



»Za enakopravnost spolov je odločilna izobrazba, v prvi vrsti za ženske in dečke, seveda pa je tudi moške in dečke treba pripraviti, da bodo to sprejeli. V tem duhu enakosti vzgajam tudi hčer in sina,« pove indijska veleposlanica v Sloveniji Namrata S. Kumar. / foto: Tomaž Skale

NJENA EKSCLENCA NAMRATA S. KUMAR, VELEPOSLANICA INDIJE

## Slovenija, ljubezen na prvi pogled

Všeč sta ji naša narava in prijaznost ljudi – Indijci in Slovenci smo si bolj podobni, kot se zdi – Indija ima ministrstvo za ajurvedo, predsednik vlade izvaja joga vsak dan – Najbolj pogreša družino

Jan Konečnik

»Pri nas beseda Kumar označuje poseben način naslavljanja moških in dečkov ter je zelo pogost prilemek v Indiji.« pojasni veleposlanica Namrata Satdeve Kumar, ki je v Slovenijo prišla letos poleti. Glede na to, da je Indijec 1,35 milijarde, sem izbrskal, da gre za 11. najpogostejši prilemek na svetu. »Sprajujem, ker je to tudi prilemek pri nas,« razložim svojo radovednost. »Res? Kaj pa pomeni?« vpraša. »Recimo kumara, zelenjava,« odgovorim. Zasmehiva se, led je prebit.

**Na družbenih omrežjih ste objavili kar nekaj fotografij narave v Sloveniji. Vas je prevzela?**

»Ja, res me je. Morda se ponavljam, a vsem povem, da je bila to ljubezen na prvi pogled. Ne gre le za naravo, gre tudi za ljudi. Itada bi spoznala še več ljudi, spoznala državo, jo začutila še bolj.«

**Preselili ste se pred nekaj meseci, privaditi se je bilo treba na novo okolje, začeti delati ...**

»Pravzaprav sem imela srečo, saj ob mojem prihodu gibanje še ni bilo tako omejeno zaradi epidemije. Dokaj hitro sem lahko tudi predala poverljivo pismo vladnemu predsedniku, njegovih ekselencij gospodu

Borutu Pahorja. To je za nas diplomate zelo pomembno, saj lahko začnemo svoje delo. Srečala sem se z ministri in uradniki ter opravila pogovore glede gospodarskega, znanstvenega in kulturnega sodelovanja, ki je med Slovenijo in Indijo že zdaj zelo dobro.

Sicer smo diplomati mednarodni nomadi in se hitro privadimo na novo okolje. To, da sem se v Sloveniji takoj dobro počutila, mi je seveda pri tem pomagalo.«

**Delček Indije v Sloveniji**  
Težko bi našli dva bolj različna svetova, dve državi, kot sta Indija in Slovenija ...

»Indijci so zelo topli, gostoljubni ljudje. To sem občutila tudi pri ljudeh tukaj. Seveda je Slovenija čistejša, v Indiji imamo velike izzive z onesnaženostjo zraka. Indija je tudi precej večja in ima ogromno prebivalcev. Ampak to so razlike v številkah. Meni se ljudje zdijo podobni. Recimo družinske vrednote. Na poti v službo in domov se pogovarjam z voznikom, ki je Slovenec in mi razlaga o družini, o tem, kako poteka praznovanja, kako skrbijo za ostarele sorodnike. Tako je tudi pri nas. Všeč mi je, da se ljudje, recimo v trgovini ali službi, iz vpludnosti vedno pozdravijo.«

**Ste si že ogledali kaj Slovenije?**

»Bila sem na obali, v Piranu. Res je lepo mesto. Všeč mi je, da ima Slovenija vsega po mašem. Morje, jezera, gore. Veliko lahko ponudi, podobno kot Indija, čeprav je manjša. Na poti v Piran sem se spomnila naših mest ob obali, Slovenj Gradec me je spomnil na kraj v hribih, kjer sem včasih delala. Ne pogrešam domovine, bolj za to, da najdem delček svoje države v Sloveniji.«

**No, gotovo je nekaj, kar pogrešate. Morda hrana?**

»Hrane ne pogrešam, saj rada jem različne jedi. Tudi hčerka, ki je prišla z menoj, rada raziskuje novo kuhinariko. Indijsko lahko kuhamo doma, polog tega so tu restavracije in trgovine, kjer lahko dobim vse začimbe. Včasih pogrešam družino in moža, ki prav tako dela v vladni službi, pri policiji, in zaradi pomembnih zadalžitev glede ukrepov proti koronavirusu ni mogel z mano. Sin hodi v šolo doma, stari so tam. Sino dnevno v stikih prek videooklica, tako da je lažje.

Morda je tukaj nekoliko drugače pri praznovanjih indijskih praznikov, saj je v Sloveniji naša diaspora maloštevilna. V Združenih arabskih emiratih, kjer sem službovala prej, nas je bilo toliko, da si se počutil skoraj kot v Indiji. Seveda

na taka praznovanja povabimo tudi domačine in ko bo epidemija pod nadzorom, bi rada pripravila dogodek za Slovence in druge prijatelje.«

**Izobraževanje za enakopravnost**  
Ste imeli že pred prihodom kakšne prijatelje v Sloveniji?

»Ne, nisem. Pred odhodom sem se sestala z vašim veleposlanikom v Indiji, gospodom Marjanom Cencnom, ki je postal moj dobri prijatelj. Se pa seveda spoznavam z ljudmi in imam občutek, da bom z nekaterimi med njimi ostala prijateljica vse življenje.«

**Je težko dobiti slovenskega prijatelja?**

»Morda sem tukaj prekratke čas, da bi lahko sodila o tem. Vendar sem imela pri nekaj ljudeh, ki sem jih spoznala, občutek, kot da se ne pogovarjamo prvič. Najbolje bi bilo, da pogovor ponovimo čez nekaj mesecev, pa vam bom lažje odgovorila.« (smeh)

**Sprajujem zato, ker Slovenci na splošno sami zase velikokrat rečejo, da smo bolj hladni ljudje.**

»To je zelo relativno. Mislim, da ima vsak narod neke zgodovinske izkušnje, na podlagi katerih razvije takine ali drugačne značilnosti. Če so ljudje iz kake dežele zadržani ali odprti do drugih, za to obstaja neki zgodovinski razlog. Slovencev je malo in morda je to razlog, da prišleke gledate drugače, ste morda bolj zadržani pri skupni evropski migracijski politiki. To je treba sploštvati. To moramo vzeti v obzir tudi zdaj, ko si prizadevamo z valno državo skleniti bilateralni dogovor o migracijah, s katerim bi lahko bolje nadzorovali potovanja ljudi med našima državama.«

**Veliko ste delali tudi na področju izobraževanja, zavzemate se za enakopravnost spolov ...**

»Pred kratkim, 25. novembra, smo praznovali Dan ustave v Indiji. Naša ustava govori o enakopravnosti v vseh pogledih. Če nisi izobražen, težko spoštujеш različnost, težko živiš v različnosti. V Indiji sem deset let delala na področju osnovnega, srednjega in višjega izobraževanja. Zgolj izobrazba lahko ljudi pripravi na svet zunaj, na izzive, ki jih čakajo.

Pri nas smo imeli dolgo kastni sistem, v katerem nekateri ljudje niso imeli dostopa do izobrazbe, do določenih delovnih mest. Ne morem reči, da tega danes nikjer več ni, je pa precej manj. Te spremembe na bolje je omogočilo izobraževanje, saj so se ljudje začeli zavedati svojih pravic. Za enakopravnost spolov je prav tako odločilna izobrazba, v prvi vrsti za ženske in dečke, seveda pa je treba tudi moške in dečke pripraviti, da bodo to sprejeli. V tem duhu enakosti vzgajam tudi hčer in sina.«

**Indijski klasični ples**  
Veliko pozornosti posvečate ajurvedi, tradicionalni indijski medicini.

»Ajurveda je filozofija, ki deluje tudi v praksi. Gre za pet tisoč let staro dokumentirano zdravstveno znanje, ki je neposredno povezano z naravo, z rastlinami. Na Zahodu marsikdo misli, da je vračanje k ajurvedi korak nazaj za Indijo. To je napačna predstava. Ko pri nas moderne medicine še ni bilo, je bila le ajurveda in je delovala. Veliko lahko pripomore k odpornosti telesa, kar zmanjšuje možnosti različnih okužb. Tudi koronavirus najbolj

prizadene tiste, ki imajo šibek imunski sistem, kot so starejši ljudje in tisti, ki so že bolni.

Gre za preventivno medicino in Indija ima veliko željo to znanje deliti s svetom. Imamo tudi posebno ministrstvo, ki promovira tradicionalne znanosti, kot so joga, ajurveda in druge, naše bolnišnice pa združujejo moderno in tradicionalno medicino.«

**Ko sem pred nekaj leti obiskal Mumbai, sem na televiziji videl vašega predsednika vlade Modija, ki je na velikem trgu vodil jogo za nekaj tisoč ljudi ...**

»To je bil verjetno prvi mednarodni dan joge, praznovali smo ga 21. junija 2015. Naš ministrski predsednik Modi je vodil jogo za 35.000 ljudi, saj je sam zelo discipliniran,

**»Slovenija je čistejša, pri nas imamo velike izzive z onesnaženostjo zraka. Indija je precej večja in ima ogromno prebivalcev. Ampak to so razlike v številkah. Ljudje se mi zdijo precej podobni.«**

prakticira jo vsak dan. Telesno je dobro pripravljen, to pričakuje tudi od vseh ljudi v svojem kabinetu, ministrov in uradnikov, pa tudi od ljudi. Premier Modi prebivalce nagovarja skozi mesečni radijski in televizijski program Mann ki Baat, kar pomeni Besede srca, kjer poudarja pomen preventivne skrbi za zdravje in ljudi spodbuja k jogi.«

**Prebral sem, da ste včasih trenirali indijski klasični ples.**

»Pri nas je navada, da se otroci naučijo kakšno izmed tradicionalnih veščin. Pri tem je vztrajala tudi mama. Trenirala sem ples 'kathak' in nastopala vse do leta 1999, ko sem bila prvič napotena v tujino, na naše veleposlaništvo v Kairo. Imela sem celo nekaj plesnih nastopov na egiptovski televiziji. Materinstvo in služba sta vzela veliko časa, zato sem nehala nastopati. Nikoli pa nisem prenehala promovirati plesa in tako smo v Parizu, kjer sem kasneje vodila oddelke kulturne diplomacije, imeli tudi festival na temo indijske kulture Namaste France, ki je trajal vse leto. Lahko sem si izmisljala nove stvari in tako sem tudi režirala nekaj plesnih predstav.«

**Torej, ko je kakšna zabava, še vedno zaplečete?**

»Seveda! Zelo rada plešem, tudi moža sem spoznala na plesišču. Tisti večer sva res veliko plesala. Pri nas imamo pregovore *Oongi par nachana*, kar pomeni plesati tako, kot nekdo drug igra. Moj mož pravi, da od prvega dne pleše po mojih melodijah, jaz pa pravim, da plešem po njegovih. (smeh) V nasprotju z mano on tudi zelo lepo poje, jaz pa raje plešem. Vsi v družini radi plešemo.«

Nedeljski dnevnik, 9 December 2020



"Education is crucial for attaining gender equality, primarily for girls or women. Also men and boys must be prepared to accept this. I am raising both my children in this spirit of equality," Ambassador of India to Slovenia Ms Namrata S. Kumar says.

**Her Excellency Ms Namrata S. Kumar, Ambassador of India to Slovenia.**

### **Slovenia, Love at First Sight**

*She likes Slovenia's nature and people's friendliness – Indian and Slovenian people are much more alike than it seems – India has a Ministry for Ayurveda, Prime Minister practices yoga on a daily basis – She misses family the most*  
By Jan Konečnik

"In India, the word Kumar is a special way of addressing men and boys. It is a very common surname in India" explains Ambassador Namrata Satdeve Kumar, who came to Slovenia in the summertime this year. "With respect to the fact that Indian population is about 1.35 billion, I found out this was the 11th most common surname in the world. I ask this because this is also a surname in Slovenia", I explain why I am curious. "Really? What does it mean?" she asks. "Let us say cucumber, vegetables," I reply. We laugh, the ice has been broken.

**You have published quite a few photos of nature in Slovenia on social networks. Have you been fascinated by it?**

"Yes, indeed. At the cost of repeating myself, as I tell everyone it was like love at first sight with your country. It's not just about nature, it's also about people. I would like to meet more people, get to know the country more, and feel it. I can already feel it but I would wish to feel it even more."

**You moved here a few months ago, you had to get used to the new environment, start working...**

"Actually, I was lucky, because at the time of my arrival, there were not as many restrictions on movement due to the epidemic. I was able to present the letter of credence to your President, His Excellency Mr Borut Pahor, fairly quickly. This is very important to us diplomats, because we can then start our work. I met with ministers and officials and held talks on economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between India and Slovenia, which is very strong already. As for the relocation, we diplomats are international nomads and we get used to the new environment fairly quickly. Of course, it helped that I immediately felt good in Slovenia."

### **A part of India in Slovenia**

**It would be difficult to find two worlds that are as different, two countries such as India and Slovenia...**

"Indian people are very warm and hospitable people. Personally I have felt this with the people of Slovenia also. As for differences, of course, Slovenia is cleaner, we have great challenges with air pollution to address in India. India is also much larger and has a

large population. However, these are differences in figures. In fact, I find the people are pretty much alike. Family values for example. Every day on my way to work and home, I talk to the driver, who is Slovenian, and who tells me about his family, how celebrations take place, how they attend to an elderly relative. It is the same as us. I like that even strangers – at stores, or work place greet each other out of courtesy."

#### **Have you seen any of Slovenia?**

"I was on the coast, in Piran. It is a really nice town. I like that Slovenia has a little bit of everything. The sea, the lakes, and the mountains. It has a lot to offer, somewhat like India, though it is smaller. The way to Piran made me recall some of our coastal towns, Slovenj Gradec reminded me of a place in the hills where I worked in the past. It is not about missing my homeland, it is about finding a piece of my country in Slovenia."

#### **Well, there must be something you miss. Food perhaps?**

"I do not miss food as I like to eat a variety of food. Also my daughter, who came with me, likes to explore new cuisine. Indian food can be cooked at home, and there are restaurants to eat out and shops where it is possible to get all the spices.

At times I miss my family and my husband, who also works in the government service, the police, and has not been able to join me because of important duties relating to the coronavirus measures. My son attends school at home, my parents are there. We are in touch with each other on daily basis via video call, so it is easier.

Perhaps a difference that one feels is with regard to celebration of Indian festivals, as our diaspora is small in Slovenia. In the United Arab Emirates, where I served earlier, there were many of us, and it felt almost like being in India. Of course, local people are also invited to such celebrations. Once the epidemic is under control, I would like to organize an event for Slovenian people and other friends."

#### **Education for Equality**

#### **Did you have any friends in Slovenia before?**

"No. Before leaving India, I met your Ambassador to India Mr. Marjan Cencen,

who has become a good friend. I am getting to know people and I have a feeling that I will get some friends for the rest of my life."

#### **Is it difficult to get a Slovenian friend?**

"It may be too early to be able to say that. However, with a few people I have met so far, I felt that it was not the first time we were meeting. But it would be best to repeat our conversation in a few months again to be able to answer this question." (laughs)

#### **I ask because Slovenians in general often say for ourselves that we are cold people. We find Serbs or Greeks open, hospitable. However, we probably seem quite open to the Finnish people up north.**

"Yes, this is always a relative situation. I think that every nation has some historical experience based on which it develops characteristics of one kind or another. If people of a country are reserved or open to other people, there is some historical reason for this. Slovenians are very few in number and perhaps this is the reason why newcomers are viewed differently and you may have your reasons to be more reserved in the common European migration policy. This needs to be respected. This also needs to be taken into account when India is working to conclude a bilateral agreement on migration with Slovenia so that the movement of people between the two countries can be supervised more efficiently."

#### **You have also worked extensively in the field of education, you advocate gender equality...**

"We just celebrated the Constitution Day on 25 November in India. Our constitution speaks of equality in all respects. If uneducated, it is difficult to respect diversity, or live in diversity. I worked for 10 years in primary, secondary and higher education sector in India. Only education can prepare people to be open for the outside world and for the challenges that await them.

We had a system of castes for a long period of time to the extent where some people did not have access to education, to certain jobs. I wouldn't say it has completely ceased, but it is not as present. Education guaranteed changes for the better as people became aware of their rights. Education is also crucial

for attaining gender equality, primarily for girls or women. Also men and boys must be prepared to accept this. I am raising both my children in this spirit of equality."

### **Indian Classical Dance**

#### **You pay a lot of attention to Ayurveda, Indian traditional medicine.**

"Ayurveda is a philosophy that also works in practice. It is a five thousand year old documented health science, directly linked with nature and plants. There is a perception in the West that a return to Ayurveda practices is a step backwards for India. This is a misconception. When we did not have modern medicine, only Ayurveda existed for us and it worked very well. It continues to be relevant because of its importance in helping build body's immunity, which reduces the possibility of infections. The most affected by the coronavirus are those having a weak immune system: the elderly and those who have co-morbidities.

It is a preventive medicine and India wishes greatly to share the knowledge of Ayurveda with the world. We have a special ministry that promotes traditional sciences such as Yoga, Ayurveda and others and our hospitals are effectively combining modern and traditional medicine."

#### **When I visited Mumbai a few years ago, I saw on TV your Prime Minister Modi who led a few thousand people at the big square performing yoga...**

"This must have been a year when we celebrated the first International Day of Yoga (IDY), on 21 June 2015. On this day Prime Minister Modi had led a Yoga session of over 35,000 people. He is a disciplined yogi, he

"Slovenia is cleaner, we have great challenges with air pollution to address in India. India is also much larger and has a large population. However, these are differences in figures. In fact, I find the people are pretty much alike."

practices Yoga every day. He is himself is physically fit and expects all the members in his cabinet, ministers and officers, and the people to be physically fit. Prime Minister Modi addresses the people of India through a monthly radio and television programme called "*Mann ki Baaf*", which means Heart's words. Through this programme, he emphasises on importance of preventive healthcare and encourages people to embrace Yoga."

#### **I read that you trained Indian classical dance in the past.**

"In India, we have a culture of teaching children some of the traditional skills. My mother also persisted in this. I am trained in Kathak dance. I performed until the year 1999, when I was on my first foreign assignment in our Embassy in Cairo. I even had a few dance performances on Egyptian television. Occupied by responsibilities of motherhood and work, I stopped performing. However, my association with dance and its promotion never stopped. In Paris, where I later headed the Cultural and Public Diplomacy Wing, we also held a year-long festival of Indian culture, *Namaste France*. I was able to invent some new ideas, and I directed some dance choreographies also.

#### **So when there is a party, do you still dance?**

Of course! I love to dance, I met my husband on the dance floor. We danced a lot that evening. We have a saying in India, "*Oongli par nachana*", which means to dance to someone's tunes. My husband says that since the day we met, he dances on my tunes and I say, I dance on his (laughs). Unlike me, he also sings very well, but I prefer to dance. Everyone in our family loves to dance.

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Translation and photo by Embassy of India, Ljubljana.

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