



IIC AUTUMN 2021
Quarterly



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ISSN NO. 0376-9771

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Autumn 2021
Volume 48, Number 2

India International Centre Quarterly is printed and published by Kanwal Wali for India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi 110 003

Price: ₹ 125

Annual Rates

India: ₹ 500; Abroad: \$ 45 (by airmail)

INSTITUTIONS

India: ₹ 750; Abroad: \$ 55 (by airmail)

BANK CHARGES for Outstation Cheques:
₹ 50 / \$ 15

Payments should be made by bank draft or cheque payable to **INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE** at New Delhi

Enquiries may be addressed to Rohit Singh (Tel: 24609330);
E-mail: publication.iic@nic.in

Typeset at Glyph Graphics Private Limited, Delhi 110 096
glyphgraphics2013@gmail.com

Printed at Naveen Printers, New Delhi

The India International Centre is a society promoting understanding and amity between the different communities of the world by undertaking or supporting the study of their past and present cultures, by disseminating or exchanging knowledge thereof and by providing such other facilities as would lead to their universal appreciation

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EDITORIAL

The festivals of Dussehra and Diwali—with all the smaller festivals associated with them—have ended and we now look forward to Christmas and New Year, the holiday season that we have imported and made ours with such enthusiasm. But the festivities have not lessened the darkness that envelops us. One has only to open the newspaper in the morning to see page after page of bad news—political, financial, socio-economic, public health and straight-forward crime. There is almost nothing that brings a smile to the face and the hope of some little light under the bushel. This issue is being published a little late because it was difficult to commission and receive articles during the COVID-19 surge in the first half of this year. It was an extremely unfortunate and difficult time that brought personal sorrow to many.

This issue, we hope, will help to lighten the mood to a certain extent, with some delightful pieces and the photo essay.

As always, the general issues are a variety of contributions, and space is limited for detailing each one. The articles range from history and politics, a piece on steel cities and the modern republic, to a personal prison narrative, an interview with Boman Irani, a brief narrative of an Israeli's observations of the lines of similarity in Indian and Jewish cultures, among others.

Anil Nauriya's well-researched article is an informative piece on a very important part of recent Indian history—the non-cooperation struggle—in its centenary year. Aditya Mukherjee's article on 'Democracy in India' is also important in the context of the ongoing contentious debate on the challenges to Indian democracy.

Democracy also underlines other articles, such as those by Arindam Banik and Vikas Rawal on the status and future of India's agriculture and the intent of the three farm laws (that have now been repealed), and Natasha Narwal's fascinating personal narrative on her prison experience for her crime of 'speaking out'.

A tribute to Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 'the most distinguished figure of the Urdu literary world', according to the author, makes a

significant contribution to this issue.

The interview with Boman Irani that provides details of his family, as also their arrival in India, is pure delight.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Laxman, known to the world as R. K. Laxman, would have been 100 this year. In celebration of his life's work, the highlight of this issue is a photo feature of his works, with an accompanying essay by Dharmendra Bhandari. We know him best for 'The Common Man' and for his daily cartoon strip, 'You Said It' in *The Times of India*, but the versatility of his work is evident on the covers of this issue. These are from his vast collection of paintings.

Wishing our readers a very happy new year.



OMITA GOYAL