

India: A paradigm of Diversity

A Dialogue exploring India's most actual issues told by Deepa Wadhwa



On April 10th, we Global Governance students, had the great honor and pleasure to meet with the ambassador of India Deepa Wadhwa. She had been the first woman to be appointed as an ambassador in any Gulf State, precisely Qatar, where she worked for several years. After this experience, she was assigned to another important position, namely Ambassador of India to Japan.

The title of the discussion was “the paradigm of diversity” or as our guest preferred to say “India’s multi-everything”.

In fact, the core of the discussion focused on the main controversies of India, its great economic growth and opportunity on one hand and its large widespread poverty on the other hand. As a matter of facts, its retailing sector has grown from 600 millions of dollars to 1.3 billions of dollars, and its economic situation is getting better in terms both of GDP and PPP, however it still remains the country with the highest rate of people living under the level of 2\$ per day.

Lots of different cultures and religions are present in this huge sub-continent, and this is accounted as an asset for the country rather than a source of conflicts between ethnicities. A clear example is the presence of Muslims and Christian communities in touch with each other together with the Hindu one; this is not a source of war for people but rather an opportunity to absorb all these features and make India a great multicultural country. There are approximatively 22 spoken languages in its territory and plenty of widespread cultures among ethnicities but they all coexist thanks to a highly inclusive Constitution, which sets the pillars for a very strong Democracy.

The origins of this Constitution are found in the fight for independence in mid-XX century, with the famous Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent movement, which promoted the concept of civil non-obedience. Although in 1947 India gained its Independence from UK, the first of a long series of War broke out, namely the First Kashmir War, which dealt with territorial and religious conflicts with Pakistan, causing 1,000,000 victims. This conflict has not been solved since then and is still today, sadly, a great problem for everyone.

Finally, in 1949 India obtained an efficient and effective Constitution: it structured its country with principles of Liberal Democracy to spread wealth around the nation, promoting Civil Society Movements, strong and women-led, which tried to resolve problems of equality thanks to affirmative actions. A clear example of an affirmative action provided by the constitution to promote equality is the acknowledgement of the fact that discrimination based on casts is now considered a crime punishable with jail detention, which is a great step forward to contrast this secular classist system.

Furthermore, many progresses were made by Indian administrations to decrease the likelihood, or better the impacts of natural disasters on the Indians; this is why it has been possible to achieve a significant reduction in the frequency of famines in the country. This great success triggered a chain reaction towards further successes: this is why, today, it possible for 1% of the population each year to cross the poverty rate of 2\$/day and move to wealthier economic situation.

The Ambassador then pointed out to us that in the last decades a movement called “Making India” had been spread in the country, carrying with it the idea that India had extraordinary human assets, however needed to find an occupation to them. Much attention was given to this movement, which had helped a huge amount of workers to effectively find jobs. We don’t have to explain how this has implied a great expansion of the markets causing an exponential economy growth: it is not by chance that India is one of the most important country among developing ones.

Although as we just have seen there were significant steps forward Indian’s economy, there are still great controversies: really poor infrastructures and logistics, the lack of unified taxation systems until today (it will enter into force from July 1st), and lack of education for the whole population still cause great backwardness in the country.

India is working the most, with lots of effort, trying to resolve these issues; first, lots of investments to infrastructures and joint project with Japan to promote a modernization of transports both for civilian and trade purposes. Second, a Micro-Finance system was introduced to help people to gain liquidity and let them be a part of the economy. This means a great liquidity and cash flow at all strata of the society. Finally, to assess the issue of education; it is promoting a program called “Skill India”, in order to make its young workers develop skills and be competitive. An example of Indian’s excellence is its Medical field which has talented and competent doctors; however also this field has to deal with great gaps, there is a serious problem of efficiency.

We can therefore understand how this country has an infinite potential but is full of controversies, still, it seems that working hard to tackle the most important issues will lead it towards a great future.

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