

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE Diary

Volume XXXVI No. 3

June – July 2022

Cross-cultural Encounters

**IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE—CULTURE AND CREATIVITY:
LEGACY AND CHANGE:** *Art Appreciation Workshops and
Screening of Films on Artists*

COLLABORATION: *Organised in collaboration with
National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA); the workshops
were conducted at NGMA, Jaipur House, Shershah Road,
near India Gate*

23–25 July 2022

Indian modern artists did not fit the trope of 'modernists' in the Western definition of modernism, as they were living out the actual transition from colonialism to liberalisation. As opposed to Western modernism, Indian modernism therefore cannot be seen from a linear and monolithic perspective. Instead, it should be seen in the context of the cross-cultural encounters experienced from both sides of the colonial divide. This programme made an essential intervention in the theme of modernism in Indian art by organising talks, workshops and movie screenings to help participants understand the influences on modern artists and their art, placing them in the context of the long 20th century. The events systematically took us through the artists' lives, methods, inspirations and artistic evolution, reiterating that Indian artists were encouraged to draw inspiration from their traditional legacies, even as they were recasting these by claiming a modernist identity for themselves.

Arpana Caur delivered the lecture titled 'Amrita Sher-Gil's Artistic Legacy', recounting how, through her frequent visits to the NGMA, she discovered Sher-Gil, which was a turning point in her own artistic journey. Although the lecture did not detail the life of Sher-Gil, it was a window for participants to understand how Sher-Gil's artistic oeuvre managed to influence many women to venture into the field of art, largely occupied by men at that time. A workshop was simultaneously organised in the Amrita Sher-Gil gallery, where artists drawing inspiration from Sher-Gil's paintings used charcoal crayons to reproduce them.

The screening at the IIC of *Amrita Sher-Gil: Une Rapsodie Indienne*, with an introduction by Yashodhara Dalmia, was intriguing because it crystallised how the personal shape provides inspiration for an artist. Sher-Gil, a Hungarian–Indian, received a formal education in art in the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Through her training in Western art, she discovered India, and her artistic evolution is testimony to that. In a letter to her parents, she writes, '...a fresco from Ajanta is worth more than the whole of Renaissance'. Rather than rejecting the immediate past, Sher-Gil's art showed the multifaceted style of art by the amalgamation of inspirations from historical and traditional paintings, coupled with her vision and representation of the people of the subcontinent. Dalmia, drawing from her paintings, showed that although Sher-Gil was a modern artist, she used traditional methods for her paintings. She captured the mundane and ordinary with undulating body movements, and the images of the women she painted had layered meanings.

Ramkinkar Baij, another iconic painter of the 20th century, was trained in Shantiniketan under the legendary Nandalal Bose. Shantiniketan as a seat of learning and hub of intellectuals was emerging as an alternative to Western modernism at the time. The film, *Ramkinkar Baij: A Personality Study*, by Ritwik Ghatak and with an introduction by K. S Radhakrishnan, sought to unravel the man behind the persona. Baij expressed his individuality in his art, bringing out the conjunction between traditional Indian and Western art, and yoking it to his contemporary reality. Radhakrishnan spoke about how Baij drew on a wide range of modernist styles, from Impressionism to Surrealism, and freely cross-connected them. Ghatak could not complete his film because of his untimely death; however, through his recorded conversations, he managed to capture Baij in his element, who remained grounded throughout his life. Baij, who hailed from a rural background, brought out a methodological shift and ventured to create art that did not only capture the proletarian bodies as the 'other', but assimilated and valorised them by giving them a more profound meaning.

The other events were the NGMA lecture on 'The Genesis of Modern Art' by Sujata Prasad; a curated gallery walkthrough of *Hastantaran*, a retrospective of Nandalal Bose, conducted by Ruchi Singh Baoni; a live studio session inspired by the maestros of the Bengal School; and the screening of Satyajit

Ray's *The Inner Eye* (1972; English), a film by Satyajit Ray, introduced by R. Siva Kumar, Ray's tribute to Benode Behari Mukherjee, legendary artist and one of the pioneers of Indian modernism.

■ DOLAN SAMANTA

Evolution of Imaginations about Ambedkar

EXHIBITION: *Baba Saheb: An Extraordinary Philatelic Journey (1966–2022)* Curated by Vikas Kumar
Inauguration by Gopal Guru

Exhibition on view: 8 to 21 June 2022:

As part of the exhibition, there were two related programmes in the Art Gallery:
Ambedkar, Stamps and the Indian Republic
Illustrated lecture by Vikas Kumar

11 June 2022

Gallery Walk Through

Conducted by Vikas Kumar, curator of the exhibition

COLLABORATION: Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

20 June 2022

Curated by Vikas Kumar, this was the first exclusive philatelic exhibition that put together a comprehensive archive on the philatelic afterlife of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Vikas used a rich variety of postal materials to throw fresh light on the shifting evolution of the official and popular imaginations about Ambedkar, dividing it into three chronologically arranged segments.

The first segment began with the commemorative postage stamp on Ambedkar issued in 1966. The philatelic material of this period was limited to commemoratives and their information brochures that presented him as a standalone political figure and social reformer. He was portrayed as a patriot who played an important role 'during India's



transition from a colony to a republic', but these brochures also noted that he was 'a highly controversial figure', who 'often appeared' to take 'extreme positions on social and political matters'. The segment

concluded with the third commemorative stamp issued in 1991 after he was posthumously conferred with the Bharat Ratna.

The second period (1992–2010), when Ambedkar was included in the special definitive series and quoted on inland letter cards and postcards, marked his entry into the philatelic pantheon hitherto restricted to Gandhi and Nehru. In this period, Ambedkar was no longer confined to commemorative stamps but figured in a very wide variety of philatelic material.

In the third period (2012–2022), postage stamps and special covers celebrated him as a pan Indian leader by representing the different stages of his life and tracing his journey across the country. The segments on postal stationery, including calendars, inland letter cards and postcards, and special covers commemorating the platinum jubilee of Ambedkar's tour through coastal Andhra Pradesh, were among the highlights of the exhibition.

As part of the exhibition, there were two related programmes with the curator: an illustrated lecture and a gallery walk-through.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK

A Work in Progress

RELEASE OF THE IIC QUARTERLY (WINTER 2021-SPRING 2022): *The Working of the Indian Constitution* by Dr. Karan Singh
Edited by Arghya Sengupta and Omita Goyal

CHIEF GUEST: Justice (Shri) P. S. Narasimha

SPEAKERS: Justice (Smt.) Anjana Prakash and Arghya Sengupta

11 July 2022



Older than the Indian Republic, witness to the Union Jack flying over Rashtrapati Bhavan, member of the drafting committee on fundamental duties, signatory of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, and Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *IIC Quarterly*, Dr. Karan Singh, released the theme issue—'The Working of the Indian Constitution', a subject chosen to acknowledge the increasing interest in the subject among ordinary citizens. In

his opening remarks, Dr. Singh regarded the Constitution as a major breakthrough, bringing together millions of people into the political system who were outside the pale for centuries.

The speakers did not provide an unqualified defence of the Constitution. The gap between what was contained in the Constitution and its actual working was debated. Justice Narasimha said that the Constitution transformed the people of India from subjects to citizens. Not shying away from the drawbacks, he emphasised the urgent need to tackle delays in disposal of cases, for justice delayed would be irrelevant to those who suffer. He gave an example of a divorce case which was still pending for 25 years. Any ruling by the court, as also the Constitution which promises the Rule of Law, would be rendered meaningless to the husband and wife. Justice (Retd.) Anjana Prakash spoke of the inequalities still existing at ground. She was categorical in stating that in fact, no power had been passed on to the people. The discriminatory system was still alive with respect to gender, caste and religion.

Arghya Sengupta, while accepting that there were several problems, emphasised that the framework of the Constitution provided space for conflicting views to be expressed. Yet he agreed that we may not have understood, or achieved, all the attributes of citizenship promised by the Constitution. The Constitution, he concluded, is a work in progress.

The aim of the issue was to take the Constitution out of the preserve of lawyers and judges. The articles have therefore been written by activists, politicians, filmmakers, apart from lawyers and judges. The common thread through all the discussions was inclusiveness—ranging from articles on women, Dalits, the LGBTQIA* community, and religious and other minorities. In the current atmosphere of polarisation all over the world, the Constitution is therefore a powerful antidote. While all the speakers agreed that much still needed to be done, there was no doubt about the statement made by Dr. Karan Singh at the beginning of the programme: ‘What stands between us and chaos is the Constitution’.

■ PRASHANTO SEN

An Equal Voice

IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS:

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE: *Women and Social Media*

PANELLISTS: *Abhinandita Dayal Mathur; Natasha Jog; Priyanka Kher*

MODERATOR: *Mahima Kaul*

30 June 2022

Although the number of women using social media has grown exponentially in recent years, they have a lot of catching up to do in comparison to their male counterparts. Online harassment and access to technology are two critical factors preventing them from exploiting the full potential of various platforms on social media. This needs to be addressed on an urgent basis, both through legal measures and awareness campaigns to ensure a level playing field on social media.

These were among a host of issues highlighted in this discussion. There was all-round agreement that social media has given a voice to women and provided a space to express themselves in the safety of their homes. Thanks to this technology, many have become entrepreneurs with the use of WhatsApp and Instagram. Others have got an opportunity to broadcast themselves on YouTube and Tik Tok. There are also women who have been able to participate in electoral politics and assert themselves politically, even if they are unable to physically attend a rally.

Abhinandita Dayal Mathur pointed out that social media has cut class and general barriers as women across different social strata and backgrounds are using it. There has been a clear shift from mere consumption to broadcasting, she said. Social media has empowered women as they are now able to engage in political and governance issues, while earlier they were unable to voice their opinion on these matters.

Despite these positive developments, the participants agreed that technology has amplified all that is wrong with our society. For instance, the digital divide is an undeniable reality as there are far fewer women on social media than men. The harassment and abuse encountered by women on a regular basis often stops them from using social media, and also serves as a reason to deny young girls access to a mobile phone. It is not just the case of people censoring women, but women also end up censoring themselves.

Aparajita Bharti maintained that by curtailing access to social media, women are unable to take advantage of social services and are denied access to educational and economic opportunities. ‘It’s not enough to have a voice on social media but to have an equal voice’, she observed.

According to Priyanka Kher, a multi-pronged approach is necessary to deal with the problem. Besides a public awareness campaign, there is need for specific laws against online harassment, as well as a legal framework to strengthen the response mechanism for such complaints.

■ ANITA KATYAL

Saving Children

EXHIBITION: *Life in the Shadows*
Photographs by Chitvan Gill

2 to 14 July 2022

This exhibition of beautiful and moving portraits brought us 'face to face' with the hard truth that our economic system is ugly, skewed and brutal. Children, our future, our collective hope as a nation, with eyes innocent and unaware of the deep scarring caused by their life situations, look at the photographer, and through her, at us. Us, the viewers, in a wide, clean and cooled space, while their hands and feet are grimy, hurt perhaps irrevocably, by labour. Their tiny fingers and delicate years being exchanged for a pittance. How dignified they look, aware that they supplement the family income, that they are vital to keep things going.

Economists around the world are committed to maintain the status quo of systems, nudging the fiscal trajectory ever upward, magnifying profits and turnovers. Numbers. Numbers which overlook the millions of lives crushed like flowers underfoot. Labour laws state that child labour is illegal. This only translates into turning the poorest citizens criminal. Children working know they have to run suddenly, clean up their appearance, and emerge pretending to be



just visiting, whenever 'inspectors' arrive. Early training in breaking the law.

An exhibition to make one weep. A collection of photographs to kick

one into doing something to try to change the situation, perhaps to save at least one child, one family, to imagine that these children could be our own offspring. Realise that they ARE our very own.

The photographs themselves were lovely. The faces showed dignity, pride, self-assurance. The play of light was delightful. The compositions elegant. Some text written by Chitvan, as well as some appropriate quotes, interspersed the arrangement of photographs. 'I see these families...the refrain is almost constant, "Who wants to see their children work", I have not asked them this. They just tell me of their own accord'.

This exhibition was Chitvan's attempt to make us address the 'tremendous complexities that drive this vicious cycle of exploitation' that forces entire families, with their children, to live out their lives in an eternal shadow.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

Hitting the High Notes of Europe

PERFORMANCE: *Concert—3 Sopranos and Guests*
Presented by The Lyric Ensemble of Delhi
Sopranos: Aastha Mohapatra; Meera Arora; and Serene Philip
Contralto: Ankur Dang
Baritone: Johnson Joseph Wilson
Accompanied on the piano by Hanna Pashkevich

14 July 2022

As this marvellous show ended with an encore of Barcarolle, one was thankful for in-person concerts returning, making it possible to have an experiential connect, after two and a half years, with the talented soloists comprising the Lyric Ensemble of Delhi. To rewind to the beginning of the evening, which was the Ensemble's first concert of the season, the audience welcomed the multi-lingual collection curated to showcase a smorgasbord of European vocal music.

Opening with the expressive soprano, Aastha Mohapatra, the music aficionados were treated to flawless arias in Italian, a song for night and dreams in German, and an evocative 'Song of Radha' in English. Then followed the Barcarolle duet by Ankur Dang and Meera Arora that enthralled the crowd,

after which Dang, an accomplished contralto, performed a solo in German and finished with an aria in Italian, donning gypsy attire.

The third performer, Arora, continued to captivate the audience with an Italian art song and a German aria. This soprano's aria in Czech ended an expert performance. She was followed by the only gentleman performer of the evening, the baritone, Johnson Joseph Wilson, who sang energetically and skillfully in English and German.

The last artiste, Serene Yoneko, started with a sacred solo cantata in German, moving on to an Italian art song. This soprano then performed the very demanding 'Queen of the Night' in German. This aria from 'The Magic Flute' by Mozart is known for its very high *tessitura*, and Yoneko was very impressive as she reached the high notes with ease, showcasing immense capacity and skill. Hanna Pashkevich accompanied each performer as the constant pianist, keeping pace with the dynamism of the challenging pieces.

The evening came to an end with all the soloists taking a bow along with their tutor, Situ Singh Buehler, and were applauded resoundingly by a very appreciative audience. And then, we were treated to an unforgettable encore!

■ RIMA HANDA ZAHEER

Movements of Threads

EXHIBITION: Kalbelia Craft Revival Project

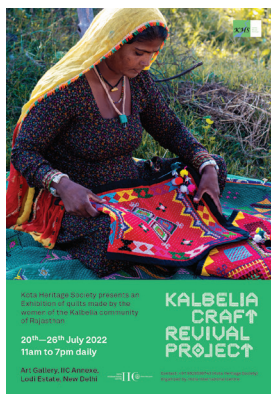
An exhibition of quilts made by the women of the Kalbelia community in Rajasthan as part of the Kalbelia Craft Revival Project

Inauguration by Ritu Sethi, Founder, Craft Revival Trust; and Mewa Sapera of the Kalbelia community

Illustrated lecture by Dr. Madan Meena *Quilting Memories*

COLLABORATION: Kota Heritage Society

20 to 26 July 2022



The one and half year project led by Dr. Madan Meena was initiated as part of the COVID-19 economic sustainability programme when migrant women returned to their regional home in Bundi district. A practising visual artist, Meena is researching de-notified nomadic tribes. His curation of 16 quilts displayed the art of six women from the Kalbelia community; the presentation included three quilts

of the same genre from Meena's rare collection from Sindh, Pakistan.

An observer remarked seeing the fluid dance of Padmashri Kalbelia dancer Gulabo, 'it appeared that the body was boneless, and it moved like fluid rays of energy emulating the snake'. Entering the exhibition hall, the visitor was

surrounded by quilts embodying a plethora of embroidered threads moving like the dancing body, alive with motion, colour, meaning, and leaning to communicate a rural nomadic worldview.

The Kalbelia caste represents the intangible heritage skill network that has subcastes such as 'the Jog-Nath singing mystical minstrels, saperas—or the snake-charmers, madaris—the animal trainers (bears, monkeys, and even pythons)—*salat* or stone workers, and those who work with bamboos'.

Although most Kalbelia skills are practised by men, the women are traditional bearers of quilting, embroidery and dance. All three heritage skills are inspired by and carry the rhythm so intrinsic to natural environments. 'The Kalbelia quilting, characterised by applique work and running stitches, is embellished by embroidery to join and layer the cloth. The traditional embroidery motifs re-positioned in the works include those symbols present in their everyday life, professions, dresses, biodiversity and cuisine—camel, tortoise, corn, lattice stonework and patterns of jewellery.' The slithering snake-like threads made by nimble fingers created layered registers on coloured cloth. They communicate improvised stories building on traditions, the contemporary 'context' of the environment and skills.

'To decode the three quilts from Sindh, Pakistan remains a challenge. A *madari* in Gujarat could interpret just one', says Meena. The Sindhi quilts provide another missing piece in the partition story of fractured geopolitics between India and Pakistan, where movements of threads echo ruptures of displacement and of nomads caught between two worlds.

■ NAVINA JAJA

An Out-of-the Box Thinker

BOOK LAUNCH: *Let me Hijack your Mind: Restart your Life with Freedom* by Alyque Padamsee, co-authored with Vandana Saxena Poria (Viking: 2022)

INTRODUCTION AND MODERATOR: Rael Padamsee

PANELISTS: Paro Anand; Feisal Alkazi; and Vandana Saxena Poria

23 June 2022

Vandana Saxena Poria collaborated with Alyque Padamsee for three years prior to his death to put the book together from 175 hours of conversation with him. Even after his death, he continues to live on and be controversial with his very original out-of-the-box thinking. The launch included a very engaging discussion between the speakers who related their experiences as educators, since they too chose non-conventional holistic ways of teaching. Vandana set the ball

rolling by talking about how Alyque had his own ways of interpreting the world with a sardonic sense of humour. About his work, he said, 'I love to see style we're gonna try and shake up the status quo and get everyone to think differently'. Some of his supposed 'think differently' social reform suggestion included a five-year marriage licence renewable like a driving license, taxpayers union, which no government in the world would like, freedom to choose one's own religion. One of his ideas, meant in jest, has been taken seriously by the industry, because it is profitable: fairness creams for men!

Feisal Alkazi uses theatre to help students come to terms with the complexities of the world—class barriers, lifestyle differences, creating synergies between people of different backgrounds, bringing children closer to heritage and history, helping people overcome depression through persuasive auto suggestion. On a personal note, Feisal described marriage as two people walking together.

Paro Anand also spoke about how she hijacked her students' minds in education: 'I ask my students to think about a subject they hated in school. Now think about the teacher. Is there a connection?'

Raell Padamsee participated online and spoke about her father and the book. There were also recorded messages by Shashi Tharoor, Ronnie Screwvala and Shabana Azmi.

Alyque had made his own Ten Commandments which were read out in the end—I leave you with just a few of them: 'thou shalt build bridges not years; thou shalt not practice double standards; and thou shalt always respect women'.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

India's Telecom Journey

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Battles of Telecom*
By A.K. Bhargava (Rumour Books India: 2022)

DISCUSSANTS: T.K. Arun; Prashant Singhal; Justice (Shri) Navin Chawla; Justice (Shri) Shiva Kirti Singh; and A.K. Bhargava

MODERATOR: Rajat Mukherjee

CHAIR: Ravi Shankar Prasad

27 June 2022

Much has been written about India's telecom journey, but the perspectives that have been expanded on by this author are both unique and scholarly. From a brief peek into the history of the origin and use of the Telegraph in 1857, to the broad vision of Industry 4.0, AI and IoT, there is something in it for everyone. Being an ITS officer, and having seen the developments as an Appellate Member in the TDSAT, the book has been neatly and interestingly divided into 18 chapters, reminding us of the 18 'parvas' of the Mahabharata. The 'battles' are not necessarily about disputes or controversies, but about types of major challenges of the market-place of regulation or of business encountered in the Indian telecom journey.

There are sections addressing spectrum, licensing, EMF, manufacturing and consumer needs, among others. With over 40 years of experience in the sector, the narrative includes the era of monopoly, the period of deregulation, and the development of policy that would eventually result in humongous growth, benefitting the average citizen. Fallow and idle spectrum was auctioned and put to good use through a careful balance between the state's rights and public good. There is acknowledgement that the regulatory environment was strengthened with the establishment of TRAI, and its creation of a large body of research and work in areas of interconnection, tariff regulation, consumer welfare and licensing, among other topics, has provided a solid foundation for the growth of the sector. The death knell of BSNL and MTNL is discussed—'How to lose a battle'—and eventually the introduction of the Internet. We are left with the exhortation that 'a constant and concerted battle must be waged against the digital divide'. This is the ultimate battle that must be won at all costs if we are to leave no citizen behind in the march to being the digital economy that is being envisioned. It is eminently readable, informative, and incisive in narrating the events of the sector, and a definite addition to the bookshelf.

■ T.V. RAMACHANDRAN

A Journey Back

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Tribes of India: Realities and Representations*
Edited by Ruby Bhardwaj and Charu Kala (Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: 2022)

DISCUSSANTS: Nandini Sundar; Swati Pal; Veio Pou; Ruby Bhardwaj; and Charu Kala

CHAIR: Anvita Abbi

26 July 2022

Tribes have always been misunderstood by society. They are marginalised, considered superstitious, underdeveloped, unscientific, and treated in a most undignified manner.

However, they possess knowledge of several issues much before so-called 'modern' civilisation did: climate change, tsunamis, community living, oceanography, indigenous medicines, money, folklore, and oral traditions of imparting knowledge and wisdom.

According to the speakers, tribal communities for centuries have been dominated and controlled by outsiders. This is a major threat to their habitats, their languages, traditions, literature and culture. They are, in fact, victims of cultural genocide.

The time is now ripe for unearthing their knowledge, literature, wisdom, and to give them the dignity that they truly deserve. This book offers critical insights into questions that are fundamental as well as contemporary in the field of tribal research.

Swati Pal stressed the need to treat tribals with dignity. She said the book is the result of papers presented at a seminar in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi Government College (Pondicherry University), Mayabunder, under the Vidya Vistar scheme of the University of Delhi.

Anvita Abbi said that tribes, or Adivasis, constitute the 'First Voices' of Indians. She observed that the Santhals are the very first voice in the mainland. She went on to say that this is an opportune time to note that the decade from 2022 to 2032 has been declared by UNESCO as the decade of Indigenous Tribes.

According to the distinguished speakers, the word 'Tribe' is a prerogative as they are the most egalitarian societies. They are the very grassroots of society. They are neither underdeveloped nor unscientific.

Nandini Sundar provided a brief synopsis of the book, and talked about our misconceptions about tribal communities.

Veio Pou described the book as a journey to the unexplored as this is a new goal and a new path. The Adivasis, although themselves dying from starvation, are still welcoming of their guests.

■ MANDIRA GHOSH

Multilingual Confluence of Poetry and Music

POETRY: IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE POETRY READINGS— CULTURE AND CREATIVITY—LEGACY AND CHANGE A YEAR OF POETRY AT IIC:

Conceptualised by Gitanjali Surendran

A Lamp in the Sun: An evening of raga-poetry through two millennia in six languages

By S. Anand

21 July 2022

Poetry lovers were treated to a heady confluence of poetry and music in six languages, by the multi-faceted S. Anand.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's photo adorned with white flowers resonated perfectly with the tone of the evening's poetry session, filled with music, Dhrupad and Dalit poetry.

In the poetry session titled, 'A Lamp in the Sun', Anand explored how a Tamil Sangam-era poem, a *vachana* in Kannada, an *abhang* in Marathi, a *nirguni shabad* in Braj, a *sutta* in Pali, and a ghazal in Urdu, could find solace in ragas.

The unique and predominant theme in Anand's rendition of poetry and ragas was his conflict with Brahminism, and its inherent caste barriers leading to his break from singing for 15 years (1999 to 2014); thereafter, he found his moorings again, encouraged by a friend, and bought his first tanpura.

Although Anand learnt in the *aalap pradhan* genre, questioning the very idea of orthodox purity in music, he chose not to focus only on aalaps and the conventional style of Dhrupad. His fusion style of singing rendered with Dhrupad reinforced the poetic themes Anand talked about, and gave the audience a sublime experience.

Anand commenced with a poem by Sembulappyalneerar, a Sangam-era poet, from the anthology, *Kurunthogai*, dating to

200 BCE. Titled, 'Like Pouring Rain Red with Earth', if one poem in the anthology emphasises godly religious devotion, the rest are secular and equally describe longing and love. For Anand personally, it was about liberating oneself from the shackles of caste.

*What's my mother to yours?
What blood ties our fathers?
...Our hearts in love mingle like
Pouring rain red with earth.*

His second poem, 'The Temple of Me', was a 12th-century *vachana* (a word, a promise, and always remembered and passed on orally) by Basava and translated by A.K. Ramanujan. It speaks of the humility of the underprivileged devotee and acknowledges him. As Basava questions the need for building temples and says, as a destitute person, what temples can he construct?

*The rich will make temples for Lord Shiva.
What shall I, a poor man do?*

Anand then sang two *abhangs*—a 17th-century *abhang* by Marathi poet Sant Tukaram, and the second, a 14th-century *abhang* by Dalit poet Sorayabai, who refers to herself as Chokyaachi Mahaari—a castiest slur. Anand reiterates that the cruelty and injustice of Chokyaachi Mahaari is as much a part of this land as poetry is.

Sorayabai laments her predicament in the last line of her poem with Chokyaachi Mahaari—her Dalit identity—and expresses her anger against God whom she is not allowed to see.

Kiti Kiti boloo devaa. Kiti karoo aatan hevaa. Bahu chaalavanaa tu hosi, naahi kaare mhane maj'si ('O God How much more do I plead. The jealousy I must bear till you heed').

Anand concluded with a *nirgun shabad* in Braj attributed to Kabir in raga Bhairavi, and Ghalib's much loved Ghazal, *Nah tha kuch toh Khuda tha, kuchh nah hota, to khuda hota...* ('When nothing was, god was; if nothing were, god would be...') set to raga Khamboji.

■ GAURIKA KAPOOR

Summer Serenade

FESTIVAL: *Summer Sonata—A Festival of Opera, Ballet and Concert Films*

Dedicated to the Memory of Dr. R.P. Jain

Curated by Sunit Tandon

Introduced by Sunit Tandon and Samaresh Chatterji

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: The Nutcracker

Kirov Ballet at the Mariinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg

Engelbert Humperdinck: Hänsel Und Gretel

Vienna Boys' Choir

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

PIANO EXTRAVAGANZA

The Verbier Festival And Academy 10th Anniversary

Birthday Festival Orchestra

A Master At Work

Carlos Kleiber Conducts Mozart And Brahms

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Adolphe Adam: Giselle

The Kirov Ballet

Orchestra of the Leningrad Theatre of Opera and Ballet

Verdi: La Traviata

Mozarteum Orchestra (Stage Music)

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

COLLABORATION: *India International Centre*

1–20 June 2022

Summer Sonata—A Festival of Opera, Ballet and Concert Films screened six films, three of which have been discussed here: Giselle, Traviata and Verbier.

Adolphe Adam was a prolific composer who wrote 46 operas and 14 ballets. His most famous piece is the music for the ballet *Giselle*. The premiere was held in Paris in 1841 and had immediate success. In 1887, this ballet made its debut in Saint Petersburg, where the Mariinsky Theatre



Russian conductor Viktor Fedotov, who dedicated his life to the Mariinsky Theatre.

Traviata—A dream cast! Everything in this production of Verdi for the Salzburg Festival is unique and perfect. Anna Netrebko, Rolando Villazón and Thomas Hampson convey strong dramatic emotions...the playing of the Vienna Philharmonic is peerless under the baton of Carlo Rizzi. With the direction of Willy Decker, the staging is focused on the acting, where Parisian life is shifted to a minimalistic universe in black and white. The flawless warm voice of Netrebko bursts to put you in a trance. When the singers are exceptional, the stage becomes real.

When candles are replaced by pianos, the birthday cake becomes a stage. In 2003, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the famous Verbier festival in the Swiss Alps, 10 of the best pianists in the world for once shared the same stage. I had the most incredible day of my life as a musical adviser when I was asked to replace Mikhail Pletnev on the piano during a rehearsal where he suddenly decided to conduct the session with the 10 pianists instead of playing! A few days later I heard Lang Lang for the first time; he was only 21 years old but he had already mastered with sincere intensity the most challenging Rachmaninoff piano concerto. The film director, Andy Sommer, with his unique talent to find the best image angles, immortalised this event for our greatest pleasure.

■ PHILIPPE ENGEL

Space Sector

IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE SCIENCE EXHIBITION: *Indian Space Programme: Growing in Leaps and Bounds*

Inauguration by Prof. Ajay K. Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India

PANEL DISCUSSION: *Prospects and Avenues for New Space in India*

PANELISTS: *S. Somanath; Shailesh Nayak; Srinivasa Kumar T.; Sachin Chaturvedi; Jayant Sahasrabudde; Suba Chandran; Sanjay Kumar; Anil Kumar Bhat; Venkat Katkuri; and Gaurav Kharod*

TALK: *Transformation of Indian Space Sector*

SPEAKER: *S. Somanath*

CHAIR: *Shailesh Nayak, Life Trustee, IIC*

COLLABORATION: *Indian Space Research Organisation; SatCom Industry Association; and Indian Space Association*

26 July 2022

This programme highlighted the achievements of the Indian Department of Space (DOS), i.e., the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and created awareness among the general public, students in particular. Three events, comprising an exhibition, a panel discussion and a talk by S. Somanath, conveyed, on the one hand, the huge strides made by ISRO in space science and technology and their applications, which have brought significant transformation in diverse sectors of the economy, and, on the other, the

enormous potential that the space sector holds for the country's future development.

Through a display of textual and photographic panels, models of rockets and satellites, the exhibition, titled 'Growing in Leaps and Bounds', illustrated ISRO's remarkable journey during the last six decades since Vikram Sarabhai established the first rocket launching station, TERLS, at Thumba near Thiruvananthapuram in 1963. It highlighted ISRO's current capabilities to design and build launch vehicles and satellites, and to apply space technology in diverse areas such as agriculture, fisheries, weather, cartography and oceanography. Students from Delhi NCR were taken on a guided tour of the exhibition.

Inaugurating the exhibition, Shyam Saran shared with the audience how, when he was ambassador to Myanmar (1997–2001), he succeeded in establishing cooperation in the space sector (The Myanmar–India Friendship Centre for Remote Sensing and Data Processing was established on 15 February 2001).

The high point of the programme was clearly the brainstorming among the major stakeholders in the space sector at the panel discussion, titled 'Prospects and Avenues for New Space in India'. Initiating the proceedings, S. Somanath said that the discussion was specifically from the perspective of looking at the future following the space sector reforms announced by the government. These reforms were a natural outcome of what has been achieved by the country's space sector in the last 60 years, he said. He went on to say that 'we are looking at scaling up the present capabilities at ISRO, which cannot be done by the government alone; it has to be done by appropriate interventions by the private agencies.'

The panel discussion was followed by a public lecture, 'Transformation of the Indian Space Sector' by S. Somanath. 'Space enterprise in India', he said, 'was people-centric and application driven. ISRO has the capability to deliver end-to-end 'verticals' both in space applications as well as in human resource and capacity building'. According to him, ISRO was now at the threshold of building the next generation heavy satellites and introducing electric propulsion. He, however, added that the organisation was heavily dependent on imports for critical components. 'Though ISRO was a pioneer in using C-MOS [imaging sensor] technology, now it is a weakness in the system because activity in earth observation [in ISRO] has come down'.

Somanath described 10 important areas of the economy where ISRO has made valuable contributions through space applications. He also highlighted ISRO's important space science and planetary missions such as the Mars Orbiter Mission and Astrosat, the multispectral astronomy observatory. The next science missions planned, he said, are Aditya, which will be located at the first Lagrange point L1 and will study the Sun, and XPoSat, a space observatory to study cosmic rays.

According to him, the space sector's contribution (Rs. 40,000 crore) to the Indian economy was about 1.8 per cent of GDP, and that too predominantly from second-order impact. It had to be increased to 15 per cent, he said. He concluded that companies had already set up infrastructure for building satellites and, while ISRO should shrink to being only a technology provider, private players should make India a manufacturing hub for the global market.

■ R. RAMACHANDRAN

Celebrating Bharatiyar

IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE PERFORMANCE: *Bharathi*

Celebrating Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharathiyar, legendary poet

Lecture-demonstration followed by a Bharatanatyam group recital

Choreographed by Guru Dr. Saroja Vaidyanathan

LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION: *By Rajkumar Bharathi, eminent musician and great grandson of Mahakavi Subramaniya Bharathi*

BHARATANATYAM RECITAL: *Group performance by artists of Ganesa Natyalaya, disciples of Guru Smt. Saroja Vaidyanathan*

COLLABORATION: *Ganesh Natyalaya*

30 July 2022

This performance celebrated one of India's greatest freedom poets, Mahakavi Subramania Bharati or Bharatiyar, who, in his short life between 1882 and 1921, created a huge impact with his fearless and visionary writings. A political refugee in Pondicherry from 1908 to 1918, Bharati's poetry lends itself to music and dance. This, when Bharati was not a conscious subscriber to the music theory of ragas; the words and themes suggested the melody. So said Dr. Rajkumar Bharati, his great grandson, a Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee and a renowned music composer, who delivered the keynote address as a lec-dem titled 'Adaptability of Bharati's Poetry to Music and Dance'. Affectionately called RKB Sir, he has sung in films in multiple languages and is the Asthana Vidhwan of Sri Datta Peetham in Mysore, Sri Sringeri Math, and Sri Kanchi Sankara Peetham.

Interestingly, Bharati's understanding of dance was more proactive than one would have expected. He wrote, much before Bharatanatyam had become a dance form and

when only a small community had ‘the joy of performing it’, and he could see how it should have a larger footprint: ‘Irrumbbai kaichi Urikkiddu Veera/ Pattu seiyyullum kothiddu Veera/Bharatanatyam koothiddu Veera’ (‘Heat the iron and melt it/Fuse music and poetry together/And then dance the Bharatanatyam’). These lines certainly challenge the narrative of a later naming of the dance of the *dasis* (*Dasiattam*, *Sadir*) as Bharatanatyam.

The dance component, ‘Nrithya Bharati’, was presented by nine students of Delhi’s veteran guru, Padma Bhushan awardee and founder President of Ganesa Natyalaya, Saroja Vaidyanthan, whose Ganesa Natyalaya has produced several adept dancers, and who has herself been a pioneer in using Bharati’s poems for dance for many years. Her disciples presented five of Bharati’s poems which framed him as a patriot, as a philosopher, and as a social reformer. The first four songs were ‘Enniya mudithal vendum’ (‘Let all that I have

envisaged be accomplished, And let there be only good and positive thoughts’), ‘Shakti shakti endru solven’ (the song about his infallible faith in the Goddesses Daivigakakshi, or divine grace), ‘Ujjaini’ (a hymn to the Goddess who resided in Bharati’s hometown Ettayapuram), and ‘Dikkugal ettum shidari’, about how the eight directions that are scattered with the power of nature saw him use *shollus* or the mnemonics of dance rhythms in the poetic tapestry to enhance his words. These poems lent themselves well to the qualities of ‘lavanya’ and ‘kaishiki’. The last two pieces were on a more strident note, coming from the nationalist register of his poetry, but Saroja Vaidyanthan had done it imaginatively, and the dancers carried it well. One issue disturbed me—the finale would have looked less Germanic if both hands were raised in salutation to the flag, a gesture Indians are more likely to make.

■ ARSHIYA SETHI

Plurality, Multilingualism and Translation

WEBINAR: *The Modern Indian Writer in Translation: Context, Issues and Problematics*

First in the Series: ‘Emergence of the Modern Indian Classic’

IIC–International Research Division in collaboration with Sahitya Akademi

July 23, 2022

K.N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC, began the discussion by citing the examples of Qurratulain Hyder, who wrote of historical rupture and whose writings showed new areas of experience. He also talked of Amrita Pritam, Krishna Sobti and Rahi Masoom Raza, who too pushed the frontiers of imagination.

Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC, said this was an area to which not much attention had been paid. To celebrate diversity and plurality, there is a need for multi-cultural dialogues. Instead of converging on English, translating the work of writers from one Indian language into another should be considered.

Sudha Gopalakrishnan said modernism in literature swept over India like a storm as a response to cultural ferment in the West. India welcomed and transformed modernism. Indian literature after modernism was never like before.

Sukrita Paul Kumar, the moving spirit behind this series, spoke of the clash of modernisms, diversities and varieties, and the context in which the writer is placed. After defying established notions, they create another modernism.

G.N. Devy drew on the Constitution and T. S. Eliot to illustrate the notions of ‘modern’ and ‘non-modern’.

Supriya Chaudhuri spoke of modernism and social realism. In her presentation, she asked: ‘What is a Classic?’ A Classic is a work of unquestioned authority or presence. Giving the examples of some Bengali novels, she said Modern Classics were rooted so strongly in their landscape and region that the regional became the national.

Simi Malhotra said caution and care must be taken when determining what a Modern Classic is, since the concept seemed ‘antithetical’. In this, if we restrict ourselves to India, we would be impoverishing ourselves.

Sachin Ketkar talked of Marathi literature and contestations within *bhashas*. Ipshita Chanda said categories such as ‘Classical’ and ‘Modern’ did not need to be reimagined. They need to be replaced with pluralism.

Saikat Majumdar spoke of the ways in which translations of Modern Indian Classics presented conflicts. There were inputs from K. Sreenivasarao, Syeda Hameed, Madan Gopal Singh and Chandana Datta.

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Abolishing Apartheid

5TH NELSON MANDELA ANNUAL LECTURE 2022:

Challenges Africa Faces Today

SPEAKER: *Amb. Gurjit Singh*

CHAIR: *Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC*

WELCOME ADDRESS: *Suhas Borker*

CLOSING ADDRESS: *H.E. Mr. Joel Sibusiso Ndebele, High Commissioner of South Africa*

COLLABORATION: *South African High Commission; and Working Group on Alternative Strategies*

18 July 2022

The 5th Nelson Mandela Memorial Lecture reached beyond the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium via live webcast across India, to Africa, London and Washington, D.C.

In his opening remarks, Suhas Borker, Convener, Working Group on Alternative Strategies, pointed out Mandela's ceaseless efforts to combat hate, a critical lesson to be learnt from his political life that was relevant to India and the world today. When ANC leader Chris Hani was assassinated in April 1993, Mandela, though not yet President, addressed the nation, calling for a National Day of Mourning, and managed to save South Africa from plunging into civil war. As President, he established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), generating a national catharsis as the proceedings of the TRC were beamed into the homes of millions across South Africa.

Shyam Saran spoke about the instinctive empathy between India and South Africa. Nelson Mandela was the first foreigner who was awarded the Bharat Ratna. Mandela was both a leader and statesman who, by reconciling the Blacks and Whites, did what Mahatma Gandhi did between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Ambassador Gurjit Singh spoke about 'Contemporary Africa and its Challenges'. After listing the achievements of the African Union, he took up the issue of governance and then mentioned the major problems such as climate change and debt stress facing the continent. The transition of the continent from a donor model to a trade and investment model is critical, but has not received due support from the donors. Africa lost 22 million jobs due to the pandemic and it will need to create 200 million jobs in the next 10 years.



The African Union is a formidable force with 54 members in the United Nations (UN). However, Africa has failed to avail of its strength of numbers because it cannot achieve consensus on its representation in the security council.

Shyam Saran recalled that the G4 (India, Brazil, Japan, and Germany) formed in 2004 seeking reform of the Security Council was originally meant to be G5 with the inclusion of South Africa. However, after agreeing to be part of G5, South African President Mbeki had second thoughts as he felt that he needed the endorsement of the African Union before taking such a step.

South Africa's High Commissioner, Joel Sibusiso Ndebele, in his concluding remarks lauded India's lead in fighting apartheid, recalling the famous speech of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit at the UN General Assembly. In 1964, Nelson Mandela was on trial, and he was about to be sentenced to death. He told the judge that he was ready to die for South Africa's freedom. The judge changed his mind and Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 1985, Mandela was offered freedom if he abstained from political activity. He rejected the offer. The greatness of Mandela was that he wanted and succeeded in establishing a non-racial democracy in South Africa.

■ K.P. FABIAN

Agnipath and India-Nepal Relations

NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST

*Coordinated by Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Ashok K. Mehta
How Agnivor will Affect India-Nepal Relations*

PANELISTS: *Amb. Ranjit Rae; Maj. Gen. (retd.) B.S. Ghotra; Maj. Gen. (retd.) Gopal Gurung; and Naib Sub Khem Jung Gurung*

CHAIR: *Maj. Gen. Ashok K. Mehta*

26 July 2022

Initiating the discussion, Ashok Mehta opined that the Agnipath scheme had grave infirmities that would affect defence preparedness and cohesion in the regimental system. There exist strong military connections with Nepal, which may be affected by the implementation of the scheme.

The presenters highlighted the procedural aspects of recruitment in the Indian Army from Nepal. The larger issues were the major incentives of job security and pension post-retirement, loss of which will seriously affect the quality of

aspirants joining the Indian Army. It was brought out that adequacy of recruitment of Indian Domiciled Gorkhas has become difficult, with the experience of raising of 6/1GR. For Nepal, the annual pension budget of Rs.5,000 crore and salary budget of Rs.1,000 crore will affect the country's GDP.

Ranjit Rae emphasised that India–Nepal have complex and multi-faceted relations. In that ambit, Gorkha ex-servicemen, numbering nearly 1,25,000, are a loyal community, and most are well-off, have become politicians or leaders of the community and businesses. The connect that the Indian Army has with ESM will tend to loosen somewhat with the Agnipath scheme. Mentioning the India–Nepal Tripartite Treaty, Rae mentioned that the processes of recruitment ought to be the same for Indian and Nepali recruits.

In the discussion that ensued, it was highlighted that there will be absolute parity between India and Nepal recruitment, screening or discharge processes under Agnipath. The effect on cohesion and training will be at par with regiments hailing from India. Currently the decision to commence recruitment rests with the Nepal government, as the modalities and recruitment schedule have been intimated to them.

■ RAKESH SHARMA



Inauguration of Elevator by Shri N. N. Vohra, President IIC



Inauguration of Heartstart Defibrillator by Shri N. N. Vohra, President IIC

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.



SHRI M. K. BRIJRAJ SINGH
M-1624



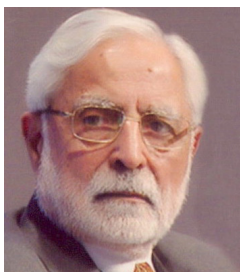
SHRI K. N. MALIK
M-2227



SHRI AVIK GHOSH
M-2499



SHRI B. K. SYNGAL
M-2792



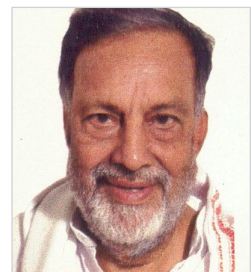
SHRI K. L. THAPAR
M-2819



SHRI SATINDER K. LAMBAH
M-3068



SHRI SHANTI K. AGRAWAL
M-3076



PROF. BHIM SINGH
M-3864



MISS RITA MUKERJEE
A-1461



PANDIT BHAJAN SOPORI
A-3433



JUSTICE TEJINDER SINGH DOABIA (RETD.)
A-6048

And the following Members (photographs not available):

SHRI BHASKAR ROY (A-4880)



Director's Note

The President of the India International Centre is elected from among the Life Trustees on a rotational basis. The tenure of Shri N.N. Vohra concluded on 22 June 2022. It is my privilege to welcome Shri Shyam Saran as the new President, who took office on 23 June 2022.

We are delighted to see that the good weather has brought with it increasing footfalls. This is also true for the dining outlets, and it is advisable to make advance bookings for a smooth dining experience. It is heartening to see an increasing number of members attending programmes almost as soon as we began physical programmes and film screenings in the auditorium. We hope this trend continues as it is a pleasure to see the Centre vibrant once again.

In collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, the International Research Division (IRD) convened a one-day webinar on 23 July on 'The Emergence of the Modern Indian Classic'. Twelve scholars from universities across India discussed the forms modernism took in India, and translation and pedagogy that is sensitive to socio-cultural contexts. The IRD also held a three-day workshop on 'The Origins of Civilizations and Indian Histories' from 26 to 28 July. It brought together 20 experts to discuss the historiography of different regions, modernity, memory, and the role of shramanas, pastoralists and Dalits in the circulation of ideas and commodities.

The Main Dining Room has been renovated and refurbished, with new crockery, cutlery and attractive table covers. Each catering outlet has additional items on the menus to make them more diverse. In terms of a recent order of the Central Consumer Protection Authority, the Service Charge on all services being offered by the Centre has been removed w.e.f. 7 July 2022.

Members were eagerly awaiting commissioning of a new Elevator to the Main Dining Room on the first floor and to the Conference Room II and Terrace Pergola on the second floor. It was formally inaugurated on 20 July 2022 by Shri N.N. Vohra, in the presence of the new President, some members and guests. Among the guests were Mr. Brajesh Shrivastava and Ms. Mahima Shrivastava, whose company, Deduce Technologies, supported the installation of the elevator under its CSR initiative. In addition, retractable awnings have been installed at the Annexe Terrace, the passage to the Lounge/Pantry and the Bar to protect against inclement weather.

As usual, details of newly enrolled members have been placed on the IIC Website. From 1 March 2022 to 25 July 2022, the Centre has enrolled 601 members in various categories (including 486 STAM). In terms of the new Membership Policy, selected applicants are initially inducted in Short Term Associate Member (STAM) category for three years, which is extendable by another two years, i.e., 3+2=5 years. The sale of Application Forms for STAM for the financial year 2022–23 commenced from 1 July 2022. In our efforts to conserve paper resources, this time the Application Forms are only available online.

■ K.N. SHRIVASTAVA