

**PART OF WELCOME SPEECH BY: NIKUNJ PAREKH FOR 8<sup>th</sup> WBC 2017 at Saitama, Japan at 3-30 pm on 27th April'17**

**Good Afternoon, Ladies & Gentlemen,**

**I am Nikunj Parekh, from India, representing the World Bonsai Friendship Federation. I am privileged to respectfully and heartily welcome, Their Imperial Highness PRINCE and PRINCESS AKISHINO, who have gracefully agreed to inaugurate today, the 8<sup>th</sup> World Bonsai Convention 2017 at Saitama, Japan.**

**World Bonsai Friendship Federation was formed in April 1989 at Omiya, Saitama, Japan with Dr. Peter Brown of The U.K., Mr. Frank Hocking from Australia- New Zealand, Mr. Chul-ho Lee from Korea, Mr. John Naka from USA, Mr. Saburo Kato, from Japan Mr. Se Xue-Hen from China and myself Nikunj Parekh from India. This was a follow up, after the formation of regional federations with the initiative of respective leaders.**

**Three founding fathers of WBFF were Mr. John Naka, Mr. Saburo Kato and Mr. Ted Tsukiyama, who had the lofty ideals to unite the world through the art of miniaturizing of trees and keep the feeling intact of friendship with Peace and Harmony. In so doing, Legal aspects with human touch and values were combined to begin THE JOURNEY. The Spirit Beyond this Oriental Art got strengthened, with the combination of Horticultural Science and this ever-changing Art. The meditative pursuit of this art was practiced for centuries by Monks and Sages in the Shrines and Temples across the Orient.**

**Later on this art was given due importance at The International EXPO held at Osaka, Japan in the year 1970. This art also reached the shores of Europe. Whereas, in the USA the pioneering efforts of immigrant Japanese farmers, who knew Bonsai and who in later days became teachers and artists who communicated very well in English. By the late 1980's China re-entered the International arena after a gap of some time, with great vigor and regained its position as one of the leading countries practicing this venerable art.**

**But finally, we all have to look to Nature and its five elements- like Sunlight, Air, Earth, Water and Space with fullest respect. Nature is surely, one of our best teacher for all times. The five elements constantly work, without respite for millions of years, without expectations of returns or awards. This, in itself is a lesson on humility ' par excellence'.**

**Next, most important are the five senses, with which we become aware of the artistic aesthetics of the mini tree creations, which need tender love and care. Soon, we began to respect good root structure, its exposure and the graceful ageing process. But as we all know,**

most of the finer roots remain under the soil, working silently. The roots then are the foundation and become a mirror reflection of the tree. Similar is the fate of us, human beings who depend on a good and firm foundation. Trunk line, the branches, sub-branches, flowers and fruits are viewed, as our eyes move upwards. Sensible care at all times makes good healthy trees, which is very similar to making of good human beings.

Virtues of patience, Minute observation power, and meticulous ways of working on trees bring lasting Peace and Harmony. The micro environment thus created for a Miniature tree leads us all to respecting the Macro environment around the world.

The Five Principles of The Orient include Peace, Forgiveness, Harmony, Devotion and Unity of Purpose with Non-Violence in deeds and speech. This encompasses the Nature around us and the entire Humanity.

When the above is achieved there is Happiness and Love. In Peace alone, commerce can flourish. Longevity and good health is assured with abundant greenery. Similarly good education is linked to Prosperity. All this, needs to be topped up with fullest gratitude and respect to all the teachers around the world and to the founding fathers of World Bonsai Friendship Federation. Let us, then, move forward with appreciation towards this art with respect. Symbolically, we celebrate World Bonsai Day during the month of May every year, but devoted leadership and teachers alone will make our onward journey JOYOUS and HAPPY, for generations to come.

On this day let us all delve deeper into the real meaning and spirit of the art of miniaturizing of trees.

Let there be Peace around the world.

Nikunj S. Parekh