

INTERVIEW

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"We feel brotherly towards India"

Interviewed by Ms. Mangalam Swaminathan
(Interview with Sudanese Culture Minister)

This is your first visit to India. How do you find it?

Actually I came with preconceived ideas about India. These ideas I developed through my Indian contacts in Sudan and my readings - Gandhi (Mahatma), his statements his story, his talisman etc. They are full of wisdom.

India and Sudan had relations 5000 to 7000 years ago. We have India in our tales and literature. The names Gandhi and Hindi are common in Sudan. The name of the Sheikh of one of the greatest Islamic sect in Sudan is Yusuf Hindi.

When I landed in the Indian peninsula, I found that what I had imagined was real. The people were as I had thought they would be.

What about the cultural similarities?

India and Sudan have a rich history of cooperation. Indian films are part of Sudanese culture, I would say nearly 80 per cent of the population in Sudan regularly watch Hindi films in their homes. Indian and Sudanese music are so similar. There are rich tribal ritual dances in Sudan, which I found to be the same in India.

How do you wish to strengthen the ties between the two countries?

I find the Indian side very sincere, Cooperation between institutions should be arranged. In this context, I thank your Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Jagmohan. He was very responsive and very cheerful.

Why do you think there was not much of cultural interaction between the two

countries till now?

India and Sudan have an agreement signed as far back as 1974. But that is government-to-government. What we need now is more between institutions, NGOs. We also have to develop a real device that will make the agreements work. We have to get together as we have the same goals and destiny. There is already people to people relation. We have to exchange civil groups, NGOs, musical troupes etc.

Do you wish to convey any message through Vihangama?

The message is enveloped in warm feelings - what Sudanese feel towards India is brotherly. We wish to have relations that are based on heritage and wisdom. We find in Indians peaceful people, in a peaceful country, in a land of diversity, wisdom and love.