

# INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IIC Diary

Volume XXXV No. 3

June – July 2021

## The Roots of Child Labour

### IIC/WNCB DIALOGUES ON CHILD LABOUR

**WEBINAR:** *What does India think and do about Child Labour?*

**A CONVERSATION:** *Shantha Sinha; Sudarshan Suchi; and Vicky Roy*

**IN CONVERSATION:** *Monica Banerjee*  
*First in a series of three dialogues addressing the root causes of child labour organised in collaboration with Work: No Child's Business (WNCB) to mark International Year for Elimination of Child Labour (IYECL-2021)*

**11 June 2021**

Monica Banerjee began by providing the audience with an idea of the criticality of the issue. She emphasised that it is time for the nation as a whole to take this issue seriously, because the data presented in the latest UNICEF Report on Child Labour presents a gloomy picture of India, where about 10 million children are in the army of child labour.

Focusing on the causes of child labour, Shantha Sinha emphasised non-economic factors, such as the absence of social norms to abolish child labour, poor attention by the elite, and lack of sensitivity by the state towards the first-generation learner.

Sudarshan Suchi specified 'child as an agency' as a major challenge and argued that child rights need to be holistic. He indicated that the issue of 'power and oppression' needs attention, and that the state should empower the agencies who are the holders of the rights. He further said that it calls for behavioural changes as well as a cultural shift.

In the context of the status of child labour during the pandemic, Sinha reflected upon the effectiveness of the 'Child Labour Free Zone' model. She specified that this model has been successful in dealing with problems like poor institutional mechanisms, high dropout rates and low industrial productivity. She remarked that the New Education Policy, 2021 does not talk about oppressed children, and criticised the proposed open school mechanism. She believes that open schools need to be replaced with bridge schools.

Suchi said that social safety networks, zero tolerance and alternate livelihoods for the poor are the major areas of concern for the state, civil society, bureaucrats as well as industrialists.

Vicky Roy described his journey from a street child to an acclaimed photographer, and argued that it is mostly due to lack of proper mechanisms that children in childcare shelters are compelled to join the child labour force once they are released from the homes.

The webinar concluded with a thought-provoking Q & A session.

■ AMBAR ZAHARA ZHCES

# Enduring Creations

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

**ONLINE EXHIBITION: Aap kya Sandesh Laya**

**14 to 27 June 2021**

This exhibition brought together a selection of *Sandesh* (Bengali: *Shondesh*, meaning both message as well as sweetmeat) covers by Satyajit Ray. *Sandesh* was launched in 1913 by Ray's grandfather, Upendrakishore Raychaudhury.

After the death of Upendrakishore in 1915, his eldest son Sukumar Ray succeeded as editor. A brilliant writer, famous for his humour, he established *Sandesh* as a unique magazine that combined literary values with humour and worldwide information.

Owing to financial constraints, *Sandesh* faced intermittent closures and revivals between 1925 and 1961, when Satyajit Ray gave it an enduring relaunch.



As editor, Ray, the creative supremo, painted and designed each of the covers, apart from contributing his own stories, riddles and puzzles, as well as editing and illustrating the works of other contributors. It manifested his mastery over calligraphy and typography, reflecting sophisticated experimentation with artistic styles and traditions, both local and foreign, without compromising aesthetics or authenticity.

The covers incorporated colourful geometric and floral patterns in a unique narrative. An experiment with creative illustration was the creation of four 'silent' comic strips, with no dialogue between the characters, leaving the narrative to the reader's imagination. In a great bonhomie of children and animals, Ray marries playfulness with strong lines, playing in each issue around the word 'Sandesh', using different calligraphic and typographical styles.

Since Ray's passing in 1992, *Sandesh* continues with his son Sandip at the helm, now also available online. The covers remain those created and designed by Satyajit Ray during his lifetime.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK

# Best of India and Zion

**ONLINE EXHIBITION: Heat and Dust—Between India and Zion**

**CURATORS: Shimon Lev; Yael Margalit**

**ARTISTS: Revital Arbel; Andi Arnovitz; Siona Benjamin; Chanchal Banga; Tal Eliaz; Anchia Anzi; Tim Nachum Gidal; Maite Coloma; Shimon Lev; Liat Livni; Dorit Lombroso; Yael Margalit; Rajul Mehta; Motti Mizrachi; Reuma Moses; Hadas Parush; Doron Polak; Rachel Rotenberg; Eyal Segal; Maya Smira; and Jean-Pierre Weill**

**COLLABORATION: Embassy of Israel**

**12 to 25 July 2021**

This exhibition was an interesting collaborative effort between Indian and Israeli artists living in India, Israel and other parts of the world. They have used their artistic skills to represent and interpret their understanding of Indian culture through various mediums. From sculptural pieces in cedar wood and oil and cement by Rachael Rotenberg, to delicate watercolours by Jean Pierre Weill, the exhibition provided many



contrasts. Photographs, drawings, prints and installations all came together to create multi-layered juxtapositions in artistic mediums.

Reuma Moses expresses herself through collages with stamps, which show texture and colour through their compositions. Each artist had relied on the strength of their medium and looked at ways to evoke emotions through imagery and video, and the three dimensional. Artist Motti Mizrachi exhibited a large installation titled 'the pioneer' which was fairly dominant.

Maya Smira made short videos of the process as well as her art, notably the dancing mandala. Art has always been inspirational, and this was evident in the works of Hadas Parush, who has photographed women with inspiration taken from a famous expressionist artist. Shimon Lev's mixed medium pieces use tonality. Yael Margalit demonstrated skill through sand sculptures with a rough texture. Yael and Shimon curated the exhibition and managed to bring together the best of India and Zion.

■ LOLITA DUTTA

# The Journey of the Hero

**4 PART BBC SERIES:** *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great*

**EPISODE I:** *Son of God*

**EPISODE II:** *Lord of Asia*

**EPISODE III:** *Across the Hindu Kush*

**EPISODE IV:** *To the Ends of the Earth*

**June–July 2021**

Historian and broadcaster Michael Wood attempts, in this monumental documentary, to parse the legend of Alexander, as he retraces the hero's epic journey to the edge of India and his demise, on his return, in Babylon. His *vade mecum*s in this odyssey were two texts written by historians Arrian and Curtius, though written centuries later, but based on contemporary accounts by campaign historian Callisthenes and his own generals Ptolemy and Nearchus. Travelling through landscapes that seem to be as timeless as the legend itself, Wood documents the living performative traditions that narrate the story of the hero, and the palimpsest that has accrued through centuries that give us a glimpse of the man.

Born in 356 BCE in Pella in Macedonia, Alexander tamed his legendary horse Bucephalus when he was barely 10, causing his father to exclaim that his own kingdom was not big enough for him. To avenge the defeat of the Greeks by the Persians, Alexander crossed into Asia through the Dardenelles.

In Turkey, Wood visits the remnants of the temple of Athena in Troy, the oracle of Apollo at Didyma, Bodrum, the town of Gordion famous for its eponymous knot that Alexander untangled, cities and towns Alexander had freed from Persian suzerainty. Alexander defeated Darius III for the first time in the battle of Issus, which rang the death knell of the Persian Empire.

Wood then retraces the hero's journey through Syria, Palestine, Gaza and Egypt, where the city of Alexandria was found and he was considered their liberator. The oracle in the oasis of Siwa proclaimed Alexander as the son of God.

He reached Kurdistan, where the decisive battle of Gaugamela was fought, and taking the royal road from Babylon to Sousa, and beyond the Zagros, to Persepolis and its rich treasury that fell to him. Among the ruins of the palace of Persepolis, Wood recalls how the palace was burnt down as revenge for the earlier destruction of the Acropolis of Athens. Iranians consider Alexander the devil or the accursed for this act.

Alexander finally became lord of Asia after the death of Darius. While the soldiers now wanted to go home, Wood says, Alexander goaded them to consolidate the empire.

Travelling through Central Asia, Wood visits the different Alexandrias that were founded, including Alexandria the furthest, the most northerly Greek city in Tajikistan. After crossing the Hindukush, Wood visits Kabul, where at the Kabul Museum he saw artifacts that betrayed both a Greek and Asiatic influence.



India International Centre presents

**In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great (1998)**

Director: David Wallace

A four-part BBC series, written and presented by Michael Wood

**Episode IV: To the Ends of the Earth**

Alexander turns towards India, heading for what he believed would be the end of the earth. Michael Wood traces Alexander's route through the northwest frontier region of Pakistan, the plains of the Punjab, down the Indus river, and by camel across the Makran desert back to Babylon – where Alexander died, aged 32

Programme • 12 - 18 July 2021 • IIC Website - [www.iicdelhi.in/](http://www.iicdelhi.in/) • All Day

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In Sogdiana, Alexander married Roxana, the daughter of the satrap, and now set sights on what he believed was the end of the earth—India. After the defeat of valiant Porus and the return of his empire, Wood highlighted that Alexander's soldiers, now battle-weary after years, resisted and Alexander agreed to return, albeit reluctantly.

Passing through the extreme desert of Makran into Iran, and Persepolis where he lost his bosom companion Hephaestion and ignoring the warnings of soothsayers not to enter Babylon, Alexander fell ill and breathed his last, far away from his beloved Mount Olympus.

■ AJAY JAISINGHANI

# Symbiotic Relationship

**RIVER DIALOGUES:** *Of Travel and the River*

**SPEAKERS:** Pallavi Aiyar; Samrat X. Choudhury; and Victor Mallet

**CHAIR:** Kishalay Bhattacharjee

**25 June 2021**

This was an invigorating and insightful conversation on river travel. Bhattacharjee initiated the conversation by inviting Samrat Choudhury to share his experiences of travelling down the Brahmaputra, which culminated in the writing of his book *The Braided River: A Journey along the Brahmaputra River*, published by Harper Collins. Samrat began by saying that the river taught him a lot, particularly 'ways of seeing', which opened up a huge canvas to the way he looked at and travelled along the river. Tracing its journey from Tibet to the Bay of Bengal, he established the simplicity and joyfulness that he learnt from the river. Pallavi Iyer shared that water is one of the most important symbols of Tao. Water is tasteless, yet life-giving. Water does not compete; water has figured in literature and politics alike and is integral to life on earth.

Victor Mallet's statement that 'India is very lucky that her people are still connected to her rivers, through their folklore and anthropology' resonates with my own work on the Ganga. In fact, my third book, *A River Sings*, portrays the Ganga as a river much revered and celebrated, and has a tremendous impact on the culture and traditions of the people who live along her banks. It is this interconnectedness that Victor is referring to in his book *River of Life, River of Death: The Ganges and India's Future*.

'River Dialogues' emphasised that although rivers in India have been exploited, dammed and polluted, there is still hope for rivers such as the Ganga, Yamuna and Brahmaputra, as well as the smaller, lesser-known ones. Just as the Thames, Rhine and Seine have been cleaned and their ecological balance restored, political will and concerted action can bring back India's rivers to their former glory.

All three panellists elucidated different aspects of river travel. The integral relationship of rivers to the sacred landscape of the region, as well as their importance in commerce and economic activities, were discussed. Rivers have a symbiotic relationship with communities, flora, fauna and all forms of life, and this delicate balance requires to be preserved.

■ ANJALI CAPILA

# A Rich Civilisation

**FILM:** *When the Moors Ruled in Europe*

**DIRECTOR:** Timothy Copestake

**14 to 20 June 2021**

This documentary is for those interested in history. It runs us through the history of how some 10,000 Moors (Black Arab-Berbers of the Muslim faith) crossed North Africa and traversed the Straits of Gibraltar in the south of Spain in AD 711. The Moors stayed on in Grenada for nearly 700 years, after which they were ousted.

Historian Bettany Hughes runs us through the events that led to the Moors (whose legacy has been erased from Western history) settling there, and also to the contributions they made to society. They introduced trade in paper which led to the setting up of a paper factory, they were well-versed

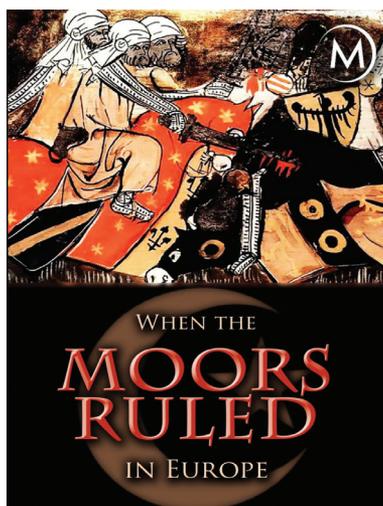
in astronomy and mathematics and encouraged learning. Many local inhabitants began to convert to Islam.

Directed by Timothy Copestake in 2005, this documentary showcases the palace of Alhambra which is an architectural wonder. The palace and fortress located in Grenada, Andalusia, Spain, was originally constructed as a small fortress in AD 889 on the remains of ancient Roman fortifications. This was renovated and rebuilt in the mid-13th century by the Arab Nasrid Emir Mohammad ben Al-

Ahmar of the Emirate of Grenada. It was converted into a Royal palace in 1333 by Yusuf I, Sultan of Grenada.

After the Christian reconquering in AD 1492, the palace became the Royal Court of Ferdinand and Isabella (where Christopher Columbus received the royal endorsement for his expedition), and the palace was partly altered in Renaissance style. The Moors' capital, Cordoba, was said to be the largest and most civilised city in Europe, with hospitals, libraries and a public infrastructure.

■ YESHI SELI



# An Extraordinary Life

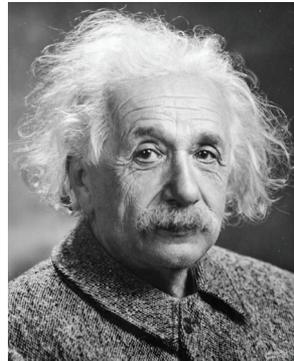
**FILM:** *Albert Einstein: Still a Revolutionary*

**DIRECTOR:** *Julia Newman*

**21 to 27 June 2021**

‘Yes, I am an old revolutionary. At the end I am still like a fire-spitting Vesuvius.’ The film is a fascinating journey through the life and works of Albert Einstein, bringing alive his deep commitments in the social and political spheres, apart from his brilliance as a scientist. It traces the mind of a 16-year-old who took a definite stand against war, ready to give up citizenship than be drafted into the military; later, his abhorrence of the militarisation of Germany.

The young Einstein was introduced to science by Max Talmud, a Polish medical student,



who would discuss complex issues with him as an equal—a world where anyone could make a difference, challenge the foundations, where science could lead not just to technological, but social progress too. He was frustrated by the silence of the civilised world and many well-known scientists against the growing fascism and atrocities in Germany, and was himself targeted by the Nazi Party and accused of working against the state. ‘A military pacifist who would fight for peace’, he used his celebrity status to speak out for his political beliefs ranging from women’s rights, sexual identity, racism to nuclear war, and saw nationalism akin to chauvinism. In the US, he helped many young scientists and German Jewish immigrants. His sense of humour is evident throughout. Using invaluable footage and recordings, the film, in a short span, reconnects us with values and priorities as relevant today as they were then, through the extraordinary life of Albert Einstein.

■ KONINIKA RAY

# The Mystique of the Indus

**ONLINE EXHIBITION:** *Two Banks of a River—The Indus in Ladakh*

*Photographs and text by Isaac Tsetan Gergan*

**COLLABORATION:** *Living Waters Museum*

**28 June to 11 July 2021**

Long before the feminine graces of the river goddesses, Sarasvati and Ganga, won the affections of ancient India, it was (what the Rigveda refers to as the ‘handsome woman’) the river Sindhu, whose awesome lineaments aroused worship. The Indus to this day continues to impress by its sheer presence. When approached on a motor cycle via the Hangru Loops in Ladakh, the impact of the river at Khaltse is like putting your head into the mouth of a lion.

This photographic exhibition, curated with commentary by Isaac Tsetan Gergan, brought out the mystique of the river



and its wild affluents, along with the character of the hardy, persevering people and their unique culture fostered on the banks of the regal coursing Indus. The photographs captured the austere and intriguing landscape whose monochromatic slopes give off the hues of shot-silk, capped by the overarching blue of a sky that speaks of the Buddha’s ‘void of shining consciousness’. As the most cheerfully welcoming of mountain hosts, the Ladakhi genius for maintaining a harmonious equation with nature is best revealed in the harnessing of water mills to both grind barley, and turn prayer wheels into thanksgiving prayers to the river spirits.

Isaac’s commentary brought home the local skills in water management, but spells out the mounting challenges of melting glaciers, ruinous floods, dams upstream threatening aquatic life, and pollution caused by tourism. In the centenary year of the discovery of the Indus Valley civilisation, this exhibition was a cautionary reminder that for a ‘water caring future’, the past honouring of river as sacred needs to be reasserted, the civilising flow of the Indus recognised as a living being.

■ BILL AITKEN

# Winds of Change

## YASUJIRO OZU TRILOGY: *The Noriko Trilogy*

### SCREENING SCHEDULE:

*Late Spring*: 12–18 July 2021

*Early Summer*: 19–25 July 2021

*Tokyo Story*: 26 July–1 August 2021

The celebrated Japanese master Yasujiro Ozu's *The Noriko Trilogy* was screened on the IIC website in July. The three masterpieces were filmed after World War II had ended in 1945, when the United States of America dropped an atom bomb each over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, causing unbelievable human suffering, crippling damage to the environment, and resulting in the Japanese surrender to the Allied Forces.

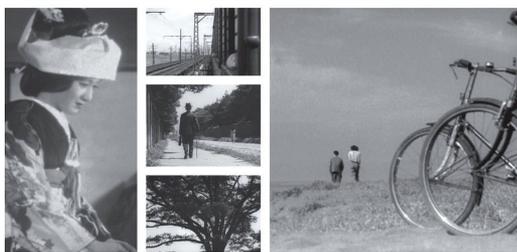
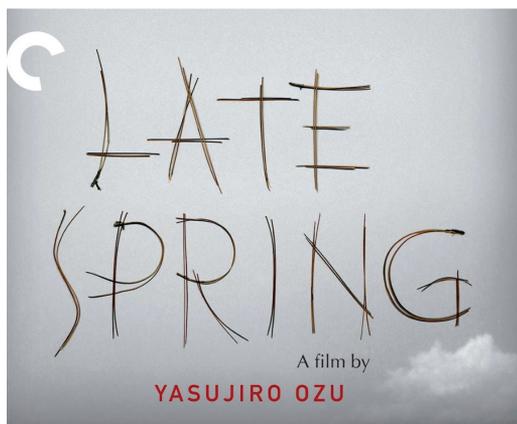
Ozu, the product of a proud, highly aesthetically evolved civilisation, made films that reflected the suffering brought about by the sudden social, political and psychological change in Japanese society. He achieved his objective by telling his stories on screen in a seemingly detached manner. By sticking to mundane, existential affairs within contemporary middle-class families, he managed to glean rich insights into the hearts and minds of his characters. This feat was possible because of a collaboration with Kogo Noda, a rare scriptwriter who understood the workings of Ozu's subtle, compassionate mind and shared with him a love of sake.

*Late Spring* (1949) is about Noriko, a young woman of 27, played with deep understanding by Setsuko Hara, living with her widowed academic father (the ever sensitive Chishu Ryu). Relatives and friends keep telling the father that time is running out for his daughter's marriage. He, being a liberal, does not want to impinge upon her freedom, but realises later that he may really be thinking of his own loneliness and not his daughter's happiness. Indulging in a ruse, saying he is planning to get married, he tricks his

daughter into marrying someone she has begun to like. In the last scene, all alone, the old academic is seen peeling an apple in an empty home. Ozu makes his point poignant because it is made incisive and brief.

*Early Summer* (1951) features Chishu Ryu and Setsuko Hara, again as father and daughter. The young lady is 28, husbandless, with ageing parents, a married brother with two small, bratty sons. Again, the problem is how to get the young lady married. The matter is amicably sorted. The beauty of the story lies in its treatment and choice of judicious details.

*Tokyo Story* (1953) is the story of a retired couple from a small fishing village on the sea coast who come to visit their children in the bustling metropolis of Tokyo. The film ends sadly but wisely as the old couple, not looked after affectionately enough by their well-meaning but far too busy children in Tokyo, return home to see the wife die. The children come to the funeral of their mother, possibly learn of their own vulnerabilities and limitations as people. The old father is left to cope with the rest of his life with wisdom and dignity.



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### YASUJIRO OZU: NORIKO TRILOGY

*Late Spring* (Banshun/Japan)  
(108 min; 1949; b/w; Japanese with English subtitles)  
Director: Yasujiro Ozu

Recipient of the Kinema Junpo Award 1950 for Best Film; and Mainichi Film Concours Award for Best Film, Best Actress, Best Director and Best Screenplay, Mainichi Film Concours 1950

One of the most powerful of Yasujiro Ozu's family portraits, *Late Spring* tells the story of a widowed father who feels compelled to marry off his beloved only daughter.

Link to View:  
<https://archive.org/details/LateSpring>

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Ozu avoided melodrama studiously. These three films use ellipses in a masterly manner and are quiet, dignified and perceptive. His sense of wit and irony attains poetic heights when he gives his characters, their surrounding environment, and nature outdoors equal weight. Life triumphs over transient circumstance.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

# The Ideal of Shantiniketan

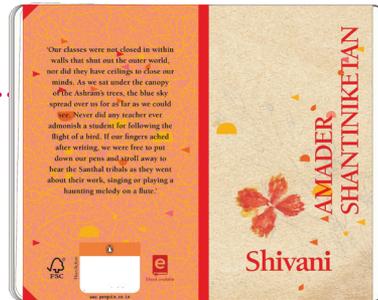
**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:** *Amader Shantiniketan* by Shivani, translated by Ira Pande (New Delhi: Vintage Books, 2021)

**DISCUSSANTS:** Radha Chakravarty; Sanjukta Dasgupta; and Ira Pande

**CHAIR:** Pushpesh Pant

**5 July 2021**

Sanjukta Dasgupta began by acknowledging Rabindranath Tagore in creating Shantiniketan and Vishwa Bharati, which celebrates its centenary this year. In fact, the poet's contributions were threefold: creating Patha Bhavan, Vishwa Bharati and Sriniketan, which was the centre for agricultural education and research, and rural reconstruction. The project was self-funded, because the poet anticipated that aid from the establishment would lead to numerous interventions. Dasgupta said the book and the translation from Hindi to English was brilliant and had charming anecdotes. Shivani, during her stay in Shantiniketan between 1935 and 1944, participated in plays and dance dramas. Classes, as envisioned by the poet himself, were held under trees.



This was his model of holistic and experiential learning.

Radha Chakravarty said the translation had brought the original alive. 'Reading every page was a joy'. The book, she said, inhabits many categories. It is a memoir that brings alive a whole ethos. It should be treasured as a cultural document that gives the flavour of the place. Alongside, the book is a social commentary that speaks of how people overcame social divisions to come together.

However, she posed a question to the translator. The second part of the book, Shivani's tributes to departed friends, was not there in the original. Why did the translator include it?

Ira Pande answered by saying that people like Kshitimohan Sen and Hazari Prasad Dwivedi had to be remembered. It was an 'uplifting mood'. This addition is in order because it is a small book and ends with the death of Tagore. Finally, Pushpesh Pant, the moderator, asked a question: Can there be another place like this? The conclusion: Tagore is relevant even today. India's expansive personality is trying to assimilate all diversities. To get a grasp of its meditative mission, we need a practising field. This is possible to realise in Vishwa Bharati.

■ UDDALOK BHATTACHARYA

# Complex Relations

**WEBINAR:** *Israel–Palestine Dispute*

**PANELLISTS:** P.K. Kumaraswamy; Bansidhar Pradhan; and John Cherian

**CHAIR:** K.P. Fabian

**9 June 2021**

The ceasefire came after 11 days of mayhem in May, when Hamas was firing rockets and Israel was retaliating with air strikes. Chair K.P. Fabian asked some pertinent questions: Was Benjamin Netanyahu trying to frustrate the formation of a coalition to oust him? Why was the UN Security Council in a state of paralysis?

Kumaraswamy pointed out that what was once an Israeli–Arab dispute became an Israel–Palestine dispute, and now it is an Israel–Hamas dispute. The Palestinian disunity came in the way of a settlement. Pradhan faulted the title

of the programme as it gave the impression that there was no asymmetry between the contestants. The crux of the matter was Israel's settler-colonial conquest of Palestinian territory. Cherian said that attacking Gaza periodically was part of Israel's 'mowing of the lawns' military strategy, and it provided for laboratory testing of its latest military technology. However, this time, the Israeli attack on Gaza united the Palestinians not only in the occupied territories, but across the diaspora.

The Chair concluded that as Hamas enjoyed popular support, branding it as a terrorist organisation made no sense. Further, the present Israeli leadership had no interest in seeking a solution unless compelled, and the US was the only power capable of doing that. This webinar made one realise that the much maligned Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) contributes so much to the international relations narrative in the country. All three panellists were PhDs from JNU, and two had gone on to become professors there. One became the media's star foreign affairs editor.

■ SUHAS BORKER

# Peace and Cooperation

**WEBINAR:** *To Mark the Centenary Year of Shri A.K. Damodaran: The World from 1954*

**WELCOME ADDRESS:** *Shri Shyam Saran, Life Trustee, IIC*

**SPEAKER:** *Thomas Pickering*

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

**29 June 2021**

In his welcome remarks, Shri Shyam Saran recalled his own association with Damodaran, who, with his 'sharp intellect, innate modesty and old-world courtesy', was one of the 'doyens' of Indian diplomacy.

Shri N.N. Vohra recalled Damodaran's participation in the freedom struggle which led to his imprisonment; teaching at Delhi University; and joining the foreign service. Shri Vohra remembered carrying a set of documents to Moscow in 1969 to be personally handed over to the Deputy Chief

of Mission, Damodaran. He played a key role in the drafting and signing of the 1971 treaty of friendship and cooperation between India and the Soviet Union before the war broke out between Pakistan and India, resulting in the liberation of Bangladesh. After retirement, Damodaran taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University, took a keen interest in the IIC, advised the government on foreign policy and wrote books.

Thomas Pickering shared his association with Damodaran at the Fletcher School of Diplomacy in 1954, from whom he learnt a lot about India and its relations with the Soviet Union and China. The two kept in close touch in later years. Turning to the theme, 'Changes Since 1954', Pickering recalled that India and the US worked together at the Security Council when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in 1990. Looking at the present status and the future of Indo-US relations, he said that the two would continue to cooperate for peaceful change and a better world.

Director IIC, Shri K. N. Shrivastava, a batchmate of A. K. Damodaran's son Ramu with the UN, proposed a vote of thanks.

■ **K.P. FABIAN**

# Unique Classical Fusion

**ONLINE CONCERT:** *Desi Chopin*

**ARTISTS FEATURED:** *Saraswati Rajagopalan (veena); Kailash Sharma (flute); Suhel Saeed Khan (sitar); Narinderpal Gill (keyboard); Manohar Balatchandirane (mridangam); Varun Rajasekharan (ghatam and kanjira); Ujith Udaya Kumar (tabla); and Tomasz Pajak (violin)*

**ARRANGEMENT AND SUPERVISION:** *Tomasz Pajak*

*Video recorded at the Embassy of Poland in September 2020*

**COLLABORATION:** *Polish Institute, New Delhi*  
**12 to 18 July 2021**

Should the great Polish piano composer Frederic Chopin's remarkable music be played only on the piano? The answer seemed to be a resounding 'No!' after watching an amazing concert of a collection of Chopin's compositions performed by an ensemble of Indian classical musicians playing traditional Indian musical instruments. Organised and arranged by the Polish Institute in Delhi in collaboration with the Polish Embassy and the India International Centre,

the concert, aptly titled 'Desi Chopin', featured interesting and innovative interpretations of Chopin's 'Prelude in D Flat Major', 'Waltz in A Minor', and the folk-based 'Mazurka in F Major', among others by the talented Indian musicians.

Veena maestro Saraswati Rajagopalan led the brilliant ensemble with her strong melodic lines, establishing and distinguishing different movements in Chopin's pieces. Kailash Sharma's evocative solos on the bamboo flute, especially in the upbeat 'Waltz in E Flat Major', deserve special mention, as in typical Indian classical form, he improvised his melodic lines to perfection. Suhel Saeed Khan's soulful sitar playing brought up a range of emotions, so typical of the style of the Polish composer, who composed much of his music through difficult phases in his life. Varun Rajshekharan (ghatam and kanjeera) and Ujith Udaya Kumar (tabla) provided strong and freely punctuated rhythmic support to music which, though based on a Western style and genre, sounded incredibly 'Indian'. Frederic Chopin's 'Prelude in A Major' was exceptional in its presentation by the ensemble—calm and serene, like the still crystal clear waters of a mountain lake! Tomasz Pajak's excellent violin support was the crossover link which brought a characteristic fusion element to this presentation. 'Desi Chopin' was an excellent example of a unique classical fusion and certainly a concert with a difference!

■ **DEEPAK CASTELINO**

# Dilemmas in Agriculture

**DR. DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE 2021:** *The Janus Face of Agricultural Policies—Kisan and Sethias: Local and Global*

**SPEAKER:** *Y.K. Alagh*

**COLLABORATION:** *Council for Social Development*  
**15 July 2021**

Y.K. Alagh began with the present-day dilemmas in Indian agriculture: poor productivity, employment and poverty alleviation schemes, amidst matters of agricultural support through food security, food subsidy, food procurement and distribution. Concerns have been expressed in bilateral and international bodies over the anti-trade subsidies for agricultural products and inputs, which have contributed to large grain stocks and export restrictions on agricultural goods.

While India is globalising and liberalising, the agriculture sector remains unproductive and underinvested. Small and fragmented landholdings, availability of seeds, need for

multiple crop management methods, availability of manure, fertiliser, pesticides or biocides, inadequate irrigation, soil erosion, the need for better water management, crop insurance, inadequate marketing, distribution and storage facilities—these are just a few of the issues to be tackled in this sector, which supports about 60 per cent of employment (agricultural operational holders, cultivators, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, tenants), but contributes only 17 per cent to the GDP. The present beleaguered condition of Indian agriculture is evident from the fact that 80 per cent of farmers in India remain marginal or small.

Textbooks state that poverty must theoretically decline with agricultural investment and agricultural growth. While poverty in India has been declining gradually by all estimates, it has persisted even with high agricultural growth. Economists have in fact argued that recent policy initiatives for reform in the agricultural sector have actually reinforced slow growth. The only logical course in a liberalising economy is agricultural reform, within which there can be more agricultural investment with food subsidies for the starving. The recent Farm Acts can benefit, but only when properly phased and implemented, protecting both food security and farmer support programmes.

■ MEKHALA SENGUPTA

# Whither Architecture?

**WEBINAR:** *Architecture—The State of Educational and Professional Standards. Lead presentation by Ranjit Sabikhi*

**INTRODUCTION:** *Meena Mani*  
*Followed by a dialogue between Ranjit Sabikhi; Aneerudha Paul; and Tanuja Kanvinde*

**CHAIR:** *Ashok B. Lall*  
**17 July 2021**

The webinar covered a wide range of problems that beset the architectural profession today. The foremost among these is the lack of commitment and cohesion in the profession as a whole to stand up for essential changes in educational standards as well as in professional practice.

The failure of the Council of Architecture to establish and follow necessary safeguards and regulations was emphasised repeatedly in the presentation by Ranjit Sabikhi. The overwhelming preoccupation with numbers, at the level of the planning of cities and towns, as well as at the level of obsessively increasing student capacity in schools of architecture, has led to a steep decline in the quality of architecture, and in the skills and knowledge-base of graduating architects—a fact stressed by all the participants and discussants. The government's rule

that bars architectural practice to professors and teachers in government-aided colleges of architecture has also resulted in such a state.

Although some of the speakers maintained that there are heartening initiatives by students and young professionals to move beyond the exclusive constraints of the client–architect relationship and explore the possibilities of initiating relevant work in rural and small-town India, this is generally despite—rather than because of—either government or institutional support and training. Apart from the necessity for such support, it is essential to focus on quality rather than quantity, as stressed by all the discussants. For this, it is imperative to allow teachers of architecture to practice professionally, and to split the architectural degree into a BA/BSc, given after three years of architectural study, followed by a B.Arch after five years of completion of the course.

This will go a long way in ensuring that only those students who are most suited to the discipline continue with the full five-year period, while enabling those students who feel unable to continue to obtain a non-practising degree after three years. This proposal has been mooted from the time of Cyrus Jhabvala's tenure as HoD of Architecture at SPA Delhi in the 1960s and 1970s. It is high time that it is accepted, since adopting it will make architectural education more efficient, meaningful and productive, and take care of at least some of the problems in the profession.

■ ANISHA SHEKHAR MUKHERJI

# Change and Catharsis

**4TH NELSON MANDELA LECTURE:** *Nelson Mandela: The Man for Our Times*

**SPEAKER:** *Talmiz Ahmad*

**WELCOME ADDRESS:** *Suhas Borker*

**CLOSING ADDRESS:** *H. E. Joel Sibusiso Ndebele*

**CHAIR:** *Shiv Shankar Mukherjee*

**COLLABORATION:** *High Commission of South Africa and Working Group on Alternative Strategies*  
**18 July 2021**

The speakers expressed their deep concern about recent events in South Africa, but were confident that the 'major challenge' would be overcome, and the polity shaped in 1994 under Nelson Mandela's towering leadership will hold. In his opening remarks, Suhas Borker highlighted three lessons learnt from Mandela's leadership—he was non-divisive and bound his people together (no hatred, live together in harmony and with equal opportunities); he was morally clean and ethically upright (not filling the pockets of cronies and looting the meagre national cake); and embodied a resilient belief in himself ('I never lose. I win or I learn').



Panel: Shiv Mukherjee; Suhas Borker, Sibusiso Ndebele and Talmiz Ahmad

Talmiz Ahmad's lecture was a *tour de force*. Mandela was a true hero of his times with a deep sense of history. He learnt from the experience of Algeria, and was inspired by what happened in Vietnam (Battle of Dien Bien Phu, 1954). Mandela invoked his cherished ideal of a democratic and free society at the Rivonia Trial (1963–1964). Prison, the 2x2 cell in the brutal Robben Island (1964–1982), far from breaking his spirit made him more determined to continue with the battle until victory; 'the chains of the body are often wings to the spirit'. He overcame critical challenges (Assassination of Chris Hani, April 1993), implemented the core principle of the Freedom Charter (South Africa belongs to all its people, black and white), directly addressed the people, promising change with reconstruction and development goals, while

bringing catharsis to the living rooms of the nation with his Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Shiv Mukherjee emotionally recalled his first meeting with Madiba, immediately after his release from prison, in Soweto. High Commissioner Ndebele spoke of the 'natural dignity' and 'moral authority' of Madiba, like Gandhi, which made a 'mockery of prison clothes', where High Commissioner Ndebele was himself jailed for 10 years.

■ K. S. SUBRAMANIAN

# The World's Unbounded Love for the Buddha

**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:** *Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha, by Jairam Ramesh (New Delhi: Penguin, 2021)*

**PANELLISTS:** *Geshe Ngawang Samten; Karam Tej Singh Sarao; and Jairam Ramesh*

**CHAIR:** *Dr. Karan Singh*

**26 July 2021**

Jairam Ramesh's book is offered not so much as a literary engagement with the poem as a dual biography—of the poem and of its fascinating polyglot author known for his translations of several classical Indian texts. First published in 1879, Edwin Arnold's epic was, as per the author, 'a milestone in Buddhist historiography', highlighting the 'human' aspects of the Buddha. Tracing the widespread influence of this much-translated poem on figures as diverse as Vivekananda and M.K. Gandhi on the one hand, and Pali-Buddhist scholar Dharmanand Kosambi

and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the other, besides figures such as Tagore, Nehru and Churchill, it contextualises the poem's arrival in terms of increasing disenchantment with the Church, a pull towards the 'rational', and the psychological need of a colonised people for inspiring 'indigenous' exemplars.

That it was an imperialist Englishman who should be that medium is richly ironic. Geshe Ngawang Samten welcomed the book, especially its 'positive' interpretation of nirvana, and reiterated the Buddhist emphasis on the 'Law of Nature' rather than on divinity. Sarao stressed that Arnold's poem was more popular than scholarly, and while appreciating the book as a 'masterpiece', felt that Ramesh had been 'too soft' on Arnold and Anagarika Dharmapala, whom he described as 'rabble rousers' who had 'communalised' Buddhism. Dr. Karan Singh stressed his great 'affection' for the Buddha, despite his Vedantin disagreements with Buddhism. As the discussion veered towards the Buddha as the ninth avatar of Vishnu, and Buddhists living in harmony with 'Hindus' until 'mischievous Victorians' sowed dissension, the book's timeliness was confirmed. It can contribute to contemporary public discourse on these contested histories. Especially welcome, then, is its attention to painstaking historical detail while addressing the general reader.

■ MAYA JOSHI

# 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.



SMT. MAAN  
KANWAR  
L-0228



SHRI M. YOUSUF  
KHAN (MR. DILIP  
KUMAR)  
L-0388



SHRI MOHINDER  
KAPUR  
M-0157



SHRI D.C. JHA  
M-1375



SHRI J.  
VEERARAGHAVAN  
M-1946



DR. BHUPINDER  
SINGH  
M-2321



DR. MADAN  
MOHAN  
M-2349



SHRI SIDDHARTH  
SHRIRAM  
M-2351



SHRI RAVINDRA  
SINGHVI  
M-2459



SHRI VINAY K.  
VERMA  
M-2678



PROF. (MS.)  
MANSURA HAIDAR  
M-2759



SHRI  
KRISHNAMURTHY  
SANTHANAM  
M-2929



SHRI A.K. MISRA  
M-2984



SHRI V.K.  
MALHOTRA  
M-3220



SHRI DAVENDER  
SINGH KANDHARI  
M-3533



SHRI VINOD  
KUMAR GROVER  
M-3662



SHRI O.P. SAPRA  
M-3804



DR. ALKA  
RAGHUVANSHI  
M-3875



DR. A.P. DIKSHIT  
M-3884



DR. SHAIBAL  
GUPTA  
M-3906



DR. PRABHA  
MANCHANDA  
M-3965



DR. (SMT.) RAJ  
K. BUDDHIRAJA  
M-4048



SHRI K. KUMAR  
MOWDGAL  
A-0305



DR. PRAVIN M.  
DALAL  
A-0888



MAJOR SATISH  
KHANNA (RETD.)  
A-1711



SHRI SANJIVI  
SUNDAR  
A-3296



SHRI SHEKHAR  
MALHOTRA  
A-3087



SHRI R.K.  
KHANDEKAR  
A-3346



SHRI PRANAB RAY  
A-3830



SHRI C.L.  
BHARANY  
A-4755



SHRI ARUN  
CHAUDHARY  
A-5111



SHRI KAMAL M.  
MORARKA  
A-6251



SHRI SHAFI ALAM  
A-6713



DR. SUPRABHAT  
MAJUMDAR  
A-7307



SMT. KAMINI  
MEHRA  
A-7343



MRS. RAJINDER  
OBEROI  
A-7367



DR. GURUPRASAD  
MOHAPATRA  
A-7562

**And the following members (photographs not available):**

**BHAI BALBIR SINGH (L-0079); SHRI M. S. BATRA (M-1294); PROF. R. V. DHANAPALAN (M-3477); SHRI VINOD KUMAR JAIN (A-2505); SHRI THURWINDER SINGH OBEROI (A-6864); SHRI RAJINDER KUMAR (AT1046)**



Walker and Wheelchair for Brahampal's (Senior Sanitation Helper) daughter, Kumari Aruna. L to R: Satish Rana; Kanwal Wali; Brahampal; Shri K.N. Shrivastava; Shakti K. Singh; M.S. Kumar



COVID-19 Vaccination Camp at Navyug School, Pandara Road



## Director's Note

The much delayed monsoon rains have brought much cheer to all of us. The Centre's lawns are lush green. Thanks to our devoted malis and our Garden Officers. Our gardens have a variety of summer flowers—Desperado, Coleus, Sunflower, Zinnia Kochia, Tiger Lily, Tuberose, Football Lily and Caladium. Seedlings of autumn flowers have been planted, and the lawns are being weeded and re-laid. Work is also ongoing to refurbish a number of rooms in the Hostel (Old Wing).

The Lotus Lounge which is now operating during Friday to Sunday afternoons is serving special cuisines which have attracted a large number of our Members. Since mid-July we have started providing our favourite ice-creams in convenient carry-away packs.

For many years now, our senior age group Members have been complaining about lack of easy access to the Main Dining Hall, Terrace Pergola and Conference Room II. They shall be happy to know that we are soon commencing the process to install a suitable lift from the ground to the first and second floors. Hopefully, this facility should become operational in early winter 2022.

The present Confectionery Counter, adjoining the passage to the Main Lounge, is planned to be redesigned to provide more space, aesthetically designed, to enable our Members to make their purchases with greater comfort. We expect this enlarged facility to become functional before the year end.

Considering the difficulties caused by the continuing pandemic, we have decided to enable application forms for Short Term Associate Membership (2021–22) being made available online. This arrangement shall be both for accessing and, later, forwarding the application forms. Details may please be seen on the IIC Website.

We would greatly appreciate if Associate Members/Members propose/second a maximum of three STAM applications (in a calendar year) of persons they have known well for a significant period and whom they consider to be truly eligible for membership of the Centre. Proposals/endorsements beyond the aforesaid prescribed number would be considered invalid. As separately communicated, this regulation would be applicable to all applications received by us on or after 5 August 2021.

In collaboration with Government of NCT of Delhi, we had organised a three-day Covishield Vaccination Camp in June to enable all our employees and their family members to receive jabs, free of cost. Our entire staff have received their first jab, and half of them have received both.

On behalf of the Centre, I presented a Walker and a Wheel Chair to Brahampal, Senior Sanitation Helper (Housekeeping Department) to provide some support to Aruna, his physically challenged daughter.

We are happy to inform that Dr. Sudha Gopalakrishnan, formerly Director, National Manuscripts Mission, has recently joined us as Executive Director of the International Research Division, which is planning to build an online knowledge resource on manuscripts which may be presently available in repositories within India and in various other countries, cataloguing and digitising the manuscripts, and designing a digital library. This project will be called South Asian Manuscript History and Textual Archive (SAMHiTA).

■ **K. N. SHRIVASTAVA**