

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE **IIC** Diary

Volume XXXIV No. 6

December 2020 – January 2021

Symbolic Connotations

ONLINE EXHIBITION: *Folk and Tribal Art of India*

CURATOR: *Meena Varma*

COLLABORATION: *Arts of the Earth*

7 to 20 December 2020

The most interesting facet of Gond art is the use of bright colours like blue, yellow and red, and the central theme is nature, including wildlife. A certain sense of balance and symmetry could be observed in the patterns used, such as spiral forms, curved lines and geometrical shapes. Another distinctive feature of this beautiful art form is that in its simplicity lies incredible intricacy and minute detailing.

Kalighat depicts Hindu gods, goddesses and other mythological characters with bright colours and bold outlines, while Kalamkari portrays women in yellow, demons in green, and red, and gods in shades of blue with vibrant colour patterns. Tales from the Hindu epics can be comprehended when these paintings are viewed carefully.

Madhubani paintings have multi-dimensional imagery, depicting people and their association with nature, and deities from ancient epics; in sharp contrast, however, one of the paintings in the exhibition depicted the urban lifestyle of people residing in Delhi, which was commendable. The paintings had complex geometrical patterns, and no space was left empty with the gaps filled with paintings of flowers, animals and birds. Multi-coloured animated images of gods and goddesses,

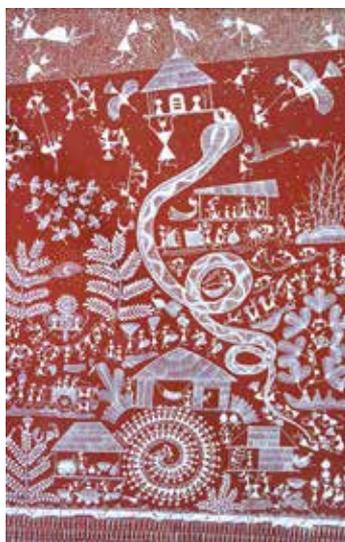
devotees, followers, flora and fauna were depicted within a marvellous narrative story.

Pichwai paintings, made on cloth, tell stories from Lord Krishna's life, a blend of legend and symbolism from Rajasthan. These are Mewar-style textile paintings usually found on the walls of temples, houses, art galleries and museums, specifically the Nathdwara temple from where they originated. Lord Krishna has been depicted as *Shrinathji*, the youthful manifestation of Krishna, and is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Shrinathji is shown with his left arm held above his head, in the act of lifting Mount Govardhana to protect the people of Vraja, while his right arm rests on his waist. Pichwai paintings project Shrinathji in his various stunning *swaroops* surrounded by the bliss of nature. Festivals like Janamashtami and Gopashtami have been exhibited splendidly, along with Morakuti paintings depicting peacocks with crested crowns dancing merrily.

Theyyam is a form of dance worship from north Kerala in which make-up, especially of the eyes, and flamboyant costumes are used. Warli represents the humble life of the Warli tribe, in which the central motifs are farming, hunting, fishing, festivals, dance, trees and animals. Their trademark is the use of geometric designs and crooked lines which depict human and animal figures, houses, crops, etc. Human and animal bodies are represented by two triangles joined at the tip; the upper triangle depicts the trunk, and the lower triangle, the pelvis.

The works of the artists differed in concept, but all had an implicit symbolic connotation.

■ ONAM VAID



Warli Art

Sensitivity to Mother Nature

ONLINE EXHIBITION: *Urmila—Enchanted Mother*

CURATOR: *Anu Jindal*

**Online exhibition was on view
from 4 to 17 January 2021**

Six artists from India, and one each from Germany, Canada, South Korea and Japan, made this exhibition a good mix of East and West, as also of varying media and genre. The theme was variously interpreted by each artist, translating mostly into ideas of earth and creation, when not directly portraying the mother.

German landscape artist Nils-Udo's works were ephemeral environmental installations, eventually to disintegrate and mingle into the earth and environment. Trees, stones, water, lava, earth and flowers were the mainstays of these compositions. Himmat Shah made an expression of the earth, presenting life in its myriad manifestations, from the primordial to the evolved. Canadian sound artist Hildegard Westerkamp's sound compositions, *Moments of Laughter* and *Mother Voice Talk*, while manifesting great finesse,



Streambed, Bindweed Blossoms

intermittently broke into incomprehensible language for those not conversant. South Korean Chang Hoon Woo's paintings were an awesome maze of brushwork, colour and intricate compositions. Works by Rameshwar Broota, Prabir Purkayastha, and Naoyuki Ishiga from Japan varied from pen and ink, oil, water colour, digital photography, and kiri-e or origami. Anu Jindal's own works were in oil on canvas and video film, portraying life, creation, destruction and reconstruction, making it an altogether timely exhibition.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK

Let's Go and Watch a Bimal Roy Film

FILM: *Remembering Bimal Roy*

DIRECTOR: *Joy Bimal Roy*

28 December 2020 to 3 January 2021

Few directors have left such an indelible mark on Indian cinema as Bimal Roy. Joy Bimal Roy, who lost his father at the age of 11, remembers very little of his father, as Bimal Roy was obsessed with his work and was hardly ever home. This documentary is a search for his father, and a record of the memories of some of his family members, including his wife and daughter, as well as actors and colleagues whose lives the iconic filmmaker touched and changed forever.

His career, which got under way in 1932 as an assistant cameraman to the renowned director Pramathesh Barua, took off with the silent



Do Bigha Zamin

film *Ekoda*. Subsequently, Barua introduced him as a still photographer to the New Theatres.

However, this talented photographer showed an interest in acting, and was given a role in the film *Mahua*. This was followed by his desire to become a director, and after a search for a suitable topic, in 1944 he found what he was looking for. Very keen on highlighting social issues, he directed *Udayar Pathay*, which dealt with the distinction between the rich and the poor. The film became an instant hit.

When New Theatres faced a financial crunch, Roy moved with his family to Bombay where he joined Bombay Talkies. In 1953, he set up his own production company, Bimal Roy Productions. The desire to highlight the impact of social distinctions led him to produce, among many others, award-winning films like *Do Bigha Zamin* in 1953, *Biraj Bahu* in 1954, *Devdas* in 1955, *Madhumati* in 1958, *Sujata* in 1959, and *Bandini* in 1963. *Amrit Kumbheyra Sandhaney* remained unfinished. And so it was that people of that age used to say, 'Let's go and watch a Bimal Roy film'.

■ SWATI DASGUPTA

Different Nuances

IIC DOUBLE BILL DANCE AND MUSIC RECITALS:

Vilasini Natyam by Purvadhanashree, disciple of Guru Swapnasundari; and *Hindustani Vocal* by Madhumita Chattopadhyay, disciple of the late Vidushi Purnima Chaudhury and Vidushi Manju Sundaram

Video recording of the recitals for IIC online programmes
28 December 2020 to 3 January 2021

Ceremonial and ritual dances performed by devdasis in Andhra Pradesh would have faded into oblivion had it not been for rigorous efforts to revive this traditional form of expression. Known now as Vilasini Natyam, this unique dance style was first reintroduced by well-known Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi danseuse, Swapnasundari. She spent years in researching and learning this intertwining of ritual, dance and theatre. Just how artistically the technical research has been enmeshed was evident in the Vilasini Natyam presentation by her disciple Purvadhanashree, who was also helped in understanding the many nuances of Vilasini Natyam by her mother, Guru Kamalini Dutt, a Bharatanatyam dancer.

Her vibrant performance comprised three pieces using pure dance (*jathiswaram*) and expression (*abhinaya*) to highlight

the uniqueness of this dance style. Often considered similar to Bharatanatyam, since it also originated in the temples of south India, primarily Tamil Nadu, Vilasini Natyam has its own distinct technique.

■ SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

It was a delight to listen to the gifted *thumri* singer, Madhumita Chattopadhyay as she painted raga *Bhairavi* in three different shades of emotions through her *thumri/dadra* renditions. Usually, artists change the raga in every item, but Madhumita took upon herself the challenge of choosing just one raga for three different items.

She opened with the famous *thumri*, *Bajuband khul khul jaaye*, set to *Jat Tala*, and treated it in the *Bol-Banaav ki Thumri* format, expressing each *bol* (word) in myriad shades of expression, the way it should be in this kind of *thumri*. She then sang a *dadra*, *Zara kah do Sanvaria se aaya kare*, where the *mukhada* (opening phrase) itself reached the upper *shadja*, depicting the amorous excitement of the *nayika* who asks her friend to send her beloved a message to come to her. Here, the gait of the young maiden matched the lilting *dadra tala* adorned with the *Khatka-Murk* of Madhumita's trained voice. The concluding piece was a *dadra*, *Ja main tose nahin bol*, where the rendition in a slower tempo of the same *tala* (*dadra*) brought out the feelings of a wounded heart.

■ MANJARI SINHA

Beethoven's Profound Genius

IN THE FOREST OF MY SOUL—BEETHOVEN AND HIS ART BEETHOVEN @250—CONCERT IV

Piano recital by Justin McCarthy
14 to 20 December 2020

The concert showcased Beethoven's range in style, and the depth of intricacy he achieved in his greatest works.

McCarthy launched into the first piece with a solemn elegance, and navigated the sedate passages of the piece, *Bagatelle in A major*, evoking the pastoral and sombre sections with subtle modulations of the tempo. The second piece was *Rondo in G major*, and McCarthy explained how this melody, although elaborate, goes round repeatedly. The middle theme was startlingly different in gait and tempo,

opening up a different vista before we returned to the rondo. In the third composition, McCarthy chose to showcase the *9 Variations in C minor* on a march by Dressler, a sombre set of works with pathos and gravitas, with the underlying rhythm created by the drum-like rhythm from the original.

Each passage of play contained a different flavour, from airy improvisations filled with trills to ominous to tense passages, where the unsettling tone was scored by numerous intricate triplet sections, navigated with dexterity by McCarthy to showcase the skill required to evoke the full extent of Beethoven's genius.

The final piece was *Sonata in E-flat major*, dedicated by Beethoven to his 'dear friend and patron' the Archduke Rudolph upon his death. The *Sonata*, divided into three sections, contained initial passages of sobriety giving way to happier melody, ending with an almost spiritual, grand coda, which exemplifies the inimitable way Beethoven transcends most composers.

■ RIMA HANDA ZAHEER

Christmas Melody

ONLINE PERFORMANCE: *Christmas at Home*
Video recording of a concert for IIC online programmes

21 to 27 December 2020

‘Lead us to a place
Guide us with your grace
Give us faith so we’ll be safe’.

These lines from *The Prayer* by Sager and Foster, made immortal by Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion, could well be a part of everyone’s prayer in these challenging times. Beautifully harmonised by Prabhat Chandola with friend Aching Shaiza, the song opened the *Christmas at Home* programme over the week straddling Christmas.

Through the magic of webcasting, we were invited into the Chandola family’s beautifully decorated home in a musical



Aalaya, Mene, Prabhat and Tamsunaro Rongsen Chandola with Aching Shaiza

celebration of Christmas. The half-hour programme featured traditional carols, as well as songs evoking the season and its merriment. In *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, composed by Brooks in 1868, Prabhat sang of the everlasting light shining upon it, as Aalaya, Aching, Mene and Tamsunaro joined to bid *All Ye Faithful* to come there joyful and triumphant as in the old Latin carol *Adeste Fideles*.

In Adolphe Adam’s 1847 canticle *O Holy Night*, young Aalaya sang of the night of Jesus’ birth, also celebrated in Gruber and Mohr’s iconic 1818 carol *Silent Night* sung by all. Along with these eternal favourites, the programme featured Javert’s song *Stars* from the musical *Les Miserables*, and more recent pieces like Wells and Torme’s 1945 *Christmas Song*, made popular by Nat King Cole with enticing images of chestnuts roasting over an open fire, and Berlin’s 1942 song, *White Christmas* that had us dreaming of glistening snow. Martin and Blane’s 1943 hit, *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, urged us to be light with our troubles out of sight, echoing the words spoken by Grandma Mene Chandola to ‘open the door of love...be blessed and experience joy’.

■ PUNITA SINGH

Complex Phenomenon of Migration

FILM FESTIVAL: *Latin American Festival of Films on Migration*

COLLABORATION: *Indo Cine Appreciation Foundation; Embassy of the Argentine Republic; Embassy of Chile; Embassy of Guatemala; and Embassy of Mexico*

Screening Schedule: 19,20,26,27 December 2020
Screenings were held over two weekends. Vimeo links of the films were made accessible for a period of 24 hours.

The festival presented films that engaged with the complex phenomenon of international migration, and brought to light the challenges and opportunities that it entailed.

Sonora, The Devil’s Highway (Mexico) is directed by Alejandro Springall. In 1931, the US government closed the border and ordered the massive deportation of Mexican farm labourers. Meanwhile, the Mexican government exiled Chinese immigrants and stripped them of their property. Under

pressure from the Sonora government, a diverse group of people were forced to take a trip to Mexicali where racism was rampant.

Perro Bomba (Chile) is directed by Juan Cáceres. To be treated as less than human is arguably the greatest injustice. For the many Haitian immigrants who relocate to Chile in pursuit of better living conditions, it is a heart-breaking reality, one that is told with confronting unease in this film.

In *Abused: The Postville Raid* (Guatemala), directed by Luis Argueta, the face of immigration is revealed through the gripping personal stories of the individuals, the families, and the town that survived the most brutal, most expensive, and the largest immigration raid in the history of the United States.

The Future Perfect (Argentina) is directed by Nele Wohlatz. It addresses the increasingly complicated challenges of intercultural communication. Divided into three parts with each meant to correlate with the linguistic structure of past, present and future, the film chronicles Xiaobin, a Chinese teenager, trying to learn enough Spanish to hold a job in Buenos Aires. ■

From Fortune to Fortitude

Betrayed by Hope (Episode I)

7 to 14 December 2020

Dramatic reading of the play by Namita Gokhale and Malashri Lal

(Episode II), 14 to 20 December 2020

Video recording of a performance for IIC online programmes

Betrayed by Hope is divided into two episodes and explores the life of the maverick poet and dramatist extraordinaire, Michael Madhusudan Dutt (MMD) (1824–1873), and his journey from alienation to a return to selfhood.

The two primary characters were played by Inji Zayba Zaheer (*Sutradhar*—a fictitious character, Rubina Rahman) and Oroon Das (MMD). Both are outstanding actors, who created and brought to light the confusion and split personality of MMD, as addressed by an innovative, insightful effective reading with visuals and music. Visuals of Sagordari, Chitpur, Khidirpur and the river Kapotaksha, with the background of melodious *bhatiali* or boatman's songs, created a haunting atmosphere.

This screenplay portrayed the genius of MMD, the first Bengali dramatist, who wrote in blank verse or *amit raksar chanda*. Indeed, the play, written brilliantly by Gokhale and Lal, and the dramatic readings by the actors, complemented each other to bring out the genius who created *Meghnadbadh Kabya*, *Sharmistha*, and others. Influenced by John Milton, he made Satan or Meghnad his icon. He met a tragic end like Byron. He was the only child of Rajnarayan Dutt, a wealthy landowner and Jahnabi Devi, and his life full of turmoil and brilliance transformed from fortune into fortitude.

Dutt changed from writing in English to his mother tongue, Bengali, as he was disillusioned with Europe, its culture and the treatment by Europeans. His extraordinary life is brought out in his correspondence with his friends, well-wishers, patrons and acquaintances. Dutt's creativity is remarkable, though he went deeper and deeper into a crisis that was created sometimes by himself, sometimes by society, and sometimes by destiny. The correspondence was primarily with his close friends and associates, Gourdas Bahsak, Raj Narain Basu and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who were responsible for giving Dutt a dignified life.

Inji Zayba Zaheer, the *Sutradhar*, played her role in a dual time frame—talking sometimes to the Michael Madhusudan

Dutt addressed in the play as MMD, and very effectively to the audience where she even criticised the protagonist for his negligence of his wives. He must have felt guilty as he left his family in Madras, and his wife Henrietta died in utter poverty and ill health. The trauma and anguish that he went through all his life, and also the success and dejection, were reflected superbly by Oroon. The play is also about an identity crisis. As *Sutradhar* says, Dutt wrote in undivided Bengal. After partition came categories like Indian Bengalis, Bangladeshi Bengalis and London Bengalis, a confusion that exists even today.



Inji Zayba Zaheer (top) and Oroon Das (bottom)

He had given up his prolific literary activities after his return to Calcutta from Europe. Finally disillusioned, MMD cried out *Atma Bilap* in a heartfelt lament,

I wonder at times/Alas, what did I gain/Betrayed by Hope?

He wrote to his friend Raj Narain Basu in July 1861 that 'I shall come out like a tremendous comet', and his prophecy came true. The portrayal of this visionary is not easy. In amazing authenticity, the character of MMD and that of *Sutradhar* demonstrated the works of the genius and the confusion of his mind.

■ MANDIRA GHOSH

A Multifaceted Artist

ILLUSTRATED LECTURE: *Designing for Heritage*

SPEAKER: *Siddhartha Das*

Video recording of a lecture for IIC online programmes

4 to 10 January 2021

As Das journeyed from his days as a student at the National Institute of Design (NID), to his projects in exhibit and museum design, we saw the sensitivity with which he has approached his work. From having worked in and experienced the V&A in London, to the Museum Rietberg in Zurich, Das has brought home his love for culture, craft, art and design in the projects he executes.

His love for travel, and his insight into India's deeply rooted heritage, is evident in the projects he passionately talks



Jodhpur Museum

about. The Jal Mahal Museum in Jaipur, set in the middle of a water body, embodies the miniature paintings of Rajasthan as a thematic background, and he designs the spaces with the interplay of light. The project which is evidently close to his heart, and conceived by his father, the noted painter Jatin Das, is the J. D. Centre of Art in Bhubaneswar. Designed by the noted architect B. V. Doshi, the building houses a range of craft and artistic collections. The building blends with the concept of museum design, and will surely be a worthwhile visit once it opens later this year.

The other project he takes pride in is the Jodhpur Government Museum. Set in a somewhat colonial style, the museum has been virtually resurrected, showcasing archival material from bygone days of the heritage of Jodhpur.

In addition to his love for art and heritage, Das is a firm believer in the arts, and has created events for a film festival, curated talks, and is also adept at photography and publication design.

■ **LOLITA DUTTA**

Rights and Responsibilities

SEMINAR: *Keys to Governance: Independence of Judiciary*

SPEAKERS: *Justice (Shri) Madan Lokur; N. Ram; Tarunabh Khaitan; and Menaka Guruswamy*

MODERATOR: *Suhas Borker*

COLLABORATION: *D. S. Borker Memorial Foundation*

7 January 2021

The sixth seminar in the series 'Keys to Governance', in remembrance of Shekhar Borker initiated in 2016, struck a chord of immediate relevance. What with 'tumultuous' happenings and public debate surrounding the judiciary in the recent past, the speakers hit the ground running.

Moderator Borker set the seminar's parameters with some key questions, and insisted on answers (safeguards to protect courts from the interference of the government). Justice Lokur



Panel: Suhas Borker, N. Ram, Justice (Shri) Madan Lokur, Tarunabh Khaitan and Menaka Guruswamy

flagged pertinent issues of transparency, use of technology (live streaming and case management) and post-retirement benefits. He called upon judges not to be hyper-sensitive to criticism, and to introspect on what needs to be done.

N. Ram said that the Supreme Court and the High Courts had become 'executive courts'. He spoke of constitutional morality and the need for well-informed and uninhibited criticism of the judiciary. He cited the case of the aborted elevation of Gopal Subramaniam, sacrificed due to political pressure.

Khaitan, with an archetypal non-resident academic objectivity, highlighted the judiciary's incapacity and unwillingness to tackle the crisis it faced, and the need for the introduction of weighted multi-partisan instruments for selection of judges to combat government manipulation.

Guruswamy, though restrained as a serving senior advocate, spoke about the impact of the pandemic on the courts. She said that live streaming would enable easy access to justice in open courts; however, the digital divide would have to be overcome. There was a consensus among all the speakers that the contempt of court provision be scrapped.

■ **K. P. FABIAN**

Progress and Poverty

WEBINAR: *Declining Savings Rate in India—New Policy Options*

WELCOME REMARKS: *Sachin Chaturvedi*

INAUGURAL REMARKS: *Shri N. N. Vohra, President, IIC*

PANELLISTS: *Ananth Narayan; Amey Sapre; and Manmohan Agarwal*

CHAIR: *Rajnish Kumar*

First in a new series of discussions focusing on the broad trends in banking and finance, organised in collaboration with Research and Information System for Developing Societies (RIS)

20 January 2021

The key issues discussed were the relevance of the national savings rate being considered a driver for traditional economic growth models, in terms of the level of savings and capital formation. The savings rate in India has been declining in recent years, but even in its peak years from 2003 to 2008 it was 30–36 per cent, lagging behind that of China which has been above 50 per cent.

That there is a decline in the savings rate is not the only malaise to address in restarting the Indian economy. The present estimation methods used to arrive at this declining savings rate are based on residual, so just the fact of declining savings itself should not be given too much importance. Household savings must be treated as distinct from national savings, and not interchanged. Much was debated about the need to harness small household savings to add to capital formation, growth and employment. Corporate entities today access funds from international markets and not from domestic sources as it costs less and is available in large tranches. Therefore, just increasing national savings will not automatically lead to the economic growth of income and employment. It is the judicious use of capital resources by the government in targeted sectors which will result in growth, employment and income. The government must invest in infrastructure, sanitation, healthcare and nutrition. The financial sector needs to be enabled so that it uses long-term domestic savings towards the national needs of growth and employment. While the financial sector in India has made great progress in terms of its use of technology, digitisation, improved delivery mechanisms, and financial inclusion in terms of the increase in sheer numbers of bank accounts in the system, still more remains to be done.

■ MEKHALA SENGUPTA

India's Cultural Base for Non-violence

WEBINAR: *Ahimsa Conversations on Non-violence*

SPEAKERS: *Ashis Nandy and Ramin Jahanbegloo*

MODERATOR: *Rajni Bakshi*

12 January 2021

In her opening remarks, Rajni Bakshi introduced her YouTube channel *Ahimsa Conversations—A Living Quest*, which she started last year. There is political opposition to ahimsa in many countries around the globe, including India. Civility, agree to disagree, was common earlier. However, ahimsa has now become an endangered value; therefore, the channel.

Nandy was of the view that war is not natural to human society. Violence and non-violence are equally balanced and instinctive in human society. Love is the affirmation of life. He said that 40 per cent of the interviews done after the Partition of India revealed the fact that Hindu victims were protected by Muslims, and Muslim victims by Hindus on either side. Our developmental process has given us enemies and allies. We have associated ahimsa with Gandhi's

name, but even before Gandhi, there was a feeling in the air that India needed somebody like Gandhi. In his novel *Gora*, Rabindranath Tagore locates Gandhi and Savarkar both, without knowing their background. Our cultural base is for non-violence.

Non-violence is an idea whose time has come, said Jahanbegloo. It is compassion and the art of loving. There is nothing like 'armchair' non-violence. You have to go out and act. Gandhi, Thoreau and Tolstoy did that. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the Revolution of Values and about cosmic friendship. There is also the interconnectedness of human beings, plants and animals. The pandemic has shown us our frailty, our powerlessness. Non-violence empowers the powerless. We need to democratise democracy, be more responsible citizens, bring ethics into politics to make a better world.

Violence has become almost multi-national, and corporatised, said Nandy. Structural violence is bringing planetary catastrophe. Gandhi came to symbolise non-violence, something we were probably looking for. Jahanbegloo saw Gandhi as a modern person, and his *Hind Swaraj* a process of civilisation.

■ VARSHA DAS

Progress in Public Health

WEBINAR: *Promise and Pitfalls of Covid-19 Infectious Disease Modeling: Overview of Infectious Disease Models presented by Gagandeep Kang*

PANELLISTS: *Aspects of the India Specific Model—presentations by M. Vidyasagar; Madhuri Kanitkar; and Manindra Agrawal*
9 December 2020

This was an extremely informative dialogue that elaborated how nations deal with pandemics. Both print media and television have been educating the public regarding the individual's role in protection and prevention from Covid-19. This panel illuminated the many behind-the-scene tasks shouldered by experts in the field of public health. Kang and Vidyasagar described how models in different infectious diseases were adapted to interpret the spread of the current virus and its related maladies. Kanitkar ably explained the responsibilities of community behaviour in regulating, and therefore reducing, the spread of the illness.

The slight unpreparedness and unpredictability of public behaviour during festivities stands as one of the pitfalls in the infectious disease model. Kanitkar cautioned that the efficacy of the vaccination should be strongly conveyed to the public. Kang reiterated that although the vaccine was



Gagandeep Kang

being made in a rush to meet the emergency, there were no short cuts or compromises in clinical testing and safety. All the speakers reassured us that there should be equitable access to the Covid-19 vaccine, globally and domestically. The talk generated reflection on the steps taken for the care of the health of the public, and also stressed the need for cooperation in the use of masks as a strong complement to the vaccine. The progress in public health research was refreshing information.

■ ASHA SINGH

A Fair Balance

National Library Conclave on Copyrights—2021

COLLABORATION: *Jawaharlal Nehru University and Sanrachana*
21 January 2021

Knowledge sharing for knowledge generation on an unremitting basis is imperative for the progressive health of the research landscape, and thus for societal good. Increasing communication through the digital mode also demands an awareness of the fair use of copyright content. The Conclave brought together intellectuals and scholars to focus on three issues of contemporary relevance: (i) One Nation–One Subscription; (ii) Copyright Provisions for Library: Guidelines for Librarians; and (iii) Copyright Challenges in the Digital Era. The half-day seminar addressed

issues of 'Copyright Provisions for Library: Guidelines for Librarians', and 'Under Covid-19 Copyright Challenges in the Digital Era.' The Conclave was inaugurated by Shri N.N. Vohra, President, IIC, who stressed the accruing benefits of access to knowledge resources and equity. M. Jagadesh Kumar, K. Vijay Raghavan, Anil Sahasrabudhe, Vinay Sahasrabudhe, Rajnish Jain and other speakers also highlighted key issues.

The issue of copyright is of critical importance and revolves around two theories: fairness theory and welfare theory. A fair balancing of the competing interests of society and authors is essential for the continuous existence of the copyright system, which in turn will result in the promotion of arts, science and literature. The copyright law as a welfare legislation tries to balance these two competing interests.

The Conclave's outcome will be a report on these topics and shall be submitted to relevant agencies of the government.

■ USHA MUJOO MUNSHI

The Indian Economy in a Troubled Year

WEBINAR: *Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah Mid-Year Review of the Indian Economy 2020–2021*

WELCOME: *Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC, and Shekhar Shah*

PANELLISTS: *Sudipto Mundle; Bornali Bhandari; and Rudrani Bhattacharya*

DISCUSSANT: *Aditi Nayar*

CHAIR: *Shekhar Shah*

COLLABORATION: *National Council of Applied Economic Research*

21 December 2020

The long-term effects of the Coronavirus pandemic will last for years, and the government's macro-economic stimulus measures alone will not be enough to take us back to a high-growth path, highlighted NCAER distinguished fellow, Mundle, making a case for broad-based structural reforms.

The year 2020 was not an easy one. Not only was a raging contagion wreaking a health havoc on the world, but the efforts of governments across the world to contain the damage by enforcing lockdowns also took a heavy toll on economies, developed and developing alike. This was visible in the headline gross domestic product (GDP) numbers for

the first two quarters of the 2020–21 financial year. All the major economies, with the exception of China, reported a contraction, with India witnessing nearly 24 per cent de-growth in the first quarter, and 7.5 per cent in the second.

However, as visible in the sharp improvement from (-)24 per cent to (-)7.5 per cent, the recovery that began in late May 2020 with the gradual unlocking of the economy had been sharp, sharper even than most experts expected. The recovery has continued, albeit at a more moderate pace since June. Another piece of good news is that the revival has been broad-based, with most sectors following the same trend. In view of these, NCAER has raised its estimates for GDP contraction for the whole of 2020–21 to 7.3 per cent from 12.6 projected earlier.

Bhandari gave details on the performance of real sectors of the economy in the first half of the financial year, and Bhattacharya spoke on the inflation situation.

Nayar said she was less optimistic about the economy this financial year. Patnaik emphasised that the economy was certainly not out of the woods yet, and that it would be a long time before we would see a full recovery. He cited the hysteresis section from Mundle's presentation to state that contrary to what year-on-year growth numbers might suggest, it would take several years for actual production to reach pre-Covid levels.

■ REETESH ANAND

Policy and Parleys

V. P. Menon: The Unsung Architect of Modern India

Illustrated lecture by Narayani Basu, historian and foreign policy analyst and author of the recently published book of the same title

21 to 27 December

Video recording of a talk for IIC online programmes

Narayani Basu's engaging talk on senior bureaucrat V. P. Menon was based on her recent biography. Menon was Sardar Patel's lieutenant and penned two weighty tomes, a first hand account of the negotiations that led to Independence and the integration of the Princely States into India. Recent scholarly writing has focused on popular alternatives, the violence of Partition and the nature of the post-colonial dispensation in India; one reason why policy and parleys, the focus of Menon's books, have fallen out

of favour. Historians too have been sceptical of some of Menon's claims as an insider—for instance, that Nehru was wary of Sardar Patel. With Patel's death in 1950, Menon lost a patron and became redundant.

Basu excavates Menon's career with care, as for her this was family history as well: her great grandmother was Menon's first wife, who, it seems, was relegated to oblivion both by Menon and his subsequent family. Menon's steady rise in the colonial and later national establishment is a fascinating story of social mobility in early 20th century India, where a street-smart Malayali typist with a good knowledge of English caught the attention of the British rulers and came to make policy in the highest echelons of government. The story began in 1914 when Menon became Secretary of State Edwin Montagu's PA, and rose to become Reforms Commissioner in the 1940s, no mean achievement.



Sketch of V. P. Menon

■ PARTHO DATTA

Nothing for the Distressed

DISCUSSION: *State of the Indian Economy*

PANELLISTS: *Surajit Mazumdar; Vikas Rawal; R. Kavita Rao; Partha Sen; and Amit Bhaduri*

MODERATOR: *Suhas Borker*

18 December 2020

In setting out the context, Borker cited the Covid shock to the economy; the farmers' agitation; crony capitalism; rebuilding of the Central Vista; and nothing for the distressed.

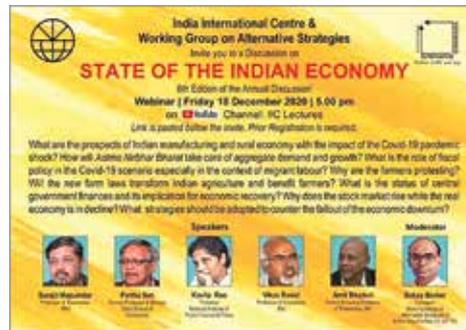
Mazumdar emphasised that a decade of industrial stagnation had preceded this contraction: with the collapse of revenues, any investment in infrastructure, demand stimulus or addressing long-term growth looks unlikely. Rawal said that the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had destroyed the rural economy: with lockdowns imposed indiscriminately, disruption of supply chains, fall in prices, and between three

and ten million migrants leaving cities. MGNREGA's potential was not utilised, with the government's focus being on passing farm and labour laws. Farm laws are problematic in the manner of implementation, undermining of state powers, creating unevenness in agricultural markets, lack of regulation of contract farming, with an unfair dispute resolution system. Rao drew attention to the decline in private and government capital expenditures: a much lower tax collection in the first half of the year than normally achieved; a clear trade-off between the fiscal deficit and total expenditure

emerges. Sen pointed to the historical mistakes of low spending on public health and low-income housing, and suggested that available theoretical frameworks for budget deficit targets are inappropriate in the Indian context. Post-pandemic, output might recover, but not employment. Bhaduri pointed to accelerated inequality in the last few years, the disconnect between stock markets and the real economy, all

revealed clearly in 2020. In concluding, Borker highlighted some issues like using food grain stocks as part payment of wages; employment-oriented programmes; decentralised local control; and domestic markets.

■ **RATNA M. SUDARSHAN**



Gandhi and his Relevance

WEBINAR: *Gandhi Katha*

On the Spiritual Leadership and the Wellness Practice of Mahatma Gandhi

INTRODUCTION: *A. K. Merchant*

SPEAKER: *Shobhana Radhakrishnan*

COLLABORATION: *Sarvodaya International, New Delhi, to mark Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom*

29 January 2021

The webinar on the spiritual leadership and wellness practice of Mahatma Gandhi was introduced by A. K. Merchant. It resonated with the current times as speaker, Shobhana Radhakrishnan, an acclaimed international voice on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, struck the right chord with her audience. Introducing her talk by saying that Gandhiji almost had a



Shobhana Radhakrishnan

premonition of his impending assassination two days prior, she touched upon how world leaders have, over the years, regarded Gandhiji as the true torchbearer of world peace for the betterment of humanity.

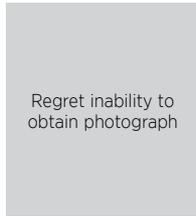
What was pertinent in the speaker's address was her stress on Gandhiji's holistic approach to human challenges, ably summed up in her assessment of the leader as 'the champion of economic and spiritual democracy'. That Gandhiji was a unique man of action was ably summed up in his now universal saying: 'My life is my message'. Despite the vastness of her ambit, the speaker encompassed not just aspects of Gandhiji's guidelines, but also his personal wellspring of strength, namely the key takeaways of 'Silence, fasting, prayer and charkha', now regarded as iconic symbols that every Indian likes to recall at the mention of the Mahatma.

The intervals of solo bhajan singing, through well-known lyrics, would have impacted more, if choreographed as a choral, rather than solo performance. That would have adeptly complemented the powerful message that the speaker had presented before her audience.

■ **SUBHRA MAZUMDAR**

DEPARTURES

We are deeply saddened by the passing away of the following Members of the IIC family, and convey our heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families.



DR. MARTA VANNUCCI
L-0222



DR. SUNIL MANILAL KOTHARI
M-2589



SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR JAIN
M-2688



PROF. C. P. BHAMBHRI
M-2912



DR. RAKESH K. TANDON
A-3390



SHRI AHMED M. PATEL
M-2988



SHRI P. C. HOTA
M-3131



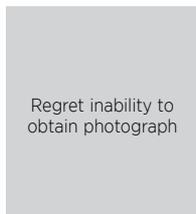
SHRI JAVID A. CHOWDHURY
M-3595



SHRI L. K. MEHROTRA
M-3838



SHRI MADHAVA CHANDRA
M-4340



SHRI H. P. SINGHANIA
L-0147



SHRI M. K. MUKHARJI
A-1488



SMT. RADHA RAINA
A-2105



MS. ZARINA LAZARUS
A-2168



DR. ADARSH KISHORE
A-2294



USTAD IQBAL AHMED KHAN
A-3906



SHRI KISHU TECKCHANDANI
A-4401



VADM. SRIKANT
A-6541



SMT. ABHA SAHGAL
A-7012



DR. N. M. GHATATE
M-2479



Director's Note

We are pleased to note that the special weekly cuisines have been greatly appreciated by Members and we are seeing increasing footfalls. Over these two months, our chefs prepared Rajasthani, Lebanese, Continental and Lahori food. We also featured a Manjit Singh Gill Special, a Christmas and a New Year's lunch.

Staff Annual Day was celebrated with a High Tea on 21 January. Shri N. N. Vohra, President, IIC, felicitated the employees who had completed 25 years of illustrious service at the Centre, as also employees who superannuated during the year. The employees who had excelled in their performance during the year and performed beyond the call of duty during the pandemic were especially awarded with Certificates of appreciation.

The Centre's Annual Day could not be celebrated on 22 January this year. Although pandemic-induced restrictions have been lifted to a certain extent, there was an embargo on the number of people who could gather in a venue. Without all our Members present, the celebrations would have been incomplete. We will host a High Tea as soon as normalcy returns.

Another annual event which could not be held was the C. D. Deshmukh Memorial Lecture 2021 on 14th January. The lecture will be held on 20th March 2021. The lecture will be delivered by Justice Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah.

The gardens are blooming with winter annuals such as Pansy, Gazania, Dianthus, Geranium, Oriental Liliium, French Marigold, Calendula and Begonia (Flame Vine).

We have been working with experts to upgrade the IIC Website. We are happy to inform Members that the new Website has been launched. The URL of the new Website is <https://www.iicdelhi.in>. The new Website has a pleasing design and easy navigation features. It is enabled with a secure web protocol. The Website will be constantly updated with details of current and future IIC programmes and publications, and will also maintain archives.

The Members' area on the new Website enables IIC Members to make payments through the payment gateway, upload profile details, send requests for Hostel/Venue bookings, and feedback to the concerned departments. Members are requested to create a new password to log in to the Members' area.

The dedication and professionalism of our Maintenance department is reflected in the high-quality upkeep of the Centre's premises. In the past year, 100 MW electricity was generated by the Solar Power Plant installed at the Centre, and has also contributed a saving of 70 tons of carbon. The Biogas Plant, which was made functional in October last year, has contributed to the generation of 1,437 cubic meters of Biogas which is equivalent to 745 kg of LPG. To process the generation of the Biogas, 10,345 kg of kitchen waste was recycled.

■ **K. N. SHRIVASTAVA**