

A Little Thing Called Hope

by **Aarya Pillai**

“Pandora crept quietly to the golden casket and lifted the lid. Then with a rush and cry out came all the ills which beset mankind - diseases, and sorrows, hate, jealousy, lies, theft, cheating and a hundred others.”

-Roger Lancelyn Green, *Tales of the Greek Heroes*

In our increasingly fast-paced world, humans became unstoppable. Or so it seemed.

When a virus that escaped from nature’s Pandora’s Box brought humanity to a standstill, motivated individuals across the world took it upon themselves to lead the way in weathering this storm fearlessly. These people are the citizen diplomats.

The twenty-first century has been widely hailed as the age of the Internet. Hence, it’s not baffling that the citizen diplomats of today would make the most out of this tool to reach out to others. By establishing connections worldwide, citizen diplomats can create platforms with a certain approachability that the common man may not find with their governments. Such a network can effectively take up responsibility in times of crisis by mobilizing funds, procuring essentials, ensuring timely intervention and most importantly, quelling misinformation.

When South-East Asia was battered by cyclones in November 2020, the citizen diplomats sprang into action, regardless of the havoc that the pandemic had wrought, aiding governments tremendously in relief and rescue.

The Internet also has a huge hand in building and cementing relationships globally. Exchange of culture and knowledge helps create new traditions that one can pass onto their descendants; mankind thus progresses. An international experience instils empathy, broadens one’s worldview and bridges communication gaps. This sets a strong foundation for a citizen diplomacy network strongly driven by the vision of making the world a better place. By being approachable, relatable and sincere, the new generation of citizen diplomats successfully inspires others to change the world.

This is what citizen diplomacy does best: it kindles the flame of hope.

When disaster strikes, we disregard all superfluous social constructs and stereotypes. The pandemic proved to be especially unkind to inter-state migrant workers in Indian metropolises. Bereft of wages and shrouded in an air of uncertainty, these workers were helpless. But Good Samaritans from all walks of life chipped in and spared all the money they could towards feeding, clothing and sheltering these people. Despite being home to 1.38 billion people, India willingly shared its vaccines with those nations which lacked

them in sufficient numbers. Even in difficult times, kindness flows from all corners, without the expectation of any in return.

A few instances like these reaffirm one's hope in humanity. When we face hard times, it's this hope that unites us. It's this hope that keeps us going for a brighter tomorrow.

“Terrified at what she had done, Pandora slammed down the lid. But a little voice cried: ‘Let me out too! I am Hope!’

For Prometheus had placed Hope there when he shut up the evil things so that mankind may not suffer quite so much if Zeus had his way.”