

## **Tête-à-Tête: Manish Uprety F.R.A.S. with Bobby Grewal, Chairman-India Association, United Kingdom.**

A well known philanthropist Bobby had earlier walked 800 km from the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh to the Houses of Parliament in London and raised quarter of a million pounds for the British charities. Bobby will say goodbye to his family and friends in London in October 2015 to embark on five and a half month long walk from Kanyakumari- the Southernmost tip of India- to New Delhi, where he is due to finish at the end of March 2016. 'Bobby's Walk Full Circle' aims to raise £1.5 million for deserving children's charities in the UK and abroad.



**(Bobby Grewal, Chairman, India Association-UK with Manish Uprety F.R.A.S.)**

**1. Manish Uprety: Many Congratulations as you shall soon be celebrating your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday? What do you think about the way the world has transformed over the years and of your journey?**

**Bobby Grewal:** Thanks a lot. I will be 80 in March 2015, in about seven week's time. Over my life span, the world has transformed in many ways. The IT and mobile phone revolutions are the key factors bringing humanity closer to each other. World war threats are far less and health wise people enjoy longer lives with better health. People of the 'up and coming' developing countries which were earlier termed as the third world countries are enjoying the lime light of the world stage as a result of their intelligence. The people of our planet do care for each other in times of natural disasters and that is something I am happy to see.

**2. Manish Uprety:** Diaspora is playing an important role for any country in international relations. Please tell us more about the India Association in the United Kingdom?

**Bobby Grewal:** The India Association was formed over 30 years ago in the form of a pressure group on the government of the UK of the time against the right wing minority which I'm happy to say is now a thing of the past. The India Association is a democratically run association with a proper constitution and elections are held every two years. It was registered as a charity in 2002 after I was elected as its chairman. So far it has donated to over 40 institutions/disasters world-wide including the Chilean disaster in the year 2010. We celebrate at least two main functions a year (Diwali and Vaisakhi) to raise funds for worthy causes globally. So far over £300,000 has been donated. My next target through Bobby's Walk Full Circle is to raise £1.5 million for needy children of the world over by supporting charities in that sector.

**3. Manish Uprety:** During the forthcoming 'Bobby's Walk Full Circle' you plan to walk 2600 miles across India. How did you get inspiration for this walk?

**Bobby Grewal :** The key inspiration for my forthcoming walk in October 2015 and my previous two walks were from my own frustrations and disappointments in life from the school days when I was only twelve years old. I believe passionately that I was a born sportsman. So much injustice and mistreatment took place in my young life at two schools even though I was born into a comfortable family where all the attention was around me as the youngest child. I will be telling my guests all about it at our Bobby's Walk Black Tie dinner on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2015. It shall be held in Mayfair, London where supporters of the India Association from all spheres of life in the UK shall congregate to support the walk. My life span is full of sorrows coupled with fleeting and sweet memories. Hopefully, one day after this walk, I will try to pen the whole saga of my life.

4. **Manish Uprety:** Bobby's Walk Full Circle has the full backing and support of UK's Prime Minister David Cameron and the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. Also known names of the country like Ed Miliband, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Lord Bilimoria, Dominic Grieve MP QC, Virendra Sharma MP, Lord Sheikh, Clare Short MP, Keith Vaz MP, Baroness Verma, Professor Colin Green and C B Patel are the patrons. It seems that supporting humanitarian initiatives has become an important international relations and foreign policy tool for the UK. Could you share your observation on the trend?

**Bobby Grewal :** I whole-heartedly agree with you that the present and the past UK governments of all colours were and have been very passionate to promote humanitarian causes wherever there is a need along with the good people of Britain as a whole united community. Definitely it is not a tool, for example, BBC Children in Need raises funds every year over a few days and they raise over tens of millions of pounds. This sum of money is donated by the common people of Britain from all walks of life. In another recent example, a teenager who had only few days to live and the people of the UK donated over £3 million in a matter of days.

5. **Manish Uprety:** Do you think such initiatives should be emulated across the world to spread awareness and build support?

**Bobby Grewal:** It would be the best way to initiate and tell the world of the moral and financial help that will be coming from the patrons, well-wishers and supporters of Bobby's Walk, from the people of my adopted country for more than 55 years. I feel, the people of the developing countries still have to understand the concept of charity. During my last walk for Cancer and HIV in India in 2004/5, over 5 months only a total of Rs 5/6 lakhs (£500-£600) was raised. However in the UK with no publicity, an amount of over £100,000 was raised mainly from friends and their friends within a short period of time. I am looking for the same support from my country of birth. India is a country for which I shed tears of joy every time I read or hear about its progress within its borders and across the world stage.

6. **Manish Uprety:** How can people from Chile and other parts of the world support 'Bobby's Walk Full Circle'?

**Bobby Grewal:** It will be a unique opportunity, not because I will be walking, but it would be because it is a walk for the children of our planet. The people of Chile and rest of the world should get together to help this walk because it is intended for the needy children of the world. At India Association everyone knows about the calamity that struck in Chile in 2010 when India Association sent a donation towards that disaster and also a donation was made towards the victims of Haiti earthquake as well in the same year. There are so many modern and innovative methods these days to donate such as via our website

([www.indiaassociation.co.uk](http://www.indiaassociation.co.uk)) and via other sites such as Just Giving. It doesn't matter if it is only £10. For the price of a few cups of coffee, you will be making a difference to the lives of children that may not otherwise have hope.

7. Manish Uprety: Our world has seen many devastations and catastrophes, yet the challenges for humanity do not seem to subside. What is your message to the youth of our world to make it a better and safe place for all?

Bobby Grewal: Nature's devastations through earthquakes and tsunamis are a great threat to the world. Renowned experts are working round the clock to understand the power that nature holds. Hopefully this threat will be overcome soon like many diseases which were a threat in the past but not now. Unfortunately other demons have taken their place. Now there is the man made threat of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism. Pockets are growing in many countries and young blood is being groomed to sacrifice their lives unnecessarily in the name of religion. The right education at home by parents, schools and at the universities which are the key places to teach these impressionable individuals that the world is shrinking and it will be a single family one day. Religion or faith should enable a person to be a good and responsible human being not a beast. This is especially true since no religion of the world teaches its loyal subjects kill or harm a fellow human being.

If I were a young man of today, perhaps I would have taken the initiative to mobilise the global youth of today to stand up against the religious bigotry. I believe we all have our parts to play in this education process.

India Association, United Kingdom: <http://www.indiaassociation.co.uk/>

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