



Ambassador Gurjit Singh

Ambassador Gurjit Singh joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1980 and in 37 years of service served in many different countries. He is well known as a **business-friendly diplomat**, who has often implemented developmental programmes and expanded India's outreach. The widening of the scope of India's perspective in those countries have benefitted from his dedication to culture, trade, investment and other popular engagements.

His initial posting was at the Embassy of India in Tokyo where he earned proficiency in the Japanese language. He was In-charge of political, information and education matters at the Embassy of India, Tokyo before returning to New Delhi at the East Asia Desk. In 1988, he was posted to Colombo as First Secretary (Political), during the period of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) and its subsequent deinduction.

With the advent of economic liberalisation, in 1991, he was posted back to Tokyo, as head of the Commercial Wing and was part of India's effort to attract foreign investment. At that time, he wrote his first book "*The Abalone Factor: An overview of the India-Japan Business Relations*", which won him the Bimal Sanyal Award for Research by an Indian Foreign Service officer. The book was published in 1997 when Japan was the partner country at the India Engineering Trade Fair (IETF). He was well known in business circles and among economic institutions as a supportive diplomat and he frequently held consultations in Japanese with the sogo sosha in closed meetings.

Subsequently, he was posted as Deputy High Commissioner of India to Nairobi, where he was also the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to UNEP and UN-HABITAT and contributed to the growing interest in environmental and urbanisation issues. He was instrumental in raising the trade levels to new heights through a series of market surveys and the first Made in India Show in Nairobi 1996.

He returned to New Delhi as Director of the Passport Division, where he made a substantive contribution towards computerisation and setting up of systems which led to significant improvements in delivery. He introduced the concept of passport services for the business community.

Upon promotion, he became Director-General (Joint Secretary), In-Charge of Africa. This started a series of initiatives which led to the holding of the **India-Africa Conclave and India-Africa Forum Summits** in subsequent years. He initiated the CII-EXIM Bank linkage which bloomed into the Africa conclave. He initiated the lines of credit for NEPAD objectives in Africa.

Thereafter, he was posted at the Embassy of India in Rome, where he contributed to the consolidation of the economic engagement particularly with the Regions and the clusters. In 2005 he was appointed as Ambassador of India to Ethiopia and Djibouti and Representative of India to the African Union, UN Economic Commission for Africa and Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In this capacity, he consolidated India's presence in Africa among the regional economic communities and contributed to the **first India-Africa Forum Summit in 2008**.

His significant work in promoting economic engagement with Ethiopia opened up many investment opportunities and brought his qualities as an economic diplomat to the fore. During this period, his second book, ***"The Injera and the Parantha: Enhancing the Ethio-India Relationship"*** was published with a Foreword by the then Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi who affectionately referred to Ambassador Singh as 'the Bulldozer' for the determined pace at which he competed long pending proposals. In his term, **Indian investment in Ethiopia went from \$ 400 million to \$ 4.2 billion** and Ethiopia was introduced to the prowess of private sector capabilities.

He had a brief stint as Joint Secretary for Eurasia, covering Russia, the SCO, Central Asia and the Caucasus countries. Subsequently, Ambassador Singh was Additional Secretary In-Charge of Africa and the African Union during which period, the Second India-Africa Forum Summit was held in 2011. The economic and developmental initiatives, received wide backing from African partners. This was the period when the India-Africa partnership bloomed. Many opportunities for Indian private and public sector were opened. The India Japan Dialogue on Africa was initiated.

In 2012, he was appointed as Ambassador of India to Indonesia, Timor-Leste and to ASEAN, making him the only Indian diplomat to have been Ambassador to two regional organisations, viz., African Union and ASEAN. During this period, he consolidated India's economic engagement with Indonesia and added significantly to the functional cooperation with ASEAN. A particular **focus was on connectivity and infrastructure project** engagement and seeking a role for Indian companies. His third book ***"Masala Bambu: Enhancing the India-Indonesia Partnership"*** was published at that time, as also a comic book, "Travels through Time" on India and Indonesia. This was a unique instance of a comic written by a diplomat! He created a YouTube video to announce the start of his term in Indonesia, the social media savvy country. During his period, the market was opened for Indian buffalo meat and rice through his close engagement with the Indonesian political establishment.

He was the Ambassador of India to Germany till March 2017 when he retired. He accelerated the implementation of the major decisions taken during the summit meeting between the leaders of India and Germany in 2015. This intensified engagement opened up many functional opportunities and a wider engagement systematically crystallised. His role in increasing cooperation in railways, skill development, water and waste management and the start-ups was keenly noticed. His edited book ***"Opportunity Beckons: Adding Momentum to the Indo-German Partnership"*** was released in January 2017 in Berlin. He was instrumental in the success of the **Make in India Mittlestand** program under which 100 targeted German Champions were shepherded to invest in India. The India German Dialogue on Africa was initiated.

Ambassador Gurjit Singh has frequently contributed essays and articles to journals and books on economic development, strategic perspectives and trade issues. He has an abiding interest in developmental economics and issues of sustainable development. He was well

known in the corridors of UNEP and UN-HABITAT and subsequently he was instrumental in supporting the Africa Climate Policy Centre and at the UNECA at Addis Ababa.

Ambassador Singh schooled at the prestigious Mayo College, Ajmer and obtained his Bachelor's Degree with Honours in Politics at the St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. He is a Post Graduate in International Studies from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has also attended programmes at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Indian Institute of Mass Communications and the Indian School of Business. Post retirement he has been appointed as Hon. Professor of International Relations at the IIT, Indore.

He Chairs the CII Business Task Force on Trilateral Cooperation in Africa including the Asia Africa Growth Corridor with Japan. He comments on current events on TV and in journals. His report on such cooperation in 2019, focused on private sector engagement to make Trilaterals successful.

He is associated with the social impact investment movement and is working on expanding it in Africa along with other trilateral initiatives, including with Japan, for B2B engagement. He is an independent director of companies achieving social impact. He is also associated with civil society efforts through the Aavishkar Foundation, and the Advisory Council of Nobel Peace laureate, Kailash Satyarthi.

Ambassador Singh is an avowed cinema buff having an interest in Indian cinema, which is both academic and historical. He is very fond of sports, including cricket and is a qualified umpire by the Kenya Cricket Association. He enjoys travelling, experiencing different cultures and cuisines and meeting people. His commitment to enhance outreach programmes in every assignment and to enlarge the agenda of engagement is well-known. He is considered a business-friendly developmental diplomat.

He is married and has two children.
