

# INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE IIC Diary

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December 2022– January 2023

## A Wonderland

### EXHIBITION

*Premola's Wonderland*  
Vignettes of the personal and magical world  
of Premola Ghose

**Inauguration by Shri N.N. Vohra, Life  
Trustee, IIC, on Saturday, 21 January 2023  
22 to 31 January 2023**

As one walked into the expansive gallery space in the Kamaladevi Block, the vast array of paintings came as a burst of colour and whimsy, the characters, rolling eyes, puckered brow, smug smile or a knowing look, comfortably settled on their perch. This was the world of the late Premola Ghose. Beginning with *Gang Tales from Ranthambhor*, she authored and illustrated a number of books, including those for children.

On display were a circus of paintings spanning space and time, carrying impressions of people and places gathered over the years, translated into her menagerie of animals that endeared themselves to one and all. Her sharp eye for detail and deep insights into character led to these spectacular paintings familiar to us all. Self-taught, her lines were magical and characters made to perfection.

As a spoof on the world she saw around her, her works bear not an iota of angst or malice. She was able instead to love and laugh it off, through a superlative lifelong creative engagement.

History interested her as did reading and travel. It all culminated as countries and cultures in her works, those that she visited and those that she imagined, and she never went wrong with any of it. Mistress of no one creative forte, from the very loveably portrayed animals, to architecture, flora, fauna and forestry, rendered as they were from multiple visual perspectives, she accomplished them with unfaltering lines and joyous, vibrant colours.

On exhibit was a large body of original paintings as also an array of digital prints of her works, along with two self-portraits. There were also four large posters and three of her books on display, bringing alive memories of Premola, and her penchant for excellence and dedication in whatever she did.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK



# Meta-history of Indian Photography

## EXHIBITION

*Cine-Pop! Bollywood Photo Culture*

**3 to 12 December 2022**

Amassed through purposive searches as well as serendipitous encounters in the streets of Bombay, this exhibition presented an array of images from the collection of Rahaab Allana comprising vintage Hindi movie stills and associated memorabilia that advertised and popularised actors and epic sequences from the original films. Many of these stills were developed into large film posters, banners and hoardings, and also circulated in the form of lobby cards and show cards that were pinned up in foyers of cinema theatres. This selection of analogue photographs, dating from the 1940s through the 1990s, aimed to invoke a visual subculture that continues to have extraordinary mass appeal, offering

a glimpse into a regrettably overlooked meta-history of Indian photography.

The exhibition reflected some of the dominant tropes and typologies prevalent in the earlier period of Hindi cinema, leading up to the globalisation of Bollywood. The photographs on display were from Bombay film studios such as Studio Nataraj, Himalaya Talkie Distributors, and Pravinchandra G. Javeri, and presented top actors from that era, including Madhubala, Ashok Kumar, Nargis, Dev Anand, Pran, Mumtaz, Mehmood, Johnny Walker, Om Prakash, Randhir Kapoor, Dharmendra, Helen and Rekha. The selection also included images of renowned personalities and celebrities captured by cameras 'in the moment' in social and other contexts, widely published in popular magazines and tabloids, and as photojournalistic reportage.

Showcased with sister concern, Art Heritage (Delhi), in 2013 to mark the centenary of Indian cinema, this unique collection was revived to commemorate the 195th year of the invention of photography

■ RAHAAB ALLANA

# Bamboo Instruments

## EXHIBITION

*Bamboo Song*

**21 to 27 December 2022**



From Japan to Malaysia, Andamans to Hawaii, and the Polynesian islands, there are myths that place the bamboo plant at the dawn of mankind. In fact, one Polynesian myth claims that the hollow space inside the bamboo contains the air that blew life into the world.

Even in India, we respect the bamboo plant's remarkable strength and hardness, but know that its real genius lies in its ability to flex and bend without breaking. This makes bamboo a perfect medium for musical instruments and many countries, including Japan, Sumatra and Indonesia, make traditional musical instruments from it. It is also a lot more environmentally friendly than most woods used in making musical instruments, and it grows very fast. It is so perfect that it is said that Krishna's flute was made from bamboo.

Subhasis Sabyasachi is a young musical genius who is in the Limca Book of Records as the first ambidextrous tabla-pakhawaj player, and who has invented, designed and patented percussion instruments like the sruti, aawaz, chhar-tarang, and jiban veena (panchatrantri). While the flute (bansuri) and other wind instruments made from bamboo were known and expected because they utilise the natural hollowness of bamboo, he also showcased instruments that he had made with bamboo like the tabla, violin, xylophone, pakhawaj, classical guitar, drums and harp. These are usually made with expensive material like rosewood and teak that are difficult to grow. But Sabyasachi's bamboo instruments also add a unique sound to these instruments and toys.

■ RITIKA KOCHHAR

# Splendour of the Himalayas

## EXHIBITION

*Small Works, Great Vision: The Art of Bireswar Sen. From the collection of Prithviswar Sen and Sarbani Ghosh*

**Inauguration on Friday, 16 December 2022**

*Illustrated lecture by B.N. Goswamy*  
**17 to 29 December 2022**

The late landscape artist, Bireswar Sen, centred his creation on portraying the splendour of the Himalayas, in his inimitable style of presenting them on a style so minuscule, it invites a magnifying glass for close scrutiny of the minute detailing of each feature from posture to presence.

Sen is known to have studied under Abanindranath Tagore in Calcutta in the 1920s, where he learnt the technique of wash painting. It was not until he met Russian artist Nicholas Roerich in 1932 that he experienced the depth and degree of man's ability to connect with nature. For Sen 'Roerich's Himalayan landscapes were an epiphany'. The rest of his life was immersed, meditating the enormity of nature, its vastness, and smallness of man in the face

of it. He appears to have shrunk the very scale of his portrayals in proportion to this realisation.

Traditionally, ours has been a naturalistic religion and society. Hence nature is the basis of our rituals, culture and practices. The instrument of death and destruction, it is also the mother of regeneration, rebirth and creation. Man is indeed a mere speck in this infinite scheme of things, through creation, birth, life, and his eventual annihilation to merge with the elements. It is within this picture that Sen posited his human beings in their various situations, with a touch of the spiritual, but also the empirical.

This is the course that Sen dwelt upon with the backdrop of nature, in this case the majestic yet sombre Himalayas. Physically minute, but throbbing with nuanced sensitivity and craft, they touched the sublime. The detailing of earthen texture, foliage, gait, posture, colouration and light were so real and unmistakable that they evoked reverence for their creator.

One must see first; then pause, feel and assimilate, before transforming it into creative expression; this too had to be Sen's practice in order to express with such meticulous precision. From bone to muscle and stone to shrub, he executed all with equal elan and exactitude. Works like Bisheshwar Sen's transform an exhibition space into a Hall of Meditation.

A truly sensitive and erudite man, his writings amply explain his leanings and affinities, as do the titles he chose: *The Temple of the Future Buddha; Evening of Life; Watcher of the Dawn; Over the Hills & Beyond; The Top of The World: A Lone Man Standing on a Hill Top; The Pool of Loneliness; Roaming in the Gloaming; The Song Of The Tamarind Tree*, among others.



His brushwork, understanding of intricacies of conveying mass, light and distance in the vast mountainscapes were a marvel, as was his mastery over form, foliage, land and sky; magical in a format so minimised in scale. Bireswar Sen's oeuvre was mystical, quite like a prayer to Creation itself!

The display was a selection of original paintings from the collection of Prithviswar Sen and Sarbani Ghosh.

■ ARUNA BHOWMICK



# Memories, Hope, Peace and Good Health

## POETRY READING

*Looking Back—Written Words, Stories Unshared*

**PANELLISTS:** Antara Dev Sen; Mandira Ghosh; Radha Chakravarty; Rachna Joshi; Humra Quraishi; Saikat Majumdar; Reba Som; Abhilasha Kumari; and Malashri Lal

**COORDINATOR AND MODERATOR:**

Jayshree Misra Tripathi

**14 December 2022**

Sukrita Paul Kumar said that she had gone inward during the pandemic due to losses, and she was still not very comfortable with people. She read from a translation by Gulzar Sahib. She also made friends with crows, and wrote a series of small poems from which she read a few. Radha Chakravarty said she experienced introspection, learning and unlearning and healing. She was concerned about patients, migrant workers and the interconnectedness of our lives and destiny. She has written poetry about her encounters with this life-changing experience. Abhilasha Kumari spoke of fear, isolation and trepidation, about the gift of love and loss.

Saikat Majumdar said that during the pandemic we lost the streets and the sense of our bodies, and he was sad that the life experience of students had changed due to online classes. He read from his prose and drama and discussed what happens to poetry in a Covid-like situation.



‘Looking Back’ was a reflective session about memories, hope, peace and good health. However, there was a tinge of apprehension about the future. Jayshree Misra Tripathi’s book of poetry of fragmented musings, called *Uncertain Times*, was a tribute to Gayatri Manchanda. Preeti Singh talked about her experiences during the pandemic and spoke warmly about her younger sister Gayatri. She then read one poem from *Uncertain Times*.

Reba Som mused that the clouds have passed, but we remain vulnerable. She was ensconced during the pandemic in her tree-lined garden estate in Greater Noida. She has been working on two books—one on her grandfather, Atul Chandra Sen’s correspondence with Tagore, and the other which goes down memory lane with family albums.

Mandira Ghosh said that we were powerless during the pandemic and she thanked the doctors and frontline workers for saving our lives. There was also a situation of panic; Jatin Das, for instance, painted ‘Exodus 2020’. The lives of several people were lost: Ganga Prasad Vimal, H.K. Kaul, Riyaz Punjabi and Tarannum Riyaz. She herself brought out several works and anthologies.

Rachna Joshi read some poems on the pandemic about domestic issues, loss and joblessness, and ‘Ode to Lucknow’, about the city of her childhood. Humra Quraishi and Malashri Lal spoke about feminism and said that the pandemic showed the collective will to overcome and survive.

■ RACHNA JOSHI

# Langa-Manganiyar Musical Evening

## IIC ANNUAL DAY

*Songs of Love, Longing and Separation*

*Conceptualised and curated by Shubha Chaudhuri*

**22 January 2023**

was a collective of desert airs calibrated into the acoustics of a concert auditorium.

The start of the evening hinged on a number evoking the Krishna legend, a traditional beginning, one gathered. Thereafter the troupe delved into ballad traditions and narrated a passage about Dhola Maru's arrival in the city. What added verve to the numbers was the dholak beats, that were played in an offbeat eight-count variation of keherwa taal, that seemed to vocalise the verses with its catchy rhythm. The placing of the kamaicha and sarangi string accompaniments at either end of the group made for a perfect balance of melodic harmonisation.



Langa-Manganiyar performers, who coincidentally, are traditional performers on special occasions at the behest of patrons, were the right match for the Annual Day celebrations of the IIC.

The presentation was well conceptualised with each number preceded with a pertinent introductory lead, wherein details, such as the Raga of the composition, its theme and other distinctive aspects, were shared with the audience by the curator Shubha Chaudhuri. This thoughtful accent made each number a meaningful sharing with the audience.

As for the concert layout, the items were selected with savoir faire. While they showcased a traditional repertoire, the performers distilled their musicality without sacrificing any of their musical expertise. Thus, the overall outcome

Besides, the singers interspersed their poetry with stretches of classical inclusions such as high pitched 'taans', cascading down, as also emphasising the rhythmic beats of the composition. This rendering made the singing and playing enhance each other's strengths.

In the final count, one must also make a mention of the raga choices of the evening. Leaning towards compositions set in the Khamaaj thaat, which is sonorously romantic, they gripped the senses a notch deeper with their musical content, particularly in the closing number, 'Jhir mir Barsey', a befitting paean to the much awaited rains. In a symbolic way, it also became a leitmotif of longing in the audience for yet another performance of this memorable evening.

■ SUBHRA MAZUMDAR

## Between Washington and Beijing

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION:** *Between China and America: Pakistan's Diplomatic Straddle*

**MODERATOR:** T.C.A. Raghavan

**SPEAKERS:** Ajay Bisaria; Shalini Chawla; and Happyman Jacob

**COLLABORATION:** IIC and Asia Society Policy Institute

**5 December 2023**

Amidst changes in Pakistan's political and military leadership, this discussion broadly uncovered Islamabad's attempts to navigate the ongoing great-power rivalry between Washington and Beijing, and its cherished goal of straddling the geopolitical sweet spot by maintaining warm ties with the two.

It was observed that the China–Pakistan relationship has grown from a purely military one—aimed at confining India in the subcontinent—to an encompassing economic, political and diplomatic one. Islamabad has also demonstrated the skill to balance between China, the US and regional powers in the Middle East and has the ability to extract aid from all sides. At the same time, the US–Pak relationship has primarily remained transactional over the years and has been nourished by Rawalpindi. In the dynamic between Beijing and Islamabad, it was noted that some level of engagement between Washington and Islamabad reduces the burden on Chinese shoulders. From an Indian perspective, it is in New Delhi's interest to see a stable balance of power in South Asia, and Washington retains a foot in the door in Rawalpindi. Therefore, India should not be too worried about some level of engagement between the US and Pakistan. Instead, it must concentrate its energies on China and its efforts to augment Islamabad's military capabilities.

■ RISHI GUPTA

## Climate Change: Problem and Solutions

**LECTURE:** *The IPCC Report on Climate Change Mitigation and Remarks on COP27: Glass Half Empty, Half Full, or Half Broken?*

**SPEAKER:** Michael Grubb

**INTRODUCTION:** Shreekant Gupta

**CHAIR:** Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC  
**6 December 2023**

Professor Grubb summarised key insights from the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in 2022, drawing on his experience as one of the convening lead authors of the report. According to the report, as per the current trajectory of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees would not be achieved unless there were deep and immediate cuts in emissions. Specifically, global emissions would have to

peak by 2025 and then fall by 43 per cent by 2030 to achieve this target. On the brighter side, the report found that the growth rate of global emissions had slowed from 2.1 per cent per year in the early part of this century to 1.3 per cent per year between 2010 and 2019. Grubb also highlighted areas of progress such as the rapid fall in the cost of renewable energy technologies, namely, photovoltaics, wind and batteries for e-vehicles, and a concomitant increase in their use. He also pointed out that many countries had pledged to reach net zero emissions and that more than a fifth of global GHG emissions were being addressed through policies such as carbon taxes and carbon trading. However, there were continuing challenges in national and global responses to climate change, including the relationship between climate mitigation and sustainable development in the context of continuing deep inequalities. He also highlighted the urgent need to increase financial flows for GHG mitigation, but at the same time showed there is sufficient global capital and liquidity to close the investment gap. Drawing on debates amongst the IPCC authors, he argued that we are in the midst of a major transition in our understanding of the climate change problem, and potential solutions.

■ SHREEKANT GUPTA



## Economy as a Tool

### IIC/I-HOUSE DISTINGUISHED VISITING SCHOLARS:

*Economic Security in Indo-Pacific: Gradation of Regional Responses*

*Lead presentations by IIC and International House of Japan (I-House) Distinguished Visiting Scholars: Ken Jimbo; Kazuto Suzuki*

**SPEAKERS:** Manoj Pant and Indrani Bagchi

**CHAIR:** Shankar Acharya

**COLLABORATION:** International House of Japan, Tokyo

**5 January 2023**

Bows and arrows; tanks and guns; nuclear-tipped missiles and now, trade. In the hands of China, the world's factory, and also the second-largest economy, it is a weapon that can, in the short-term, take on the world, already burdened by post-Covid supply-chainitis.

China's 'weaponising supply-chain chokepoints can destabilise' the global economy, worried Ken Jimbo of Keio University during a discussion on 'Economic Security in the Indo-Pacific', chaired by former chief economic advisor Shankar Acharya. Agreeing, Kazuto Suzuki of the University of Tokyo declared that 'politics and economics were fused' and politicians were 'using the economy as a tool'.

It is a difficult enough world, with an aggressive China treading on the toes of Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, all allies of the United States, unquestionably the world's biggest economy and military power. After the recent visit to Taipei by Nancy Pelosi, then Speaker of the US House of Representatives, China threatened Taiwan with naval and air force war games, and then, sprayed missiles everywhere—some landed uncomfortably close to Japan. Then, there's the war in the Ukraine and as a result of Western sanctions on Moscow that followed the invasion, China and Russia have edged closer, much to Japan and India's dismay, said Indrani Bagchi of Ananta Centre. The war has meant high food and fuel prices, leaving the global South hungry and much of Western Europe cold.

The United States can use its technological heft in artificial intelligence and quantum computing to ensure a decisive advantage over China, which is trying to catch up, said Jimbo. The US efforts to stop sales of some semi-conductors to China, said Suzuki, are part of the 'collective Western effort to bring China down', added Suzuki. Japan's policy of strategic autonomy to counter the weaponisation of trade by building up technological capability and scientific knowledge and not trusting certain (read Chinese) vendors with critical infrastructure is a way of fighting back, said Suzuki. There's also the strategic messaging of Quad, comprising Japan, India, Australia and the United States. The schism between the Quad countries and China will only widen in the near future, said Bagchi.

After the 2008 economic crisis, China and Russia, said Suzuki, decided that Western values (liberalism) were not worth tinkering with. Jimbo added that author Thomas Friedman's optimistic 'World is Flat' premise stands challenged by 'nationalisation and regionalisation of the economies'. And India, as Manoj Pant, former professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University said, has had to take sides (it didn't during the Cold War) and joined the liberal democracies.

The rise of China after the Four Modernisations of 1982 was perhaps inevitable, but there is a realisation, much too late, that the billions of dollars invested by the West (and Japan) merely fattened the dragon. Japan, like other countries, is paying the price. Defence spending by Tokyo was barely one per cent of Gross Domestic Product, but it has to go up, said Jimbo. Otherwise, China, as militarily strong as Japan in 2005, is today five times stronger. An unfettered China can be nine or ten times more powerful in the future. What does that mean for not only Japan, but also India?

■ SRINJOY CHOWDHURY



# Earthquake Monitoring

## IIC DIAMOND JUBILEE SCIENCE EXHIBITION

**COLLABORATION:** Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India

**7 to 14 January 2023**

The exhibition focused on cyclone warning services and depicted the cyclone forecasting accuracy over 2014–2018. The deep-sea mining technologies showcased the details of the underwater mining machine, deep-sea remotely operated submersible, autonomous coring system (which can operate to depths of 3,000 m) and the polymetallic nodule mining which is a useful source of minerals like manganese and cobalt. Many interesting models like the ocean moored buoy network for the northern Indian Ocean, remotely operated submersible, wave energy plant, underwater mining machine, and low-



This interactive exhibition was presented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India. The MoES consists of key national centres under the umbrella of the Earth System Science Organisation, namely, the National Centre for Earth Science Studies, the National Centre for Seismology, the Indian Meteorological Department, the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology. Besides this, it has five other national centres of eminence, namely, the National Institute of Ocean Technology, the Centre for Climate Change Research, the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, the National Centre for Ocean Information Services and the Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology. This exhibition focused on the collective works of all of these national centres. The main focus was on sensitising the visitor to the Weather and Climate Services, Ocean Advisories and Services, Harnessing of Ocean Resources (Water, Energy and Minerals), Ocean Living Resources Mapping, Seismological Service and Scientific Exploration of the Polar Regions. The exhibits also included models of ocean research vessels Sagar Tara, Sagar Manusha, underwater mining machines and autonomous coring systems; photographs and posters on MoES programmes such as Deep Ocean Mission, desalination plants in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep and other activities of the Ministry.

temperature thermal desalination plant were displayed to help viewers understand the operations of deep-sea mining and ancillary processes.

The Ministry also showcased several computationally intensive applications on high-performance computers which helps to provide weather and climate prediction systems, high-resolution operational forecasts, tsunami alerts, advisories on potential fishing zones, etc. Details of advanced numerical models used to carry out these activities were depicted. Indian exploration in Antarctica was also showcased, where three Indian bases and their research areas were significant.

In recent times, poor air quality has been assuming public health significance. For this, an app called Safar, India which is India's own Air Quality Monitoring system, was depicted to provide users with accurate air quality data in cities around India.

Timely detection and prediction of earthquakes can save lives; the exhibition created awareness of seismological research which focuses on round-the-clock earthquake monitoring in India. This research directly provides earthquake hazard and risk-related products to the areas. The exhibition provided a useful avenue for the general population to increase their awareness of the earth sciences.

■ VIKRAM DATTA



## Indian Democracy: Pros and Cons

**TALK:** *India's Democracy: Strength and Weaknesses*

**SPEAKER:** Ashutosh Varshney

**CHAIR:** Yamini Aiyar

**9 February 2023**

At the start of what was a very stimulating talk, Yamini Aiyar invited Varshney to elaborate on two of his articles that have been recently published on Indian democracy's electoral aspect and its functioning as a liberal democracy. His talk was based on these two papers.

Varshney reinforced that democratic theorists worldwide recognise Indian democracy as being historically exceptional, especially given its level of income. However, this claim applies mostly to India as an electoral democracy; India has functioned less well as a liberal democracy. He named the gaps between the electoral and functional democracies as 'liberal deficits', suggesting that the liberal aspect of Indian democracy is in serious decline.

He further said that one of the biggest claims in democratic theory is the relationship between democracy and income.

Democracies can be established at low levels of income or any level of income, but they mostly survive at high levels of income. He made a very refreshing comparison between different surviving democracies of the world and remarked that the Indian income has been the lowest amongst the longest surviving democracies. Democracies should not be confined to elections alone; the time period in between elections is an indispensable aspect of liberal democracy.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Varshney has authored a number of notable books like *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*; *Battles Half Won: India's Improbable Democracy*, etc., and many research articles in peer reviewed international journals.

### ■ INDRAJIT PANT



## The 'Past' of the Past

**DR. C.D. DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE 2023:** *Our History, Their History, Whose History?*

**SPEAKER:** Prof. Romila Thapar

**CHAIR:** Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC

**14 January 2023**



Within the trials and tribulations of the evolving nation-state, the authenticity of historical narrative remains intrinsic to the process of nationalistic identity-making. And, while the writing and dissemination of this often contentious narrative comes with its own inherent challenges, it remains but an imperative task. Positioned within this purview, Romila Thapar's C.D. Deshmukh Memorial lecture held on 14 January 2023 provoked an intertwinement between nationalism and the writing of critical histories.

Viewed from Thapar's nuanced perspective, these histories would be the productions of trained professional historians using reliable evidence and methodologies, in contrast to the uncritical imaginations of self-professed and 'story-telling' historians—the former espousing the virtues of democracy, syncretism and the inclusion of previously 'absent' voices, the latter deploying divisive and often simplistic tropes of imagined antique meanderings.

In therefore suggesting that within civilised society all knowledge essentially remains open to question and serves as the foundation of new knowledge, Thapar emphatically underlined why ‘our histories’ today need to strategically revisit the biases of the colonial past—some systematically canonised through erroneous repetition and others rendered blandly normative. It is these real, imaginary, and proscribed oversights and inabilities to view the palimpsest of our complex past, its continued practices, and concomitant inter-community choreographies, that remains tellingly disturbing.

For history to exude the susurrus of trueness, Thapar expatiated that its resonance be a metaphor for life and education that engages, enriches and endures. In this transient world what remains is the history we invest in.

■ BEEBA SOBTI

## Mixed Legacy

### BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP: *Churchill and India: Manipulation or Betrayal*

By Kishan S. Rana (Routledge Taylor & Francis: 2022)

16 January 2023

This was followed by the launch of the book by several illustrious former officers of the Indian Foreign Services, including former Ambassadors M. K. Rasgotra, Shyam Saran, Prof. Pallavi Raghavan and the author himself—Ambassador Kishan S. Rana.

Shri Shyam Saran was the Chair for the evening. He introduced the author and described how the book was conceived and written in many different countries. He emphasised how the experience of the author as a hugely important bureaucrat first during the Indira Gandhi regime and then his status as Professor Emeritus lent huge weight to the scholarship. This was followed by the launch of the book by several illustrious former officers of the Indian Foreign Services, including M. K. Rasgotra and Pallavi Raghavan.

In his turn, M. K. Rasgotra said that Winston Churchill was directly responsible for the partition of India during his stint in office, and how he bore more responsibility than M. A. Jinnah.

The author of the book, Kishan S. Rana, introduced his work by pointing several ‘monstrous lies’ such as writing to US President Roosevelt that the Indian National Congress was providing passage to the Japanese to reach the Soviet Union through India. The next important fact was that of the Bengal famine, which was actually created for the

British Army directly out of the policies of Mr. Churchill’s government. He noted with regret that nobody today remembers the victims of the biggest artificial famine.

Historian Pallavi Raghavan was in agreement with the author’s view that Churchill was certainly a racist and responsible for the Bengal famine. However, she did not give him too much credit for the partition of India, pointing out that a single person could not have engineered an event of this scale without the involvement and consent of the Indian people.

■ AKARSH



## CHURCHILL AND INDIA

### MANIPULATION OR BETRAYAL?

KISHAN S RANA



## An Eclectic Life

**BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP:** *Zikr—In the Light and Shade of Time* by Muzaffar Ali (Vintage Books, 2022)

**DISCUSSANTS:** Dr. Karan Singh; Navtej Sarna; Nonica Dutta; and Muzaffar Ali

**CHAIR:** Shri Shyam Saran  
**17 January 2023**

Shri Shyam Saran introduced Muzaffar Ali as a 'Renaissance man' and for the right reasons. A man of eclectic personality, Ali is a renowned filmmaker, painter, fashion designer, poet and social worker. The programme centred around his debut publication, an autobiography titled *Zikr—In the Light and Shade of Time*, released last year in November.

The discussants took the audience through various fascinating aspects of the book and its author. Charting the extensive career of Ali, Dr. Karan Singh drew attention to the restrained elegance of the book and hailed Ali's vibrant engagement with the Sufi tradition and its message to develop the divine within everyone as the most important aspect of the book; one that has the spiritual power to rejuvenate humankind in contemporary times.

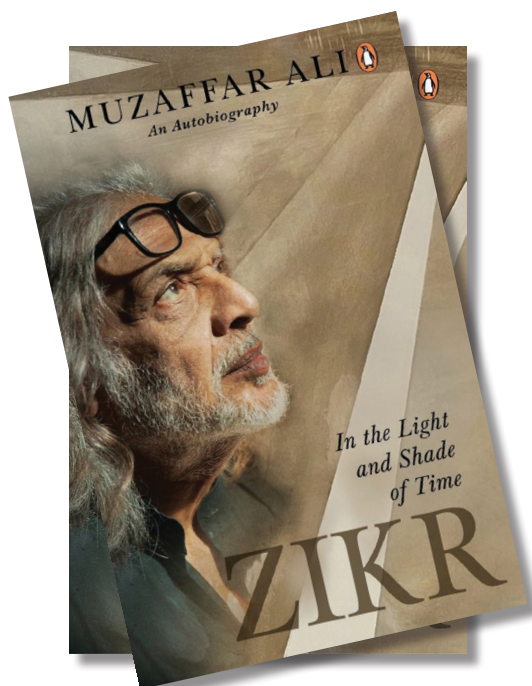
Calling autobiography a tentative genre often mobilised to propagate ideology or defending oneself, Navtej Sarna commended the honest attempt on Ali's part to delineate his life through a lens of love, beauty and regard for humanity. Tracing the deep roots of Urdu poetry in the book through its invocation of poets like Rumi, Ghalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sarna described the fundamental mood of Ali's autobiography as that of Nostalgia which informs every page of the book.

Nonica Dutta, coming from the discipline of History, acclaimed Ali's autobiography as a rich source of historical material for researchers given its close engagement with the history of Awadh through multiple micro-histories of people and events that have influenced Ali.

Ali described the book succinctly as an account of the 'lives that have shaped him and the ones he has shaped', and proclaimed the importance of histories of ordinary humans over the histories of rulers and influential people. Asking for interdependence over independence in current times, Ali ended with a quote from Hazrat Ali:

*mai uss har shaksh ka gulam hu  
jisne mujhe ek chiz bhi sikhayi  
(I am indebted to every  
single person  
who taught me even one thing)*

■ DIGVIJAY NIKAM





## Architectural Adventurism

**ILLUSTRATED LECTURE: INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY.** *Architectural Adventurism in 19th Century India: Begum Samru's Sardhana Church*

**SPEAKER:** Jyoti Pandey Sharma  
**7 December 2022**

Jyoti Pandey Sharma's talk was based on a theme connected to her broader interest in early colonial culture, as reflected in architectural projects. In this lecture, she examined the historical context of the architectural commissions of Begum Samru in Sardhana, particularly her grand church, characterising it as 'architectural adventurism'.

Sharma located the adventurism firstly in the hybrid architecture of the church. In style, the church included

some features—such as the spires and the pedimented front—that were taken from the typical British models for church construction being followed in India at the time, which were largely based on designs in the Scottish architect James Gibbs's *A Book of Architecture* (1728). At the same time, the church at Sardhana used a typically Indian mode of construction when it came to the dome. Sharma contended that apart from these unconventional architectural choices, and her personal career as the ruler of a principality, Begum Samru's choice of Catholicism itself marked her departure from convention, being different from the Anglican faith professed by most of the officials of the East India Company.

During the discussion, there were some suggestions from the Chair, A. G. K. Menon, and members of the audience that Sharma could take her research further by locating Begum Samru's conversion to the Catholic faith within her political context, and comparing her to other women rulers in the India of her time.

■ SWAPNA LIDDLE

**PERFORMANCE:** *IIC Diamond Jubilee*  
*Engendering The Discourse: 'Her Voice—Simhika: Daughter of the Forest'*



## Creating Empathy

**EXHIBITION:** *Through Their Eyes*  
An exhibition of photographs by Andy Malhan and poems by Astri Ghosh documenting the daily reality of dementia through the eyes of patients and their caregivers  
**18 to 24 January 2023**

needs more attention, shifts and fissures affect all aspects of relationships: mental, emotional, physical. There is no choice.

Slippers kept in the fridge, money trashed, garbage neatly stored, the blank stare, the gentle vacant smiles, simple events like these were featured in the photographs. Astri Ghosh's poems say, '*It might be kinder/ if she were to go/ quickly, in her sleep,/ rather than leaving us/ slowly, piece by piece...*'; '*...and you feel guilty...for leaving when you go/ guilty for having a reason to leave.*'



When we first confront dementia and Alzheimer's, we learn about physiological changes in the nervous system. These details do not even begin to address our problems. We next discover that there are almost no support mechanisms in either the medical system or in our social community. We have always linked intelligence with consciousness, and mind with body. When gaps appear between what were till now indelibly intertwined, and the gaps widen, we find we are ill-equipped to cope.

In such a setting, this exhibition was particularly brave and moving. Photographer Andy Malhan presented a rather personal chronicle: documenting his mother's initial appearances of dementia, and, as symptoms progressed, the pressures that impacted the lives and careers of other family members. As the increasingly helpless loved one

Permeated with pathos and almost tangible love, this exhibition was very special for its quiet dignity, for creating empathy as also awareness that we need greater community action for this very common yet isolating problem.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI





*Strokes of Sumi-e: An Exhibition of paintings by Madhu Jain*



## 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.*



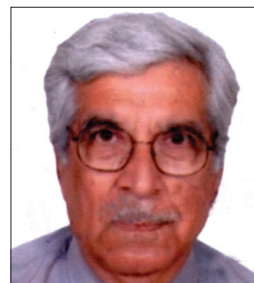
**PRINCE  
MUKARRAM JAH**  
L-0023



**SHRI DEEPAK NIRULA**  
M-1534



**DR. S. VARADARAJAN**  
M-1769



**DR. YOGINDER  
K. ALAGH**  
M-1824



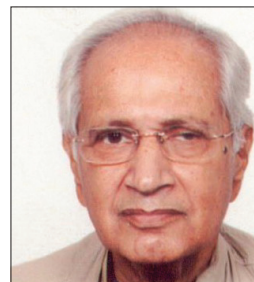
**SHRI BALKRISHNA  
V. DOSHI**  
M-2223



**SHRI P.  
ROHMINGTHANGA**  
M-2549



**PROF. A. K. SHARMA**  
M-3322



**SHRI H. H. TYABJI**  
A-2619



**SMT. PAM PARMAR**  
A-4376



**SMT. SARITA PRASAD**  
A-7298



**PROF. RATNA GUHA**  
A-7310



**SHRI SAMIR MATHUR**  
AT1584



## Message from the Director

Dear Members,

The Biennial Elections for electing two Trustees and four Executive Committee Members for the period April 2023 to March 2025 are scheduled to be held in March 2023. To exercise their franchise, all the eligible Members ('L' and 'M' categories) are required to present their Smart Card for identification at the polling booth. Those who would fail to do so, will not be allowed to cast their vote during the physical voting. Members are thus requested to carry their Smart Card with them when they go to vote at the Polling Booth.

It was observed that during the previous two elections, the Members who exercised their voting rights were very few in number. Eligible Members have a responsibility to cast their vote. We urge our Members to exercise their voting right in maximum numbers in the forthcoming elections. Also as the election bye-laws clearly stipulate that "Canvassing in any form or manner by anyone, for or against any candidate, in connection with his election is totally prohibited."

The Annual Subscription Fee (ASF) 2023-24 is due for payment on 1 April 2023. Members are requested to pay their ASF as soon as possible and well before the due date.

Winter at the Centre was a culinary delight, starting with additional confectionery items during Christmas. A Christmas buffet was organised in the verandah lawns on 25 December 2022. It was a 'full house' and very festive despite the chill in the air. A New Year buffet was organised on 1 January 2023.

The Centre celebrated its 'Annual Day for Members' on 22 January with a high tea in the Fountain lawn, followed by a contributory dinner in the Dining Hall. It also celebrated its 'Staff, Annual Day' on 23 January 2023. On this occasion, President, IIC, presented appreciation certificates to staff who had performed exceptionally well in the last year, and mementos to those who had completed 25 years of service.

With its large stretches of green space and abundant trees, the Centre generates about 100 kg of garden and horticultural wastes daily. A vermicomposting pit was earlier being used to convert the green wastes to compost manure. This system of composting besides being very slow, was also hugely capacity-constrained. Hardly 20 per cent of the wastes was getting converted into compost and as a result we used to buy a large quantity of compost-manure from the open market to meet our requirement.

The Centre has now commissioned an Organic Waste Composter (OWC) for handling green wastes. It can process 150 kg of green wastes per day and convert it to good quality compost within 4-5 days. With this equipment, we are moving a step closer to self-reliance and zero waste discharge.

An order for a 29.1 KW Solar Power Plant to be installed at the Annexe building has been placed on Tata Power Solar. The delivery and installation process will commence shortly. The plant is fully funded by IREDA through their CSR arm. The plant will generate about 40,000 units of electricity per annum and its payback period is five years.

Upgradation of the Sewage Treatment Plant has been undertaken to produce better quality treated water. The full effect of this effort will be seen from the months of April and May. This endeavour will greatly reduce our dependence on underground water.

The Centre has purchased an Electric Vehicle. It is environment-friendly and cost effective with a payback period of five years. Our experience with this vehicle will enable us to decide whether to continue with fossil-fuel driven vehicles or to switch to electric vehicles fully.

The carpets in the Auditorium, Multipurpose Hall and Annexe Dining Hall have been replaced with new ones. The re-furbishing of the Main Lounge and Lounge Verandah is in progress. Winter regulars in the IIC Gardens, like Petunia, Antirrhinum, Ornamental Kale, Brachyscome, Calendula, Sweet Sultan, Clarkia, Larkspur, etc., are in full bloom.

**K. N. SHRIVASTAVA**

*This issue of the Diary has been assembled and edited by Omita Goyal, Chief Editor; Ritu Singh, Deputy Editor; Rachna Joshi, Senior Asstt. Editor. Published by Kanwal Wali, for the India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi - 110003. Ph.: 24619431. Designed and printed by Niyogi Offset Pvt. Ltd., D-78, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 1, New Delhi-110020; Phone: 49327000.*