***Introduction of Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Director of Wiscomp & Principal Emerita, Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi by Mr. Bharat Doshi on The Occasion of the 27th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture Held on 27th August 2021***

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Good evening friends, I should also say Good Morning friends and Good Afternoon friends, because we have audience from Australia in the East to the US in the West for this virtual event. We welcome Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath's spouse, Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra, a renowned writer and an independent documentary film maker, editor and producer who also is present in the audience today.

It is my privilege and honour this evening to introduce Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath on the occasion of the 27th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture. The Foundation is delighted as this year is a special occasion and we are fortunate to have a distinguished lady for the first time joining the galaxy of our illustrious speakers in the Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture series.

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath is an educationist par excellence, a political scientist, a writer and the distinguished Principal Emerita of Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi.

It was Dr. Rakesh Mohan and Ambassador Vijay Nambiar, both past speakers in the memorial lecture series, who strongly recommended Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath's name as a speaker for this year. We connected on phone in mid-June 21 and after a pleasant conversation Dr. Gopinath very graciously accepted our invitation. Over the last two and half months, we have had several conversations as she was very interested in knowing more about Lalit and understanding the spirit of Lalit. Meenakshiji, thank you very much for your comments and questions during those conversations as they often led me down the memory lane and made me remember several stories about Lalit.

Friends, you all have the brief CV of Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath as a part of the invitation card. While introducing her, I will therefore narrate and weave in the lesser-known personal aspects about the speaker based on my personal interaction and based on internet search. Meenakshiji's grandfather, Shri Pattom Thanu Pillai, a freedom fighter, was the Chief Minister of Kerala in the 60s. Her father was a Civil Servant and her mother, a Gandhian, both of them believing in an inclusive society. Meenakshiji wanted to become a doctor but family intervened as the biology class was too late in the day and destiny took her to the field of Political Science and Education.

After her BA honours in political science at Lady Shri Ram College for Women (LSR), New Delhi, she pursued her master's degree at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Thereafter, she returned to India to secure a doctoral degree from the University of Delhi.

Earning a Fulbright Scholarship, she later did post-doctoral research at Georgetown University.

She started her career as a member of faculty at the Jawaharlal Nehru University but subsequently joined her alma mater, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, and served the institution for over two-and-half decades, since 1988, as its Principal.

She contributed to the ascendancy of her College as a centre of excellence in the country and in recognition of her invaluable contribution, post her retirement, she is now the Principal Emerita of Lady Shri Ram College.

While surfing on the net I found a video on the YouTube covering the farewell function on her retirement and it is titled 'The Magic of LSR'. The love and affection shown by the teachers, the administrative staff and the students pours heavily in the last few minutes of the video. I too, who has known Meenakshiji for a short time, had tears in my eyes as she walked to the gate with her admirers on both sides of the floral path cheering her. It was obvious from the scene that Meenakshiji was the majestic magician behind the magic of LSR.

Dr. Gopinath was the first woman to serve on the National Security Advisory Board of India, which she did from 2004 to 2006 where she sought to mainstream gender and human security concerns.

She is the founder and incumbent director of the Women in Security Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), an NGO promoting peace and socio-political leadership among the women of South Asia. WISCOMP's partnerships with schools and colleges in training young people into a new vocabulary of leadership and active coexistence through the education and civil society space in several parts of the country, reflects this aspiration. Under the auspices of WISCOMP, several intensive workshops were held between India and Pakistan and over a period of 13 years more than 400 Pakistani men and women participated.

Meenakshiji has written and lectured extensively on issues of Conflict Transformation, Peace building and Education for Peace in South Asia and internationally.

In recognition of her contribution to the field of education and women's empowerment, she has received several awards including the Padma Shri Award, Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi Award, the Rajiv Gandhi Award for Excellence in Education and Qimpro Platinum Standard Award for Education.

Quoting from the citation of the Qimpro award – "A person of many 'avatars', Dr Gopinath has interests in human rights and gender issues, conflict resolution and peace, innovative pedagogy, yoga, Buddhist philosophy, documentary films and Indian classical dance. An inspiration for women in Asia. An international benchmark".

This evening she will be addressing us in her avatar as a leader in the field of education. Meenakshiji, we now look forward to your lecture "The Expansive Academy: A Role for Higher Education in India.

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