



# diary

## INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

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### Parsiana

**FESTIVAL: A Parsi Panorama**

**Collaboration: Parzor Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage and Craft Revival Trust, March 12–16**

This glimpse of Parsi culture comprised an exhibition, a seminar, a three-day workshop on Parsi embroidery, and a gala musical evening. Complemented by its delectable cuisine, the event ended with an extravagant *lagan-nu-bhonu* dinner.



*Parsi Festival*

The exhibition, when Parzor also released a souvenir, was truly a panorama of everything Parsi. Walls were adorned with photographs depicting the religious ceremonies; interiors of the Meherjirana Library; people and palatial houses; the unique water harvesting system *Tanka* and the medical *Hadvaid* tradition; Parsi arts and crafts, and archival pictures from Parzor's collection. Mannequins draped in

majestic *garas* were arranged across the gallery. Also on display were a *kusti* (sacred girdle) weaving loom, a glorious embroidered *toran* hanging, *tanchoi* work, and furniture. Curated by Ashdeen Lilaowala, it was an embodiment of a living tradition. A small area also displayed Parzor's revival of the dying art of Parsi embroidery.

A seminar featured several eminent scholars who discussed various topics, from Parsi crafts and their religious and ecological significance, to Parsi textiles in India and Iran, the practice of *kusti* weaving and the challenges facing attempts to revive these dying arts.

The embroidery workshop proved an interesting gathering of participants from Ahmedabad to Iran. Special demonstrations of the difficult and precise art of *kusti* weaving and *toran* making were shown by experts from Navsari. The gala evening on the final day presented Penaaz Masani, who sang not only *ghazals* but also some Persian songs, Parsi *monajats*, a Sufi number and even a Punjabi song on popular demand! Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan was

honoured at the ceremony and Mrs. Gursharan Kaur was the guest of honour.

The event was truly an introduction to the syncretic nature of Parsi culture, a vital part of the rich cultural tapestry of India.

■ KRITI BAJAJ

## Amir Khusrau's Pluralism

**TALK: FRONTIERS OF HISTORY:** *Appropriating*

*Amir Khusrau to Create*

*Versions of Cultural Identity in India and Pakistan*

**Illustrated lecture by Yousuf Saeed**

**Chair: Professor Sunil Kumar, March 11**

Amir Khusrau is a household name to Indian classical music lovers and exponents of Sufi poetry. India and Pakistan both claim him as their own; but Yousuf Saeed, a filmmaker and archivist by profession, demolished some of the commonly accepted shibboleths that have prevailed, in an extensively researched deconstruction of the legendary mystic poet. Particularly citing the research done by two scholars—Rashid Malik of Lahore, and Shahab Sarmadee Saheb of Aligarh—he elaborated on the dissonance between oral and documentary sources. That Khusrau was a multi-faceted genius, there is no doubt. Among other achievements, he is reputed to

have written one ghazal a day with music and words. Up to nine volumes of poetry and prose in both Persian and Hindustani are also ascribed to him.

Yousuf Saeed lays bare, however, the claims made by various sources to inventions in music as enormous as Khusrau's literary output: the sitar, the tabla, the qawwali form, and various genres and techniques of music, or their variations such as *taranas*, *khayals*, *bandishes*, *ragas* and *talas*. While oral tradition is not to be dismissed, written sources ranging from his contemporary, Ziyaddin Barani, to fourteenth and fifteenth century textbooks on music, which do not even mention him or the sitar or tabla, to more recent scholarship, question some of these claims. Neither does his Muslim heritage limit him to a particular religious identity, as has often been claimed. If anything, Khusrau was one of the icons of the subcontinent's pluralistic culture, so beautifully proved by the songs of Gokul Krishna, *bhakti*, and others that he wrote in *Hindavi*.

■ RAZIA GROVER

## Dastan-e-Purani Dilli

**PURANI DILLI FESTIVAL: April 23 and 24**

Just as the candle burns brightest before being snuffed out, so too did the city of Delhi shortly before it was ravaged by the revolt of 1857. And it is this city, poised as it is on the brink of disaster, its culture, its poets and, above all, its language—the exquisitely elegant *zaban-e-dehli*—threatened by extinction that was faithfully re-created by a programme of unusual proportions. Conceptualized and directed by Kulsoom Noor Saifullah and Zakia Zaheer, *Dastan-e-Purani Dilli* consisted of many parts: songs, readings, theatrical enactments, dance. And holding these diverse parts together were the charismatic sisters—Zakia and Syeda.

The spartan stage of the newly-built multi-purpose hall in the conference block witnessed a remarkable

transformation. Lit by candles, decorated with flowers, and low couches bedecked with brocade cushions, it evoked a bygone era of gracious living and refined speech. Zakia Zaheer—dressed in a traditional *gharara*—ably steered the evening's programme by introducing the various segments—poetry by Murad Ali, dance by Shovana Narayan, music by Renee Singh and *dastangoi* by two bright young *dastan-go*—and narrating the story of Delhi in all its decadent glory just before its decline. Syeda S. Hameed took time off from her duties at the Planning Commission to brilliantly recapture the drama and pathos of the last *mushaira* of Delhi.

The other programme, also organized by the India Harmony Foundation, *The Sacred Word*, an illustrated lecture on Islamic calligraphy was remarkable for the refreshing candour of its speaker, Farhan Mujib, who confessed at the very outset that he knows little about his subject!

■ RAKHSHANDA JALIL

## Celebrating Tagore

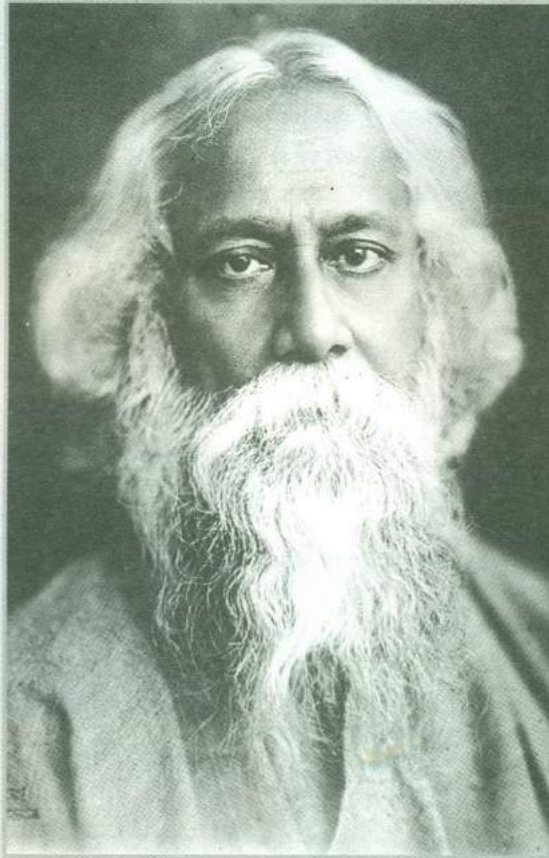
INTERNATIONAL POETRY YEAR 2011:

*Rabindranath Tagore – A Tribute*

**Seminar: Myriad Minded Personality and Translating Tagore, March 21–23**

To mark the celebrations of World Poetry Day, a befitting tribute was extended to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore through his memorable poems, and songs. The special programme series included an interesting seminar spread over two days.

This was a fascinating journey through Tagore's celebrations of nature, through his music and recitation. Tagore called himself a disciple of Nataraj and his mind resonated with the sound of the seasons: 'Each season plays its role in the cycle of creation and destruction', he once declared. Jayati Ghosh and Ruma Ghosh recreated the presentation of Tagore's musical Nataraj. The programme began with Jayati Ghosh's mellifluous voice singing *Akash bhara Surya* Rabindranath Tagore



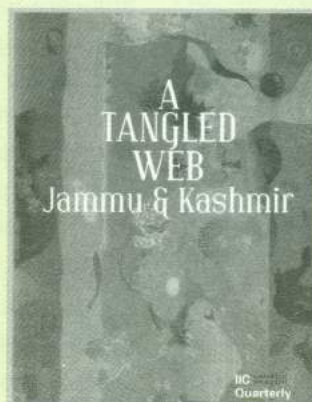
*Tara, vishwa bhara pran*, followed by *Nrtyiera taley*, *taley Hey Nataraja*, and Ruma Ghosh's recitations. Jayati concluded the session with the beautiful *Aaj Khela bhangar Khela*.

The main concept behind the seminar was to re-introduce Tagore and his myriad-minded personality, to unwrap his stereotyped (and over flaunted) image of being only a Bengali poet and hero and re-establish his importance in the national and international scene. The contemporary relevance of his ideas on education, the environment, universalism, cultural unity, the notion of inclusiveness in development, gender issues, and translating his works, were discussed.

Conceptualized by Shiela Sengupta, scholars and intellectuals unravelled the many-sided personality of Tagore. She concluded the special programme series quoting the memorable lines of Tagore himself, 'Tumi rabe nirabe bridge mamô'. (In silence you remain in our hearts).

■ MANDIRA GHOSH

The Publications Division, in collaboration with HarperCollins India, launched its theme volume of the *IIC Quarterly*, *A Tangled Web: Jammu & Kashmir*, before a distinguished audience. The book attempts to comprehend the current unrest of a land that is culturally, linguistically and geographically diverse, and traces the journey of a land once a paradise on earth to a paradise lost.



Analysts, politicians, academics and artists familiarize the reader with various political, cultural, economic and social issues at play, concerns of ordinary men and women, as well as the beauty, art and cuisine typical of the region.

The Journal was released by Dr. Karan Singh and was followed by a panel discussion. The panelists were Madhu Kishwar and Salman Haidar.

## Corruption and Governance

**TALK:** *Corruption Free Governance*

**Speaker:** Vinod Rai

**Chair:** Pratyush Sinha

**Collaboration:** IC Centre for Governance,  
March 18

The lecture on Corruption Free Governance by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Vinod Rai, chaired by former CVC Pratyush Sinha and introduced by former Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar, coincided with the Wikileaks story of cash for votes which ostensibly helped UPA I to survive the no-confidence motion.

Rai traced the history of *bhrashtachar*, gave recent illustrations of its working, and concluded by saying that the State and governments have failed in fighting

corruption. He said India was losing its credibility in the international market and suggested that civil society fill the breach left by the State. To make this point, he cited instances where NGOs and civil society groups have succeeded. He felt media and civil society together could help in rolling back corruption, and suggested that appointments of CVC, CIC, EC, CAG should be made by a collegium.

Noted journalist Prem Shankar Jha, the second speaker, rejected the notion that civil society could combat corruption. He attributed this to the absence of state funding for elections, and Article 311 of the constitution which virtually conferred immunity on civil servants. Both these are derived from Britain's unwritten constitution and have become the fountainhead of corruption. In the U.S., he said, laws for electoral funding have been amended nine times to plug leakages.

■ ASHOK K. MEHTA

## Padmapani Lecture, 2011

**TALK and EXHIBITION:** *In Awareness of the Buddha – The Landscapes of Nicholas Roerich and Bireswar Sen*

**Speaker:** Dr. B.N. Goswamy

**Exhibition:** *Mountain Mysteries–The Landscapes of Bireswar Sen*

**Collaboration:** Tibet House, April 14–18

Geshe Damdul Dorjee, the new Director of Tibet House, inaugurated a collection of Bireswar Sen's paintings, along with Shri Lokesh Chandra, art historian B. N. Goswamy, and the painter's grandson. Those present had little time to take in the breathtakingly small, jewel-hued paintings on display. Later, as Dr. Goswamy gave the twenty-third Padmapani Lecture, the slideshow enlargements opened up the exquisite paintings, each no larger than a playing card, for fuller appreciation.

In keeping with the spirit of the Padmapani Lecture Series, Dr. Goswamy wove in elements of Buddhist

philosophy. 'We are the result of all we have thought,' the Buddha has said, and the vividly imagined Himalayan landscapes Dr. Goswamy discussed—of the adventurous Russian explorer-painter Nicholas Roerich and the more sedate Bengali Bireswar Sen—testify to travels, inner and outer, that evoke awe and wonder.

Sen, Abanindranath Tagore's student who came under Roerich's influence, achieves in his tiny gem-like paintings a richness of texture, colour and perspective that matches Roerich's grander scale. Traces of Japanese influence in the foliage apart, the predominant motifs of looming and luminous mountains and caves with solitary, seeking human figures (no larger than a rice grain) suggest not only a quieter version of Roerich's spiritual quest, but also perhaps a Romantic influence, unsurprising in an artist who also taught English Literature.

Dr. Goswamy peppered his presentation with apt nuggets from Urdu poetry, an idiom alien to both artists, demonstrating a shared human quest that reverberates across cultures.

■ MAYA JOSHI

## Transmissions and Transgressions

**BOOK DISCUSSION:** *Learning through the Arts in Asia*, edited by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan; IIC-Asia Project—Primus Books. Discussants: Dr. Kavita A Sharma, Professor Yashpal, Dr. Shobita Punja, March 25

This important volume grew out of an international symposium organized by the IIC-Asia Project a few years ago. The symposium, in which educationists from all over Asia had participated, focused attention on the diverse and significant ways in which traditional knowledge is transmitted through the arts and crafts. An important step in the search for alternative pedagogical tools with which to transmit knowledge, the symposium was hailed at a later UNESCO Conference on art education

held in Lisbon. This volume presents a selection of papers presented by some of the participants at that symposium.

After a brief introduction to the book by Dr. Vatsyayan, the discussants—all of them eminent educationists—discussed the various aspects of this volume that should be paid attention when we frame educational policies and initiatives. Since all of them have worked in devising non-formal educational methodologies with which to stimulate young minds, their discussion looked at a wide spectrum of issues—from science education to the performing arts. With interesting comments from the audience, several of whom were contributors to this volume, this book discussion underlined the pivotal role played by Asia's treasury of cultural tools in keeping alive the traditions by which values, skills and civilizations are kept alive for succeeding generations. At an age when information technologies have assumed such importance, this is a legacy that needs to be remembered and strengthened.

## Celebrating Women

**FESTIVAL:** *Celebrating Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay*, April 14

A day-long conference was organized to mark the turning of the sod for the foundation of the India International Centre building by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, a Gandhian, a social reformer, a freedom fighter. She was most remembered for her contribution to the Indian Independence struggle and for being the driving force behind the renaissance of Indian handicrafts, handlooms and theatre in post-Independence India.

The first session of the day shared intimate profiles of known, as well as not so well-known, early women leaders of India, highlighting the Gandhian perspective on leadership. This was followed by a discussion about different facets of women's leadership in the media, and in the development of handicrafts. The morning sessions underscored the comprehensiveness of these leaders' interests, strengthening their connection with societies as a whole.

The afternoon session shared stories of development of leadership from the grassroots, whether this was among the fisherfolk and domestic workers in Kerala, women farmers in Maharashtra or women street vendors in Delhi. The last session discussed leadership from other spaces, and floated ideas to take women's leadership to the front and centre. The dialogue was engaging and stimulating. To conclude the celebration, a befitting Hindustani vocal recital was presented by Sawani Mudgal, disciple and daughter of Pt. Madhup Mudgal. Her accompanists were Kharak Singh on the tabla, Pravesh Malik on the harmonium and Diwan Singh on the tanpura.



■ SHUBH SHARMA

## History and Mythology

**TALK:** *The Valley of the Kauravas*

**Speaker:** Professor William Sax

**Chair:** Neeru Nanda, March 1

Kauravas are one of the two chief protagonists in the *Mahabharata*, and their defeat at Kurukshetra, the triumph of truth and justice. They belong, in our consciousness, to the dustbin of history. Yet, tucked away in a corner of the Garhwal Himalayas, in the valley of the Tons, the Kauravas are worshipped in ancient temples.

An anthropologist of international distinction, Professor Sax of the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg has spent many years studying the culture of the people of the central Himalayas, and written several books on the subject. He discovered, he said, the Valley of the Kauravas about two decades ago: '...a remote valley where villains are worshipped...where the hills, rocks and stones are associated with the *Mahabharata*'.

The first temple is of Karna, or Raja Karan as locally known, at Sankri. One may recall that Karna was not a 'Kaurava'; but, in fact, the first born of Kunti, the mother of the five Pandavas. Yet it is through his Kaurava associations that he is worshipped here. Locals believe that he was 'a virtuous prince—a progressive prince—unlike the 'evil' Duryodhana', who is worshipped a few miles upstream of the Tons. The noble and generous character of Karna is amply testified to by the *Mahabharata*, the only blemish being his silence when Draupadi was humiliated in open court. Karna speaks through his 'oracle'. 'Raja Karan' settles disputes. In his own temple, Duryodhana too speaks through his 'oracle'. Here the atmosphere is somewhat ambivalent.

Professor Sax felt that fundamental changes were taking place in Uttarakhand. From being the subject of divine kings constantly at war with each other, the people have become citizens of a secular, democratic India.

■ DEB MUKHARJI

## Indian Resonances

**TALK:** *Rediscovering Angkor*

**Speaker:** Dr. Sachidanand Sahai, March 31

*The Dance of Shiva in the Theatre State of Angkor*

**Speaker:** Dr. Sachidanand Sahai, April 1

**Chair:** Dr. Gautam Sengupta

**Collaboration:** IIC – Asia Project

The majestic monuments of the Khmer civilization in the Cambodian jungles represent some of the most glorious examples of art and culture. These remains reveal the deep influence of Indian culture over Southeast Asia during the first millennium and the earlier half of the second millennium CE. This was elaborated over two lectures by Dr. Sahai, with slides.

The most crucial period of the introduction of Brahmanical religion, and other elements of Indian culture was during the seventh and eighth centuries CE, when the first well-organized kingdom was established in the Khmer land. However, the story of Indian influence dates back to much earlier times, around the beginning of the common era, when merchant-

adventurers sailed across the seas to the shores of Southeast Asia. The story is connected with Kaundinya who is believed to have Indianized Funan—the earliest historical period of Cambodia dating between the first century and sixth century CE—by introducing the worship of Brahmanical deities, including state worship of the *Siva-linga*, the laws of Manu, the Indian alphabet and the use of the honorific '*varman*' to the names of kings and other exalted personages.

The Khmer empire, after the Funan Period was followed by the Chenla Period and finally Kambuja when the Khmers attained their glory as reflected in the complex at Angkor. The Chenla Period (550-802 CE) gave illustrious rulers.

The second lecture 'The Dance of Siva in the Theatre State of Angkor' was mainly about Preah Vihear. Couched in a rather abstract language, Professor Sahai identified the shrine with Dangrek of the Angkor empire, and was the replica of Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas. He suggested that here Siva will be dancing in the space of *Chitta* while Angkor as a theatre is his *Lila*. The temple, which is atop a mountain, is called *Sikharesvara* with two components *Sivapada-purva* and *Sivapada-paschima*.

■ B.M. PANDE

## Temple Architecture

**ILLUSTRATED LECTURE:** *The Great Temple at Thanjavur – One Thousand Years 1010 to 2010-Old Problems, New Thoughts* by Dr. George Michell March 8

A UNESCO World Heritage Monument, the Thanjavur's Brihadisvara temple has evoked admiration and sustained interest for many reasons: its architecture, idols, sculptures, paintings, wall inscriptions, reliefs among others. The celebration of its millennium has given a fresh spurt to the study and research of this grand monument.

Michell's fascinating illustrated presentation dealt mainly with the chronology, the nuances of the architectural dimension and related aspects of the temple. Referring to the monument as 'one of the supreme Hindu architectural masterpieces' and structured with 'enormous accuracy',

Michell mentioned that the Brihadisvara was not based on natural and sustained religious life associated with the place but that royal sponsorship played a significant role in the history, maintenance and the additions during the later periods of the Nayak and Maratha rule.

The imposing height, the skillfully designed upper-storey, the size of the linga, depiction of dance postures, earliest instance of royal portrait painting, the beautiful bronze icon of Nataraja, all part of the original set up, were listed as some striking features. However, some areas still pose problems in interpretation, Michell said. These included: the possibility of an upper sanctuary over the linga sanctuary, the disproportion between the stone images and the alcoves in the outside walls perhaps due to the lack of synchronization between sculptor and architect, the missing wheels in the chariot-like structure in the later addition of the Subramanya temple built during the Nayak period.

■ SRINIVASAN NATARAJAN

## Thanjavur Legacy of Dance

**PERFORMANCE:** *Celebrating the Thanjavur Legacy of Dance—A Lecture-demonstration* by Lakshmi Viswanathan, March 31

The Thanjavur legacy of dance must be viewed in a larger perspective as an integral component of the musico-devotional culture that flourished in the region for several centuries. Music and dance traditions, evolving from a much earlier period, got a firm footing when they became part of the temple worship practices according to the *agama* scriptures followed mostly in the Chola region. When RajaRaja established the Brihadisvara temple as an expression of his intense devotion to Siva, he incorporated these practices in an elaborate manner by providing endowments.

He engaged about fifty hymn singers and as many as 400 dancers, from the different temples in his kingdom, in the service of the temple. Their names,

provenance, residential details are inscribed in the temple wall: a unique feature. This temple-centric patronage system introduced by RajaRaja and the sustained inspiration provided by the temple lent a special fervour to its cultural legacy and had a widespread impact.

An accomplished dancer and scholar steeped in this tradition, Lakshmi highlighted this in her lec-dem. Her lucid explanations were interspersed with visual depictions of the temple and dance interpretation of excerpts from selected songs in the nature of devotional offerings by different composers in the region over a millennium. These included a hymn on the temple by Karuvur Devar, the spiritual mentor to RajaRaja; the famous '*varnam*' (*Dhanike*) in the *Raga Todi* composed by the Thanjavur Quartet (nineteenth century); one of Gopalakrishna Bharati depicting the pining of Nandan, an 'untouchable' for the Lord's *darsan*, and a couple of lighter pieces referred to as *javali*. It was a fitting tribute to a grand tradition.

■ SRINIVASAN NATARAJAN

## Compositional Richness

**MUSIC:** *Mitu-ranga – A Festival of Sufi Khayal Bandishes of Guru Pandit Amarnath*

**Collaboration:** Pandit Amarnath Memorial Foundation, March 9 and 10

This annual homage to the late Pandit Amarnath of the Indore gharana presented a rich repertoire of the late guru's compositions, interpreted through dance and music. The two-day event began with a moving tribute by Pandit Birju Maharaj, as he spoke of Panditji's dedication to music.

Known for his extraordinary skill as a composer, it was fitting that the performers should offer specimens of Panditji's compositional genius. The first was a musical tribute by his daughter Bindu Chawla, who chose Raga *Shyam Kalyan*. Her steady *alap* passage, clarity of *taan* patternings and the meaningful phraseology brought out the high points of the Indore *gayaki*. Kathak dancer, Shovana Narayan, took her pick from the late guru's cache of compositions, and wove exquisite *bhava* passages around the phraseology.

Next morning, Shruti Sadolikar chose *Babadur Todi* for her presentation as this was one of the late master's choices among *ragas*. A faster beat composition of the late Pandit, '*Saajan bina maaney nabi jiyaa...*,' rendered with appropriate embellishments reflected the Sufi subtext of the lyric. The compositional richness honoured the late composer's ability to endow immeasurable possibilities and intense creativity into his works. Nisha Mahajan's rendering of the *bandishes* of Guru Amarnath rounded off the festival.



Shruti Sadolikar

■ SUBHRA MAZUMDAR

## Jazz in India

**ILLUSTRATED LECTURE: FRONTIERS OF HISTORY**

*Portrait of Jazz-Musicians in India*

**Speaker:** Astri Ghosh

**Chair:** Professor Sambuddha Sen, April 8

This interesting talk was both well-researched and presented, with an audio-visual presentation that included rare recordings of Indian jazz bands going back to 1922.

Jazz came to India very early, through big bands on cruise ships that passed through Indian ports, and house bands at the large Indian hotels that catered to the expatriate community and foreign armed forces.

Astri's presentation featured tracks and photographs from the early 1920s to contemporary compositions by Indian jazz musicians, such as Amit Heri and Lew Hilt. She highlighted that several soundtracks of Bollywood

movies over the years were actually arranged and played by Indian jazz musicians, playing two videos of well-known Bollywood hits that featured Leslie Godinho on drums and Chic Chocolate on the trumpet.

The Godfather of Indian Jazz, and the man who fostered it, was bandleader and U.S.-born pianist Teddy Weatherford who came to Bombay in 1930, and later moved to Calcutta. Many leading jazz musicians—Paul Gonsalves, Jimmy Witherspoon, Rudy Cotton, Reuben Solomon and George Banks (Louis Banks' father)—cut their musical teeth in Weatherford's band. Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay were the centres of the Indian jazz scene in the swinging 1950s and '60s, to the '90s featuring such stars as Rudy Cotton, Chic Chocolate, George Banks, Braz Gonsalves, Pam Crain and Louis Banks.

The presentation was followed by a lively interaction with the audience.

■ S. CHIDAMBAR

## Greater Economic Equality

**TALK:** *The European Union, Global Governance and Social Justice*

**Panelists:** Dr. Stetter, Jesus Caldera and Zia Gurmain

**Collaboration:** Foundation for European Progressive Studies – FEPS Brussels, April 5

Public discussion among the functionaries of the European Progressive Union on global governance and social justice brought the Indian audience the voice of those Europeans who think economic growth must result in better distribution of wealth, and ecological balance.

The Washington Consensus that privileged free workings of the market economy must give way to a kind of growth that brings about greater economic equality and environmental balance, said Dr. Stetter, Secretary of the European Progressive Union. He said employment, just distribution of

wealth, environmental preservation, must be the main considerations for a global economic growth strategy. Citing the works of a foremost critique of globalization, Joseph Stiglitz, Stetter said that a self-regulating market is an illusion. Stetter also called for a greater role for BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) in the running of the world economy.

Jesus Caldera, Member of Parliament, Spain, debunked the idea of *homo economicus*, so dear to the classical laissez-faire economists, such as Hayek and Milton Friedmann. He contrasted the behaviour of the Americans and the Japanese to make the point that greater economic equality leads people to behave humanely. He said that the Japanese, during the recent earthquake, helped each other, whereas the Americans during the hurricane that struck Florida some four years ago robbed and mugged each other.

Ms. Zia Gurmain, Member of Parliament from Hungary, held the developed world responsible for the civil strife that has broken out in Libya today.

■ BHARAT WARIAVWALLA

## Urban Encounters

**EXHIBITION:** *A Walk in Melbourne – A Street*  
Documentary by Peter Nadolny

**Inauguration:** Yask Desai, March 25-31

An image of a couple of youngsters drinking water next to a car becomes a study in parking-lot performance. Another of two senior citizens, one with his head cocked to the left as he struggles to light his cigarette against a strong breeze, while the other looks away casually holding one already lit becomes one in contentment; one approaching, the other attained. Peter Nadolny's exhibition of photographs presented fragments of urban encounters, observed over four decades roaming the streets of Melbourne.

Nadolny's acutely observed moments were extracts from the rush of lives as people went about their day, taking part in unplanned choreographies;

occasionally balletic, at other times oddly unsynchronised, but always familiarly endearing. Collectively, they were pauses that could be stitched together to make up an eternity of the mundane, urban reality that never ceases to amaze, intrigue, surprise, humour and even sadden one; reflective as it is of moments we all often pass, or find ourselves in.

A modest selection of 34 prints, it consisted of a larger share of black and white images that presented intimate portraits of crowds waiting to cross a street, or people attending a fair or parade. In contrast, his colour photographs shifted to more expansive views incorporating *mise en scène* in an effort perhaps to absorb the contrasting hues that entered his frame.

Held only for a short while, the exhibition was remarkable for the range of moments and emotions the photographer captured, through a singular focus on the public life of a city he has resided and worked in.



*A Walk in Melbourne*

■ AKSHAYA TANKHA

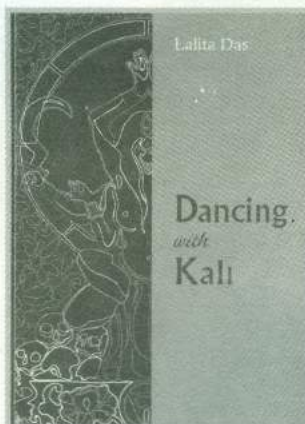
## Light and Dark

**MEET THE AUTHOR:** *Dancing with Kali*, Niyogi Books, Author: Lalita Das

**Discussants:** Gurcharan Das and Dr. Kavita A. Sharma, March 14

Lalita Das' award-winning novel is an intricately woven saga of love, revenge and retribution. It resonates with the ethos of Karma—the dance of Kali, who is both destroyer and creator. Weaving together Hindu and Christian philosophies, Goan and hippie cultures, the modalities of Western urban gentry and the Indian rural structure, it celebrates the strength of womanhood.

Das began by saying that the freedom of hippies in Goa is set against very traditional, oppressive society. There is a clash of generations, and at the end of it the message the book gives is that if one, especially a woman, acts



against Dharma, one has to pay the price. Freedom and sacrifice go hand in hand.

Gurcharan Das felt that at one level the book is a family saga; at another, a whodunnit. Das has addressed the great ancient primordial themes of Karma, Dharma, revenge, retribution and forgiveness. It has resonances of the *Mahabharata*, of Aswatthama's desire for revenge and Kripa's words of the two aspects of Karma—the past and the future, fate and responsibility.

Dr. Kavita Sharma felt that the book addresses issues of Hinduism as well as of gender. Throughout the book, there are references to Kali—a contradictory goddess, who is both destroyer and creator. She demands a price for her freedom, and that price is sacrifice. There are references to the *Mahabharata* but also issues relating to women that are explored at various levels.

■ RACHNA JOSHI

## Churchill and India

**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:** *Churchill's Secret War – The British Empire and the Ravaging of India during World War II* by Madhushree Mukherjee

**Discussants:** K.P. Fabian and Professor Mridula Mukherjee

**Chair:** Inder Malhotra, April 15

In the context of India's freedom struggle, Winston Churchill occupies a significant place. During World War II, his influence and attitude to India contributed significantly to the debates on freedom, independence, colonialism and the British Raj. Madhushree Mukherjee's book debated various issues that took place in the Indian subcontinent from the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to the transfer of power in 1947. This debate was enriched by the presence of the distinguished panelists as they discussed the historical and political relevance of Churchill's role in the context of India, and located the book as a narrative of factual history combined with interesting political twists.

Each panelist addressed Churchill's various agendas and his political role in India. They disagreed at various points, but agreed on the relevance to critically locate the political consensus and hidden agendas of the British government with reference to Churchill's influence. Also, the discussion noted how Bengal became a virtual graveyard as millions of people fell prey to Churchill's capitalist schemes. The infamous Bengal famine was his secret holocaust, affecting millions who suffered the consequences of Churchill's diabolic political strategies.

Overall, this interesting discussion agreed that the organized pauperization of Bengal reached its climax during the period of the World War II, and contributed enormously to the ruining of the Indian economy. As this indicates, the academic critique of the British Raj in India has anti-colonial and anti-capitalist perspectives. This means that Indian scholarship and intellectual debates can contribute to the transformation of Indian society to becoming a truly democratic polity.

■ VINEETH MATHOOR

## Ways of Seeing

**FILM FESTIVAL:** *The 7th IAWRT Asian Women's Film Festival*

**Collaboration:** International Association of Women in Radio and Television; Max Mueller Bhawan; Sangat South Asia; and Zubaan  
March 6, 7 and 8

The 7th International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) Asian Women's Film Festival celebrated Women's Day with gusto. Titled 'Ways of Seeing: Rhetoric and Reality', the films were insightful and bold commentaries on women and their lives.

Nivedita Menon was the discussant for the set of films of the section on 'Now You See It, Now You Don't: Identities, Bodies and Politics'. She discussed non-normative identities—an idea reflected in each of the films. In *Untitled* (Ferwa Ibrahim, 2007) the artist's attempt to trace her own shadow, and the failure in successfully doing so finds its resonance in *There is a Spider Living Between Us* (Tejal Shah, 2008), where the filmmaker tries to understand the dimensions of her desires through a mixture of animation and poetry, and personal narratives. Both films look at the ways in which the body and identity collide and come together.

Menon analyzed this interesting conflict from the purview of the State and its mechanisms of

surveillance, such as the Census, where a pre-defined grid or structure asks people to identify themselves within prescribed identities that are both normative and legible for the State. Within such limits of self-definition, Tejal Shah's film appropriately voiced the conflicts of a queer woman's desire for life and love—just as *Untitled* forced us to think about the constraints that we face in defining ourselves.

The search for identity continued in *Sosefina*, a student film that captured teenage angst in a Maori girl trying to fit into Australian mainstream society. Shakuntala Kulkarni's provocative film, *Is it Just a Game?*, showed how the game of *kabaddi* resembles the struggles and violence of male-female interaction. *Made in India* (Vaishali Sinha and Rebecca Haimowitz) dealt with the equally controversial issue of commercial surrogacy. Shot in Texas and Mumbai, the film comes at a time when the reproductive tourism industry in India has been in the news for the practice of 'renting out wombs'. The directors bring forth multiple, even conflicting, voices together within the surrogacy arrangement. *The Zone* (Guliz Saglam and Feryal Saygilgil) on the women workers of the free trade zone in Turkey chronicled similar concerns regarding labour rights. In many ways, the film resembled the struggles and concerns that women workers face across the world.

■ ANINDITA MAJUMDAR

## Obituary

|        |                            |        |                                    |
|--------|----------------------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| A-0874 | Shri T.R. Mulchandani      | A-4357 | Ms. Mrinalini Reddy                |
| A-1038 | Smt. Kowsiki Vishwanathan  | A-4486 | Shri Ramesh Chandra Jain           |
| A-1286 | Shri Ajit Bhattacharjea    | M-0702 | Shri J.R. Nagarwalla               |
| A-2025 | Brig. (Retd.) A.K. Sahukar | M-1189 | Prof. B. Sengupta                  |
| A-3274 | Mrs. Pran Seth             | M-2274 | Air Marshal (Retd.) Edul Dhatigara |
| A-3787 | Shri Ranjit M. Shahani     | M-3168 | Shri Rama Kant Shukla              |

## Highlights for May-June 2011

### SUMMER DELIGHTS—A FESTIVAL OF OPERA, BALLET AND CONCERT FILMS

Curated and introduced by Dr. R.P. Jain

**2 June 2011**

**Franz Liszt – Dante Sonata**

Pianist: Alfred Brendel

**Franz Liszt - A Faust Symphony**

With Kenneth Riegel (tenor)

Tanglewood Festival Chorus - Chorus master:

John Oliver

Boston Symphony Orchestra - Conductor: Leonard Bernstein

**3 June 2011 at 6:00 pm**

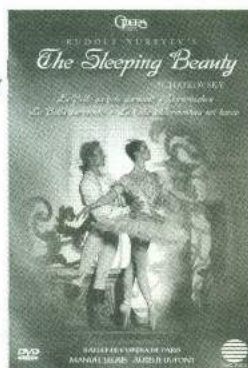
**The Sleeping Beauty**

Music: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Ballet in three acts

Choreography: Rudolf Nureyev

With Aurelie Dupont, Manuel Legris, Vincent Cordier  
Orchestra and Ballet of the  
National Opera of Paris



**6 June 2011**

**Salome**

Music: Richard Strauss

With Teresa Stratas, Astrid Varnay, Hans Beirer

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Karl Bohm

**10 June 2011**

**Gustav Mahler -**

**Kindertotenlieder** (Songs on  
the death of children)

With Thomas Hampson

(baritone); Lucia Popp

(soprano); Walton Groenroos

(baritone)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Leonard Bernstein



**Gustav Mahler - Symphony no: 1 'The Titan'**

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Leonard Bernstein

**13 June 2011**

**Manon**

The Royal Ballet, Covent Garden

Choreography: Kenneth Macmillan

With Jennifer Penny, Anthony Dowell, David Wall

Orchestra of the Royal Opera House conductor;

Ashley Lawrence

**16 June 2011 at 6:00 pm**

**La Cenerentola**

Music: Gioacchino Rossini

With Frederica von Stade, Francisco Araiza, Claudio

Desderi, Paolo Montarsolo

Orchestra and chorus of La Scala

Conductor: Claudio Abbado

**20 June 2011**

**Lang Lang Live at Carnegie Hall**

Recorded live at Carnegie Hall, New York on 7  
November 2003

**24 June 2011 at 6:00 pm**

**Madama Butterfly**

Music: Giacomo Puccini

With Mirela Freni, Placido

Domingo, Christa Ludwig

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Herbert von Karajan



**28 June 2011**

**La Fille Mal Gardée**

Ballet with music by Ferdinand Hérold

Music freely adapted

Conductor: John Lanchbery

With Lesley Collier, Michael Coleman, Brian Shaw

Choreography: Frederick Ashton

### VENUE: AUDITORIUM

This issue of the *Diary* has been assembled and edited by Ira Pande, Chief Editor; Rachna Joshi, Senior Asst. Editor; and Ritu Singh, Asst. Editor. Published by Ravinder Datta, for the India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi-110 003, Ph: 24619431. Designed by Poonam Bevlisahi at FACET Design, D-9, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110 024, Ph: 24616720, 24624336 and printed by Mastan Singh at I.G. Printers, 104, DSIDC Shed, Okhla Phase-I, New Delhi - 110 020.