



diary

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

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September–October 2015

Song of Flowers

EXHIBITION & TALK: by Ms Sunaina Suneja

Phulkari: The Song of Flowers

Inauguration by Mrs. Maneka Gandhi

Lecture: *Phulkari: The Journey of a Craft Revival*

Organised with the support of The Nabha Foundation

17–23 September

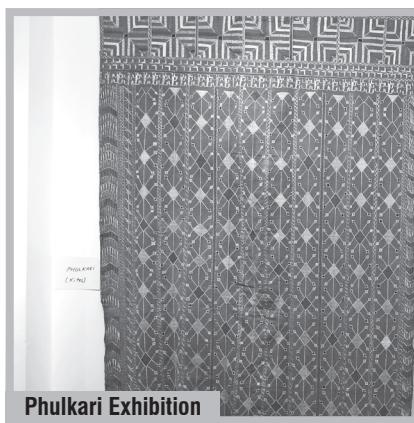
Whenever I see *Phulkari*, I recall what that redoubtable memsahib of the Punjab, Flora Anne Steele, said about it: *'A work of faith, savouring somewhat of sowing in the red-brown soil.'* There is something very moving about this traditional embroidery done by women from primarily rural communities in the Punjab. These are a gift of love, an investment in the lives of their daughters, made in the midst of all their other tasks in the field and home. These are also an expression of individual creativity, almost a meditation. Quite different in spirit from the work women now do for the commercial market. (A point raised in Sunaina's illustrated talk on her work with the Nabha Foundation Phulkari Project.)

The *Phulkari* works on display formed two parts: the first was traditional pieces from Sunaina's own personal collection—a resplendent assortment of large *Bags*, ranging from the stunning *Sona-Chandi* work all over in

cream and gold, to the simplicity of the red-checked *Saloo* and the whimsical figurative *Sainchi*. I loved the *Chope*, its stitches reminiscent of the *Kasuti* embroidery of Karnataka and the Elizabethan Holbein stitch. A small fragment reminded us of the links with Pakistani *Jisti* embroidery across the border, though the predominant colours there are black, red and purple rather than our characteristic orange, yellow and white.

The second part of the exhibition consisted of pieces done by the Nabha Project under Sunaina's guidance. Exquisite work, keeping the integrity of traditional *Phulkari*, though on a much smaller scale than the magnificent *odhnis* of yore. Sunaina's talk illustrated the challenges, frustration, and ultimate success in motivating women who had never done embroidery before to produce work of such good quality. These were pieces made for the market, born out of the women's desire to earn and be independent. We must make sure the market rewards their laboriously learnt skills.

■ LAILA TYABJI



Ibsen in Translation

READINGS: *The Sins of the Father: Reading Ibsen in Translation*

Readings in the original Norwegian and Hindi by Astri Ghosh; Moonmoon Singh; Sukumar Tudul; and Rajesh Tailang

Director: Ms Anuradha Kapur

3 September

The dramatised reading of Ibsen in translation cements his relevance to an Indian audience. The *mise en scène* depicted a living room consisting of two lampshades placed at either end of three single-seater sofas on stage. Ambient sounds of a fragmented nature punctuated the silence between characters, providing a sense of hesitancy. The implicit fastidiousness of the set and careful lighting adumbrated the strained formality in the negotiations of Ibsen's characters that was to follow.

The translation was a collective effort involving people from various disciplines, including language and drama. It aimed at presenting core issues in the plays, which resonated with the audience in Hindi. Translating Ibsen's

Ghosts to Pretchhaya is less literal, yet evocative of the sense of haunting that accompanies painful remembrance. The translator, Astri Ghosh, read *Pretchhaya* in the original Danish and in lucid Hindi.

Legality and legal rhetoric were thematically discernible in the performances. Confrontation and defensive statements abounded. In *Gudiya Ghar*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in translation, directed by Anuradha Kapur, the preoccupation of having and lacking autonomy is another vein that runs through. This underscored the air of tension conveyed through the performance. The character of Krogstad (Sukumar Tudu) is an extension of this legality. Rajesh Tailang as Torvald Helmer expresses his lack of autonomy, wilfully blind to his wife's predicament of being smothered in her marriage. Ms Singh's performance as Nora Helmer charted the anxious negotiation with Krogstad, to her acquiescence to her husband, and finally her resolve to leave in the course of her brief performance. This negotiation—of the legal and of selfhood—is translated into the possibility of one person's complete claim over another and the drastic lengths taken to attain selfhood are woven seamlessly into *Gudiya Ghar*.

■ RAKSHA THAKUR

Between Commerce and Awards

DISCUSSION: *The Extravagance of Kookiness. One Tree, One King and the Open Road.* Discussion and readings from Lavanya Reghunathan Fischer's new book (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2015)

Speakers: Ms Lavanya Reghunathan Fischer; Dr. Giti Chandra; and Ms V.K. Karthika

4 September

Here was a book ultimately 'about finding oneself and one's voice' and 'to accept and overcome doubt and uncertainty', but a book curiously 'fabulous': both fabulation and fable, an allegory told with sufficient kookiness, revelling in fantasy tied in closely to words and their interactions, and to things possessed of personality. Punningly, the Radicars have through technicality and a grammatical glitch got themselves a Park, which they expect to turn into a parking lot that involves the Tree of the title, but that can be gleaned only once the book is read through to the end! Good governance, democracy and tourism feature, but not as part of the main narrative.

For Dr. Giti Chandra *The Little Prince, Alice in Wonderland* and others, which were books for all ages, and the new

'young adult literature' Percy Jackson and Artemis Fowl create a space to understand this work. For V. K. Karthika, the book spoke of an exciting difference in the spectrum of English language fiction—the midlist—between 'commercial fiction' and award-winning 'literary fiction'. As Dr. Chandra pointed out, the book proved that the Indian writer had grown up, moving away from that Banyan tree that *The God of Small Things* had been. It had no markers of identity, and could easily have been written by a German or a Vietnamese.

Lavanya Reghunathan said her influences were Jerome K. Jerome, Sid Fleischman and Mark Twain, and her training in philosophy. Her book was 'a light hearted packaging of complicated concepts', the Indian concepts of fluidity and change: not the truth of 'I think therefore I am', but 'That thou art'.

What could have been the most illuminating part of the evening was sadly lost in the absence of the third discussant, the philosopher Vijay Tankha who could have said more about the above and the intriguing Pragmatist, the shape-shifting Mind Mender, but also the 'mind dividing'/spirit travel aspects of the king and the tree who finally retain integrity.

■ PUNAM ZUTSHI

Reading Neruda

DISCUSSION: *Reading Latin America: Pablo Neruda*

Conceptualised and coordinated by Professor Vibha Maurya

Speakers: Professor Maneesh Taneja; Mr. Dinesh Shukla; and Dr. Veena Kumar

17 September

All the speakers were well-versed in Neruda's presence among Indian Hispanists and those who love poetry translations. Neruda is the best-known poet of the 20th century and also the most translated poet in any language. He was both a poet and a politician. His commitment to communism and socialism was his connection to people's suffering and pain. He led a turbulent life and suffered in his own country. He was in exile for three years, during which he travelled all over the world. He also came to India for a brief period.

Neruda used poetry to communicate his firm belief in a changing society. His memoirs are a great piece of literature

and have been widely read and quoted in different fora. Neruda is taught in many universities and has attracted the attention of research scholars. Chile has produced many other great poets like Gabriela Mistral, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and influenced Neruda's poetry as well.

Neruda's perpetual quest to search for himself was depicted in his famous collection of love poems which shocked many readers because of its eroticism. Neruda had a varied career. He was sent to Buenos Aires in Argentina and Madrid in Spain on diplomatic assignments as a consul. He died of cancer in 1973.

The highlight of the evening was the presence of a large number of students who were deeply engrossed in the experience of listening to the poetry of this towering poet. The most salient feature was the film clip showing Neruda reading his own poems in Spanish. He was at his brilliant best.

■ OM GUPTA

Japan and Hindi

TALK: *On Propaganda: Leaflets Scattered by the Japanese Army during World War II and Specialities of Hindi Used in Them*

Illustrated presentation in Hindi by Professor Tomio Mizokami

Chair: Mr. Ashok Vajpeyi

7 September

Professor Mizokami underscored the fact that the IIC owes the Japanese Emperor a lot as it was he who laid its foundation. Subsequently, he highlighted the significance of the propagation of Hindi by Japanese proponents in the leaflets scattered by the Japanese army, particularly during the Second World War.

In a bid to exemplify the precedence of Hindi language over others, he referred to the third chapter dedicated to Indian soldiers and citizens, wherein as many as 47 illustrations are in Hindi and a mere four in Urdu. A great number of pictorial expressions carry Hindi explanations with them. He said that Jawaharlal Nehru was the inspiration behind

learning the Hindi language. At that time, Japan looked upon Churchill as its adversary. He further added that the Japanese would not discriminate against Indians on the grounds of religion or any other. The Japanese army urged the masses to wake up and wage a struggle against the British to come out of the shackles of subjection.

Moving further, he touched upon the grammatical aspects with their etymological expressions figuring in the leaflets which, of course, explicitly or implicitly seemed to be clothed in Bengali, which was obvious when it came to the usage of gender, sounding ludicrous to the Hindi-speaking. In illustrations and pictorial presentations, the limits of visual ethics had been blurred which in essence may be called voyeurism.

In his concluding remarks, Professor Mizokami made a moving observation that, sadly, the Hindi language was used for war, contrary to its inherent nature of joining hearts and promoting amity among the masses. He wished for the Indian language to be used as a tool to ensure peace and harmony across the globe.

■ UPENDRA NATH

Festival of Films

FESTIVAL: Open Frame Film Festival and Forum 2015

Collaboration: Public Service Broadcasting Trust;

Doordarshan; and External Publicity and Public

Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs

18–22 September

Exploring ‘Diverse People, Diverse Stories’, the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) organised the 15th edition of its Open Frame Film Festival and Forum from 18 to 22 September. The festival opened with film appreciation workshops that examined principles of creative filmmaking, structures of the documentary, aesthetics and narratives in film, among others.



Bahurupia

Public screenings of films produced by PSBT over the last year, exploring a variety of themes, commenced on 18 September. Each section of the festival focused attention on specific themes: stories of human endeavour, innovation, enterprise and transformation; the nostalgia of traditions and practices forgotten; perspectives on care and unlearning; looking back at homes and lives that once were; the creation of subcultures that allow individual and collective expression and the iconic work of artists and their unique journeys.

Panel discussions were the special highlights of the festival. These looked at the rich legacy of Indian women’s literature, about women’s lives, conflict, labour and love; how history is created, why some narratives get privileged over others, the idea of justice and closure, pain, memorialisation,

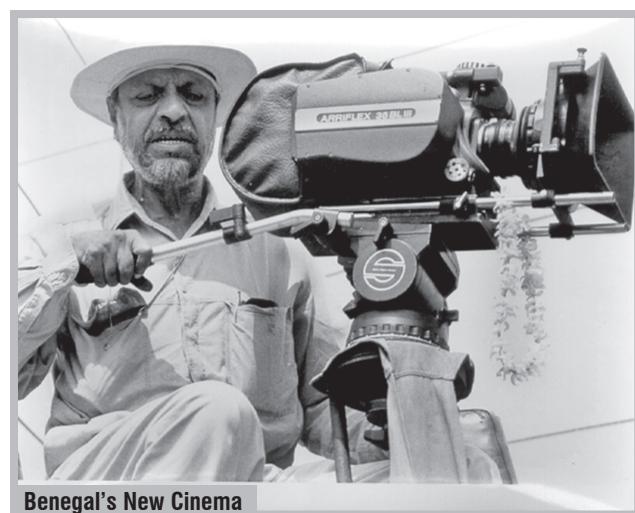


Jai Ho

erasure, the role of the state, the dangers of forgetting, questions of equality, access, social and sexual regulation, inclusion and exclusion through the institution of marriage, ideals of masculinity created and reinforced by popular culture, tales of our lands, water, forests and people, their threatened existence and our collective responsibilities and failure.

The festival sparked multiple conversations and contributed to the ongoing discourse on many themes. It was well attended by practitioners, filmmakers, students and film enthusiasts.

■ PSBT TEAM



Benegal's New Cinema

Human and Plant Symbiosis

FILM: *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*

Director: Mr. Michael Schwarz

Collaboration: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama

9 September

The Botany of Desire is a thoroughly enjoyable, very informative television documentary directed by Michael Schwarz and produced by Edward Gray. It is based on Michael Pollan's eponymous book, and he appears on screen as presenter, holding the four sections of the story together. Well-known American actress Francis Mc Dorman makes a persuasive narrator. Four plants, namely, the potato, the apple, the tulip and marijuana are discussed and their role in human life is treated in detail in half-hour episodes.

The apple, which has its origins in the forests of Kazakhstan, has been cultivated the world over through centuries thanks to travellers who ate the fruit, carried it with them, or possibly just its seeds to their own land. The unique soil chemistry of each place in which it was grown produced

its own distinct flavour. It is a cold climate fruit and has grown well in comparable conditions in many parts of the world.

The humble potato, a reliable constant in pan-Indian cuisine, has its origins in South America and is eaten the world over; however, it is different in look, colour, size and shape in each country where it is cultivated.

The tulip, cultivated with great ardour in Holland and in huge quantities, is done so for its beauty. The documentary shows in detail the process of cultivation and methods used to ensure a disease-free flower, which is coveted for its beauty and is a reliable revenue earner internationally.

Marijuana, grown in the Indian subcontinent and far away North and South America, fulfils both human need and desire, because of its soothing effect on the nervous system when smoked in very small quantities.

The film juxtaposes the dangers of industrial agriculture with the safety offered by organic agriculture. It highlights the symbiotic relationship of humans with plants over millennia.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

Mando Music

FILM: *Aamchem Cantar, Aum Mhantam – I am Singing Our Song*

Director: Ruth Lobo

Collaboration: Centre of Ethnomusicology, American Institute of Indian Studies

28 September

The iconic strains of Goa's music have a popular following not just within the state, but elsewhere as well, because of its intrinsic character of basic harmonisation and rhythmic content. This documentary on the music of Margao was an extensive piece of research produced with professional élan by the students of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad.

These 19th-century folk ballads are preserved today and pertain to several aspects of life in Goa. According to researchers, these songs were a collection of lyrics of historical Margao and thus offered a rounded character where the music stretched far beyond notes, songs and

harmonisation. What this documentary managed to include was the nostalgia that the diaspora cherish for these numbers. Their efforts at propagating this music in their new locations had transformed it from being a provincial product to one heard across several continents.

The documenters also deserved appreciation for their work by recording the songs in authentic settings. The singers were not stage-managed, but were shot in villas and villages where the numbers are to be heard even today. One learnt that as a part of weddings, the singers usually gathered at the villa of a rich resident where women were dressed in kimono-style gowns and the men in tailcoats. While the women fluttered delicate Chinese hand-fans and took dainty steps, their male partners sang opposite them and matched their foot-movements in a coordinated manner.

The continuation of the tradition into the present through a rendition of church music and the customary training of the younger generations to a musical culture has ensured the rooted character of this art.

■ SUBHRA MAZUMDAR

A Dance Tradition

TALK: *Living the Past Dancing in the Present: Sattriya*

Dance Tradition of Assam

Illustrated lecture and demonstration by Dr. Anwesa Mahanta

Collaboration: Seher
16 September

On 16 September 2015, barely two months before the 15th anniversary of the national recognition of *Sattriya*, and in the month of *Bhadon* that marks the *tithi* of Shrimant Shankardeva, the founder of the neo-*Vaishnav* faith in Assam, an illustrated lecture and demonstration by Dr. Anwesa Mahanta was organised by Seher. The Seher group plans to continue focusing on the not so well-known and understood dances from the north-east of India. They couldn't have chosen a better start than with Anwesa, who comes from an active *sattriya* family that practises the arts in these *Vaishnav* monasteries of Assam. She has been trained by her *adhyapak* Bayanacharya Ghanakant Bora.

Speaking on the dual life of the dance *Sattriya* that lives in the past but dances in the present, Anwesa danced, demonstrated, showed images and videos, and reflected convincingly on how the unique features of this double life



Traditional Sattriya Dance

are respected and preserved in both centres of its artistic existence—the *sattras* and the stage. Her performances started with a *Vandana*, proceeded to include a *Chali Ramdani*, a *Geotor Nac* to the song *Sakhi he* in Raga *Suhai* and *Joti tala*, and a *Mela nac*, which is an elaborate pure dance item. She concluded with an energetic rendering of the *Narashimbh Lila*, which with cries, jumps and shouts, reflected the *Natya* part of the composite artistic tradition out of which emerged the dance.

Long ago, the monks, especially in the celibate *sattras*, would spend the entire day linked to and engaged with the arts of the *sattras*. The life that Anwesa has chosen for herself also reflects this same devotion to the art, a rare quality in a modern world and a person that young.

■ ARSHIYA SETHI

The Unknown Bird

PERFORMANCE: *Achin Pakhi: Songs of Lalon Fakir*, by

Baul Shafi Mondol from Bangladesh

Accompanied by Mr. Jagannath Roy on percussion and Mr. Rohit Prasanna on flute

16 October

Lalon Fakir has remained an endearing phenomenon in both Bengals. Born on this side of the Padma river, a century and a half back as a Hindu boy, he had fallen gravely ill from some incurable ailment and his body was thrown into the stream, presumed dead. A Muslim woman rescued him and nurtured him back to health. Gradually, the more his musical virtuosity was heralded, the more obscure became his religious convictions. Belonging to the ascetic community of mendicant Bauls, Lalon held a life-long cudgel against all discrimination in his musical oeuvre.

Hailing from Kusthia in Bangladesh, the birth-place of the mystic poet, Baul Shafi Mondol presented a beautiful bouquet of 11 Lalon songs, carefully selected to reflect diverse sentiments. His first segment was the whip-lash attack

against caste and creed: *Folks enquire which denomination is Lalon's; I wish I knew...and His religion is doomed: cries the community...* The second segment was on simple surrender to the Supreme: *Do you know if anyone is familiar to the Gracious One...; I'll offer prayers in own mind's temple and own heart's mosque...; and When will the blessed union happen?...* Next, he switched to pure mysticism: *The moon has eclipsed the moon...; The unknown bird flutters in and out of the cage...; and When the three madcaps met by themselves...* The last segment mirrored mixed emotions, delineating: *I'll preserve you within my heart and won't let you go...; Let's go to the pleasure-arcade;* and Lalon's very last composition: *I'm waiting listlessly on the shore, do take me across...*

While the singing was impeccable, the audience was perhaps somewhat surprised at the panoply of musical instruments used, spanning electric guitar, bass guitar and bongo. Many would think that the single-stringed and double-stringed drones, besides drums, should have sufficed, as they have traditionally served Bauls through the ages.

■ UTPAL K. BANERJEE

Modes of Transportation

TALK: *Heritage Transport Museum: Story of the Journey*

Speaker: Mr. Tarun Thakral

Chair: Air Marshal (Retd.) Naresh Verma

1 September

Humankind's romance with modes of transportation has made them different from every other species. The sail or wheel has also enabled humans to cross every sea and traverse every land. An inanimate car, like a living horse, soon became much more than a mere means of transportation, and became revered for its pedigree, sleek lines, speed and stamina.

The well-attended meeting was chaired by Director, IIC, Air Marshal Naresh Verma who lauded Tarun Thakral's ambitious project to create the world's first 'Heritage Transport Museum'. There are many excellent museums of cars, planes and trains in many countries, but this museum is the first in the world to cover all modes of transportation. The museum, spread over three acres of land near Toaru

in Gurgaon district, covers almost everything from bicycles to Bentleys. It has tried to collect carts, carriages, howdahs carried by elephants, palanquins carried by human porters, rickshaws, cycles, rail-carriages and planes. Cars, that seem to be Thakral's special love, occupy the greatest space.

The 95,000 square foot display area not only shows many of these restored treasures, but also has 'cut sections' of engines, gearboxes and other mechanical systems to enable viewers to understand how they work. The museum has special programmes for schoolchildren with workshops, a library and a research centre. With conference rooms and facilities for recreation and refreshment, the museum is a very entertaining way of spending a few hours away from the hustle and bustle of Delhi. Dr. Martin Bellarmy, curator of the prestigious Riverside Museum of Transport, Glasgow, described it as the finest museum of its kind in the world. What is especially admirable is that this unique museum was entirely privately funded by Tarun Thakral and is supported by the revenue it generates.

■ MURAD ALI BAIG

Memory and Art

TALK: *Myth, Memory and Fantasy*

Illustrated lecture by Dr. Geeti Sen

Chair: Dr. Karan Singh, M.P.

24 September

Geeti Sen's illustrated talk beautifully entwined the two 'M's—Myth and Memory—and took us on a flight of fantasy in the context of the works of four artists: Manjit Bawa, S.H. Raza, Ganesh Pyne and Nilima Sheikh.

The talk drew from her long associations with these artists and from her recent book of essays, *Your History Gets in the Way of My Memory* (2012).

Manjit Bawa resorted to the power of mythology and sometimes invented his own myths! The iconic deities such as Kali, Krishna and Hanuman appeared with their essential attributes, illuminated against a pungent flat ground of vermillion or yellow.

Raza, according to the speaker, relied on memories of the country he left behind. These were distilled into one single metaphor of his country as 'Bindu', with its multiple meanings and sacred geography.

In Geeti Sen's view, Ganesh Pyne's drawings in pen and ink called 'Jottings', were as significant as his finished works in tempera. 'Jottings' such as the 'Night of the Rider' (1995) expressed his fantasies and subliminal desires. For images, Pyne turned to the songs of the Bauls, the mystics of Bengal:

*My heart is a lamp floating in the current,
Drifting to what landing place I do not know...
(p. 10, 'Jottings')—Your History Gets in the Way of my
Memory).*

The speaker focused on Nilima Sheikh's visual narratives on Kashmir. In her works, Sheikh wove fact and fiction entwined with fantasy. She laid claim to the legacy of women exploring the art of story-telling. In 2002, on discovering the poetry of the late Agha Shahid Ali, she found her voice to express and lament the lost paradise that was—Kashmir. Sheikh inscribed a line from the poem of Agha Shahid Ali—'Your history gets in the way of my memory'—in one of her scroll paintings which becomes the title of Sen's book of essays.

■ ANJALI CAPILA

A Conversation

DISCUSSION: *Art Matters*

Mrs. Alarmel Valli, Bharatanatyam dancer, in Conversation with Ms Arundhati Subramaniam

Collaboration: The Raza Foundation

18 September

When Martha Graham wrote about her collaboration with painting, poetry, music or stage craft in her autobiography *Blood Memory*, I puzzled over why nothing like it happened in India. Or, when I read a book on Pina Bausch, where you can acquire a detailed account of the working of Pina's mind, I was happy as well as sad.

We have a history of great dancers and equally great names in literature, painting, music, poetry, etc.; why then does no one want all the arts to come together? Why this aloofness from other streams? Why can't we look at dance through the eyes of poets or painters?

I was relieved while listening to Alarmel Valli, a seasoned Bharatanatyam artist, in conversation with a very significant

English poet, Arundhati Subramaniam. Both have a long association of working together. Arundhati opened the conversation with the remark that she is well aware of Valli's art and the artist she is talking about. She started with three points on Valli's dance, including her exuberance, her ease, and a very important comment: 'here is a dancer not in a hurry but always on time'.

Subramaniam covered almost all the significant spheres of Valli's journey as a dancer as well as a person. From her training with great gurus including Vidvaan Shri Chokalingam Pillai, to her approach towards poetry, to her thoughts on social relevance, she said that 'just to learn the linings, is not dance. How the movement travels is the art'.

A very well-read and eloquent Valli touched upon the important elements which contribute to becoming an artist and not just the dancer; whether it is the difference of *Saarakk-Minnakk* (substance–superficial) taught by her first guru, or the importance of observation, stillness or human relevance.

■ PRERANA SHRIMALI

A Global Icon

TALK: *A New Global Icon: Gandhi in the 21st Century*

Speaker: Dr. Arundhati Virmani

Chair: Smt Varsha Das

21 September

The subject of Gandhi as a global icon is not new. Dr. Arundhati Virmani spoke recently on the theme of 'A New Global Icon: Gandhi in the 21st Century' at the IIC. She stated that the importance of the name of Gandhi has increased rather than diminished since his assassination in 1948.

The Mahatma has been featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1920, 1930, 1931 and 1947. In 1999, he was ranked with Einstein as the most influential personality, and even to the present day in 2011, when Gandhi was voted as the top political icon of all time.

There are bronze, stone and clay statues of Gandhi installed across the world in varied postures, showing Gandhi in his famous stride or looking into the distance or at the horizon.

The statues are also a paean to what his name evokes of the leader of Hindu asceticism. These statues in countries across the world are life-size, imposing, and placed on granite pedestals in prominent public places.

Virmani noted that these appear to be in those host countries which want better commercial and business relations with India. This is fuelled to a major extent by the efforts of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), but also by private trusts and active interest groups. The name Gandhi is applied to restaurants and culinary centres and there are a host of memorabilia, mugs, cups and key chains.

These installations are not without controversy; there have been severe protests by various groups including women's empowerment groups, minority groups, those supporting regional heroes like Dadabhai Naoroji, Subhas Chandra Bose and others. Some of these dissenting voices have resulted in Gandhi's statues being desecrated.

■ MEKHALA SENGUPTA

Life and Death

MENTAL HEALTH: *Right to Die or Assisted Dying: The Debate Continues*

Speakers: Dr. S. K. Khandelwal; Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra; and Mr. Arudra Burra

Moderator: Dr. S.K. Khandelwal

Collaboration: AIIMS

22 September

Dr. Khandelwal began by referring to a Rajesh Khanna film, *Jahapanah*, humorously presenting life and death as being a metaphysical assumption of God's will and beyond human intervention. Touching upon the legal status of assisted euthanasia and the cultural backdrop of religious sanction of voluntary death among followers of Jainism, Dr. Khandelwal set the backdrop for the contemporary debate on freedom to die in the Indian context. He posed for the audience the dilemma of a psychiatrist who is trained to prevent suicide and the professional, social and institutional dangers of euthanasia becoming a viable legal possibility in India.

Dr. Burra set out some of the key positions regarding euthanasia in the American analytic philosophical tradition and the ways in which arguments for the right to die are made, drawing on notions of individual liberty and dignity. His arguments suggested that the right to die in India may change doctor-patient relationships with people's own notions of their life being a burden on kin and caregivers.

Rajiv Mehrotra brought out different ideas of the place of suffering in many world religions, and the diversity of positions even within religious traditions on the idea of voluntary death. He emphasised the deeply personal nature of these decisions and the deep uncertainty one might feel in making any kind of blanket statement about what is right or wrong, *per se*. The present emergence of capitalist profit-making hospitals has given a whole new economic incentive for hospitals to keep patients 'alive'. Mehrotra also cautioned that a legislative shift in favour of euthanasia may boost adverse social ramifications of the right to die in a context like India, giving the example of female infanticide and other dangers.

■ ASHA SINGH

Preservation of Murals

INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: *Kerala Murals*

Illustrated lecture by Dr. M. Nambirajan

Chair: Dr. Lotika Varadarajan

15 September

Kerala has a rich tradition of mural paintings, as can be seen in its temples and several buildings. Dr. Nambirajan spoke about his field research during which he documented Kerala's murals in monuments protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Documentation work entailed detailed drawings of the buildings, indicating the location of the murals, study of the subject matter and style—including theme, technique, colour scheme—and the material used in preparation of colour and pigments, the ground, state of preservation and measures for their conservation. The paintings are mainly religious in content with the depiction of episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, although secular themes are also represented.

The history of Kerala's murals can be traced back to about the 9th century CE; however, most date between the 15th

and the 19th centuries, and coincide with the Bhakti movement. Interestingly, the tradition of mural painting could also be seen in some Kerala churches, which shows the impact of temple murals, although the subject matter is Christian. While describing the technique, process of painting, use of colour and brushes, Nambirajan also mentioned that the artists used the 15th century Sanskrit text *Silparatna* by Sri Kumara. The various stages in making the murals were: *lekhya-karma* (line work), *rekha-karma* (brush work) *varna-karma* (colouring), *vartana-karma* (shading), *lekha-karma* (fine detailing in black), *dvika-karma* (finishing touches), followed by a coat of varnish with pine and sesame oil which imparts permanence and brightness to the murals. The five colours (*panchavarna*) were derived from plants or minerals, green by mixing indigo (*neelamari*) with the juice of *eravikkara* (monkey fruit), black from lamp-black, and white from the lime used in base preparation. Nambirajan concluded by explaining the problems of preservation of the murals.

■ B.M. PANDE

Monumental Work

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Metaphors of the Indian Arts and Other Essays* by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan
(New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2014)

Speakers: Dr. Parul Pandya Dhar; Dr. Naman P. Ahuja;
Dr. Shobhita Punja; and Mr. Vikram Lall
Chair: Professor K.D. Tripathi
28 September

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan's writings have become source material for scholars working in several fields. Naman Ahuja gave an overview of the book, *Metaphors of the Indian Arts and Other Essays*, and ruminated on how one could use this work in art pedagogy.

Parul Pandya Dhar located Dr. Vatsyayan's writings in the larger context of the historiography of Indian art. She spoke of her overarching vision for Indian art forms—visual as well as performance traditions; her depth of understanding in relation to the multivalent nature of art; and her abiding search for a culture-specific theory for the arts of India.

Dr. Vatsyayan's approach to arts, interdependence and interconnections, as illustrated in *Vishnudharmottara Purana* with a dialogue between Sage Markendeya and

King Vajra about learning several arts before learning how to create *pratima* is well-known. Her magnum opus, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, has broken fresh ground and developed methodologies.

K. D. Tripathi observed Dr. Vatsyayan's plea and invitation to see wisdom in the relationship regarding not man and nature, but man in nature, to see the cosmos as one figure, referred to the abstraction of *Shikhara*. He said that Dr. Vatsyayan cautioned us not to lose chronological premises and spoke not about cosmology but cosmogenic, how she explained the ideational background of the arts.

Shobhita Punja dwelt upon Dr. Vatsyayan's insights vis-à-vis sculpture. Her suggestion was to go back to philosophical roots, for art has grown, drawing out clear structure and metaphors.

There was a reference to Dr Vatsyayan's interpretation of Thanjavur's Brihadeśhwara temple: to Dr. Nagaswamy's religious approach and Champak Lakshmi's socio-political approach.

Vikram Lall focused on mountain, myth and monuments about Kailasa and Meru and how metaphors illuminate the subject.

■ SUNIL KOTHARI

Connecting Cinema, Literature and Architecture

FRONTIERS OF HISTORY: *Imagining History and the Future: Through Cinema, Literature and Architecture*

Speakers: Snehanshu Mukherjee
Chair: Shohini Ghosh
3 November

While the connection between literature and cinema is well-known, the role of architecture in making that happen is less explored. The adaptation of literature into cinema is an act of imagination that attempts to present the story of the book authentically – for which the architectural setting of the story becomes as critical as the choice of the actors, costumes and props. Architect Snehanshu Mukherjee discussed the ways in which architecture serves as the link between literature and cinema by creating the spatial and formal context of settings for story and illustrated it through selected examples of adapting classic works of fiction.

He explored this process of imagination with Satyajit Ray's adaptation of Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's novel

Pather Panchali, presenting the manner in which Ray conceived the frames of the film by illustrating the scenes of the book through sketches that establish the settings and architectural context. Architecture in turn also influenced the way scenes are created in cinema – employing architectural settings to narrate the story more effectively by conveying time and place. Several of his films illustrate that – set in Benaras, the scenes of *Aparajito* are visualised through the architectural imagery of its buildings, ghats and streets. In the adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Monihara*, Ray used the architectural frame of the same building to create three different moods and atmospheres.

Through different adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* he further presented how architecture established the varied contexts for retelling different stories of the original work of literature. Entirely different cultural contexts and time periods are depicted in Akira Kurosawa's, *Throne of Blood*—which is set in the context of medieval Japan and in Vishal Bharadwaj's *Maqbool* that is set in Bombay in 20 C.E. India. His talk also showed how architecture and trends influence the setting of stories in an imagined future.

■ VIKRAM LALL

Commemorating Noakhali

TALK: *To Commemorate the 70th Year of the Noakhali Peace March. Non-Violence in Action*

Speakers: Mr. Madhukar Upadhyay; Audio-visual presentation by Mr. Alok Bajpai

Inauguration of an exhibition of photographs and posters by Mr. A. Annamalai

Collaboration: Sarvodaya International Trust, New Delhi Chapter; National Gandhi Museum; and SAHMAT
30 September

On the eve of Gandhi Jayanti, a distinctive aspect of the Mahatma's personality and his experiments with non-violence, not only as a guiding principle in his life but also as a means to achieving his ends, chiefly, India's independence, was discussed in this collaborative event. After addresses by the various participants, there were *bhajans* by the students of Springdales School.

Alok Bajpai reiterated that Gandhi's message and his life's mission of ahimsa, truth and compassion remained relevant even today, in spite of Gandhi-bashing critics questioning his methods and philosophy. He rightly

stated that Noakhali was Gandhi's litmus test, a test of his life-long experiment with non-violence.

The area comprising East Bengal, especially the Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions, had been witness to numerous instances of ethnic violence during Partition. In the 1940s, the decades preceding Partition, the frequency and intensity of the riots increased as the movement for Pakistan gained momentum. In the last quarter of 1946, the Bengali Hindus of Noakhali and Tippera districts were subjected to a series of massacres, loot, arson, rape, abduction, and forced conversion to Islam, which came to be known as the Noakhali carnage.

Madhukar Upadhyay pointed out that Gandhi's peace mission in Noakhali, a testing of the validity of his faith in non-violence and Hindu–Muslim unity, was not totally successful in quelling communal disturbances. And though Gandhiji managed to galvanise the whole nation in its march for freedom, gaining acceptability and respect from all quarters, did anyone actually bother to listen to him? Did anyone live by his principles and imbibe his values? Sadly, no, according to Madhukar. An apt summation indeed, in these troubled times.

■ GAURIKA KAPOOR

Expressions of Muharram

PERFORMANCE: *Expressions of Muharram: As They Emerged in the Ganga Jamuni Soil of Awadh*

A cultural presentation by Saeed Naqvi

20 October

This cultural presentation by Saeed Naqvi accompanied by gifted vocalists Tasnim, Askari, Nazim, Turab, Dipta and Shanney shared what many outside Awadh do not know—the wealth of poetry, ragas and cultural forms that emerged around the traditions of Muharram in the Ganga-Jamuni soil of Awadh. There are *marsias* or long elegiac poems; *soz* or shorter compositions generally set to classical ragas; *salaams* or 'salutations' similar to *soz* but recited to honour the one for whom they are recited; and *nauhas*, popular rhythmic renditions in chorus.

In a stirring two-hour performance, eight people associated with one family's tradition in the *qasba* of Mustafabad in Rae Bareli in the heart of Awadh mined this wealth. The evening had deeply moving recitations of *soz*, *salaam*, *nauha* and *marsia*—all learnt from tradition through generations.

The language was Awadh's own: *Awadhi*, *Hindustani/Khari Boli*, Urdu, Farsi flowing one into another.

The recitations were woven together through narration by Farah Naqvi in English/Hindustani for those less familiar with these forms—explaining what the month of Muharram commemorates—the context of the Battle of Karbela, fought by a small band of 72 men, women and children in the harsh terrain of Karbela over 1,400 years ago, leading to the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imam Hussain.

The narration pointed to the shared heritage these poetic traditions represented through the example of Munshi Channu Lal, an 18th-century Urdu poet, who excelled in *marsia* writing, adopted the *nom de plume* of 'Dilgeer', and composed the *nauha* classic, *Ghabraegi Zainab*.

Soz/salaam compositions drew from many Urdu poets, including Mir Taqi Mir, and were set to ragas like *Yaman Kalyan*, *Khammaj*, *Jhinjhoti*, and *Chaya Nat*. The highpoint of the evening was Saeed Naqvi's *marsia* recitation—compositions of arguably the greatest *marsia* writer, 18th-century Urdu poet, Mir Anees.

Remembering Deoli

FILM: *Beyond Barbed Wires: Discussing the Deoli experience*

Film followed by a discussion

Directed by Rafeeq Ellias

The Deoli Wallahs - The Last Generation of Survivors of the Chinese Internment Camp in Deoli

Panellists: Michael Cheng; Joy Ma; Yin Marsh; and Steven Wan

Chair: Dilip D'Souza

6 October

Barbed Wires: Beyond A Distant Dawn, a disappointing film by Rafeeq Ellias discussed the internment, for around two years, of a few thousand Chinese of the 30,000 living in India at the time of the 1962 Indo-China war in the Deoli Camp in Rajasthan.

Interspersing the film with quotations by Japanese Ann Muto, incarcerated at the Pearl Harbour camp, was misleading as the Deoli experience can hardly compare with the suffering of the Japanese subjected to the worst bombing in the history of mankind.

The filmmaker's reference of the Deoli camp as a 'concentration camp' conjured visions of gas chambers and Anne Frank, in total contradiction to the tales of the Chinese on the dais. None of them were able to narrate experiences of torture or mass annihilations.

A typical day at the camp, as described by Joy Ma, was that they got their rations at 10 am and then did not have much to do. The ultimate suffering for them was being uprooted from their comfortable lives; why they were targeted in particular was left unsaid.

The film featured interviews of former internees in their homes in the USA, Canada and Kathmandu. No attempt had been made to visit the locations mentioned in the film: areas in Darjeeling and Assam and Deoli, or interview locals from these areas.

Interestingly, two Indians in the audience turned out to have been present in eastern India at the time of these happenings and shared their experiences.

■ ANU JINDAL

An Academic's View on Durga

TALK: *In the Name of the Goddess: The Durga Pujas of Contemporary Kolkata*

Speaker: Dr. Tapati Guha-Thakurta

Discussant: Ms Gayatri Sinha

Chair: Mr. Jawhar Sircar, 5 October

Well-regarded academic Tapati Guha-Thakurta delivered a talk entitled 'In The Name of the Goddess', which is also the title of her book on Durga pujas of contemporary Kolkata. She has spent ten years researching it. 'It is the least academic and most personal book that I've done', she said. It is more of a visual history of the event in a given time-frame. Her presentation, backed by a number of telling illustrations, emphasised the role that advertising has played in commercialising a religio-social yearly celebration and turning it into a carnival.

She sees Durga puja in today's Kolkata as a mass festivity in which old and new histories have blended seamlessly. The martial (the slaying of *Mahishasura*, the buffalo demon

by the Mother Goddess Durga to ensure the triumph of good over evil) has merged with the material. It is a hugely expensive undertaking these days and the image of Durga astride a lion along with other characters like her daughters Lakshmi, Saraswati, and sons Ganesha and Kartik, and demon *Mahishasura* are not always created in clay in time-honoured tradition. Materials as diverse as fibre glass, papier mâché, light-weight alloy and even discarded machine parts are used as a medium of expression. Sometimes, the artist's imagination takes on a distinctly Dadaist turn.

The Durga puja was introduced in rural Bengal by Barindra Brahmins over 800 years ago. In the British India of the 19th century, it was mainly the preserve of big landowners or zamindars. From the early 20th century onwards, with the rise of the nationalist movement, it became a community affair. It is held ransom today by commerce. Guha-Thakurta's talk, although rich in sociological implication, lacked insights into the spiritual side of Durga puja and its rapid decline in urban Kolkata.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

Design and Governance

LILA PRISM LECTURES 2015: TRANSFORMATIVE GOVERNANCE. *Sense of Design and Transformative Governance*

Speaker: Mr. Rajeev Sethi

Chair: Mr. Raghu Rai and Gurmeet Rai

Collaboration: Lila Foundation for Translocal Initiative
8 October

In the eighth lecture in the Lila Prism series, Rajeev Sethi—scenographer, designer and art curator—presented his insights into the connections of design to not only governance but to the everyday fabric of life. Sethi drew these connections through his own memorable design endeavours, career and work.

He expanded on his journey as an artist, a designer, a communicator and thinker, all linked with the thread of activism that gave the makers, the singers, the skilled practitioners in the arts and crafts a voice. Showing work that has not been publicly seen in Delhi, Sethi's journey as a young 17-year-old when he posed questions on the headlong rush to mass-communication through the

introduction of satellite disks across India, the beaming of messages to huge audiences remains true to the essence of effective design and communication even today.

Sethi presented his work on design that worked towards giving creative people a voice, raising questions and presenting new ways of seeing. From his setting up of the first cooperative of folk artists in India—the 'Bhulle Bhisre Kalaakar'—at Shadipur depot which continues to remain a work-in-progress, and his learning of the lives of vulnerable creative people, to the PIL on the conservation standards of the ASI at the Red Fort that were heard in the Supreme Court.

His creative engagement with artists, craftspersons, performers and their interpretation of events through song, art and craft, whether it was the powerful 9/11 tragedy depicted by the Patta Chitra Patuas of Bengal, the *Azaadi ka Phad* on the events leading to India's independence in 1947 painted by members of the Joshi family and sung by the Bhopas in Rajasthan, the creative expression of issues like the resettlement of craftspeople brought public attention to the practitioners and their world view.

■ RITU SETHI

Giving Power Back to Handloom

SEMINAR: *Handloom Spaces: Locating Mubarakpur as Paradigm for Renewal*

Collaboration: Craft Revival Trust and All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association
10 October

The seminar on reviving handloom using the Mubarakpur weaving cluster as a paradigm disseminated a sense of urgency. The panel of experts gave a comprehensive overview of the state of handloom in the country and the dismal condition of weavers. In a country where handloom is touted as an integral part of our cultural ethos, paradoxically, weavers can barely make ends meet.

The Mubarakpur case study, presented expertly in a mix of Hindustani and English to include the weavers present, brought to light the decline of the handloom industry. The village faced riots in 2000 and subsequently shifted to powerlooms from handlooms. Curiously, their plight did

not improve because the village receives only five hours of electricity in a day. With an increasing number of weavers choosing to send their children into different professions to sustain themselves, this village almost lost its unique skills, which comprise a satin weave with *zari* motifs.

The return to handloom in Mubarakpur with the help of AIACA has been a steady, albeit slow one, with 20 weavers in the collective after one year. This famous centre is now in the revival process under the brand name 'Mubarakpur Weaves'.

The seminar ended with an enlightening session with the three weavers from Mubarakpur who spoke in turn about the challenges they faced with the powerloom and its limited scope for improvement. They answered many questions put to them by the audience regarding this revival. S.F. Hussain, a senior weaver, explained that using nylon on powerlooms proved damaging to their health and that they were pleased to work with natural fibres like cotton and silk again.

■ RIMA ZAHEER

Transformative Governance

TALK: *Pre-Requisites of Good Governance*

Speaker: Shri Soli J. Sorabjee

Chair: Justice Ajit Prakash Shah

Collaboration: Lila Foundation for Translocal Initiatives

10 September

At the start, Justice Shah pointed out that the earliest reference to the concept of good governance in India was the *Arthashastra* (circa 400 BC) of Kautilya, which laid down the basic pillars on which good governance stands: ethics, truth, equity. Governance was different from government and covered a vast array of action/decision-making; their implementation at local, state and international levels in almost all spheres of civil society.

Governance had become an ‘umbrella concept’ and corruption was the biggest impediment in its path. India had to find its own solutions and seek out new ideas to do so, especially as we have deep-rooted social and economic inequity coupled with the criminalisation of politics.

Soli J. Sorabjee concentrated on the two major aspects of good governance and the role of the judiciary in it. The essential requirement of good governance was that a timely opportunity be given to the accused to put forth his/her point of view—a ‘hearing’ be given before arriving at a decision. As he put it humorously, even Adam (and Eve) were given a hearing by God before they were evicted from Paradise.

Another fundamental aspect was that lucid/logical reasons be given while arriving at a decision. This should be a ‘reasoned one’ and a ‘speaking order’ issued. This ensured fair play and facilitated judicial reviews, ensured natural justice, all of which are essential obligations in a democratic system. Executive apathy and the failure to effectively implement laws had led to intervention by the judiciary, as had the aberrations in the functioning of the legislatures. However, the judiciary was not running the country, but merely intervening when and where required. An apt example of judicial intervention for good governance was the Supreme Court’s decision to ensure that all information on political candidates be made available to the electorate to enable them to make a judicious choice.

■ SIDDHARTH KAK

Managing Waste

DISCUSSION: *Solid Waste Management in the NCT of Delhi*

Keynote address by Shri Tejendra Khanna

Speakers: Ms Debasree Mukherjee, Mr. Manik Thapar; Mr. Niraj Sethi; and Mr. Ravi Agarwal
13 October

Shri Khanna began his talk by citing the example of the ongoing ‘Swacch Bharat Campaign’, stating that as Delhi is the national capital of India, it needs to be clean. According to him, large chunks of the city’s populations live in unauthorised colonies and slums without the basic facilities of sewerage, sanitation and waste management. He emphasised the need of segregation of waste into non-biodegradable and recyclable. He also touched upon the construction of waste facilities in Burari and the waste-to-energy options for waste management.

Manik Thapar of Ecowise Waste Pvt. Limited in his presentation shared his motivation and experiences in setting up the waste management company. The company started in 2006 with door-to-door collection of waste from

a few households, and now caters to 25,000 households in Delhi and NCR, spreading to industrial units. The USP of his model is segregation and the entire system is running successfully on selling recyclables. He has also set up composting units for biodegradable waste.

Niraj Sethi from Engineering India Limited stressed the need of waste minimisation as the quantum of waste will grow with the growth of the population. He also emphasised the importance of segregation and urgent attention towards plastic waste management.

Ravi Agarwal in his presentation stated that solid waste should be considered material rather than waste; therefore, segregation will have a better recovery of recyclable waste that can be used as resources. There is a need to improve the recycling infrastructure in the country and biodegradable waste should be converted to compost. Further, utmost priority should be given to check land-fill diversion of solid waste due to growing space constraints. He highlighted the problems surrounding incineration technology, and also gave an overview of Extended Producer Responsibility in the context of various types of waste management.

■ PIYUSH MOHAPATRA

India and Africa

On the eve of the Third India – Africa Summit in New Delhi
SEMINAR: *Strengthening and Deepening Cooperation and Strategic Partnership Between India and Africa*

Inaugural Address: Shri Soli J. Sorabjee

Moderator: Suhas Borker

23 October

While delivering the inaugural speech on ‘Strengthening and Deepening Cooperation and Strategic Partnership Between India and Africa’, former Attorney-General of India, Shri Soli J. Sorabjee, warmly welcomed all speakers and dignitaries and expressed his views from the perspective of a jurist.

In the beginning of his address, he cited the example of Mahatma Gandhi who had a long relationship with Africa and its citizens. Similarly, he also didn’t forget to mention India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s foreign policy and the fact that he took neither side during the Cold War.

During his inaugural address, he elaborated on the post-Cold War era, when the emergence of an independent Namibia and a democratic South Africa brought India and Africa together to create a better world.

However, he criticised the world community for not using the abundance of natural resources available in the African continent, which had affected socio-economic conditions. ‘Conflict and terrorism also have multiple, long- and short-term impacts on development, and on environmental as well as human well-being. The effects, even of internal conflicts, are felt at various spatial levels, within the immediate area of conflict, and often in neighbouring countries like India,’ he added.

In his concluding address on malnutrition and hunger in African countries he said, ‘World hunger and food insecurity is a recurring problem in most parts of the continent. There are concerns about a technological landscape. Improvement in government policy, fight against corruption, and adopting technology with a horizontal approach in implementing programmes at community level must be encouraged.’

At the end Shri Sorabjee wished the very best for the ‘India–Africa Mega Summit’ to herald a new era in mutual partnership between two of the world’s fastest growing regions.

■ M. SHAHID SIDDIQUI

One Belt One Road

THE CHINA SYMPOSIA: *What Does China’s Global Economic Strategy Mean for Asia, India and the World*

Chair: Mr. Kishan S. Rana

Collaboration: Institute of Chinese Studies; and Ananta Aspen Centre
30 September

China has invited India to participate in its most ambitious OBOR (One Belt One Road) project. But India is uncertain. So how should India respond? What will be the benefits? Will it be in India’s interest? Can we join it selectively? These and other questions were discussed at this symposia.

In his keynote address, Chairman of the RIS Ambassador Shyam Saran said that the project’s reach is from the east coast of China to Europe, one branch going to Africa. It links Mongolia to Siberia. ‘Though it aims at a multi-polar world bringing connectivity all along, India should carefully evaluate and become a selective participant as well as a junior partner. But, while doing so, we cannot look at it as a benign project, and cannot remain unmindful of its

security and geo-political dimensions. Let us piggy back on certain projects,’ he quipped. Mr. Saran explained the details of the project on a map.

Founder Chairman of Mans Advisory and Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) Ravi Bhoothalingam, suggested that India should not shy away from OBOR, but become the second or third mover. Adding that India has great potential, he went on to say that shying away will be tantamount to being defeatist and reflective of timidity.

‘Sitting on a fence is no solution’, remarked Suhasini Haidar, Deputy Resident Editor and Diplomatic Affairs Editor of the *Hindu*. Referring to fault lines in the India-China relationship, she asked, ‘Is China a soft power or a power with an iron fist?’

Before responding to China’s invitation to join OBOR, India will have to consider what the reactions of its neighbours will be. The trick would be to find complementarity. There are ways for India to scrutinise it and turn it into a win-win situation.

■ VIJAY NAIK

Languages in Decline

SEMINAR: *The Indigenous Languages: Survival of the Oral in the Digital Future*

Collaboration: Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, 22–24 September

The seminar was inaugurated by Justice B. N. Srikrishna. Referring to the *Rigveda*, the *Brihadaranyak Upnishad* and the *Dvani-siddhanta*, he pointed to the semantic complexity and multiple-elusiveness of the Word. There were 11 paper presentations attended by over 30 scholars, cultural activists and field folklorists and linguists who presented their findings. Besides discussing the situation of the languages not included in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, the participants also discussed themes such as Indian Sign Language used by deaf people, metropolitan language shifts in Kolkata and Delhi, and folklore in Bhojpuri. In addition to the presenters, there was an invited group of 20 researchers and activists who participated as ‘observers’. The seriousness with which the seminar proceeded made it a most memorable and intellectually enriching experience.

Professor Anvita Abbi, in her riveting keynote address, presented a grim picture of language decline in India across language families, but more specifically that of tribal languages. She brought to her presentation her own

field experience in order to illustrate the difficulties faced by the languages as well as by those who try to document and conserve them. The presentations were organised in terms of specific regions such as the Himalayan states, the north-eastern states, the southern states, the states of Central India and so on. They gave an overall review of the status of nearly 300 tribal languages, while specifically focusing on over 25 non-scheduled languages such as Nishi, Singpho, Khasi, Garo, the Banni languages of Kutch, Kishtavari, Ho, Gondi, Bhilli, Mewati, Bhojpuri and others.

The questions raised and observations made in these papers brought in issues of language maintenance, genealogies, primary education in the mother tongue, language policy, the power of the spoken word, the strengths and limits of digital technologies, diaspora and migration, primacy of gender in language continuation, minority rights and print technology. Fortunately, the discourse was free of clichés and jargon as the presenters had rich and first-hand field experience. In the closing session, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan and Professor G. N. Devy spoke about the relation between human evolution, neurological modifications and related language shifts, as well as the nature of the response expected of us in the present scenario of the non-scheduled indigenous languages of India.

■ G.N. DEVY



The Ghosts of Machu Picchu

FILM: FILMS ON SPIRITUALITY AND THE OTHER

DIMENSION. Curated by Rajiv Mehrotra. *Ghosts of Machu Picchu: Inside the Incan City in the Clouds*

Director: Mr. Alan Ritsko

Collaboration: Foundation for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 7 October

Built in the 15th century by the Incas, Machu Picchu was lost to the world until the American explorer Hiram Bingham brought it to global notice in 1911. Since then, the site has been an object of intense fascination, curiosity and speculation. This documentary endeavoured to satiate our inquisitiveness by marshalling the latest evidence in archaeology and allied disciplines to answer the questions, who built it and why?

Believed by Bingham to be the lost city of Vilcabamba that was destroyed by the Spanish, and the theory that the bones found there were those of the 'virgins of the sun' has now been contradicted. Machu Picchu was unscathed and the bones were not of women alone.

Though the evidence of skeletons found at the base of Machu Picchu reveal that these were soldiers, the presence of shrines indicate that it was a religious sanctuary. Through the accounts of the Spanish priest Cobo, one knows that it was Pachacuti who expanded the kingdom and built the site.

Paleohydrologists have suggested that the building of Machu Picchu was an engineering marvel, as terraces had to be built and granite chipped away without the use of iron. There is evidence that sacred geography was the reason why the Incas invested in a site and terrain so remote and complex.

Latest studies done on bone samples reveal that they were of the royal caretakers. Historian Stella Nair surmises that the site visible to subjects in the valley may have been a symbol of the Emperor's authority.

Why was it left untouched by the Spaniards? Till future finds and technology unlock more secrets, the ghosts of Machu Picchu will continue to haunt us.

■ AJAY JAISINGHANI



A Traditional Ritual of the Maya

NOTICE

IIC does it again

This year again the India International Centre Annexe has provided safe refuge to two peahens for nesting and successfully laying eggs during the months of July and August. In one case incubation was not successful, but in the second case five chicks were hatched and have survived. As before, nesting and incubation took place in the window-ledges at a height of more than 30 ft. above the ground. The concerned IIC staff, led by Assistant Manager Rahul Bist, deserve all praise for taking care of the peahens and chicks.



Nepal's Constitution

DISCUSSION: *Nepal: The Struggle for an Agreed Constitution*

Speakers: H.E. Mr. Deep Upadhyaya; Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan; Mr. K.V. Rajan

Moderator: Professor Sangeeta Thapliyal, 14 October

Introducing the topic, the moderator, Professor Sangeeta Thapliyal, said that the new Constitution of Nepal adopted on 20 September has declared it a federal republic. The country has moved from a unitary to a federal structure, from a constitutional monarchy to a republic. Taking into consideration the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural nature of society, the Constitution has declared Nepal to be secular. However, certain sections of society, especially the Madhesi, Tharu and Janajati, have expressed their resentment at certain provisions of the Constitution such as the formation of new provinces which, according to them, does not take into consideration their interests.

Taking this further, Deep Upadhyaya talked about the first Constituent Assembly and the second Constituent Assembly election, saying that Nepal as a whole was being

affected due to the blockades by the Madhesi. He believes in the linkages between India and Nepal and people-to-people contacts, saying that the media hype against India should be ignored.

The second speaker, K.V. Rajan, said that the new Constitution is an achievement for Nepal. While talking about the political developments which had led to the new Constitution, he spoke about the violent protest in the Terai which broke out after the promulgation of the new Constitution. He said that we need to maximise support for the Constitution. Otherwise it would not be healthy. The nationalist feeling in Nepal which is anti-India has vitiated the atmosphere.

The third speaker, Siddharth Varadarajan, said that Constitution-making in Nepal was a successful undertaking which has no parallel in South Asia. He highlighted it as a progressive one which has incorporated gender rights and those of minorities. It is remarkable that the right to social justice is inscribed as a fundamental right in Nepal's Constitution. However, he too said that the concerns of the marginalised communities should be addressed for a stable and peaceful Nepal.

■ REHNA RAVINDRAN

Of the soiluI

FESTIVAL: *Maati Maa: The Festival of the Living Soul*

Collaboration: Navdanya

1 October

The Bhoomi Festival 2015: Maati Ma: The Festival of the Living Soul was inaugurated with a recital from Vidya Rao consisting of *thumri*, *dadra* and folk-derived forms like *chaiti*, *hori*, *kajri* and ghazals; the devotional poetry of medieval bhakti and Sufi poets, and *soz* and *marsia*. Vidya Rao started with a verse from the *Atharva Veda* which was a salutation to Mother Earth. Then the festival commenced with the lighting of the lamp, and the book release of *Bhoomi: The Living Soil*.

The programme was varied and diverse, consisting of a skit, *Mrittlika*, by students of Universal Public School,

and a film *The Living Soil* by Tadpole Artists Collective which dealt with the debates on organic forms, rights of farmers, etc. There were declamations by students of Mother's International School called *Terre Vivante*. There were also panel discussions on soil and its role in supporting life, among other programmes.

The programme included theatre performances by the Space Theatre Ensemble from Goa who performed two pieces for the Earth. The cultural evening continued with songs by Ms. Vidya Rao and Tenzin Choegyal, Tibetan Australian musician. There was also a programme by Gede Robi Supriyanto, Indonesian rock musician, activist, writer, and farmer. The festival concluded with a vote of thanks, and a dinner called *Navrasa: The Diverse Colours, Aromas and Tastes of Food*.

■ RACHNA JOSHI

Obituary

A-0668	Smt. Sheila Dua	M-1838	Dr Ranjit Roychaudhury
A-1106	Shri Kamal Nain Singh	M-1999	Prof. Ramaswamy R. Iyer
A-2166	Shri Shamshad Husain	M-2041	Admiral R.H. Tahiliani
A-3924	Shri Ravindra Jain	M-3169	Shri Janak Raj Gupta
A-4337	Smt. Sunita Mehra	M-3065	Shri Ashok Mubayi
A-6975	Prof. P.R. Ramachandran Nair	M-3976	Shri Anand Bhushan Aggarwal
A-1718	Dr. Ranjana Sidhant Ash	OA-529	Swami Veda Bharati
M-1614	Shri Ashwini Kumar		

Highlights For November-December

LECTURE SERIES

November 18-December 17

India and the World: International Experience and National Policy

Following Gandhiji's advice to keep our windows open to the world, this lecture series probes the viability of India learning from experiences of other countries in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing our policy makers

18th November at 6.30 p.m. in the IIC Kamaladevi Complex

Dimensions of Interaction between Rural and Urban India

Speaker: Pronab Sen

23rd November at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Conference Room 1

Opportunities and Challenges for India's Finance Diplomacy amidst Global Bipolar Disorder

Speaker: Rathin Ray

26th November at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Kamaladevi Complex

New Approaches in Designing Health Systems

Speaker: Nachiket Mor

3rd December at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Kamaladevi Complex

Employing and Skilling a Billion People

Speaker: Manish Sabharwal

7th December at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Conference Room 1

Trends in Education and Inequality

Speaker: Surjit Bhalla

10th December at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Kamaladevi Complex

The Myth of Control in Urban Governance

Speaker: Jessica Seddon

17th December at 6.30 p.m. in IIC Kamaladevi Complex

Thought Experiments in (Urban Transportation)

Moving Around Cities

Chair: Dinesh Mohan

Collaboration: Shiv Nadar University

PERFORMANCES

4th December

Piano Recital

By Pallavi Mallidhara

The programme includes works by Ravel, Brahms, Liszt and Berio

Pallavi Mahidhara, an Indian American pianist has appeared in solo and orchestral concerts across the world. (Collaboration: Delhi Music Society)



WB Yeats 150th Birth Anniversary Program

FESTIVAL

November 27 at 6 p.m. in the C. D. Deshmukh Auditorium

W.B. Yeats And The India Connection

As we celebrate W.B. Yeats' 150th birth anniversary, it is time to reconsider the continued significance of his life and works for India and the world at large. The two-day event will focus on Yeats, the influence of Indian spiritual, intellectual and creative traditions upon his work, and his own impact upon the Indian cultural and literary scene. Through academic lectures and discussions, film screenings, readings and music, the programme will highlight Yeats' continued importance for the world we inhabit today. Participants from India and Ireland will come together to commemorate the significance of this literary giant for the 21st century.

Inaugural Lecture

Speaker: Dr Keith Hopper,

Topic: 'The Island Dreams under the Dawn': W.B. Yeats, India and Ireland

Dr Hopper currently teaches Literature and Film Studies for Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education, and is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Irish Studies at St Mary's University, London His forthcoming publications include *A Sense of Place: W.B. Yeats and the Lake Isle of Innisfree*.

November 28 from 11 a.m. in the C D Deshmukh Auditorium.

W.B. Yeats and the India Connection - a Seminar

Key note Speaker: Professor Indra Nath Choudhuri

Topic: Rabindranath Tagore and William Butler Yeats: Their Literary Friendship and Intellectual Conflict

Prof. Choudhuri is a distinguished academician, cultural administrator, cultural diplomat, Former First Tagore Chair at the Edinburgh Napier University and Chair of Indian studies at Bucharest University. Former Secretary, National Academy of Letters and Director of The Nehru Centre, London and author of distinction.

Panelists: Dr Keith Hopper;

Prof. Anisur Rahman, Professor of English and Honorary Director, Centre for Coaching and Career Planning, Jamia Millia Islamia; and Professor R.W. Desai, well known and very distinguished Professor of English of Delhi University (retd.)

15:00 Documentary Films

1. *Affairs of the Heart: Yeats and the Women in his life*
2. *Players and the Painted Stage: Yeats and the Theatre*
3. *The Other World: Yeats and the Theatre*
4. *The Mask: Yeats, the Public Man*

17:30 Readings and Performance

Readings from ten poems by Yeats and contemporary artists like Kathleen Watking; Theo Dorgan; Sinead O'Conner; Seamus Heaney; Donna Dent; Paula Meehan; Ulick O'Conner; and Katherine Wade

Introduction: Dr. Santosh Pall, retired teacher of English from Delhi University who is a Yeats scholar, Odissi dancer, freelance writer.

Followed by readings by Sunit Tandon, Director General, Indian Institute of Mass Communication and Bhaskar Ghose, Formerly Director General, Doordarshan; Secretary, Department of Culture; Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Both are members of Yatrik Theatre Group.

19.00 Purgatory

A play by W.B. Yeats presented by Shaw's Corner. Courtesy Dr Vinod Bala Sharma, Former Faculty member Mata Sundari College, University of Delhi.

Yeats had been strongly influenced by the Noh theatre of Japan in the later years of his life and this is seen through Yeats' use of the spirits of the Old Man's parents as a metaphor for the family's decline and of death and rebirth. Similarly, the sparseness of the setting, the use of only two characters and the play's relative brevity.

(Collaboration: Embassy of Ireland)

This issue of the Diary has been assembled and edited by Omita Goyal, Chief Editor; Ritu Singh, Deputy Editor; Rachna Joshi, Senior Asstt. Editor. Published by Ravinder Datta, for the India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi-110 003. Ph.: 24619431. Designed and printed by Mensa Design Pvt Ltd., C-73, DDA Sheds, Phase-I, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi - 110020; Ph.: +91-11-4175 0769, 2681 6964