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August – September 2020

An Epic of Realisation

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Aesthetic Textures: Living Traditions of the Mahabharata*. Edited by Molly Kaushal and Sukrita Paul Kumar (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2019)

DISCUSSANTS: Radha Vallabh Tripathi, Molly Kaushal and Sukrita Paul Kumar

CHAIR: Sachchidanand Joshi

4 September 2020

Molly Kaushal began the webinar by highlighting the fact that the epic Mahabharata was not a singular narrative. Different translations, adaptations, poetics, ethics, and varieties of folk and tribal traditions based on the epic have been sung, recited and performed through the ages.

Several dance forms were also based on the epic, both folk and classical. It is the multiplicity of traditions of various tales that Bharata presented for millennia in different geographical regions. *Jaya Utsav* was a relationship of different traditions with the Mahabharata text, and *Jaya* is known to be the earlier version of the Mahabharata.

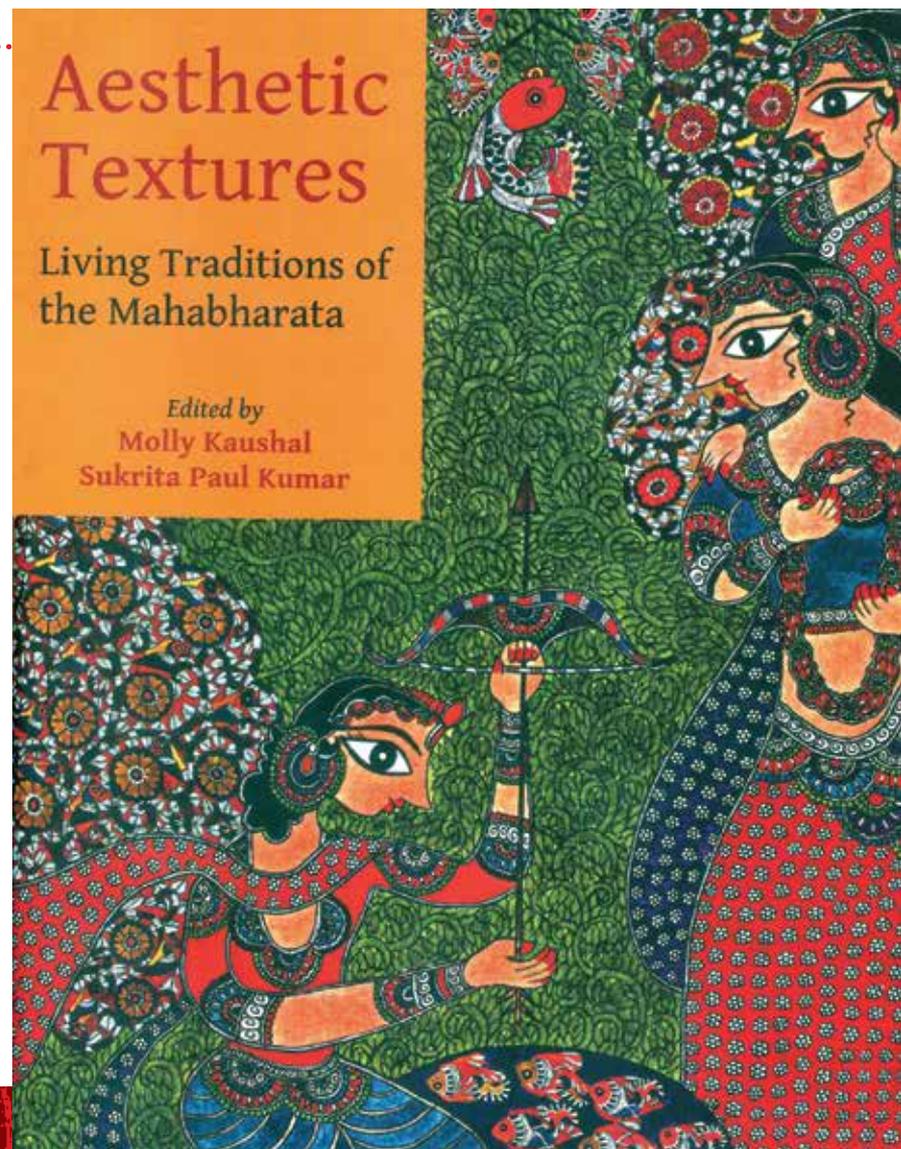
Sukrita Paul Kumar, equally passionate about *Jaya*, said that the Mahabharata is a fluid tradition, and not frozen. There are celebrations of cultural diversity. It takes us to our roots. The aesthetic texture of historical, geographical, eco-cultural performances based on the epic evoke a variety of imaginations.

Radha Vallabh Tripathi said the book speaks of diversity and plausibility. He talked of the six plays of Vyasa, and also of *biprit* or opposite

Mahabharata. He talked of dharma and shastra, and elaborated the significance of the Mahabharata in present times.

Sachchidanand Joshi explained the Mahabharata as an epic of realisation, expression and interpretation. Throughout the epic, there are undercurrents of human emotion.

■ MANDIRA GHOSH



The Abstract and the Contemporary

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE:

ONLINE EXHIBITION:

National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome. A Virtual Tour of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome, Conducted by Angelina Jimbo

COLLABORATION: *Italian Embassy Cultural Centre, New Delhi and Bell'Italia 88*

31 August to 6 September 2020

The exhibition showcased the works of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. The gallery is a beautiful building, designed in the classical style by architect Cesare Buzzani. In a magnificent part of the Villa Borghese, in true Italian manner, the emphasis is on marble columns and carved details with high-vaulted ceilings.

The gallery houses over 20, 000 artefacts, sculptures and

objects d' art, as also the paintings of Picasso, Modigliani, Mondrian and Pollock. A mix of what is impressionistic, abstract and contemporary.

In the virtual tour, we began with marble sculptures, depicting mythological figures, which showed that only Italians are renowned for the perfection of anatomic sculpting. These were the works of Antonio Canova, Hercules and Lichas. Leading us into proportioned rooms were paintings by Van Gogh, a beautiful light-filled painting by Silverstro Lega of women in a town square, and Kilmnt, who used pattern and texture in gold-filled colours, creating a juxtaposition of the human and the abstract.

A timeline of the artworks showed that the collection was from the early 19th century onwards. There was a painting by Rennato Gusto called the 'Crucifixion', in deep tones of umber, ochre and red. In more contemporary exhibits were the works of Marcel Duchamp, one of the artists in the Dada movement. There was also a very contemporary sculpture of a dinosaur's back by Pino Pascali.

■ LOLITA DUTTA

Hope, Harmony and Possibilities

EXHIBITION:

Living the New Normal: In these Extraordinary Times Curated by Arshiya Mansoor Lokhandwala

COLLABORATION: *MASH and IIC*

27 July to 9 August 2020

The exhibition created a realm where hope, harmony and possibilities prevail in these difficult times.

Mithu Sen's show, titled 'Unsocial Media', harnessed the immediacy of social media to create a language of juxtaposed images as a means of tapping the collective unconscious. Acutely aware of political hierarchies and online surveillance, she used patterns 'gathering like a cloud, a mass of meanings bursting into precipitation...'



Pushpmala N. has been called 'the most entertaining artist iconoclast of contemporary Indian Art'. She presented a sequel to her 1990s photo-performance series, 'Return of the Phantom Lady'. Playing Phantom Lady and her doppelganger, Vamp, these staged photographs combined dramatic noir with lurid colour, creating a pastiche rich with cinematic references.

Prakajta Potnis offered yet another interpretation of life with 'Capsule Series'. She projected photographs by an unknown tourist into a refrigerator freezer as a ploy to preserve memory. Stark ramps, stairways, openings, symbolised inner worlds and outer realities; a feeling of being ever on the move, never going anywhere.

'Half a Sky' was Shilpa Gupta's offering of mounted photographs of skies with fluffy clouds enclosed in boundaries. Like clouds, multiple beings cannot be contained. Her works subverted mankind's attempts to create singular definitions and borders.

Anita Dube's 'Eye Photos' used her trademark votive eyes with black-and-white photography. Hands covered with eyes, even holding an eye or two, photographed and printed with repetition and negatives playfully creating new meanings, enhanced by evocative titles: 'Eklavya', 'Offering' and 'Sea Creatures'.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

Amazing Diversity

ONLINE EXHIBITION:

Diverse Asia, An Exhibition of Photographs by Ajit Rana

10 to 23 August 2020

As the very name suggests, Rana photographs the diversity of landscape, natural habitats and people through Vietnam, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Hong Kong and Bali.

His images capture stories, sometimes in detail, sometimes as a whole. From a detail of sacks of roses which create a pattern, to a starkly barren landscape in Kyrgyzstan, where wild horses create a story.

Asia has a unique diversity, and this is evident through its cultural ethos, its people, food, and similar yet dissimilar landscapes. From the lush fields in Vietnam in a luminous green, to the setting sun over water bodies in Bali, the light is captured beautifully, painting an almost ethereal picture.



Colour and textures in almost all his photographs highlight the beauty of the image. In his images of Hong Kong, the cityscape with its pulsating feel contrasts with the gentle landscapes of Myanmar. People and expressions are evident in some interesting faces shot in Vietnam.

Rana says he has two philosophies, to travel a lesser-known road, and to follow his heart. He has done that, and has therefore been able to capture this amazing diversity which exemplifies Asia.

■ LOLITA DUTTA

Treat of both Music and Dance

IIC DOUBLE BILL DANCE AND MUSIC

RECITALS: *Odissi Recital by Madhulita Mohapatra*

Hindustani Vocal Recital by Padmaja Chakraborty

10 to 16 August 2020

Padmaja Chakraborty, a gifted disciple of Vidushi Girija Devi, presented a Hindustani vocal recital, and Madhulita Mohapatra, trained under Guru Gangadhar Pradhan

and Vidushi Aruna Mohanti, presented Odissi dance in this virtual concert. Padmaja opened with a khayal composition in raga *Puriya-Kalyan*. The *Bada Khayal* set to *Vilambit Ektala* saw the vocalist treating the raga in a traditional format of *Alap-Barhat*, gradual *Vistar* to varied *Taans* and *Chota Khayal*, adorned with *Sargam* and *Akar Taans*. Padmaja concluded her melodious concert with a *Kajri*, depicting the emotional state of a *Virahini Nayika* during the *Barkha-Ritu*. She was ably accompanied on the tabla by Shubhendu Das.

Madhulita Mohapatra opened her dance recital with *Jansammohini Pallavi*, a vibrant visual depiction of the raga set to *Ektali*, escalating from simple to complex rhythmic patterns. She chose the *Ashtapadi Ramate Yamuna pulin vane...* choreographed by Guru Aruna Mohanti, for the *abhinaya* aspect of her Odissi repertoire. Music for this, composed by Subas Pani complimented her subtle *abhinaya*, right from the opening *alap* in raga *Pilu* on flute, helping her evocative *abhinaya* blossom with the *Rasa-Bhava* of the *Ashtapadi* from *Jayadeva's Geet Govinda*.

■ MANJARI SINHA



Civilisational Values

To Mark the 40th Anniversary of Southern African Development Community (SADC) 1980–2020

WEBINAR:

Post Covid-19 Path to Recovery: SADC and India

SPEAKERS: H.E. Baraka H. Luvanda, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, Aparajita Biswas and Mammo Muchie

MODERATOR: Suhas Borker

COLLABORATION: Southern African Development Community Heads of Mission Group in New Delhi and the Working Group on Alternative Strategies

17 August 2020

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and India are expected to face the brunt of a fast-sinking global economy, which will adversely impact all socio-economic growth projections,

and the fight against poverty. Major downslides in industry and tourism outputs, and skyrocketing healthcare costs are expected. In the case of India, there is also the problem of migrant labour returning to their homes with uncertainty over their re-employment.

In his opening remarks, moderator Suhas Borker called for out-of-the-box strategies to counter the fallout of the economic downturn. Tanzanian High Commissioner, Baraka Luvanda, speaking on the recovery roadmap, stressed the need for SADC–India cooperation in MSME, digital economy, medical industry and debt cancellation. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee pointed out that instead of rhetoric, there should be joint efforts, monitored and implemented on the ground by designated officers in our missions. Aparajita Biswas urged SADC countries to move out of China dependency, and let India play a pivotal role in the cooperation discourse. Mammo Muchie from Pretoria said that a combination of Ubuntu and *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* should provide civilisational value to replace the military–industrial complex with a humanity complex.

■ K.P. FABIAN

Winds of Change

FOCUS JAPAN

FILM: *The People and Their Emperor*

Screening of NHK documentary films on Japan's history, literature, art, culture and heritage

COLLABORATION: NHK World and Embassy of Japan, New Delhi

31 August to 6 September 2020

This film traces the relationship of the Emperor with the Japanese people over the years, and focuses especially on the esoteric customs that accompany the accession of every new Emperor in the Imperial Palace Grounds. The interest of the film lies in the fact that it gives us a glimpse of the ceremonies that take place during the accession, behind the closed doors of the Daijokyu Halls where, other than a couple of facilitators, no one is allowed. The details of this ceremony have never been disclosed.

The ritual, which is performed only once during each reign, runs from night until the next morning, when the new Emperor offers prayers to the *Kami* on behalf of the Japanese people and prays for Japan's agriculture, mountains, rivers and natural resources. *Kami*, the Japanese word for God, are the holy powers venerated by the Shinto religion. The night ends with the Emperor dining with the *Kami*.



The film also traces the Imperial ancestral lineage, from the 'male only' succession custom, to slowly inducting female members in the National Diet, and finally, given the very limited number of royal offspring being born, the decision of the Advisory Council to adopt the principle of primogeniture, giving precedence to the Emperor's direct descendants in order of age, regardless of gender. However, since there are many who oppose this decision, it now remains to be seen if Japan would be willing to accept a commoner as Emperor.

■ SWATI DASGUPTA

The Crisis of Migrant Labour

WEBINAR:

Epidemic, Migrant Labour, and the Politics of Life

SPEAKER: Ranabir Samaddar

MODERATOR: Binod Khadria

7 August 2020

Samaddar broke down the Covid-19 crisis, which has had the entire world in its grip for close to eight months now, as a combination of three different crises—an epidemiological crisis, an economic crisis and a political crisis. These three crises exploded, as we saw in late March and early April, in the form of a migrant crisis, he said.

‘There is an autonomy in migration; the decision to migrate is a conscious call that also involves “re-turn”’, Samaddar said, expounding the concept of ‘circular migration’. It was a crisis in itself that migrants were deciding to go back, convinced that they would have no more opportunities. ‘We are missing the political significance of the term “return”’.

The crisis symbolised a breakdown of trust between those governing and those being governed, he said.

On the relation between the lockdown and the spread of the disease, Samaddar said the migrant crisis showed that this relation was fraught with uncertainties. He also questioned why migrants were always invisible in politics, to become visible only in times of crises. Among the solutions he gave was portability of voting rights.

The migrants who went homewards might indeed return, but not necessarily to the places they left. This, he said, would leave this labour force—estimated at anywhere between 2 crore and 12 crore—to more uncertainty. As for the Employment Guarantee Scheme, Samaddar said jobs under this scheme were more widely available to those in rural areas, and the government needed to ensure much more employment in urban areas.

Drawing one lesson from how the Covid-19 crisis was addressed in parts of West Bengal and Kerala, Samaddar said the solutions were found not at the highest level of the political ladder, but ‘down below’.

■ REETESH ANAND

The Role of the Media

To Mark the 30th Anniversary of the Presidential Assent to the Prasar Bharati Act

DISCUSSION: *State of Indian Media: News or Noise, Watchdog or Lapdog*

SPEAKERS: N. Ram, Jawhar Sircar and Pamela Philipose

MODERATOR: Suhas Borker

COLLABORATION: Jan Prasar

12 September 2020

The judiciary has been subverted, federalism is under threat, and during all this, where is the media, the fourth pillar of democracy? This was the question to which the panellists were trying to find an answer, while marking the 30th Anniversary of the Presidential Assent to the Prasar Bharati Act.

The Webinar excellently highlighted what the media has transformed itself into in recent times, where fake news, trolls, media trials and the Sushant Singh Rajput case took centre stage, and the role of Rhea Chakraborty in his death played out day in and day out.

On 11 September, an obituary was placed in the *Hindu* by



a young man named Kartik Sahani, mourning the death of democracy. This triggered a much-needed discussion on the role of the media in present times, and where it is headed in the future.

Real issues like the status of migrant workers, the worsening situation of the economy and the declining GDP, massive unemployment, devastating floods and other such pressing issues were ignored; a false narrative was being made to make people feel that everything was well. Moreover, the media, which needs to hold the government accountable, doesn't ask any uncomfortable questions. This is evident from the fact that the PM has not given interviews or held a press conference. Dissent and criticism are being curbed in all areas.

■ M. SHAHID SIDDIQUI

Galwan Valley Clash

WEBINAR:

India–China Relations: Galwan Valley Postscript

SPEAKERS: Ajai Shukla, Ananth Krishnan and Hemant Adlakha

MODERATOR: C. Uday Bhaskar

5 August 2020

Chinese intrusions in May this year along the LAC in the Galwan Valley, Pongong Tso, Gogra and Hot Springs are uppermost in the minds of Indians today. They are anxiously looking forward to the efforts of the government to come to some solution. However, all negotiations since the intrusions indicate that it is going to be a long haul before matters are settled.

Shukla pointed out that the assessment about PLA build-up was incorrect. Displaying detailed maps relating to the intrusions, he narrated date-wise movements of Chinese troops, and added that China violated all agreements with India since 1993. He blamed four civil and five military agencies for lack of coordination.

Saying that the problem arises due to different perceptions on the LAC, Krishnan blamed the Chinese media for fuelling animosity against India during May and June. The attempt by China to push forward their territorial claims will have

India International Centre
presents a Webinar on
India-China Relations: Galwan valley Postscript



Speakers:
Col. Ajai Shukla (Retd.)
Consulting Editor (Strategic Affairs, Business Standard)

Shri Ananth Krishnan
Journalist with The Hindu & author of the forthcoming book *India's China Challenge*

Prof. Hemant Adlakha
Associate Professor, Centre for Chinese and South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Moderator:
Cmde. C. Uday Bhaskar
Director, Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi

Wednesday August 5, 2020 from 4 pm to 5 pm

India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi- 110003

wide repercussions. This is already reflected in the change in India's FDI and trade policy towards China.

Adlakha was of the view that since the Doklam standoff, China was looking at an opportunity to hit back at India as it had started to see India as a threat. He lamented the dropping of the Chinese language from the New Education Policy on the pretext that it was a national security concern.

■ VIJAY NAIK

Breaking the Silence

WEBINAR:

K File: The Conspiracy of Silence

By Bashir Assad (New Delhi: Vitasta Publishing, 2020)

DISCUSSANTS: Syed Ata Hasnain, Sushil Pandit, Rekha Choudhary and Bashir Assad

CHAIR: Shri N.N. Vohra, President, IIC

10 August 2020

Bashir Assad said that in his book, he had dealt primarily with the complexities of the situation in Kashmir, especially after the crucial watershed of 2008/9. The very nature of the agitation changed for the worse, mistakes were made on both sides, especially the regrettable expulsion of the Kashmiri Pandits. The vested interests of the militants, Islamists, Pakistan and the local politicians had kept the pot boiling.

Hasnain felt that the turning point was when Pakistan used the

ideological route as a weapon. Constitutional changes would have a positive effect in the long term, but more immediate steps were required.

Pandit called the book a lament for the past, present and future, and though apologies and regrets were welcome, there were numerous inaccuracies. Booking a requiem for Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmir was a collective failure on all sides.

Choudhary held that the use of violence had been legitimised with the indoctrination of the general public by Islamists, mullahs and local politicians, encouraging the dream of 'Azadi'. This book would enlighten the Kashmiris of the truth of their situation.

Shri Vohra pointed out that the book gave an insider's view of the situation, and brought out the dangers of political games and radicalisation. The immediate concern was strengthening the education system to protect and train youth to take the right path. Dialogue and discussion with all sections of society should be encouraged to break the silence.

■ SIDDHARTH KAK

Democracy in Peril

WEBINAR:

How Robust is India's Democracy?

SPEAKERS: Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Jagdeep S. Chhokar and K.P. Fabian

CHAIR: M.G. Devasahayam

9 September 2020

Former IAS officer and civil society activist Devasahayam initiated the discussion by highlighting that although India is the world's largest democracy, it is not elections alone that contribute towards a vibrant democracy. He said that the issues of grassroots democracy, representation, corruption, the selection of candidates, the independence of institutions, federalism, etc., needed immediate attention.

On the question of the robustness of India's democracy, Chhokar began with an emphatic *no*, while underscoring the difference between a procedural and a substantial democracy. Criminal cases against members in the Lok

Sabha had steadily increased from 24 per cent in 2004, to 43 per cent in 2019. He questioned the role of institutions in maintaining checks and balances on the system, and lamented the fall of India in indices that now describe it as a 'flawed democracy'.

Lalitha Kumaramangalam (of the ruling party) asserted that the overwhelming majority of her party may make some people feel that democracy is imperiled. While the health of a democracy also depended on its economic strength, she deplored the lack of transparency in the political process, including election funding and the state of television media. She commended the policy of reservation for women at the panchayat level.

Fabian underlined the potential of the growth of Indian democracy, and commented upon the use of money spent after elections on horse-trading. He bemoaned the state of the judiciary, where habeas corpus cases are piled up in courts. He concluded that people have the power to vote, which they must use intelligently to elect the right candidate.

■ AJAY JAISINGHANI

Pandemic Musings

WEBINAR:

Pandemic Musings: History, Mental Health and Marginalisation

PANELLISTS: Alok Sarin, Sanjeev Jain, Vandana Gopikumar, Ratnaboli Ray and Pratima Murthy

21 August 2020

Alok Sarin, clinical psychiatrist, moderated an informative, contemplative and reflective Webinar centred on the impact of the pandemic on people's lives and well-being. The mix of experts from the field and activists engaged in a lively discussion on how humans respond when they encounter unpredictable situations, and the role of history and research in guiding and supporting state and community actions. The panellists familiarised the audience with lockdown difficulties for people in remote areas and institutions who

became more marginalised because of lack of access to information and basic resources for survival.

Familiarity with social geographies brought to the table the inability of the marginalised to procure or benefit from any relief measures due to the difficulty of accessing identity proof. Lockdown restrictions further compounded marginalisation and disrupted issues of development, focusing the gaze on the lens of mental health and illness, homelessness and insecurity. The mental health professionals on the panel suggested etching out collateral opportunities for examining and re-imagining possible schemes for basic survival, health and fitness. On the other hand, the social activists, armed with evidence of poverty and suffering, stressed the features of social justice embedded in social equity and shared humanity. The panel agreed on the usefulness of a multi-sectoral dialogue with exchange of multi-disciplinary expertise in the issues of community support and intervention during phases of crisis.

■ ASHA SINGH



India–Sri Lanka Relations

WEBINAR:

Neighbourhood First Series: After 5th August Elections in Sri Lanka

PANELLISTS: Jehan Perera, Gulbin Sultana

MODERATOR: Ashok Mehta

19 August 2020

Perera highlighted the unprecedented results of the recent Sri Lankan elections and categorically stated that this was quite an unexpected outcome as the Rajapaksha brothers achieved almost 60 per cent of the popular vote, an impossible figure to achieve in a proportional system of representation. He also stated that any government that endeavoured to change the constitution would have needed the support of the other party. But this is no longer required by the Rajapaksha regime, which is legally entitled to make such amendments. What the

overwhelming majority articulates is that the people of the country wanted a strong and cohesive government since the last election had resulted in a coalition government where the Prime Minister and President came from different parties, and often could not agree on strategic issues and take the country forward.

Gulbin commented on what the return of Rajapaksha meant, especially in the context of India–Sri Lanka relations. She said that in the previous two tenures of Mahendra Rajapaksha, the relations between the two countries had swung like a pendulum from good to bad, to the extent that Rajapaksha had threatened to pull out of certain agreements unilaterally. This might have been because he felt that India had not dealt appropriately with the minority issues in Sri Lanka. In the next five years, she said, ties between the two would improve on all fronts due to the high level of engagement in politics, security and defence, and cultural spheres.

■ **INDRAJIT PANT**

An Exemplary Field Marshal

FILM:

In War and Peace—The Life of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

DIRECTOR: Jessica Gupta

Produced by UNESCO Parzor Project

COLLABORATION: Parzor and Jiyo Parsi

3 to 9 August 2020

This film covers a period that relives India's finest moments. The central figure of the film, the hero of the Bangladesh war, who was associated with it from its nascent planning to its successful execution, is covered through a conversational encounter with his grandson.

The opening episode strikes the right note, with the Field Marshal taking the salute at the Passing Out Parade at the Indian Military Academy in 2002. It had marked the golden jubilee year of his commissioning into the Indian



Army in 1932, and he was returning to his alma mater as a Field Marshal. Snippets of his stirring address make the visual shots more gripping.

Besides his numerous successes across several theatres of operations, the film also juxtaposes strategic roles that the Field Marshal had held in a military capacity. These include his presence at the time of the annexation of Kashmir to India, the patrolling of Calcutta's streets during the riots after Independence, as also his taking over command of 4 Corps after the 1962 India–China debacle, which in true Manekshaw humour he dismisses saying: 'The Chinese came to my rescue'.

Reputed for his human qualities and fairness of judgement, the film highlights his confessional of never punishing a soldier. His quick-witted repartees at the most unexpected moments and his innate respect for the man in uniform, endears viewers to his persona. The closing shot in the surroundings of his home, 'Stavka', in the company of his grandson, concludes the moments in the company of 'Sam Bahadur' (as he is affectionately dubbed) with élan.

■ **SUBHRA MAZUMDAR**

Shards of Memory

EXHIBITION:

A Brush with Hope, art by women inmates of Tihar Jail created during workshops conducted in the early 1990s

Conceptualised and curated by Dolly Narang

7 to 20 September 2020

A stuffed ball of cloth became a tool for a monoprint, leaves, grasses and the odd flower—subjects of imaginative fantasies for women prisoners. It was the early 1990s, and it needed three women—Kiran Bedi, then Inspector General of Tihar Jail, Dolly Narang, the curator, and the artist Bulbul Sharma—to bring colour, paint and excitement through workshops to a group of women incarcerated for crimes of various sorts. As Narang commented, 'What characterises these monoprints is spontaneity which only the ease and



comfort of the medium allows. Thus, monoprinting proved to be an effective medium well suited to the confines of the prison environment as no prerequisite skill or experience was required.'

Some monoprints were prosaic dashes of colour, a few more thoughtful than others, like the one of parallel wavy lines. Was the artist thinking of the sea so far away from the cell she is locked into every night? Is that a tear drop coursing down a profiled face? Or is it a frontal portrait—

the only image with a human presence. Flowers are outlined, twigs pressed to become well-composed images of trees, and one or two prints went beyond conventional colour choices to bold yellows and blues. There were no knives, hammers or any indications of violence, but rather a peaceful medley of colours and textures. Memory shards of another lifetime.

Surely such an imaginative input into prison reform, much needed in any case, can be repeated in our many jails?

■ MALAVIKA KARLEKAR

Educational Avenues for Traditional Artisans

WEBINAR:

Education for Artisans: Past, Present and Future

PANELLISTS: *Judy Frater, Jaspal Kalra, Ashoke Chatterjee, Shobita Punja and Prakash Naran Siju*

MODERATOR: *Ritu Sethi*

COLLABORATION: *Craft Revival Trust, and Global InCh Journal*

18 September 2020

Based on the Government of India's National Education Policy 2020, this discussion sought to explore educational avenues for traditional artisans.

Frater laid emphasis on the creation of a sound 'ecosystem for the arts' to support rather than disturb traditional educational patterns and outreaches, as well as an appropriate market.

At Jaspal Kalra's Kalhath Institute, Lucknow, teaching is high-end, collaborative and integrated, focusing on craft, community health, and development of identities, both

local and global, with distinguishing entrepreneurship and ownership, always optimising available resources.

Chatterjee explained how NID's focus has been craft and professional design, and the culmination of the creative gamut as a means of sustainable livelihood. He spoke of the difficulties of meeting the contrary ends of overseas demand for tradition, and the Indian demand of modernising.

Writer, thinker and teacher, Punja spoke of cognitive, emotional and creative intelligence, decrying the system of learning by rote in our present school system, as opposed to creativity and imagination. In the ever changing world, she felt, imagination, too, should be dynamic. Additionally, the artisan should be able to communicate in his/her own voice with officialdom at any level.

Contrary to common belief, carpet weaver Prakash Naran Siju said that weavers' children are opting for their ancestral profession after higher education, bringing more verve and novelty into the practice.

Sethi, who moderated the discussion, concluded with Judy Frater's invaluable remark: 'Buy better and buy less. Let lesser things go into the landfill!'

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK

A Celebration with Three Virtuosos

CONCERT:

Beethoven @250—Recital 1. Piano recitals by three young Indian artists—Keya Kalra Gupta, Priya Ann Sequeira, and Anuvrat Choudhary Conceptualised by Justin McCarthy

21 to 27 September 2020

Beethoven had an unusual 250th birth anniversary concert held across four different homes, and streamed into countless others. Justin McCarthy introduced this unique collection of performances with a Nietzsche quote appropriate for these existential times.

The virtual concert started with young Keya on the keys who was introduced by McCarthy. She played the *1st Piano Sonata*, dedicated to Haydn, and tackled the piece earnestly, showing promise as she navigated the complexities of the composition.

We watched and heard Priya, the second performer, play

two sonatas with a depth of feeling. These pieces were not part of Beethoven's famous 32 sonatas. The first in *E Flat Major* followed the dynamics of the work with subtlety and sophistication. In the second sonata in *F Minor*, she showed alacrity, and together both sonatas gave us an insight into the influence Mozart and Haydn had on Beethoven's creativity. Priya demonstrated control over a broad range of techniques with ease, showing her resolute connection with the art form.

The concluding artist, Anuvrat, showed profound dexterity and kept us spellbound with his interpretation of all the pieces he chose to play. His rendition of the *5th Sonata in C Minor* was played at a frenetic pace, which evoked in us an appreciation for Beethoven's genius. He demonstrated deep passion, building anticipation perfectly during the *adagio*, before reaching a roaring crescendo with thundering base notes in the *presto*.

The execution of the *Appassionata Sonata* was spellbinding. Whether his fingers flew furiously across the keys during the rapid runs, or played softer interludes, he evoked the best in Beethoven for our appreciation.

■ RIMA HANDA ZAHEER

DEPARTURES

We are sad to inform about the passing away of our Members:

MEMBERSHIP NO.	NAME
HM-024	SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
L-0363	SHRI JASWANT SINGH
L-0368	SHRI PANDIT JASRAJ
M-1458	DR. (SMT.) KAPILA VATSYAYAN
M-1487	SHRI EBRAHIM ALKAZI
M-1542	CDR. JOGINDER SINGH (RETD.)
M-1713	DR. (MISS) S. R. K. PADMAVATI
M-1862	SHRI R. D. PRADHAN
M-2490	SHRI AMAR SINGH
M-3269	DR. MAHENDRA TALWAR
M-3401	SHRI D. P. SINGH
M-4140	MS. SADIA DEHLVI
A-1661	SHRI K. S. BAJPAI
A-1831	CAPT. DHIRENDRA KUMAR VERMA
A-3163	SHRI D. N. GUPTA
A-5402	SMT. RAVI MISHRA
A-5453	SMT. SUBHASH BAHL
A-5479	SMT. SANTOSH NARULA



Flag hoisting ceremony by Shri K.N. Shrivastava, Director (15 August 2020)



DR. (SMT.) KAPILA VATSYAYAN
Padma Vibhushan (2011)

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, who would have been 92 in December this year, passed away peacefully at her residence on 16 September 2020 after a very brief illness. I had known her from around the late 1970s when I came to Delhi to work for the Union government.

After serving the Ministry of Education (differently named from time to time) for nearly four decades, she superannuated in 1986 as Secretary Arts to the Government of India. Actually she never “retired” and was the ruling deity in the realm of arts and culture for over half a century. Trained as a classical dancer, she was a scholar, teacher, researcher, educationist, administrator and a practitioner who conceived and set up several pivotal institutions for the advancement of higher learning. Besides being the founder Academic Director of IGNC, and later the Chairperson of this eminent institution, she was responsible for the planning and materialisation of several museums, archival repositories, libraries, et al.

As Director of the India International Centre I worked closely with Kapilaji during the period when she was Vice-President, President and Chairperson of the IIC-Asia Project (subsequently renamed as the International

Research Division) and, later, as her fellow Life Trustee. Throughout her long association with IIC she stood firm, literally alone at times, to defend and protect the high values and integrity of the Centre. Arriving around noon everyday she invariably attended all the programmes and remained available to one and all—Staff, Members and the many scholars who came to seek her help and guidance.

As an eminent member of the UNESCO Executive Board, Kapilaji very significantly enlarged her contacts and interactions with the intellectual fraternity, all over the world. While she got seriously engrossed with the larger civilisational issues, she remained intensively involved in crafting practical approaches on how the invaluable corpus of the Indian traditions and systems could be fused with the demands of modernity while particularly ensuring that the pluralistic and spiritual foundations of our ancient socio-cultural heritage were not eroded. In recent years, she recurrently voiced concern about the growing challenges to the pluralistic dimensions of our societal framework.

Kapilaji’s absence shall be missed by all those who had got to know her. Her passing on marks the end of an era.

4 November 2020

■ N. N. VOHRA



Director's Note

On 16 September 2020, the Centre suffered a great loss with the passing away of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Life Trustee, formerly Vice President, President of the Centre and Chairperson of the International Research Division for the past nearly two decades. Dr. Vatsyayan's departure has left a great void. Her support will be greatly missed.

Members shall be happy to know that the Centre's Green Building initiative has started showing results. The Biogas Plant, funded by National Thermal Power Corporation at a cost of ₹ 36 lakh under their CSR initiative, has become functional; the biogas being generated is utilised in the main and staff kitchens. The Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), installed at a cost of ₹ 30 lakh through CSR funding by Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA), has also become functional. The Biogas Plant and the SCADA Control Room were formally inaugurated by President on 8 October 2020. By reducing the sanctioned electricity load for the Main complex and Annexe we are now also saving ₹ 12 lakh annually in the payment of electricity tariff. For preserving the original concept and design of the Centre, evolved by the eminent Architect Joseph Stein, and to ensure against any ad-hoc alterations/modifications/additions to the existing complex, President has set up an Architectural and Design Advisory Committee, comprising several respected architect members of the Centre, to provide guidance and support to the Director in regard to any change that may require to be carried out in respect of the buildings.

The IIC Library was re-opened in a phased manner; it has been functioning on all days of the week after the lockdown was lifted on 4 July 2020. For the Members' convenience, the Library timings have been extended by one hour.

We are eagerly waiting for the flowers to come up in our gardens. The lotus in the Fountain Pond are a delightful sight.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, the Centre's functioning has been very adversely affected. As of present reckoning we shall run a very heavy financial loss in this financial year.

To meet the continuing crisis, the expenditures have been considerably curtailed, by tightening on all sides. The Finance Review Committee, set up by the Board of Trustees, is meeting regularly to review the income and expenditure in the preceding month and, side by side, identifying all possible measures to enhance revenues and curtail spending. Overall, as of now, I cannot share an optimistic note.

■ K. N. SHRIVASTAVA



The Life Trustees have appointed Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former Governor of West Bengal (2004-09), to be a Life Trustee of the Centre in the vacancy caused by the sad passing away of Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan. Shri Gandhi (b1945), who joined the IAS in 1968, has served twice with Shri Venkataraman, first as his Secretary (1985) when the latter was Vice President of India and, later, as Joint Secretary to the President (1987-92). He set up the Nehru Centre in London (1992) and was its founder Director; served as India's High Commissioner to South Africa (1996-97); Secretary to President K.R. Narayanan (1997-2000); India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (2000-02); and as Ambassador to Norway (2002-04). Shri Gandhi has authored several books and is a well-known columnist. We extend a warm welcome to Shri Gandhi and look forward to his valuable contribution to the functioning of the Board of Trustees of the Centre.

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