

INDIA
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IIIC Diary

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The Seventh Continent

ONLINE EXHIBITION: *Antarctica—The Last Frontier*

A Photographic Journey to Antarctica with Ajit K. Huilgol

1 to 14 March 2021

It is evident that the last great frontier of human exploration and indeed of endurance is often thought of as the seventh continent of our wonderful planet—the Antarctic. To be standing on it is a privilege, and every moment one breathes its air is a gift.

For the intrepid explorer, photographer and conservationist, Ajit Huilgol, his visit to the Antarctic resulted in over 30,000 photographs, and the photo exhibition of his best 45 shots was breathtaking, to say the least.

In fact, he leads you to believe in the adage that ‘Life is not about the breaths you take, instead about the moments that take your breath away’. He provided us such moments, especially when you saw the clarity of the feathers of the Striated Caracara in flight, which must have given him cold fingers trying to get that ace shot in sub-zero temperatures.

There were other arresting pictures of the variety of penguins, from the colourful King Penguins to the Adelie, Chinstrap, Gentoo and Rock hoppers, who were a treat in their moods, actions and colonies. There was a Weddell Seal in a yoga pose, as he creatively captioned it, and one could literally count the whiskers off the Southern Elephant seal.

A visit to Antarctica on a ship involves getting to Argentina, and then setting sail from its southern most point, Ushuaia.

Heaving through the dreaded Drake Passage, one reaches the Antarctica continent, and that’s where you don the extra layers and jump into a Zodiac boat that takes you to different landings, be it abandoned whaling stations or to the spots of the penguin colonies where one has to follow strict protocols on human interaction and viewing.

Ajit Huilgol did well in capturing the special Antarctic landscape too, from mountainscapes to icebergs. The winner was an image of the Antarctic landscape taken from his Zodiac, using a super wide angle lens to exaggerate and capture the beauty and remoteness of this pristine land which one hopes will be left alone by the world, and not be opened up for mining, etc. when the Antarctica Treaty is renewed in 2048.



Gentoo penguin diving—Antarctica

Being a trained medical surgeon, Huilgol employs good surgical strikes to capture some of the best moments of the Antarctic for us. Those who saw the photos should have a gnawing feeling of wanting to get there, and those who missed it, you can rectify that by travelling there!

■ MANDIP SINGH SOIN

Resonances of the Past

THREE FILMS BY RUTH WIEDER MAGAN

COLLABORATION: *The Foundation for Independent Artists, Ministry of Culture and Sport, Israel*

6 to 7 March 2021

Ruth Wieder Magan is best known for her pioneering work integrating sacred texts with contemporary voice/body theatre. Her approach to the transcendental aspect of voice is founded solidly in sacred cantorial Jewish traditions. In *Mirror Sky*, against a backdrop of dimly-lit scenes, Ruth, swirling, moaning, producing guttural sound, explains the origin of her techniques:

'The process of my voicing goes something like this; a voice arises from the particular presence of present time.... I will begin to track the life of the vibration. Where is it sounding in my body?

[As Music Swirls] Is it liver or kidneys or blood or eyelids? And where in my perception of the cosmos? is that reverberation, am I feeling angels or am I sensing the moon or feeling stars shifting?and how is that kernel of sound moving out into space?

Does it want to travel forward or travel back into the sides?

and what cultural meaning arises in me

As I hear the sound emitting from my very own voice ...is it ancient America or China or is it Atlantis?...or am I hearing an animal?' Her investigation continues.

Ruth's source of inspiration were her own parents, both Holocaust survivors. Their memories and experiences



Ruth Wieder Magan

triggered the melodies and intonations rooted in the barren world of yore.

The movies are psychedelic. Ruth's voice and body performance is mesmerising. The audience is connected to so many insights and the things she said, '...a wound is a gateway, a gateway to the universe'.

A wind-blown image of her hair swirling over her face like diaphonous clouds punctuated with screams of agony seems to haunt you.

There was also a webinar, *The Ecstatic Voice. What is the Female Voice?* with participants Ruth Wieder Magan; Michal Govrin; Gabriella Lev; Michael Shachrur; Sara Siegel; and Yuval Steinberg. Their sentiments echoed what the films resonated with.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

Innovations within Tradition

IIC DOUBLE BILL RECITALS

Sitar Recital by Smarajit Sen followed by Kathak Recital by Sangita Chatterjee

8 to 15 March 2021

Video recordings of two recitals for IIC online programmes

The sitar recital by Smarajit Sen and the Kathak performance by Sangita Chatterjee were quite innovative in their approach. Although totally rooted in their music and dance traditions, the performers didn't confine themselves to the beaten track of a conventional format.

Initiated into classical music by Guru Sukumar Chandra, Smarajit was further groomed at the ITC-SRA Gurukul, Kolkata, under the able guidance of Pt. Buddhadev Dasgupta, the erudite Sarodia of Shahjahanpur Gharana. The *Jawari* of his sitar captured one's attention by its eloquent

tonal quality, right from the introductory *Alap* of his chosen raga, *Kaushi Bhairav*. Amandeep Singh joined him during the following *Jod-Jhala* sequences on *Jodi*, sounding like a Pakhawaj. This profound Dhrupad *Ang Alap* prefaced the Dhamar composition set to Dhamar Tala of a 14-beat cycle. Smarajit continued the raga with a medium tempo *Teental* *Gat*, which had melodious flourishes like a Thumri. The rare raga concluded with a neat *Jhala* that maintained its dignity and grace despite the high-speed climax.

The Kathak performance by Sangita Chatterjee, a gifted disciple of Guru Vaswati Mishra, matched the classy format

of the sitar. Opening with *Surya Upasana* on recorded music by Pt. Jasraj, Sangita proceeded to *Shuddha Nritta* in the slow and medium tempo of *Teental* with the traditional repertoire of *Uthaan*, *Thaat*, *Aamad*, *Tode-Tukde*, *Paran*, *Gat-Nikas* and *Ladi* to showcase the crisp footwork. Concluding with abhinaya, the emotive aspect of Kathak, on Jayadeva's *Ashtapadi*, *Kuru Yadunandana*, instead of the hackneyed Thumri/Dadra, she offered a pleasant surprise in the Baithaki Bhava of Kathak abhinaya.

The evening was a double treat for *rasikas*.

■ MANJARI SINHA

Intertwining of Music and Dance

IIC DOUBLE BILL RECITALS

Hindustani Music—Sarod Recital by Pt. Abhik Kumar Sarkar

followed by Saabhinaya, an Odissi Recital by Vrinda Chadha

25 March 2021

Pt. Abhik Kumar Sarkar, a disciple of Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, first played raga *Kamod*, then *Kalawati* in *Jhaptal Teen Tal* and *Drut*, and lastly, a melodious Bengali *dhun* on the sarod. He was ably accompanied on the tabla by Shubhendu Das from Kolkata.

The second artist was a young Odissi dancer, Vrinda Chadha from Delhi, a disciple of Guru Ranjana Gauhar Padmashri.



Pt. Abhik Kumar Sarkar

The Odissi dance repertoire is enriched by many aspects. Traditionally, the *Saabhinaya* is one such presentation—an intertwining of pure dance and abhinaya, followed alternately. Much like life, the *Saabhinaya* is a holistic piece which evokes myriad shades and the underlying moods of a situation, expressed through verses of *sahitya* (literature woven to melody), corresponding to the syllables of Odissi, recited in rhythmic patterns.

Vrinda's performance began with a prayer to the goddess Tripura Sundari, who symbolises the power of consciousness—she is the light within the triangle vis-a-vis body, speech and mind, and she is the essence of the three worlds. The choreography was by Guru Ranjana Gauhar set to raga *Saveri* and *Shiv Ranjani*, *Taal Ektali* and *Jati*, with the music composed by Sukant Kumar Kundu from Bhubaneswar.



Vrinda Chadha

The next presentation was an excerpt from Mahakavi Kalidas's *Ritu Samhara* describing the advent of spring, of Rituraj Basant who bestows new life to all living beings. This choreography was set to raga *Maallika*, *Taal Maalika*, with music composed by Saroj Mohanty from Delhi. Vrinda went on to present a beautiful and famous song written by saint-poet Surdas in the medieval period titled *Palane Jhulaawe Yashoda Hari*, describing the intense love of a mother for her baby. She concluded with an Oriya song by poet Banmali Das, *Sangi Ni Re Chahan Benu Pani*, which described the beauty of young Krishna holding the flute in his hands. The choreography by legendary Guru Mayadhar Raut (Padma Shri) was set to raga *Kalawati* and *Taal Jati*.

■ HARISH BHALLA

Bridging Differences

AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP EXHIBITION: *What to do with Difference: Art and Artists as a Bridge*

COLLABORATION: *Art for Change*

15 to 28 March 2021

This exhibition was a bringing together of what we perceive as 'difference' through aspects of personal and individual relationships, and the larger picture of community and social identity.

Stephanie Mc Dairmant, from the USA, explored the Ruach technique, which uses breath to move paint, leading to interesting compositions on emotions and hope. Sedrick Huckby created a series of 22 pieces with charcoal, oil pastels and writings to capture a narrative on Christian faith and community. These illustrative images were in contrast to the work of Navya Sah, who worked on narrative using sound, motion and film to communicate touch, emotion and sensation.



The DNA painting (above) is 'Love Bridges Differences'

The sky bird (right) is 'Bridging to Love'



All through the exhibition, we saw artists as storytellers, observers and listeners. Art brought together the complexities of society and culture, but also decoded the same through artistic expression, which provided hope and direction through the various media employed.

Installations by Marianne Lettieri with brooms, fabric, canvas and paint created that dimensional effect, along with other installations which broke the monotony of space and addressed conflict.

Elizabeth Kwant, on the other hand, worked with cynotype on paper creating the effect of images in indigo, dealing with the subject of missing girls. Amit Saha showed an utopian Nagri, Jama Masjid without wires, done in delicate water colour. Thockchom from Manipur illustrated, with colour pencils and water colour, a collage of fashion illustrations and high art.

Other artists, both from India and abroad, had also bridged the gap in multiple ways. Wherever there is collaborative work, it is interesting to see how art unifies across continents.

■ **LOLITA DUTTA**

Mixed Fare

TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021: WOMEN'S FILM FESTIVAL

Organised in collaboration with the Federation of Film Societies of India, NR

8 to 9 March 2021

Two shorts and two features directed by women were screened at this festival. *Imaginary Homes*, a short by Priya Naresh, is about an old, crippled Punjabi social worker Gurman, who remembers the trauma of women during the mindless, unspeakably violent Partition of India in 1947. Despite the visual flourishes, it is an oddly static exercise.

In the Land of Poison Women, based on a story by Yeshe Dorji Thongchi, in contrast, is a good old-fashioned exercise in filmmaking, capturing movements in time and evoking

memories, especially in the four major characters in the story. Manju Bora's unobtrusive direction and Sudhir Pulsane's striking photography of the changing moods of the Tawang landscape in Arunachal Pradesh are the highlights of a story about local superstition and the spirited attempts of Thupten, an intelligence officer, and his lady love Tasi Yudan, a circle officer, to overcome traditional prejudice.

Begamon Ka Bhopal (Bhopal, a city of Begums, directed by Rachita Gorowala) is another short. It is an attempt to conjure up a glorious past in the British era through memories of women associated with the Nawab of Bhopal's family. Their present life, curtailed by old age and dwindling resources, is rather clumsily depicted as is the past.

Geeta J's *Run Kalyani*, in Malayalam, about a young domestic looking after a dying aunt, and her daily interactions with dodgy, well-heeled employers, despite its astute art direction and elegant, resourceful camerawork, cannot rise above a clichéd literary conceit.

■ **PARTHA CHATTERJEE**

Art and History

WEBINAR: *Art and History: Texts, Contexts and Visual Representations in Ancient and Early Medieval India. Edited by R. Mahalakshmi. (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2020)*

DISCUSSANTS: *Shyam Narayan Lal; and Prabhat K. Basant*

MODERATOR: *Swapna Liddle*
12 March 2021

Swapna Liddle, the convenor of the Delhi Chapter of INTACH, who moderated this discussion, provided the audience with an idea of the criticality of the book. She emphasised that it was time for historians to venture into visual representations, as it seemed they shied away from the challenge of incorporating 'the visual' while dealing with any period of Indian history.

It was clear from the way the discussion progressed that R. Mahalakshmi has met this challenge quite seriously and creatively. Mahalakshmi presented an elegant account of the various streams and trends in art history, and explained

how and why the contextual treatment of our visual and sculptural artifacts have not found favour, both with historians and art historians. In bringing a very dynamic interplay of the text *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*, in terms of visual and performative art, she herself has given the lead. According to her, the context of artistic production was of critical importance, and this could be done only when we put art into its historical context.

Shyam Narayan Lal and Prabhat K. Basant echoed the points made by Mahalakshmi. Basant, for example, highlighted the element of contextual analysis which made many of the papers in the volume carve niche and new domains. He pointed out the way visuality was always seen from the art historian's point of view, but not from a conjunctural analysis of the objects, coins and temple-based sculptural representations. Lal, on the other hand, indicated how the methodology employed by scholars in the volume, for example the treatment of the Mother Goddess, can be usefully applied elsewhere. Both indicated that the volume is methodologically a pioneering work, and the papers set new standards and directions in historical as well as art historical research.

■ PRERANA PURNIMA ROY

Statuary Bronzes

WEBINAR: *Art and Technology of the South Indian Bronzes and the Chola Nataraja*

SPEAKER: *Sharada Srinivasan*
15 to 21 February 2021

The erudite lecture by Sharada Srinivasan captured the remarkable work she has undertaken on the technical art history of south Indian statuary bronzes. Her talk linked the connections between history, devotional poetry, philosophy, temple architecture, dance and astronomy to the metallurgical proficiencies of the changing dynasties in south India.

Providing insights on stylistic iconography and iconometry, and interconnecting them to technology through archaeo-metallurgical studies, her talk traced the lineage of these magnificent bronzes with provenance attributions that dated them to their historic periods of creation.

Her discourse on the renowned Nataraja icon, also called the Cosmic Dance of Siva, provided new insights on its dating,

as her metallurgical analysis of the lead isotope ratios and chemical fingerprints evidenced that this statuary could be provenanced to the 7th–8th century Pallava period, and not as previously thought to the 10th century Chola period.

Further, the speaker provided new perspectives on the metallurgical fingerprinting of the ritual bronze icons in the Government Museum, Chennai; British Museum; Victoria and Albert Museum, among others, that extended to her exploration of the cultural interactions and exchanges with South East Asia that opened up new vistas of thought for the audience.

From touching on the traditions and sites of ancient mining and metallurgy in southern India to her study of the ongoing historic tradition of the high tin bronze metal mirror making in Aranmula Kanadi in Kerala, to the master metallurgists bronze-casting at Swamimalai, she provided new perspectives on both the artistic and scientific processing technologies of these traditions.

The speaker's three decades of in-depth study, pioneering and innovative research in archaeo-metallurgy and ethno-metallurgy opened a whole new area of learning for the listeners.

■ RITU SETHI

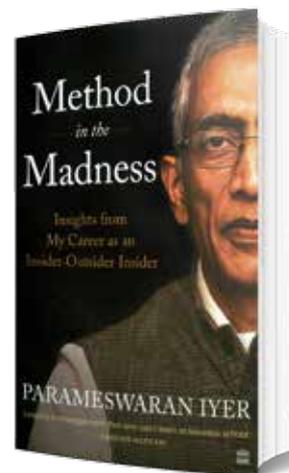
Swachh Bharat Mission

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Method in the Madness: Insights from the Career of an Insider-Outsider-Insider* by Parameswaran Iyer (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2021)

DISCUSSANTS: N.C. Saxena; Yasmin Haque; Hari Menon; Raj Chengappa; and Parameswaran Iyer

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

23 February 2021



For an IAS officer who helped make an unthinkable possible, Parameswaran Iyer comes across as a simple and straight forward administrator when he says he knew a government programme like Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) could not be successful if it were to be run like every 'sarkari' programme. It had to be a 'Jan Andolan', like Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in 2014 while announcing the sanitation programme from the ramparts of the Red Fort in his Independence Day speech of 2014.

In chairing the webinar to discuss this book, Shri N. N. Vohra, President, IIC, recalled his brief association with Iyer when both worked in the defence ministry under Arun Singh. He wished that the book had covered that period a little more, but said that it might be the subject of yet another book.

N.C. Saxena, a former bureaucrat who helmed several key government projects himself, recalled his days as Secretary, Rural Development, to illustrate how Iyer's achievements in building toilets as Secretary, Sanitation, outshone his own.

Unicef's India head, Yasmin Haque, spoke of the commonalities she discovered as she went through Iyer's book. She found that they were both 'military brats', and fans of Alistair MacLean. She praised Iyer's story writing

ability for the simplicity and humility with which he shared his successes and failures. She also noted that the book had several management lessons for anyone who cared to learn.

Hari Menon, India head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, appreciated Iyer's call to choose the years leading up to SBM as the subject of the book. He noted that there were doubts about the success of the programme, even within the government, when the Prime Minister announced it in 2014. It wasn't until early 2016, when Iyer took charge of the project, that things started moving. Menon also narrated the story of the Gates' India visit in 2014, and their meeting with PM Modi.

India Today Editorial Director Raj Chengappa spoke of his five-year association with Iyer and praised his 'breezy' writing style. He drew a parallel between SBM and India's space mission. 'Isro's success was on account of a "mission mode" that Satish Dhawan gave it', he said, adding that SBM also had a similar treatment to thank for its success. The goal of building 100 million toilets in five years would not have been achieved without people's involvement as part of a 'Jan Andolan'.

■ REETESH ANAND

Equality and Hope

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Dalai Lama: An Illustrated Biography*, by Tenzin Geyche Tethong (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2020)

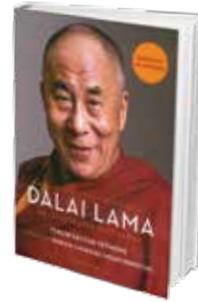
PANELLISTS: Tenzin Geyche Tethong; Tendzin Choegyal; and Rajiv Mehrotra

8 March 2021

This webinar presented a rare opportunity for global listeners to witness a rich and animated conversation among three trusted companions and aides of His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Tenzin Geyche Tethong, former Secretary of His Holiness and author of the book; Tendzin Choegyal, the younger brother of His Holiness and writer of the Foreword to the book; and Rajiv Mehrotra, a student of His Holiness for 40 years and the Secretary/Trustee of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Inviting readers to explore this definitive biography of His Holiness, the speakers shared deeply personal and unique insights about His Holiness as a teacher, learner, brother and leader. Moving anecdotes illuminated His Holiness' generosity of spirit, curiosity as a learner, equanimity amidst suffering, and compassionate handling of dissent. The speakers explored His Holiness' commitment to fostering human flourishing through an embodied understanding of secular ethics which encourages individuals to 'become the change'. The conversations also voiced his relentless efforts in nurturing inter-faith dialogue and shifting the vocabulary of 'tolerance' to a more expansive 'celebration of diversity'.

Commemorating International Women's Day, the speakers reflected on the boundaries of gender that His Holiness has pushed with the Geshe Ma initiative. The initiative has introduced the possibility for nuns to study Buddhist philosophy and achieve equal academic status as Buddhist monks. This process of transforming attitudes towards



gender in the Tibetan community is a testament to His Holiness' vision of ensuring processes of change that are enduring, build consensus, and whose reverberations are felt timelessly through generations. Emphasising His Holiness' gratitude and respect for India, the speakers explored his call for the revival of India's spiritual heritage. They also celebrated His Holiness for his leadership of the Tibetan refugee community, and for introducing democracy and inspiring hope in the community in exile.

■ SHILPI SHABDITA

COVID-19 Hub

WEBINAR: *Development of COVID-19 Vaccine—India a Global Hub*

WELCOME: *Alka Sharma*

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

SPEAKERS: *Renu Swarup; Vinod K. Paul; Shahid Jameel; and K. Srinath Reddy*

Followed by a panel discussion with Indian industry on 'India becoming a COVID-19 Vaccine Hub' moderated by Shirshendu Mukherjee

VOTE OF THANKS: *Jyoti Logani*

COLLABORATION: *Department of Biotechnology, Govt*

18 February 2021

Amidst the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, India has become a hub for developing and providing COVID-19 vaccine globally. This webinar discussed critical elements of the development, production and implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine. Key speakers included development experts, policymakers, regulators, and representatives from industry and allied fields.

Alka Sharma welcomed the speakers, and appreciated India's stand of taking forward the development of an

affordable and accessible COVID-19 vaccine. It was followed by comments from Shri N.N. Vohra, President, IIC, wherein he allayed concerns regarding vaccination.

Renu Swarup presented an overview of the COVID-19 vaccine development process. She informed the audience about the two vaccines under emergency-use authorisation, and the vaccines under clinical trials. She stated that the past year had helped India in the identification of gaps in its healthcare delivery system. Further, she added that sharing information and data helped enrich the ecosystem, which comprised the government and stakeholders.

Vinod Paul spoke about prioritising groups for receiving the vaccination. He stated that top priority was reserved for healthcare workers, followed by personnel engaged in pandemic control. He mentioned that soon the vaccination would be available to the broader population.

Shahid Jameel briefed the participants about the different vaccine types. He emphasised the need for genetic surveillance to detect new variants of the virus. He also explained in simple language the mechanism of the action of the two vaccines currently available for use in India.

Srinath Reddy put forward the action plan for the rollout of the immunisation programme. The webinar concluded with a panel discussion and a question and answer session with Suresh Jhadav, Pankaj Patel and Sanjay Singh.

■ VIKRAM DATTA

Justice Denied

WEBINAR: *A Woman's Quest for Justice*

A conversation with Bhanwri Devi on her life and struggle

Kavita Srivastava in conversation with Bhanwri Devi

The webinar was conducted in Hindi and Marwari

COLLABORATION: *Business & Community Foundation*

6 February 2021

The programme was introduced by Amita V. Joseph representing BCF, chaired/translated by Kavita Srivastava, a leading human rights worker from Jaipur, and a steadfast friend of Bhanwri Devi over two decades.

Talking poignantly in Marwari about her struggle for justice, Bhanwri Devi, hailing from the potter community of village Bhattari and working as a *sathin* of the State Government's

Women's Development Programme, described her work on a range of social issues such as dowry, caste, child marriage, need for girl's education, etc. However, her work on child marriage irked the dominant Gujar family whose 9-month-old daughter was being given in marriage. Based on her complaint, a policeman visited the family, but could not stop the marriage. In retribution, she was gang raped by five men of the village, two belonging to the same family, in front of her husband while working in the fields. Bhanwri did not remain silent about the rape and filed an FIR, staying on in the village despite hostility, social boycott and ostracisation. The men were arrested and later released with what was seen as a bizarre judgement. Protesting it, women's groups filed a PIL in the Supreme Court which led to the Vishakha guidelines being framed in 1997, and finally the law against Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace in 2013. While Bhanwri remains an icon and grassroots leader, justice has eluded her as her appeal languishes in the Rajasthan High Court even after 25 years!

Over 200 persons registered for the talk which ended with a Q & A.

■ **AMITA JOSEPH**

No Solutions for Humanity's Problems?

DR. C.D. DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE

2021: *Indian Constitution: What it Should Mean Today*

SPEAKER: *Justice (Shri) M.N. Venkatachaliah*

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

20 March 2021

The webinar in these times of the pandemic did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the event, with Shri N.N. Vohra, President, IIC, kicking off matters by recalling his own interaction with former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah in the context of judicial appointments in the pre-collegium era, and the committee to review the Constitution.

The nonagenarian speaker commenced by recalling the diversity of the nation at the time of Independence, and how the Western press had been cynical of the democracy at its beginning. He referred to the foundation

of democracy being laid in the aftermath of the Second World War, and how even now, those who are disenchanted must abandon all unconstitutional methods (including civil disobedience) as there are constitutional alternatives available, including the central role of political parties in the electoral process. It would have been interesting to have him address what is to be done when those very institutions are undermined or compromised, but perhaps that was left for another day.

Justice Venkatachaliah echoed John Stuart Mill's lament about the inability of people to elect the incorruptible, and suggested that it was time to have a comprehensive legislation to regulate political parties. Quoting statistics on the limited number of police personnel and forensic labs in the country, he talked of how the scourge is not 'judicial explosion' but rather 'judicial exclusion'. In conclusion, while referring to democratic fatigue that had probably set in within the system, he quoted widely from historical experience across the world about how human beings, otherwise so creative, had been incapable of finding solutions for some of the pressing moral problems of humanity.

■ **GOPAL SANKARANARAYANAN**



Dr. C.D. Deshmukh

How to Rethink Trust

B.G. VERGHESE MEMORIAL LECTURE: *What Journalists Can and Should Learn from Social Media*

SPEAKER: Alan Rusbridger

CHAIR: Harish Khare
followed by

Presentation of the Chameli Devi Jain Awards 2020 for an Outstanding Woman Journalist

19 March 2021

Video recording of the award function and lecture for IIC online programmes

‘We need to rethink how trust is earned in the 21st century’, said Alan Rusbridger, as he took us on an alphabetical ride of journalism jargon, and prodded us to rethink these words: what they mean to us as journalists, and what they would mean to our readers. There is an erosion of trust in journalistic institutions, leading to ‘information chaos’ and

disengagement with news. From being transparent about our mistakes to being honest about the ‘Chinese wall’ of newsrooms, the metaphorical wall between the commercial and the editorial (is it still standing?), he deftly pointed out the lessons we can learn from the best of social media.

With social media changing the conventions of who can be a journalist, Rusbridger invited us to investigate the political and commercial motivations of those who hold enormous power over readers: the press barons, proprietors, the traditional gate-keepers and editors. Could media be independent of power when the owners themselves hold unaccountable power, he questioned. Talking about his book *News and How to Use it*, he implored us to interrogate the ways in which journalists set the lens for readers to understand the world. He cited examples to point out the disconnect between communities and journalists, the need for diversity, and urged journalists to understand their readers. He concluded with an appeal to be more emphatic in our relationship to readers, be it in earning their trust and not demanding it, or in being transparent about the rules of news gathering.

■ VIDYA SREE PULAMARASETTI

Sustainability of Forests

WEBINAR: *Targeting Sustainability of Forests through Certification and NCCF Standards*

INTRODUCTION: Shri K.N. Shrivastava

SPEAKER: A.K. Srivastava

CHAIR: Ben Gunneberg

17 February 2021

Forests play a critical role in alleviating the effects of climate change and natural disasters; they are an integral part of water and carbon cycles; conserve biodiversity, provide food, medicine, wood and renewable raw materials for our diverse requirements globally. It is one of the primary sectors that contributes significantly to our economy, providing a large variety of tangible and intangible benefits for the people at large, and are a prime source of livelihood for millions of poor people. The significance of forests on a global scale reinforces the need to manage forests in a sustainable manner, and ensure benefits from forests for present and future generations.

Forests cover 31 per cent of the earth’s surface area, but due to rising demands and unsustainable utilisation of forest resources, there has been a decline in forest area leading to a

decrease in total forest carbon stocks. India is blessed with a rich and varied wealth of forests and wildlife, which are being managed on scientific lines for more than 150 years.

Forest management is a long-term process. There has been a paradigm shift from timber primacy to ecological and stakeholder-oriented forestry, with the focus being on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), an approach that balances environmental, socio-cultural and economic objectives of forest management. Forest certification, an emerging global movement, is a sustainability-based, voluntary, non-regulatory, facilitative, conservation and marketing tool that promotes sustainable management of forests/trees outside forests.

In the context of ongoing global dialogues on climate change, the use of wood products is emerging as a versatile renewable alternative to its competing non-wood products that have higher embedded energy with adverse environmental implications. Recently, the Prime Minister of India in his talk ‘Mann Ki Baat’ has emphasised that India should adopt global standards. Large-scale adoption of certification by wood-based industries will contribute to doubling farmers’ incomes, and facilitate the implementation of the ‘Make in India Programme’ and ‘Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’ initiatives. As a country, we need to integrate the concept of ‘Grow more wood—use more wood’ in our developmental and environmental priorities. ■

Strong Ties

WEBINAR: *Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Bangladesh's Independence Day*

PANELLISTS: *Shamsher M. Chowdhury; Ashikur Rahman; Veena Sikri; and Sreeradha Datta*

CHAIR: *Ashok K. Mehta*

26 March 2021

26 March 2021 is a milestone in the history of Bangladesh. It marks the 50th year of Bangladesh's Independence. Speakers at this webinar held a dialogue on the tempestuous birth of Bangladesh, the post-independence scenario, and bilateral ties between Bangladesh and India.

Shamsher M. Chowdhury is a *Mukhtijoddha* (freedom fighter) and Bir Bikram award winner. His fascinating presentation took participants back in time to his days as a lieutenant in the Pakistan Army, the subsequent revolt when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made his famous call for freedom from the clutches of an exploitative and ruthless regime. 'We Bengalis in the Pakistan Army, men and women rallied around that

call and took up arms to fight for Liberation,' he recalled. Chowdhury was wounded in action and taken prisoner by the Pakistan Army. He remained a Prisoner of War until Bangladesh, supported by the Indian Army, emerged victorious over Pakistan on 16 December 1971.

Post the assassination of Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman, bilateral ties between India and Bangladesh have had a chequered history. The relationship between the two countries was impacted by the establishment of military rule and the upsurge of anti-India Islamic sentiments. Ties hit rock bottom between 2001 and 2006, when the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, supported by the Jamaat-e-Islami, came to power. This regime was often held responsible for sponsoring terrorism in India.

However, since Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina took over the reins of the government 12 years ago, there has been a revival of ties between the two nations. Today, the Land Boundary Agreement and the Maritime Boundary Agreement and closer cooperation on the trade and energy fronts are cited as examples of how the two neighbours can emerge as key economic players in the region. Irritants like sharing of the Teesta waters remain, but the two nations, said the speakers, continue to be bound by strong ties.

■ KAVITA CHARANJI

National Security Strategy

WEBINAR: *India's National Security Challenges and the Way Ahead*

PRESENTATION by *Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy*

DISCUSSANTS: *Arun Prakash; Deependra S. Hooda; Ajai Sahni; Arjun Subramaniam; and Philip Campose*

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

10 March 2021

Shri N. N. Vohra, President, IIC who chaired the webinar, opined that, unfortunately, there is no document to date that postulates the Indian National Security policy. In the 1990s, Pakistan started a proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir, extinguishing any distinction between internal security and external security. Hence, a more holistic approach towards national security is required.

Sujan Chenoy specified economic growth as the biggest national security challenge to strengthen India's role in the global arena, especially with respect to rising Chinese global/

regional aspirations. Arun Prakash emphasised that the Indian military has achieved a deep sense of territoriality, and it is against this backdrop that we need to introspect on our military capacity to meet future military challenges. Ajai Sahni reiterated that there is chaos developing across the world that can create opportunities as well as overwhelm us; the onus lies on us to commit ourselves to a true national security reconstruction.

Deependra S. Hooda spoke about managing the two Indian adversaries, China and Pakistan, from a security perspective. Suggesting an escalation in the budget allocations, he cautioned that Indian strategy should be to deter both adversaries from coming together. Arjun Subramaniam suggested that significant progress has been made in addressing the scope of airpower in situations like deterrence, and hence airpower can play a significant role in the less-than-war scenario. Philip Campose indicated that our national security apparatus is deficient since it appears to be geared to address the crises that have occurred in the past, rather than those likely to happen in the future. A well thought out national strategy needs to be enunciated at the earliest and reforms put in place.

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

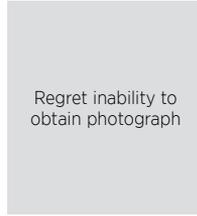
■ INDRAJIT PANT

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.



PROF. T.D. CHUGH
A-5415



MR. I.C. PURI
A-1315



**SMT. ANJALI
BANERJI**
A-1339



SHRI R.K. SHASTRI
A-1621



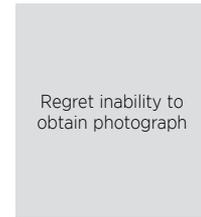
**PROF. NARINDER
KUMAR SING**
A-1795



SMT. RAJSHRI PANT
A-1194



SHRI S.R. FARUQI
A-2086



**SHRI GAJENDRA
HALDEA**
M-3730



**SHRI NIPPUN
GUPTA**
M-3996



**SHRI VINOD KUMAR
MISRA**
M-3914



**MR. PADAM KUMAR
KHANNA**
M-3841



SHRI R.C. JHA
M-2880



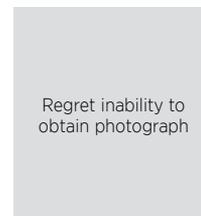
DR. B K SHARMA
M-3170



PROF. ARJUN DEV
M-3053



SHRI R.L. SUDHIR
M-2468



**SHRI MIR
NASRULLAH**
M-1720



Director's Note

Shri N.N. Vohra, President, chaired the 65th Annual General Body Meeting (AGBM) of the IIC, held on 31st March 2021, which was physically attended by about 63 Members, while the others attended on-line. After the two-hour meeting, President thanked all the participating Members for their valuable comments and suggestions. He also announced the results of the recently held elections to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee (given below). He thanked the outgoing Members of these two bodies for their valuable contributions and congratulated the incoming candidates.

- Dr. Ashis Nandy: elected to the Board of Trustees in the Individual segment.
- Professor Anil Sahasrabudhe: elected to the Board of Trustees in the Corporate segment.
- Shri Ashok Vajpeyi and Shri Suhas Borker: elected to the Executive Committee (two seats) in the Individual segment.
- Shri P.K. Das, CMD, IREDA: elected to the Executive Committee (one) seat in the Corporate (other than Universities) segment.
- Professor Dr. Mahesh Verma, Vice Chancellor, GGSIP University: elected to the Executive Committee (one) seat in the Corporate Foundation Members and Universities segment.

The special week end cuisines continued to attract a good number of Members and their guests. In the past two months the cuisines offered have included: Pan-Asian, Oriental, Parsi, Mexican, 'From Kabul to Kolkata', 'Jashn-e-Kebab', 'Delhi Dastakhwan' and 'The Maharajas: Food of the House of Sailana'. We opened the catering outlets and the hostel rooms in the Annexe with effect from 12 March; to keep expenditure under control, a limited menu is being offered till the foot falls increase to an optional level.

In the past year we have inducted 193 Short Term Associate Members, and in the Institutional segment we have admitted Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Harvard Global Research Support Centre, India; and O.P. Jindal Global University, among others.

At the end of this winter, our Gardening Officer, Anita Sharma, made arrangements for raising saplings of summer flowers in our nursery. I am happy to inform that several thousand saplings of Balsam, Celocia, Zinnia, Kochia, Sunflower, Portulaca and Cosmos were sold to our Members on no profit basis.

Before I end this note: the pandemic is back with added vigour. While we are taking all necessary precautions for the safety of our Members and staff, the second wave of COVID-19 does not harbinger well for the financial health of the Centre. As it is, we underwent a very large revenue loss in financial year 2020-21.

■ **K. N. SHRIVASTAVA**