part of the globe in the most interactive sense'. He adds that 'India has been both an importer and an exporter of ideas in the world and has been successful in producing a good deal of what economists call 'value added' to its identity'. Prof. Sen., however, cautions that India must be careful in addressing its difficulties arising from globalization and particularly stresses the need for great attention to primary education, health care, land reforms, and the development of micro credit and empowering of women.

Standing on the ancient soil of Armenia, I am obliged to refer to the civilization interactions between India and Armenia. It is confirmed that long before the Portuguese explorer Vasco De Gama reached the Indian shore at Calicut in 1498, the Armenian sailor-merchant Tomas Cana had already traversed this route. The historic records referred to the Christian queen of Emperor Akbar, Mariam Zamani Begum who was of Armenian origin and is buried alongside the Emperor in the mausoleum at Agra. I am certain that many manuscripts in the Matenadaran Museum wait to be studied to throw flashes of light on the history of India. These were matters of no accident that the first draft of the Constitution of the future independent Republic of Armenia was so carefully crafted by the cleric-constitutionalist, Shahamir Shahamiryan in Madras in 1781 and the first ever journal in the Armenian language, 'Azdarar', was also published in Madras in 1794. It is also interesting that the first Indian classical vocalist to be recorded on gramophone was Ms Gauhar Jan of Armenian origin. She was the only artist to perform at the Delhi Durbar in 1912 and also, according to a record, contributed generously to the causes of welfare undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi.

I recently became a personal witness to the popularity of poet Sarmad of Armenian origin, martyred by Emperor Aurangzeb, whose humble grave in front of the massive Jami'a Masjid in Old Delhi attracts many devotees, even today. I was glad to see on 1st January, this year that the Armenian Philanthropic College in Calcutta is again chirping with the noise of its young students. The philosopher President of India Dr S Radhakrishnan, and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi paid official visits to Armenia in 1964 and 1976 respectively to renew the ancient relations of friendship between the two countries. It is a matter of pride and distinction for me to be the first resident Ambassador of India to Armenia.

Let me conclude with an anecdote narrated to me by a very senior diplomat who said, 'I have been attending many international conferences and seminars in which Africans, Europeans, Asians, Americans all take part. Do you know the

plain, the great gift of the Himalayas to the people who would inhabit this land millions of years later.

These mind-boggling events happened in comparatively very recent geological times, long, long after the formation of the earth some 4.6 billion years ago - it all happened, as if, in a wink of cosmic time, though over many millions of earth years. It has been between only a million and ten thousand years ago that the present broad physical features of India became finally established. The geo-dynamic forces involved in the making of India would remain active forever - Kashmir, once a vast lake, has since turned into a garden valley; many centuries later, the forest land around the present area of Bombay subsided into the sea (perhaps, creating the offshore oil ridge of Bombay High today) and it was as recently as 1890 AD that an extensive tract of land in Gujarat slid into the sea. The devastating earthquake exactly 78 days ago in Gujarat could be interpreted as a grim reminder of the convulsion of the Indian plate which continues to push and grate against Asia. The Himalayas are estimated to be currently growing at the rate of about seven millimeters a year and eroding by one millimeter.

The land thus enclosed by the mountains and the seas is indeed vast and of such great geo-biological diversity that it has been rightly described as a subcontinent. From Kashmir in the north to Kanyakumari at the southern tip, India stretches some 3200 km and it has a width of about 2900 km from the Hindu Kush in the northwest to the Assam Mountains in the north-west. India has an area of about 3.1 million square km while the other four nations of the subcontinent Pakistan, Nepal Bhutan, and Bangladesh account for 1.1 million square km. It needs to be underlined that the present political division of the landmass of India are mere accidents of history and have no physical and civilization-based rationale whatsoever. The early Aryans in India were conscious of the geographic distinctiveness of their homeland calling it Himachala Setu Paryantam: the land stretching from the Himalayas to the southern Sea and in their proprietary pride they named the land, Bharat, after their legendary royal hero. Ancient Sanskrit writers usually spoke of India metaphorically as a lotus flower. The other great civilizations of the ancient world - the Chinese in the east, the Persians, Greeks and Romans in the west had

some knowledge of India's topography - an ancient Chinese writer stated, 'this country in shape is narrow towards the south and broad towards the north and the people's faces are of the same shape as the country'. This landmass has the densest population in the world with India alone totaling 1.2 billion people at the turn of the new millennium, representing 16.7% of the world population.

The story of early man in India remains obscure, as archaeologists arrange and rearrange shreds of evidence -- often sharply disagreeing with each other -- about what happened, where and when. It is, of course, certain that human progress in the Old Stone Age was extremely slow with life barely distinguishable from that of animals. It is believed that sometime between the 9th and 7th millennium BC, among the fertile crescent arching from Egypt to the Persian gulf, man had started to take charge of his environment, the domestication of animals, followed by village habitation, led to the discovery of wheels, carts and boats. It is widely believed that around the 6th millennium BC, the

settlements of farmers spread from the Middle East to the Iranian plateau and Central Asia and later to the Indian subcontinent. The racial composition of the early Indians also remains uncertain: it is generally believed that the people who first brought farming to India and developed an urban civilization were a Caucasoid sub-race speaking a proto-Dravidian language, the precursor of present Tamil. Still later, several other races came, turning India into one of the greatest ethnographical museums of the world. All these races have blended together so thoroughly over the centuries that today it is impossible to find any pure racial type in India. India has been subjected to successive waves of migrations and invasions, resulting in a teeming linguistic jungle so that today, according to a linguistic survey, it has as many as 225 distinct languages in addition to dialects.

It is intriguing that in the long recorded history of India there has not been even a faint hint of the Indus valley civilization until the celebrated metropolises of the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro civilizations were first excavated in the 1920s. At its height, the geographical reach of the Indus civilization covered about 1.3 million square kilometers. The Indus civilization reached its peak around the 3rd millennium BC. Writing is said to have been first developed in Sumeria

**Writing is said to have been first developed in Sumeria around 6000 BC, but we do not know when it was adopted in the Indus valley- the earliest date assigned to the Indus Valley inscriptions is 2600 BC**



**H.E. MR. BAL ANAND** was born on November 15, 1943. He has Master's degrees in English Literature and in Political Science.

He was a Lecturer in English Literature in College and joined Indian Foreign Service in July 1971. He trained in the Ministry of External Affairs and in other institutions of the Indian Government. From May 1974 to July 1975, he was an Under-Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs. From 1975 to June 1978, Mr. Bal Anand was second, then first, Secretary at the Embassy of India in Tehran. From December 1978 to June 1980, he was First Secretary/Charge d'Affairs at the Embassy of India in Mali. From July 1980 to September 1982, Mr. Bal Anand was a Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs. From October 1982 to March 1986, he was a First

Secretary/Counselor at the Embassy of India in Bucharest then, from April 1986 to July 1989, he was Counselor at the Indian Embassy in Madrid. From September 1989 to July 1992, he was posted as Minister to the Embassy of India, Riyadh.

From September 1992 to November 1994, he was Deputy High Commissioner, in the High Commission of India, Islamabad.

From December 1994 to July 1999 he was Ambassador of India in Panama with concurrent accreditation to Nicaragua and El-Salvador. From October 9, 1999 to the present, Mr. Bal Anand is the Indian Ambassador in Yerevan, Armenia.

must find its life saving way corresponding to its soul. It is not up to me to tell any Armenian how to be.

**-Are there any state structures or political councils in India that are moving in the direction of accepting the Armenian Genocide?**

*-The Armenian Genocide was a real tragedy. I must say that in the sense of our historical and cultural heritage we have always believed that there should be tolerance and respect towards other beliefs. We are aware of the historical precedents of that tragic event. I would like to say that the participating parties should search their souls and leave behind the tragic past.*

**-What are the consequences of the recent Indian earthquake? What is your estimate of the damage? What programs of reconstruction are there? What lessons are learned from the disaster?**

*-First, I must say that the group of 18 Armenian specialists, headed by Mr. Nazaretian, was one of the first to begin life saving work in the earthquake area. I have exchanged views with the Armenian specialists. They have given their conclusive account on their return. The Armenian specialists have worked for two weeks in India. I must say that the scientists of Armenia and India have been collaborating in the field of seismology for a long time. During the discussions, it became clear to me that the Armenian specialists have serious and significant experience in the fields of town planning and life saving.*

**-Can you give some information on the problem of Kashmir?**

*-I mentioned in my lecture that this lake became a beautiful valley millions of years ago. It should not be an apple of discord but should be admired. I think this is a heritage that remains from the history of India. As a historian has mentioned, never have so few determined the destiny of so many in such a short period of human history. I will mention that when the British left India, the major part of India belonged to Britain. There were serious disagreements and generally, the principle of the division was that Moslem territories passed to Pakistan. I must say that there was a state in India, which was governed by a Moslem, who tried to gain independence from both Pakistan and India. The people, however, wanted to gain independence, to become a part of the Indian democracy. Then there was the problem of Kashmir, where the leader was*

*Hindu, but there were many Moslems in the population. The nation of Kashmir, led by sheik Abdula, considered that Kashmir belonged to those who had lived there for many ages. After its independence, India turned to the UNO, when the army of Pakistan invaded Kashmir, even though the leader of Kashmir had signed an agreement that Kashmir would become part of India. After this, the problem of Kashmir turned into a game within the bodies of the UN. So, the UN was concerned with personal interests rather than with the solution of the problem of Kashmir. During that period, the aggression became more strained. I mentioned that periodically, elections were held in Kashmir and the population of Kashmir agreed to become a part of India. Recently, there have been problems connected with minor groups who do not believe that India has a collective culture. There have been problems in other regions too but we could solve them in a democratic way. I can say for sure that the democratic system of India will let us solve the problem of Kashmir.*

**-What are the problems and solutions connected with the population explosion of India?**

*-The positive aspect of this problem is that there exists only one opinion on that question. We must do something to prevent the numbers from growing so rapidly. India was the first country to adopt a policy that gave broad rights to families. We have succeeded greatly in this question. Today there is a 2.1% growth rate instead of 3.2%. However, the base is so large that every year the population increases by as much as the population of Australia. There is no contrary opinion concerning family planning, cultural and religious heritage, and social values. The emphasis lies on the fact that individuals can have as large a family as they can afford. We have succeeded in many Indian states. The brightest example is the southern state of Kerala. We were successful in the field of education, especially in the field of women's education. We hope that the other states will follow Kerala's example. We have succeeded in the development of different social fields. The death rate has decreased and this favors population growth. I must stress that the Indian nation, the Indian government, and Indian social organizations are conscious of this problem and try to control it.*

**WEDNESDAY, 2001 04 25**

LECTURE SERIES PROGRAM  
Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary of Turkmenistan to Armenia, His  
Excellency

**Mr. Toily Kurbanov**

Will give lecture titled

**The Basin of the Caspian Sea as  
a Resources System:  
Turkmenistan's point of view**

Wednesday, 2001 04 25 18:00  
American University of Armenia  
Small Auditorium, 5th Floor

The lecture will be given in English,  
with simultaneous translation into Armenian

ADMISSION IS FREE



The  
**SPEAKER**

Newsletter of the Lecture Series Program  
American University of Armenia  
Extensi  
on Program

URL: // [www.aua.am/aua/extens/lectures](http://www.aua.am/aua/extens/lectures)

Program Coordinator:

**Hrair Zoryan**

American University of Armenia  
40 Marshal Bagramian Boulevard, Yerevan, Armenia

Tel: 51-27-07

Addressee: