

AN INSPIRATIONAL LEADER

by Farah Baig

Former Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, His Excellency Abdulnabi Alshoala, has always upheld his opinion of the Republic of India and its people. He tells us about his book on the teachings of Gandhi, the contributions of the Indian community and his illustrious life.

With a natural ability to lead, HE Abdulnabi Al Shoala, has been at the helm of several significant organisations in the country and has been lauded for his achievements and accolades. Having been the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain for a decade he has made various observations about the Indian community which he commends for their contributions to the development of the Kingdom.

“The Golden Jubilee of Diplomatic relations between the two countries is an occasion to be celebrated with pride and joy,” says HE Alshoala, who with a number of Bahraini and Indian friends took the initiative to form the Bahrain and India Society in 2008.

According to HE Alshoala, the 50th

anniversary occasion should be a milestone for the nations to renew their commitment to further consolidate their friendly ties. “India was among the first countries to establish a diplomatic relationship with Bahrain in 1971 immediately after it gained its independence. I believe this is a natural consequence of the historical, friendly relationship that has existed for centuries and is sure to continue to exist,” says HE Alshoala.

“It is demonstrative of the desire and the commitment of the people and leadership of both the countries to continue their efforts to develop this relationship for the benefit of its people.”

India - An Alma Mater

After completing his schooling in the

Kingdom of Bahrain, HE Alshoala worked in the private sector for three years before pursuing his higher education in India in 1969. In what was then known as Bombay, he joined St. Xavier's College and completed his course in Political Science, Economics and Public Administration in 1973.

“It was the greatest experience in my life with many lessons that are worth talking about to date,” HE says. “However, I consider living in India to be a university in itself. I have learned in India the values of tolerance, co-existence, peace and respect for others.”

He strongly believes that India provides the best education in the world. “The proof is that we in the GCC rely on the graduates of the Indian Educational System in all our requirements for growth and development

in our countries,” says HE Alshoala. As a graduate of the Indian higher education system, he believes that India is an attractive and viable destination for those seeking a good education in this region. “In fact, today we find in the most advanced countries that a majority of leading companies and cooperations are headed and managed by Indians who have gained their skills and knowledge through the Indian educational system,” elaborates HE Alshoala.

“Furthermore, I understand that there are thousands of Bahrainis who have graduated from Indian universities who are now an integral part of the society. Not one of them is a failure. In fact, many of them enjoy high positions in the management of our country.”

The Teachings of Gandhi

In October 2018, as an homage to India, HE Alshoala released a book titled ‘*Gandhi... Arabic and Islamic Issues*’ which put a spotlight on the relations between the two countries. “From the beginning I have written and continue to write articles with the aim of increasing the understanding and co-operation between the people of India and the region,” says HE Alshoala.

“I was inspired to write a book on the subject as I wanted to pay India back for the favours and benefits that I have enjoyed while living and studying there,” HE adds.

With political disputes, war and terrorism plaguing this part of the world, HE Alshoala found it necessary to evoke the thoughts and principles of Mahatma Gandhi whose commitment to the principles of peace and non-violence managed to achieve the independence of India. “We can resolve all our differences without resorting to violence and terrorism. I believe that there are many lessons that our countries can learn from India and in particular the lessons, values and principles that Mahatma Gandhi proclaimed,” HE stresses.

Directed at the GCC and the rest of the Arab world, the book skyrocketed to success and was well received from the first day of publishing. “In fact, the publisher had to issue the second edition soon after and I believe that there will be a third release shortly. This is a testament to the fact that the message of the book is much needed in the region,” says HE Alshoala.

‘*Gandhi... Arabic and Islamic Issues*’ is now available in English, Malayalam and Urdu,

and has a Hindi edition in process. “It’s been so well received that I am currently in talks with a publisher in France who wishes to release the book in French,” enthuses HE Alshoala.

Commercial Collaboration

Having been a part of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) since 1983, HE has observed that commercial co-operation and economic relationships between Bahrain and India continues to grow in all sectors of economic activities. “Statistics prove the yearly growth of collaborations very clearly. However, there are still lots of opportunities to increase and further develop our nations’ commercial and economic relationship,” believes HE Alshoala.

According to HE Alshoala, there is a need for increased dialogue between relevant institutions, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and organisations in both countries to propel this growth. “We also need to increase the exchange of trade delegations and participations in exhibitions and similar platforms in both the countries,” says HE Alshoala.

An Able Workforce

As the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain from 1995 to 2005, the doyen believes that the greatest development in terms of the Indian workforce is their ability to consistently improve and increase their skills and specialties. “I have observed this personally. The caliber of the Indian workforce is consistently developing and they contribute to the technical aspects of the economy and industry with clear dedication. Prior to this, the contribution was mainly in the area of unskilled and semi-skilled workforce,” elaborates HE Alshoala.

The Indian community makes up the largest workforce in the Kingdom of Bahrain. “Being the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, gave me the opportunity to see with my own eyes the extent of the positive contribution of the Indian work force in all the sectors in Bahrain and, in fact, all aspects of our life,” says HE Alshoala. “We will remain grateful for their contribution and commitment

without which we would not have been able to achieve all our objectives in our development plans.”

Embellished with Achievements

HE Alshoala has undeniably made some of the most significant contributions to society through his involvement with various government entities, societies and associations. “I consider my first significant achievement to be my success in completing my college education at my own cost without the support of anyone else,” says HE Alshoala.

When standing for the election of the BCCI Board of Directors, HE Alshoala received the highest votes on more than one occasion. “I was honoured to be appointed as a Member of the Shura Council and then subsequently to the Council of Ministers. I am aware that such appointments are a clear recognition of my standing and abilities of which I am also proud and consider it one of the greatest achievements in my life,” states HE Alshoala.

“However, I feel that the most treasured of all my achievements, and my true success, has come from building a very happy family of myself, my wife and four children. I believe that you can only make achievements if you have a happy family,” HE Alshoala concludes.

