

# INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IIC Diary

Volume XXXV No. 2

April–May 2021

## Dealing with a Pandemic

**SEMINAR:** COVID-19 Vaccine Awareness and Registration Camp

**EXPERTS:** Drs. Naresh Gupta and Mini Aggarwal

**CHAIR:** Suhas Borker

**3 April 2021**

This awareness Camp dealt with the issue of rising COVID-19 cases. The experts said that amongst infections, those caused by viruses can be most difficult and dangerous. Out of the six lakh viruses of relevance, barely 5,000 are known. While the seasonal 'common cold' viruses like rhinovirus are self-limiting, others like influenza, H1N1, SARS, MERS and now Coronavirus can be more threatening. Although Coronavirus was discovered by scientists 60 years ago, it remained associated with mild infections in humans, interspersed with two serious outbreaks of SARS and MERS in 2003 and 2012, respectively. With an airborne and contact

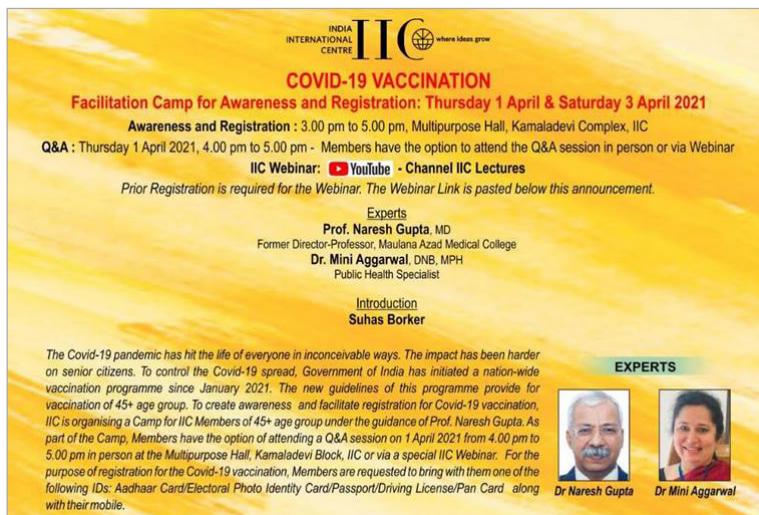
route of transmission (aerosols being the dominant mode of transmission), international air travel spread the novel COVID-19 mutation like wild fire into a pandemic of global concern. Protective masks, social distancing, and hand hygiene and sanitisation became vital to its prevention.

When will the COVID-19 pandemic end? The answer depends on nature's way, changes in human behaviour, progress in developing effective treatment and vaccines. Scientists were swift in their response to the surging pandemic, and developed multiple vaccines quickly. Herd immunity against COVID-19 can be achieved by protecting people through vaccination.

In the Q & A session that followed, the dichotomy in approach between the scientific community and political diplomacy was discussed. There was a lot of optimism about the vaccine, and it was emphasised that more and more people should be encouraged to get vaccinated. A clinical history of bleeding disorders like hemophilia, or the use of blood thinners, or listed co-morbidities, or obesity, or allergies should be reported to the doctor before vaccination.

Currently, two types of vaccines are available in India: Covishield (Serum Institute of India) and Oxford AstraZeneca and Covaxin (Bharat Biotech). Both are tested and tried, providing comparable protection against the COVID-19 virus named SARS-CoV-2. Another vaccine, the Russian Sputnik, has completed its trials in India and awaits permission. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are in use in the US and Europe, and may be allowed for use in India soon.

Both speakers felt that although the elderly (60+) must get priority in vaccination, everyone above 18 years must also be quickly vaccinated.



# A Fine Balance

**BOOK RELEASE:** *Rebel Angel: Collected Prose by Hoshang Merchant. Edited by Akshaya K. Rath.* (*Dhauli: Bhubaneswar, 2021*)

**INTRODUCTION:** Usha Mudiganti

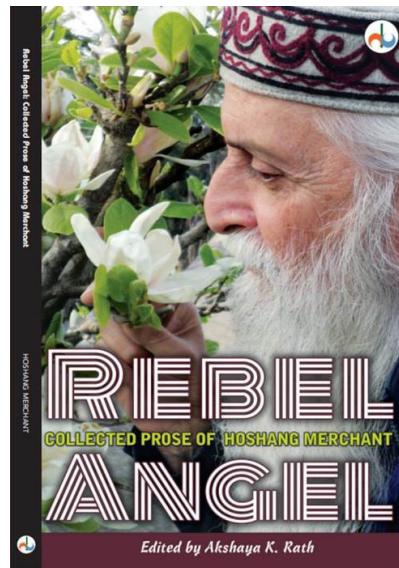
**CHAIR:** Keki N. Daruwalla

**1 April 2021**

This was the launch of renowned poet Hoshang Merchant's first book of prose. He is the author of 20 books of poetry, and has been a teacher at the University of Hyderabad for decades. This collection contains his essays on the content and art of writing, including 'Sexuality, Poetry and Spirituality' (*Scroll.in*) and 'What is Culture?', among others. Merchant has emphasised that the role of the writer is first transgression against patriarchy/Zionism/racism, etc., and later transcendence. A balance between the two is needed.

Some of Merchant's poems were read out by Keki N. Daruwalla, Usha Mudiganti and Pranav Srivastava. They included two explanatory poems about the father-mother archetype: 'Christ meets Peter' and 'Mother Mary'; as well as 'Kashmir' and 'Teacher's Story'. Merchant deals with the concept of a pan-sexuality, leading to a dream of world peace, forgiveness and integration.

In the lively Q & A session that followed, it was mentioned that while Merchant's poetic style is classified as Orphic



(influenced by Greek myths), his prose style is contemporary. Keki Daruwalla said that it is the intellect which helps one decide whether to write poetry or prose. Merchant felt that the prose/poetry divide is artificial, and that people should write in the language they feel comfortable with, even incorporating local rhythms, like the Caribbean writers do.

Merchant sees himself as an Indian writer primarily, and has defended Ezra Pound, who, though labelled fascist/mentally challenged/anti-American by some, was responsible for the development of 'modernism' in English poetry—'Il Miglior Fabbro' or the 'Little Master' as T.S. Eliot called him in his dedication to Pound in *The Waste Land*.

■ RACHNA JOSHI

## Old World Feel

**ONLINE EXHIBITION:** *Eudaimonia—Happiness. Paintings in Oil on Canvas and on Wood by Ana Romero from Portugal*

**12 to 25 April 2021**

The exhibition on wood with oils had only a few images and was not very inspiring. While the artist certainly has credentials, the work, maybe being online, did it little justice.

*Eudaimonia*, happiness for the Greeks, or a good performance of their demons, is achieved by doing what their fear called for or evoked. This was the underlying theme of the exhibition.

The images painted in oil did have a certain old world feel, and appeared to be partly surreal, although any justification of the images was not clearly visible.

Since there were only a few images, which were also cropped, it is unfair to judge the work, which in some form did allow for subtlety. The palette was subdued, a play of greys and faded pinks. As they were on wood, there was no sheen, but a faded texture.

Ana Romero, born in 1971, has exhibited in several countries, from London to Spain and other places in Europe. She has achieved acclaim in her work, and has no doubt an interesting thought process.

■ LOLITA DUTTA

# Denying the Negativity of Caste

**WEBINAR:** Who is Afraid of Caste?

**SPEAKERS:** Uma Chakravarti; Dilip Mandal; Meena Kandasamy; Y. S. Alone; and Sharad Baviskar

**MODERATOR:** Suhas Borker

**COLLABORATION:** Maharashtra Sanskritik ani Rannaniti Adhayana Samiti; and Working Group on Alternative Strategies

**1 May 2021**

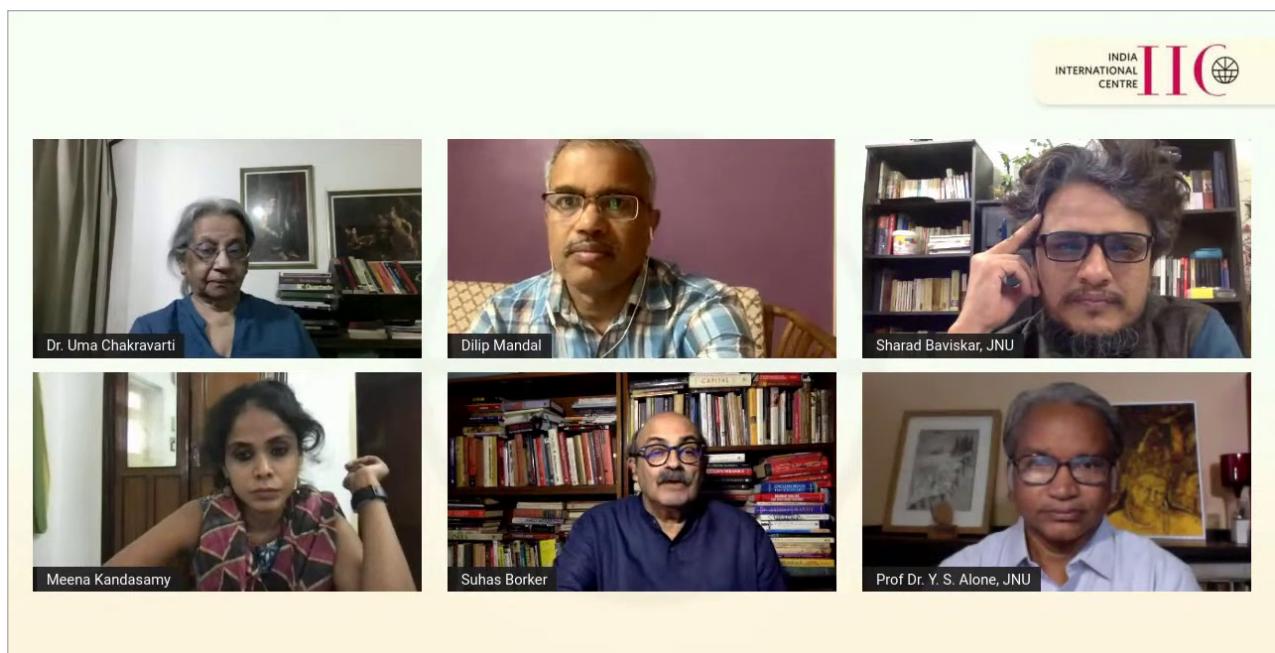
At a time when the nation is reeling under the impact of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, an insightful and stirring discussion on 'Who is Afraid of Caste?' marked the 130th birth anniversary of Babasaheb B. R. Ambedkar, and the observance of May Day and Maharashtra Day. Opening the discussion, Suhas Borker raised some pertinent questions. Why was India hyper-sensitive and reluctant to discuss the caste issue in international fora, including the UN? Will tokenism and lip service go on, or will India jettison the centuries-old dehumanising baggage of caste stigma once and for all?

Feminist historian Uma Chakravarti spoke about India as a 'prison house' of extreme inequality, where casteism constituted a package of suffering, exploitation and stigmatisation, unique to South Asia. Speaking from a

different perspective, media person Dilip Mandal analysed the focus by sociologists on the Dalits, Adivasis and OBCs, contributing to the invisibility of the upper castes. He highlighted the hurriedly passed legislation in 2019 in favour of the so called General and EWS categories, ignoring the constitutional framework. Before poet and activist Meena Kandasamy spoke, the closing lines from her poem expressing her anguish at the failure of the Indian state to save poor people from the current pandemic were read out: '*India is my country*, to which we now feebly add, my country is a crematorium'. She talked about the way in which Dalit political assertion in Tamil Nadu is sought to be suppressed by the upper castes. Statues of Dalit icon Periyar had been defaced by the Brahminical BJP party.

In a forceful argument, art historian Y. S. Alone examined the psychic perversion of casteism and called for societal self-introspection. He deplored the dreadful silence in response to Ambedkar's seminal study on the annihilation of caste. Sharad Baviskar said that the struggle against casteism in India is in reality a struggle for democracy. Caste had religious sanction in the Hindu scripture *Manusmriti*. It was difficult to co-opt Hindutva to the ideas of Babasaheb who was essentially humane and compassionate. Suhas Borker concluded that India has been in denial about the negativity of the caste system which is the basis of its persistence.

■ K.S. SUBRAMANIAN



Panel: Uma Chakravarti; Dilip Mandal; Sharad Baviskar; Meena Kandasamy; Suhas Borker; and Y.S. Alone

# Disruptions in the Narrative

**WEBINAR:** *Public Health: Gaps in the Narrative*

**INTRODUCTION:** Harish Khare

**PANELLISTS:** Abantika Ghosh; Banjot Kaur; Amar Jessani; and Keshav Desiraju

**MODERATOR:** Geeta Seshu

**COLLABORATION:** *The Media Foundation*

**9 April 2021**

This webinar was held in the midst of the second surge of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mumbai, followed closely by Delhi. The health journalists who have been covering the first and second wave of the pandemic observed that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed major gaps in the urban health care infrastructure, both public and private. They highlighted the fact that the private sector's contribution was rather slow and patchy during the pandemic. In fact, there was no effort by the government to rein in and discipline the private sector. As one of the panellists rightly said, the pandemic was a national emergency, and could

have been an opportunity to pull in the private sector to provide services for testing and hospitalisation. All the speakers highlighted the weak public health communication strategy of the government that created fear and anxiety in the lay public.

This, coupled with the lack of preparedness of the health service infrastructure, and the shortage of human resources, added to the suffering of those with the disease. The speakers observed that the management of the pandemic was essentially in the hands of specialists who had little public health training. There was scant effort to engage with the science of public health, and the lack of a scientific temper informing policy decisions. Apart from the gaps in the public health system and the private sector, the panellists raised some important long-term 'invisible gaps'. These include the effects of children out of school being denied nutritional support that is bound to affect child nutrition. Other concerns include curbing civil liberties, rise in domestic violence and mental health issues. The speakers highlighted that the boundaries of public health go beyond health services to include the many disruptions in society that have a bearing on health.

■ RAMA V. BARU

# Remembering the Struggle for Bangladesh

**FILM:** *Nine Months to Freedom*

**DIRECTOR:** S. Sukhdev

**12 to 18 April 2021**

*Nine Months to Freedom* is a historical documentary made by S. Sukhdev on the struggle for the freedom of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) which began with the military crackdown on 25 March 1971 by the Pakistani Army, and ended with the surrender of the Pakistani Army to the Indian Armed Forces under the command of Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora.

Despite having a majority in the National Assembly, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was not allowed to form a government, and General Tikka Khan, the military governor, came down with a heavy hand. The film depicts the gory details of those tumultuous days. The murder, rape and plunder is well brought out. The film has interviews with Mother Teresa,



Senator Edward Kennedy, Andre Malraux, Pakistan President Yahya Khan and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman on the issue. With a powerful voice over, it gives you a glimpse of the intensity of the atrocities which resulted in the migration of 10 million refugees from East Pakistan into India in nine months.

The formation and training of the Mukti Bahini is also well recorded. The famous Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal called the massacre 'criminal and stupid' in his interview. The scenes of the 14-day war and the surrender ceremony at the Race Course in Dhaka, followed by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's triumphant return, are the icing on the cake, and an appropriate culmination of the documentary.

■ ARVINDAR SINGH

# Planning for the Long Term

**WEBINAR:** *India at 75*

**SPEAKER:** Y.K. Alagh

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

**20 April 2021**

What has changed in India's policy-making and governance in the past 75 years? 'We have stopped planning and taking a long-term perspective on things that matter for the country', said Y. K. Alagh, noted economist, former Union Minister, and Professor Emeritus of Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research, Ahmedabad.

Alagh, however, expressed his optimism that the country would go back to planning for the future sooner rather than later. To a specific question on what 'India at 100' might look like, he said the country would definitely be a dominant economic force, and hoped we would also become unique in the world for having harnessed the unity of multi-ethnic and multi-religious cultures to our

advantage. On the future of development planning in India, he said we needed to recognise that it was not for institutions in New Delhi alone, but also for think-tanks and planning bodies in various universities across cities to push development planning in the years to come.

Looking back at the past half century through his vast experience, both as an economist and a government functionary, Alagh recollected his work with Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and I. K. Gujral, and recounted how the committee headed by him came up with what was called the Alagh Poverty Line. He asserted that the need for such a poverty benchmark should have been over by the late 1980s, and rued that only cosmetic changes were made to it in terms of prices in subsequent years.

He also reflected on the country's big achievements—from achieving food self-reliance by 1978 to sustainable agro-climatic strategies, fast growth in the 1980s and the tribulations of the Washington Consensus in the next decade. He also cited the lack of planning in recent times as a reason for the migrant crisis that India has witnessed against the backdrop of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

■ REETESH ANAND

# Hanging by a Thread

**ONLINE LECTURE:** *Internationalism or Extinction*

**SPEAKER:** Noam Chomsky

**29 March to 4 April 2021**

*Video recording of the lecture delivered in 2016*

Noam Chomsky, addressing the twin existential threats of nuclear annihilation and global warming, traced the origin to that fateful day, 6 August 1945, when the possibility of self-destruction became only too real as we entered the nuclear age. Coeval to that moment is when geologists ushered in a new epoch that they termed Anthropocene—a geological age so shaped by mankind that it would ineluctably lead us to the sixth extinction. Climate change and global warming causing the rise of sea levels and attendant disasters, which will displace millions, can only be tackled globally to avert certain catastrophe.



Noam Chomsky

Chomsky highlighted climate denial and the inability of the world to reach an agreement on the nuclear front. Efforts by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to bind all nuclear powers, and to establish nuclear weapon free zones, have not borne fruit. The Doomsday clock declared that we were three minutes away from midnight, owing to a threat of nuclear war and failure to deal with the environmental crisis.

He also flagged the provocative missile defense systems that threaten Russia and the expansion of NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, NATO expanded into Germany and further up to Russia's border, even offering membership to Ukraine, thus risking terminal war.

Chomsky concluded that humankind is facing the most critical questions that have arisen in history, which can only be countered by popular mobilisation, activism and developing public awareness about the enormity of the issues we confront.

■ AJAY JAISINGHANI

# Meaningful Architecture

**WEBINAR: TALKING ARCHITECTURE:** *The Discovery of Architecture—A Contemporary Treatise on Ancient Values and Indigenous Reality*

A conversation with Narendra Dengle and Savyasaachi

**MODERATOR:** Anisha Shekhar Mukherji

**11 May 2021**

This webinar was dedicated to Ashish Ganju, co-author with Narendra Dengle of *The Discovery of Architecture*. He had worked unceasingly to augment the role of architecture in culture and the community.

This first event of a bi-monthly series focused on human values, linking rural and urban, old and new, at a time when everything is fractured and falling apart. Even the nomenclature, ‘building industry’, disconnects from traditional building with the awareness of a larger context: especially of nature, time, community. An egotistic urge for

durable monuments has replaced recyclability of materials as the hallmark of construction.

Dengle felt architecture should revive participative building processes without glorifying the village; and incorporate the philosophy of ancient texts without getting trapped by religiosity. He focused on four principal areas: self as community, action based on awareness, maintenance as renewal, and learning as ongoing regeneration. Savyasaachi talked about Ganju’s work ethic. Each new building project was a rediscovery of architecture; each site unique in terms of materials, climate, sponsors, users—aspects which include just about everything and everyone. The worldview should advise the building process.

The limited methodologies adopted presently focus on *roopa*, burying normality under a heightened sense of the market. Offensive designs are created that degrade the environment, ignore drainage and waste disposal, and imprison people in gated communes. This webinar offered an analysis of how pedagogy and the practice of architecture can become more meaningful. Educational spaces should facilitate the growth of talent lying unexplored.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

# Finding the Raga

**ONLINE BOOK DISCUSSION:** *Finding the Raga*

**IN CONVERSATION:** Amit Chaudhuri, author of the book; and Ashis Nandy

**MODERATOR:** Ananya Vajpeyi

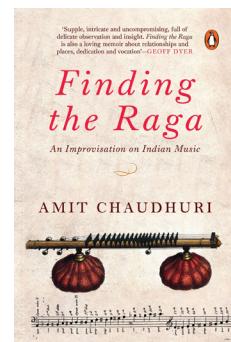
A conversation based on the new book by Amit Chaudhuri (New Delhi: Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Random House India, 2021)

**COLLABORATION:** Penguin Random House India

**16 April 2021**

This webinar on Amit Chaudhuri’s latest book introduced the telling characteristics of Hindustani music as a form of ‘Bliss’. Speaking of his contact with the music of the late music doyenne, Kishori Amonkar, Chaudhuri elaborated on how she had vocalised through the *aakar* sound, the concept of it as a kind of eschewed departure from the libretto of Western music. Rather, it is the production of gliding notes (*meend*), characterising the concept of *ananda* as a form of serenity. His conclusion was that the khayal was the self, giving way to the primacy of the raga, achieved through deep dedication, and the singer immersing himself in the

raga. Tagore too, he said, had derived the transformative notion of *ananda* as the music being produced, taking control of itself, or that of experiencing history in Tagore’s works such as *Khudit Pashan* or *Meghdoot* which create an aesthetic around history. The speaker made interesting observations on the representational mentality of Western classical music, such as the concept of spring in Beethoven’s 6th Symphony. Pertaining to Ragamala figures, he said that the Indian tradition gave equal weight to nature and form without personifying the raga.



The speaker also surmised that the relevance of performance rules regarding times and seasons of performance in Hindustani music have changed over time due to concert settings. Thus, the *samay chakra* was through an approximation of tonalities through such accompaniments as the tanpura. He also pointed to the growing increase in gesturing among some current performers—such as touching of the feet, pulling of the ears—and touched upon earlier symbolic markers such as the introductory alap for unfolding the music. The programme was ably convened by Ananya Vajpeyi, and supported through broad-based questions by Ashis Nandy.

■ SUBHRA MAZUMDAR

# Pictures of the Floating World

**ONLINE EXHIBITION:** *The Floating World of Ukiyo-e-Prints*

**26 April to 9 May 2021**

The Japanese are known for precision and delicacy, and so it is with their ancient art of wood block printing. A 250-year-old art style, it is practised even today, but is certainly not as glorious as in the bygone era of the Tokugawa period (1603–1867).

The woodblock prints depict the aspects of pleasure, from courtesans, to prostitutes, tea ceremonies, and the kabuki theatre. Developed in the city of Edo, the prints make a social statement as it was a collaborative effort of artists, merchants, the elite and the working class. Woodblock as a technique was imported from China, but perfected by Japanese artists, using detail



and the rendition of delicate forms. Initially only printed with black ink, as is the norm even today, the demand for colour led to the development of many pigments, from red to blue and ochre, which soon gave rise to an array of colours. The final test however lies at the hands of the printer. Paintings commissioned are initially drawn on paper, later pasted on paper, carved and subsequently printed. All stages require skill and precision, as was evident from some of the prints on show.

Hokusai, a master woodblock artist, has the now world-famous print of a rising wave with Mount Fujiyama in the distance. The tones of blue against the frothy white foam make for a powerful composition. Among the other prints on display were the three beauties, delicate and with expression. The tiger with bamboo, and the cherry blossom were just a few of the beautifully composed prints: all in all, the prints, both coloured and black on white, were noteworthy, and made for great viewing.

■ LOLITA DUTTA

# Afghanistan Peace Process

**WEBINAR:** *In Search of Peace for Afghanistan*

**SPEAKERS:** Barnett Rubin; Jawan Shir Rasikh; Radha Kumar; Afrasiab Khattak; and Jawed Ludin

**MODERATOR:** Lakhdar Brahimi

*Historical Letters of President Najibullah and Dr. M. Hassan Kakar, A Collection of Essays,*

**5 May 2021**

This very interesting webinar was based on a new volume of essays, edited by Jawan Shir Rasikh (Kakar History Foundation & Heart of Asia Society, 2021).

Radha Kumar highlighted that India is far less engaged with Afghanistan today, and both politically and strategically, the interactions have diminished. Indian policy largely remains one of wait and watch, other than a few overtures to have small working dialogues with the Taliban.

Barnett Rubin stated that a major historical event occurred in the 1990s that none anticipated—this was not just the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan but the collapse of the USSR. The concern, today, is to manage the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, and keep

the US and other international actors diplomatically and economically active in the region.

Rasikh was of the opinion that peace had never been a priority for the international community in Afghanistan, and that if we continue to see international intervention in Afghanistan—militarily or otherwise—then the situation will further exacerbate and peace will be unsustainable.

Jawed Ludin expressed his worry that with the withdrawal of the peacekeeping forces, the role of the US in the region is going to be diminished, and the Taliban will perceive the role of the US with far less seriousness. He maintained that the US still has a role to play in the peacekeeping process, and whatever leverage has been lost due to the military withdrawal has to be regained in other areas like diplomacy.

Afrasiab Khattak stated that the Doha agreements have systematically weakened and isolated the Afghan state and the republican system, and has legitimised and empowered the Taliban who now are demanding their emirate militarily in Afghanistan. Finally, Lakhdar Brahimi remarked that peace in Afghanistan is most important for the people of Afghanistan and also for the neighbouring nations.

■ INDRAJIT PANT

# José and Pilar

**FILM:** *José and Pilar (José e Pilar)*

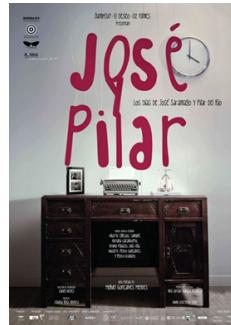
(2010; Spanish and Portuguese with English subtitles)

**DIRECTOR:** Miguel Gonçalves Mendes

**3 to 9 May 2021**

This was an engaging documentary on Portuguese Nobel Laureate Jose Saramago and his Spanish journalist wife Pilar del Rio.

Directed by Miguel Goncalves Mendes, it has been shot in the couple's house in Lanzarote, Spain, and also follows them through their hectic travels across continents between 2006 and 2008. It gives wonderful insights to the man Jose was, an atheist who believed that love could improve the human condition. As age progressed, Jose was seen to be getting tired of travelling. He had a



wonderful sense of humour, and said that in his next life he would prefer to be a tree as he wouldn't have to travel.

During the course of the shooting of this documentary, Jose wrote his last book *The Elephant's Journey*, most of which he completed after he partially recovered from cancer in 2008.

He also tells his wife that although he is tired of travelling, one of the places he always wanted to visit was India. Pilar was Jose's lifeline. She not only translated his works, but also managed just about everything in his life from his schedule to social outings. During a visit to Pilar's village in 2007, Jose and Pilar are seen exchanging marriage vows again. Jose met and married Pilar when he was 63, and she was 26 years junior to him in age. The love and respect they had for each other is beautifully revealed in this film.

A highly recommended film for those who appreciate good cinema.

■ YESHI SELI

## Multiple Dimensions of Disability

**WEBINAR:** IIC/WISCOMP DIALOGUES: Gender and Disability

**SPEAKERS:** Anita Ghai; Mahesh Pannicker; Seema Baquer; Karuna Rajeev; and Meenakshi Gopinath

**FACILITATOR:** Seema Kakran

**COLLABORATION:** WISCOMP

**19 May 2021**

This engaging webinar was a follow-up to the special issue of the WISCOMP journal *Peace Prints* on disability. It began with a detailed overview of the concept of disability in contemporary times by WISCOMP President, Meenakshi Gopinath, setting the stage for other panellists to focus on specific aspects of the topic. Anita Ghai talked about the intersections of gender in disability in both theory and practice, with particular reference to the Indian reality, highlighting the conflations and contradictions between disability and feminist studies. She was followed by Mahesh Pannicker who spoke about the hierarchy of ableism, i.e., the multiple layers of structural discrimination that favour the

non-disabled in society, making ableism (discrimination against the disabled) the default modality. Seema Baquer discussed disability and conflict with particular reference to the 2020 riots in east Delhi. She gave empirical examples of the plight of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), with pre-existing or acquired disabilities due to the conflict and their families in such areas.

The final presentation by Karuna Rajiv talked about care as both labour and emotion in the context of COVID-19. While the ostensible theme of the webinar was gender and disability, the discussions covered a much wider area, touching upon multiple dimensions of disability against the backdrop of the prevailing pandemic. The fact that the presenters illustrated their arguments with insightful real life examples greatly enriched the webinar.

It appears that the pandemic has exacerbated the marginalisation of PWDs in all aspects of life, from health to livelihoods. Social distancing has increased stigmatisation, and challenges vital access to family and community which people with disabilities rely upon for survival. In the face of this, PWDs have shown remarkable resilience. The need of the hour is to understand the barriers experienced by PWDs, and to enhance their resilience not only in normal times, but more so in times of crises.

■ RENU ADDLAKHA

# Framing a National Security Policy

**WEBINAR:** *National Security Challenges: Centre-State Responsibilities*

**SPEAKER:** C. Uday Bhaskar

**CHAIR:** Sri N. N. Vohra, President IIC

**25 May 2021**

India stands at a stage where its very existence is under threat if it does not frame a holistic, pan-India national security policy. The days of reports, documents and research papers are over; extremely good reports and research are already in the public domain. There is now a need for policy makers to start some serious work in this direction.

In equal measure are the domain experts and a pool of other very senior experienced persons who have given a lifetime to governing and managing various areas dealing with national security, and the IIC can take a lead in starting a nationwide engagement on the topic. The first step in this direction starts with a reading of the Indian Constitution itself.

Under the Indian Constitution, the state is responsible for the maintenance of police and public order, as against the union which is responsible for protecting the states, the territory of India against external aggression (war) and internal disturbance. This constitutional segregation, translated into 'governance' terms, is a myth. It translates into the ministry of home affairs and the states being responsible for internal security, whereas the union defence ministry and the cabinet take responsibility for external security.

However, in governance terms, this original concept or perception that internal security is a marginal matter left to the states is no longer viable nor operational.

As has been evident over the past few decades, internal security is intricately intertwined with external threats, with infiltrations, radicalisation, organised crime, international mafia, and the Western neighbour's activities over the past 70 years.

It cannot be overstated that with the criminalisation of politics and the politicisation of criminal activities, law and order and internal security issues have permeated the external security linkages. As a result, the nature of Indian security challenges has become more opaque and more complex.

■ VICHITRA SHARMA

## Role of Banks in the Pandemic Era

**WEBINAR:** *Role of Banking and Financial Sector: Overcoming Pandemic Challenges*

**WELCOME ADDRESS:** Sachin Chaturvedi

**PANELISTS:** Manish Sabharwal; Dakshita Das; Sangram Singh; and Charan Singh

**CHAIR:** Usha Thorat

**COLLABORATION:** R/S

**21 May 2021**

How can banks help in the COVID-19 era? What stimulus can they provide to the weakened economy, particularly the informal sector? This webinar discussed the current problems while also searching for solutions.

Global conditions are slowly and steadily improving, but inflation is a concern. The speakers focused on governance, and the current stereotypical responses to the two COVID-19 waves, with special emphasis on the micro, small

and medium sectors, and the informal sector. Tourism has suffered, as has hospitality, but the informal sector, which employs poor people, including migrant workers, has been worst hit. Unlike the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, the informal sector has been bludgeoned, and the workers, who were barely making ends meet, could face dire poverty.

So, what is the solution? Rather than revive bankrupt business units, preemptive measures to allow solvency and liquidity of the running small business units are necessary; so also is the need for structural transformation in the delivery institutions. Sadly, the credit growth ratio is stagnant at 50 per cent since 2005.

The government has done a lot, the speakers acknowledged, through institutions such as the RBI Utkarsh, but much remains to be done. Investment in public health is necessary. Workers need housing and financial support, and the 63 million MSMEs need insurance cover. This is imperative as a third COVID-19 wave is likely. Before that, the MSMEs must get the necessary incentives and the stimulus they need.

■ MEKHALA SENGUPTA

# Satyajit Ray, The Legend

## PEN, INK, ACTION: SATYAJIT RAY AT 100

To celebrate the centenary year of Satyajit Ray, a series of programmes will be organised in virtual and physical mode throughout the year

**FILM:** *Satyajit Ray (India; 1985; English)*

**DIRECTOR:** Shyam Benegal

Produced by Films Division

**24 to 30 May 2021**

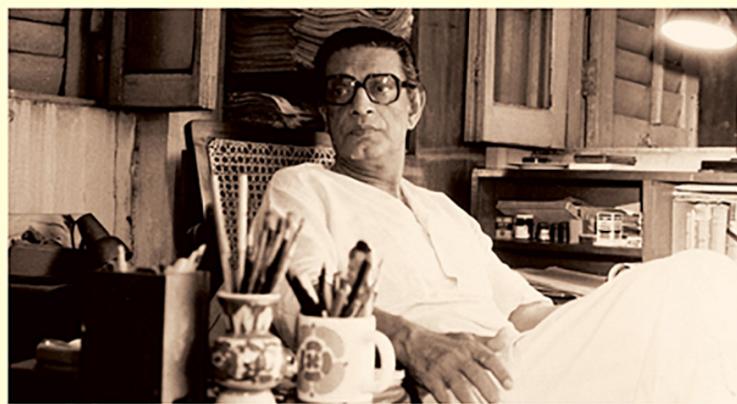
Satyajit Ray, the legend. Anyone who has watched his films knows that other than directing films, he was also the script writer and music composer of the films. The listing of credits at the beginning of the films were all in his handwriting. This was the legend interviewed by another very well-known director, Shyam Benegal. The discussion between the two greats had Ray reminiscing about his past, and sharing details about his life and his ideas on filmmaking.

Born in his grandfather's printing press, Ray had always been fascinated by the graphic productions churned out by the press. Although sketching, drawing and painting greatly interested him, at the advice of the statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis he studied economics in college, but soon after left for Shantiniketan, where he studied art under

some very well-known artists. He initially started working as a commercial designer, but his interest soon moved to films, especially Western films. His first involvement in the production of a film was as a script writer. Compared to Western films, he found Bengali films to be false, unrealistic and shoddy. Therefore, *Pather Panchali*, the first film that he directed, was of a completely different genre from what had existed in Bengal until then. Many of his films, *Charulata*, in particular, dealt with the visual aspect of opulence and used very few words.

There was, however, an element of risk in each of Ray's films since he tried not to repeat himself thematically. The common feature that stood out was the very realistic representation of society.

■ SWATI DASGUPTA



INDIA  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTRE

## PEN, INK, ACTION: SATYAJIT RAY AT 100

**Satyajit Ray** (136 min; 1985; English)

A film by Shyam Benegal

Produced by Films Division

**Link to View:** <https://vimeo.com/431263624>

**Programme • 24 - 30 May 2021 • IIC Website - [www.iicdelhi.in/](http://www.iicdelhi.in/) • All Day**

## NOTICE

In order to maintain transparency in the enrolment of new Members, it has been decided that the names with brief details of all the newly enrolled Members be periodically informed to Members through the IIC Website. The category-wise number of newly enrolled Members during the period 02 November 2020-17 May 2021, is as follows:

- (i) Overseas Associate Members (OAM): **01**
- (ii) Spouses of deceased Members enrolled as Associate Members (AM): **25**
- (iii) Members ('M' category)—Migrated from 'AM' category: **15**
- (iv) Short-Term Associate Members (STAM): **307**
- (v) Members ('M' category): **28**
- (vi) Associate Members ('AM' category): **76**
- (vii) Corporate Members (CM): **07**
- (viii) Corporate Associate Members (CA): **06**

Details of these Members may be viewed on the IIC Website.

As per the new Membership Policy, applicants are initially enrolled as Short-Term Associate Member (STAM) for a period of 3 years which is extendable by another 2 years. After the completion of their STAM tenure of 5 years (3+2), they become eligible for consideration for the regular membership ('M' and 'AM' categories). The applications for STAM during a financial year, if not considered, stand closed at the end of the year, i.e. on 31 March. It has been decided to re-open the membership with effect from 7 June 2021. The sale of the application forms has started from that day.

# DEPARTURES

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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.



MS. KARNA CHOPRA  
A-3856



DR. G.N. RAMU  
A-2857



PANDIT RAJAN  
MISRA  
A-6003



SMT. VEENA NAYYAR  
A-7311



SHRI M.N. ASHISH  
GANJU  
A-2426



SHRI VIJAY N.  
SHANKAR  
A-1731



DR. K.K. AGARWAL  
A-3650



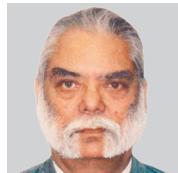
SHRI SURINDER  
S. KAPUR  
A-2749



CDR. S.K. JAIN  
(RETD.)  
A-4675



SHRI KAILASH  
DILWALI  
A-3743



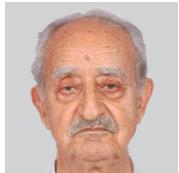
PROF. DINESH  
MOHAN  
A-1467



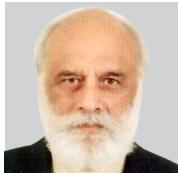
PROF. B.P.  
KHANDELWAL  
A-5728



MS. SURJIT S. PURI  
A-3994



SHRI OMKAR NATH  
MATTOO  
A-5619



SHRI AJAY PRATAP  
SINGH  
A-4257



JUSTICE MOHAN M.  
SHANTANAGOUNDAR  
AT1026



SHRI JAGMOHAN  
L-0275



JUSTICE SURINDER  
SINGH NIJJAR  
M-3205



PROF. ASHOKA  
CHANDRA  
M-3107



SHRI A.R. DEO  
M-2045



SHRI SOLI J.  
SORABJEE  
M-1403



SMT. DURGAWATI  
SINGH  
M-1023



SHRI RASHPAL  
MALHOTRA  
M-1399



SHRI R. C. JAIN  
M-3237



PROF. R. P. GANDHI  
M-3139

And the following members (photographs not available):

SMT. MAYURI VAID (A-4732), SHRI BHARAT WARIAVWALLA (A-1918), SMT. SHAMSHER RANDHAWA (A-7587), SHRI TARUN GOGOI (A-3198), PROF. PRAYAG MEHTA (A-2070), SHRI AJIT SINGH (M-2184), PROF. Y.C. SIMHADRI (M-3094) and SHRI VED PRAKASH MEHTA (M-0745)



Shri Soli J. Sorabjee, Life Trustee, left us on the 30th of April. As President of the Board of Trustees he had steered the affairs of the India International Centre during 2002 to 2006 and again from 2012 to 2017. A respected friend of all the functionaries of the Centre, his passing on has left an irreparable void.

Shri Sorabjee was an eminent jurist and renowned legal luminary. He twice served as Attorney General for India with great distinction. He was awarded Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award, for his defence of the freedom of expression and the protection of human rights; for his service to Australia-India bilateral legal relations, he was appointed an honorary member of the Order of Australia (AM). A well-known jazz aficionado, he was President of Jazz India, Delhi, and later of Capital Jazz. Not known to many, he was a great lover of poetry which he often recited at private gatherings. Warm and affectionate, he had a wonderful sense of humour. He shall be long remembered by us.

**N. N. VOHRA**



## New Life Trustees Appointed

To fill the vacancies caused by the sad passing away of Shri Soli Sorabjee and the resignation of Shri Justice B.N. Srikrishna, the Life Trustees have appointed Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, who is an eminent Educationist; Chair, Board of Governors, Centre for Policy Research, Founder and Director of Women in Security, Conflict Management & Peace (WISCOMP), an initiative which seeks to promote the leadership of South Asian Women in the areas of peace and security. A former member of the UGC she was the first woman to be nominated to the National Security Advisory Board of India. Author of several books, she has received numerous honours and awards, including the Padma Shri.

The other vacancy has been filled by appointing Dr. Shailesh Nayak, an eminent Earth Scientist, who has served as Secretary to Government of India, Chairman, Earth Commission, and Director, Indian National Centre for Ocean Information. Presently, he is Director, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, and Chancellor, TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi. He has built up the Space Application Centre, which he served in various capacities for nearly three decades. Known for his pioneering initiatives in various fields, he is an eminent researcher with several hundred papers and many books to his credit. He chairs a number of prestigious organisations in the arena of science and ecology.

(The detailed biodata of Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath and Dr. Shailesh Nayak may please be seen on the IIC website at [www.iicdelhi.in](http://www.iicdelhi.in))

## Director's Note

The past two months and more have caused devastation across the country. There have been immense tragedies and loss of lives. The Centre and its staff were also adversely affected. The entire premises and all our facilities were shut down. However, as on the occasion of the first wave, we retained limited staff at the Centre, with all safety precautions, to look to the essential maintenance and security of the Centre. While the number of fresh cases in Delhi and NCR and the mortality rates are declining, an environment of fear and anxiety continues to prevail.

Certain lockdown restrictions were recently eased by the NCT Government and we opened the Centre on 7 June, on a limited basis. As the very first step we made arrangements for all our staff and their dependents to be got vaccinated within three days. Consequently, as of now, all our functionaries presently on duty, have received the first jab. We have organised for all of them, and their families, to receiving the second jab within the stipulated period.

Our Bakery has commenced functioning and we have also resumed our take-away service, which shall be progressively enlarged to cover an increased number of dishes and food items. Our Members will be happy to know that we have also resumed the popular and much sought after special cuisines served every week end. We are looking forward to an increasing number of our Members visiting the Centre to avail of the catering services in the Lounge and Dining Hall.

As, due to the lockdown, some Members were not able to pay their Annual Subscription Fee for 2021-22, we have extended the period for making these payments till 30 June 2021. Members are requested to please pay the due Subscription by this date.

■ K. N. SHRIVASTAVA