

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE **II** **Diary**

Volume XXXVII No. 4

August – September 2023

The G20 Selection

FILM CLUB: *G20 Film Festival*

COLLABORATION: *G20 Secretariat, Ministry of External Affairs; and G20 Member Countries*

16 August to 3 September 2023

The G20 Summit was the backdrop for the G20 Film Festival which featured films from the participating countries. It was inaugurated on 16 August by Amitabh Kant.

Pather Panchali (1955), Satyajit Ray's timeless classic set in rural Bengal, 68 years after its making still held the viewers in thrall. Contemporary films from various countries that followed, despite their many interesting experiments with form, appeared to be works-in-progress.

Ana. Untitled (2020), a documentary-fiction from Brazil directed by Lucia Murat, is about the experiences of Ana, an actor who mirrors the traumatic lives of women plastic artists across many countries of Latin America under the heel of dictators in the 1970s and 1980s. The director uses the letters of these women artists in Cuba, Mexico, Argentina and Chile, along with real documentary and staged footage mixing fact and fiction in a beguiling manner bolstered by the voice-over narration of the Brazilian actor Stella Rabello to grip the viewer, thus making the fictional Ana almost a flesh and blood character.

Mezquite's Heart (2019), director Ana Laura Calderon's gentle, moving, incisive portrait of the gradual disappearance of Yoreme, an indigenous community in Sonora, Mexico, is focussed on little Lucia learning to play the harp, against the local tradition that regards it as the sole preserve of men. The innocence of Lucia, her family and the community to which they belong, pitted against the cunning of the urban, material world that wishes to



subjugate them and impair their dignity, is told through the music of the Yoreme people and the pleasure it brings by collective sharing. Very likely, this film may strike a chord among Indian viewers aware of an almost parallel cultural situation that confronts the various tribes in this country.

Footprints on Water (2023) from the UK, directed by Nathalia Syam, was disappointing. This story about illegal Asian immigrants in Birmingham tricked by unscrupulous touts into modern-day slavery fails to take off. While veteran Indian actor Adil Hussain gives a refined performance, as does the supporting cast, the laboured, melodramatic script could not rescue a potentially strong and truthful subject from being an amateurish film.

The most engaging film was *Ivie Wie Ivie* (2021), a German production directed by debutante Sarah BlaBkiewitz. It centres around Ivie, a young, well-educated woman of African-German parentage, helped by her German friends, trying to find her place in contemporary Leipzig. Her loving, outwardly reticent mother is forced to talk at length about her long-absent father, whose death Ivie discovers through Naomie, a half-sister who suddenly turns up to upset her equilibrium. The film handles her identity crisis and that of her half-sister with exemplary warmth and discipline. It is a film by a director whose work will be worth watching over the years.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

Creative Expressions

FESTIVAL: Animac Film Festival: Humour and Massacre Stories

COLLABORATION: Cervantes Institute, New Delhi; and Decaf Festival

22 September 2023

A selection of seven short films from the Catalan festival, 'Amimac Lleida International Animated Film Festival of Catalonia', were screened on a single evening—all imaginatively made.

Decorated by Alberto Vázquez of Spain is dark, in keeping with the mood of the times. The drawing is like the turn of the 20th-century illustrations for children's fantasies, but the aesthetic is Dadaist and the tone mock-sad, with music to match. It questions the concept of idealistic love.

Beast (Chile), directed by Hugo Covarrubias, is both funny and chilling. It is about a secret police agent working for the dictatorship in Chile. The animation of equivalents of human figures modelled possibly with malleable material against a mock-realist background suits the theme to a 'T'.

Loop (Argentina) is Pablo Polledri's witty, acerbic satire on the repetitiveness in the performance of certain actions in their day-to-day activities by individuals to suggest



an eternal loop. The idea is questioned by a couple who choose to do otherwise.

Carla Pereira's *Selection Process*, a three-minute offering from Spain, is a droll, funny and deceptive description of the job selection process through interviews in our time. The candidate is a resigned cat! The colours are bright, the animation lively and in the realist tradition.

There was a strong, uninhibited approach to the depiction of sex in some of the films. In Camila Káter's *Flesh* from Spain, five women examine their relationship with their bodies through life in an urbane, witty manner in lively lines and colour tones.

Other films like *Carnal Symbiosis* (Belgium) by Rocio Alvarez Varela and *Tio* by the Mexican Juan Jose Medina attempt to understand a dystopian world through the experiences of beleaguered individuals in seemingly incomprehensible surroundings.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

Sacred Spaces

FILM: *Indian Modernity: The Architecture of Raj Rewal—Part I & II*

DIRECTED BY: Manu Rewal

7 to 8 August 2023

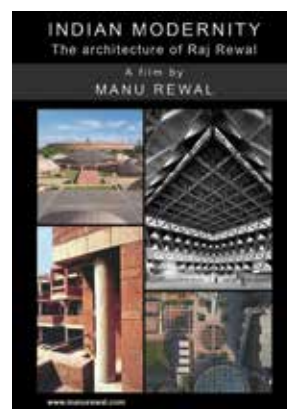
'This building is ironic,' Cyrus Jhabvala proclaimed. It was 1970, I was nine, and we were at the 'Hall of Nations' construction site. I dreamt of becoming an architect. Jhabvala would take me on architectural walks and hold forth, 'Elsewhere they would build this with glass and steel. Raj Rewal is doing this in concrete, cast in situ.' A large space frame concrete structure with spans of 144 feet was completely unheard of then.

Inside—the volume, the play of light and shadow, and the people building it by hand, was utterly cinematic. Raj Rewal was sculpting in time, and I was seeing a new world being created.

Democracy and secularism are the foundations of Raj Rewal's practice. 'The Hall of Nations' was about inclusion, democracy and the idea of freedom. It was a testament to the times and to the nation we thought we were building. Raj Rewal took a strong ethical position, looking beyond dominant ideologies while conceiving this building. The Indian Constitution inspired the structure of his 'Library for the Indian Parliament'. 'Knowledge, education and enlightenment' were what he sought to create in this space which exudes a different value system and spirit.

Raj Rewal is acutely sensitive to the local context. While light, space, structure and sustainability are central to his works, his quest is in 'creating a sacred space with stone'.

Manu Rewal's film takes on the challenge between the personal and the public.



Raj Rewal is his father, and the film-maker kept a revered distance, skirting the personal and focussing instead on the architect's oeuvre.

Divided into chapters, the film engages with sketches, drawings, excellent animation to reveal the architect's thoughts and spaces which have been filmed with great care and beauty. The 16mm celluloid evokes the subtle

tonal range, the colour palette of the buildings, and the changing natural light the architect engages with.

'Beauty in everyday life' 'buildings with form and poetry,' is how Raj Rewal would like his work seen. In this age, Raj Rewal's work is a voice that needs to be heard and Manu Rewal's a film that must be seen.

■ DEV BENEGAL

Japanese Translations

TALK: *Sanskrit and Tibetan Manuscript Study in Japan*

SPEAKER: *Kimiaki Tanaka*

COLLABORATION: *Ministry of External Affairs; and World Buddhist Cultural Trust*
11 August 2023

In the talk on 'Sanskrit and Tibetan Manuscript Study in Japan', Kimiaki Tanaka explained that Sanskrit manuscripts of Buddhist scriptures were transmitted in ancient times in the country, the oldest being the Horyuji manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya* and *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, dating back to the 7th or 8th century. The Siddham script was used for the transcription of Sanskrit mantras and *dharanis*. Although Japanese scholar-priests had some knowledge about the Sanskrit rules of liaison (*samdhī*) and combining of characters (*samyuktaksara*), a systematic grammar of Sanskrit had not yet been transmitted. Since Paninian grammar did not exist, deciphering Sanskrit manuscripts was nearly impossible for Japanese scholar-priests at the time.

In the Edo period, scholar Jiun Onko (1718–1804) revived Sanskrit studies in Japan. However, the full-scale revival of the study of Sanskrit manuscripts did not occur until the Meiji Restoration.

As part of the Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project, Tanaka visited the National Archives of Nepal and based his study on the manuscripts he purchased on microfilm from the archives before leaving Nepal.

Tanaka further said that several Japanese scholars are working on Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts. Notable among them are Kazunobu Matsuda of Bukkyo University in Kyoto, who identified manuscripts from across the world, including Afghanistan, and Seishi Karashima of Soka University, who has published several studies on Sanskrit manuscripts from Central Asia, among others.

To conclude, Tanaka lamented the dismal situation of Japanese research on Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts due to dwindling birth rates in Japan and the consequent paucity of new students in the universities. Private universities established by Buddhist sects, with many chairs in Buddhist studies, are especially adversely affected.

■ GAURIKA KAPOOR

A Multidimensional Crisis

DISCUSSION: *Beyond Imran Khan: Pakistan's New Political Direction*

PANELLISTS: *Sharat Sabharwal; Tilak Devasher; and Smita Sharma*

MODERATOR: *C. Raja Mohan*

COLLABORATIONS: *Asia Society Policy Institute, Delhi*

6 September 2023

Pakistan is no stranger to political crises and is currently at a crossroads as the former PM, Imran Khan, was ousted with a no-confidence motion and eventually arrested.

C. Raja Mohan opened the discussion by describing this inflection point with challenges on the economic, domestic, foreign policy and security fronts. Smita Sharma reflected on her visit to Pakistan during the 2013 elections, which saw a remarkable shift of focus on domestic issues from the usual emphasis on Kashmir that gave a cautious sense of hope to its people. It signalled how Imran Khan had become a political powerhouse. She drew a character sketch of the leader and his times to demonstrate who he is and what he represents. Tilak Devasher contended that Imran Khan remains central to the country's politics despite his inability to deliver the promise of 'Naya

Pakistan'. He also emphasised the questions over non-traditional security threats—water, education, economy and population. Sharat Sabharwal outlined the increasing power of the army and stated that whenever elections are conducted, it would be orchestrated and result in a government sans political legitimacy, dependent on the army, incapable of dealing with economic problems or terrorism.

The panellists explored the implications for India and concluded that India should break out of conventional wisdom about Pakistan and engage at a deeper level without expectations. The internal happenings in Pakistan

need serious attention, and an engagement with that ecosystem and people is crucial. The round of questions covered an array of issues ranging from the offer of exile to Imran Khan, the need for an economic overhaul for stabilisation, tensions on the Pak–Afghanistan boundary post-Taliban takeover, USA and India relations with China, and protests in Kashmir.

Raja Mohan concluded the discussion with a vote of thanks and termed the situation in Pakistan a multidimensional crisis where the country has to set direction for itself.

■ SAURYA MISHRA

The Data Uproar

CONFERENCE: *International Conference on Open and FAIR Data Ecosystem: Principles, Policies, and Platforms*

WELCOME ADDRESS: *Usha Mujoo Munshi, Chief Librarian, IIC*

INTRODUCTION: *Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC*

INAUGURAL SESSION SPEAKERS: *Ajit Kembhavi; O. P. Kalra; Vinton Gray Cerf; and Simon Hodson*

CHIEF GUEST: *Ajay Kumar Sood*

CONCLUDING REMARKS: *Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC*

COLLABORATIONS: *Pune Knowledge Cluster (PKC); Indian National Science Academy; and SGT University*

11 to 13 September 2023

The conference brought together stakeholders from academia, industry and government to deliberate on strategies for implementing open and FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability) data initiatives. It aimed to highlight advancements in data-sharing practices, promote open science policies, and encourage collaboration among diverse communities involved with open and FAIR data.

Dedicated to advancing openness in scientific research, the conference drew delegates from India, the USA, the UK, South Africa, Germany, France, New Zealand, Singapore and Spain.



Inaugurated by Ajay Kumar Sood, the conference featured 10 technical sessions, a panel discussion, and a round table on 'Digital Twins'. Experts presented a total of 50 papers, which were discussed to formulate recommendations for national governments, international organisations and research institutions. Sood emphasised the conference's importance as a product of the New Delhi G20 Declaration. He underscored the need for responsible AI governance and highlighted the G20's commitment to AI principles, pro-innovation regulation and using AI for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ajit Kembhavi outlined the conference's objectives. Simon Hodson stressed CODATA's role in promoting open science and FAIR data, and its vision of empowering science through transparent and equitable data use. Vinton Gray Cerf highlighted the role of data in solving key issues.

Shri Shyam Saran pointed out that all disciplines are becoming increasingly data-driven and it has therefore become imperative to develop expertise in the collection and curation of data, data processing, management and distribution. Shri K. N. Shrivastava said the conference would provide a forum for sharing expert insights and enable intense community interaction to understand global trends better.

■

A Historical Record

TALK: *Letters to Theo—The Art and Life of Vincent Van Gogh*

ILLUSTRATED LECTURE BY:
Sumanjit Chaudhry

CHAIR: Ravi Bhoothalingam
29 September 2023

Over 2,000 letters were written by Vincent Van Gogh during his lifetime, making him a prolific letter writer. Many of these were sent to his brother Theo, who was also his best friend and loyal supporter. Theo supported the artist financially and emotionally for the entirety of his life until his death at the age of 37. The brothers wrote 903 letters to each other in all, 820 of which were addressed to Theo and 83 to Van Gogh. Since Theo had saved Van Gogh's letters with great care, Johanna Van Gogh-Bonger, his wife, archived the letters after Theo passed away six months after Van Gogh.

When he was 19 years old, Van Gogh started writing to his brother. Many of these letters are written in French. They provide a first-person perspective on Van Gogh's development as a person and artist, his struggles to master drawing and painting, his interactions with the early impressionists in Paris and the astonishing impact that this had on his painting style, his fascination with Japanese art and how it affected his work, his move to Arles in France, and his discovery of his own unique style.

Additionally, they detail his encounters with other impressionist painters such as Paul Gauguin, who was present when Van Gogh amputated his ear. He also chronicled his mental breakdown, his attempts to paint while he was lucid, and the cruelty with which he was treated by the villagers. He was also exhausted from working hard and the high standards he set for himself. He was uncertain about the future and felt he had failed as a man and as an artist.

Van Gogh shot himself in the chest with a revolver on 27 July 1890 in a field near Auvers. He died two days later, with his brother Theo at his bedside.

■ RITIKA KOCHHAR

The Lost Legacy of Delhi

TALK: *There was Once a City by this Name: Shahjahanabad before 1857*

SPEAKER: Swapna Liddle

CHAIR: Shubham Mishra
24 August 2023

The talk by Swapna Liddle delved into profound changes and transformations of the fabric of Shahjahanabad—now the old Delhi—built by the emperor Shahjahan in the mid-17th century.

A detailed map of Shahjahanabad of 1846–47, the writings of Mirza Ghalib and pictorial depictions of the pre-1857 and post-1857 periods reveal the destruction of its prime landmarks. The revolt of 1857 was the watershed moment when the physical and cultural fabric of the city was transformed. Ghalib witnessed these changes firsthand and lamented the passing of the city's essence in terms of physical spaces such as the Lal Qila or the Red Fort, the markets of Jama Masjid and Chandni Chowk.

Today, the Red Fort has vast open spaces, but a panorama of the fort by 19th-century painter Mazhar Ali Khan depicts

a high density of constructions due to occupation by the emperor and his extended family over two centuries.

Similarly, Chandni Chowk originally owed its name to an octagonal water pool that served as a chowk, or city square, and the moon's reflection in water gave it its name. The Chowk was the commercial hub built by Jahanara, along with a *sarai* built to host wealthy traders and merchants, and the Bagh Sahibabad, a large formally laid out garden with water channels and pools.

A conscious effort was made by the British to replace the major Mughal landmarks with their own—a clock tower at Chandni Chowk; barracks in the Red Fort; and what is now the old Town Hall, once a well-laid-out garden of a sarai stood. Besides the water channel and pool at Chandni Chowk, the city had a *nahar* or canal, along with bridges at regular intervals, and the water from the river Yamuna entered it from the Kabuli Darwaza, one of the 13 surviving gates in Delhi, and flowed past the Nawab of Awadh's estate into the city.

The legacy of the city, which once was Shahjahanabad, lingered in the memory, and the old names, such as Meena Bazaar and Urdu Bazaar, remained a part of the rebuilt city.

■ SUSAN VERMA MISHRA

The Media Conundrum

DISCUSSION: *Manipur Crisis and the Role of Media*

SPEAKERS: *Patricia Mukhim; Sanjoy Hazarika; Pradip Phanjoubam; Nemthianngai Guite; and S. N. Sahu*

MODERATOR: *Suhas Borker, Trustee, IIC*

COLLABORATION: *Jan Prasara*

12 September 2023

Manipur continues to witness intense ethnic violence since May 2023, raising pertinent questions about the media's role in reporting the conflict. At the outset, Suhas Borker pondered if a free press can promote peace and reconciliation, especially when both communities in the conflict feel wronged and have their own perceived realities.

Three prominent themes emerged in this discussion. The 'complexities of reporting conflicts' were repeatedly alluded to. Patricia Mukhim rued how most journalists are not trained in the ethics of conflict reporting and are unable to internalise a conflict if they are unfamiliar with its history. Coupled with this were concerns regarding inadequate fact-checking by journalists, voiced by Sanjoy Hazarika and Pradip Phanjoubam, leading to media becoming 'narrative creators'. Simultaneously, fake news

on social media contributes to the formation of prejudicial opinions against a community.

The discussants also contended how 'internet bans' in Manipur disrupted communication between journalists. Nemthianngai Guite spoke about the disproportionate harm such bans cause to hill-based communities, which are geographically disadvantaged in both receiving and sharing information. S. N. Sahu echoed this sentiment by saying that human rights suffer when connectivity is hampered.

The discussion was useful in highlighting how so much of this conflict stems from 'contestations regarding land' in Manipur. The absence of land reforms, the different land tenure systems in the hills and the valley, and competing claims around land are crucial to this conflict. This should, undoubtedly, appear more prominently in media coverage.

Most journalists work under pressing deadlines and imminent threats to their safety in conflict zones. Not being conversant in the language spoken in the conflict zone hampers access and comprehension. It was heartening to see that the discussion was simultaneously sensitive to these challenges media persons face.

Perhaps the most profound comment came from Phanjoubam when he said that the solution to the Manipur crisis has to be a win-win for all because there is no enemy to be eliminated.

■ RITWIK SHARMA

Need of the Hour

SEMINAR: *International Conference on Creative Tensions between Nationalism and Globalism*

WELCOME REMARKS: *Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC*

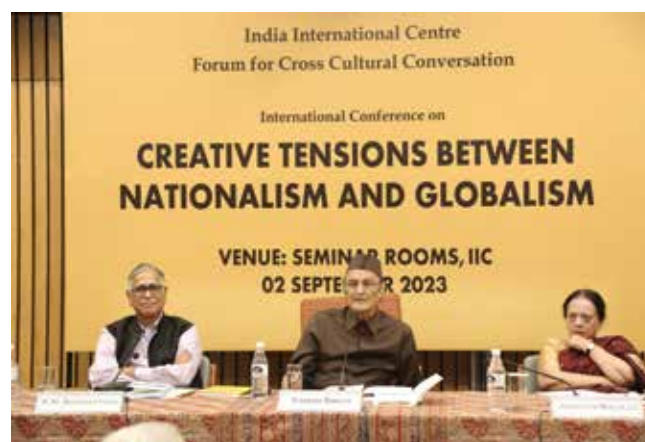
INTRODUCTION: *Anindita Balslev*

OPENING REMARKS: *Dr. Karan Singh*

SPEAKERS: *Jorge Heine; Lalitha Kumaramangalam; Syed Akbaruddin; and Ashis Nandy*

COLLABORATION: *Forum for Cross Cultural Conversation*

2 September 2023



Various historical incidents have played significant roles in shaping the political, economic, social and cultural landscapes of countries in contemporary times at both domestic and international levels.

In the realist world of the 21st century, globalism and nationalism are pivotal for protecting and influencing the idea of national interest and foreign policy. While

globalism advocates for international cooperation and the free flow of goods, information and people across borders, nationalism emphasises the importance of preserving and protecting the identity, sovereignty and interests of individual nations. These contrasting ideologies often lead to disagreements, forming 'creative tensions'.

Globalism is rooted in the Cold War era when international organisations such as the UN, WTO, EU, etc., were established. These organisations aimed to promote peace, cooperation and economic stability at the global level. On the other hand, nationalism emerged as a response to external pressures, perceived threats to sovereignty, or economic challenges.

The keynote speaker, Anindita Balslev, considered the call for globalism the key factor behind the rise of creative

tensions as it promotes open markets, free trade, open borders and cooperation. These practices do not align with the ideas of national interest and cultural distinctiveness that nationalism propagates.

The speakers emphasised the importance of 'self-help' and the need for a 'balance of power' in the international arena by highlighting the current situation of the Russia–Ukraine war and the role of state and non-state actors in dissolving these tensions.

The speakers agreed that for peace building, the states must practice diplomacy and peaceful negotiations. They must respect the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations by not intervening in internal affairs.

■ SIDDHI BHARDWAJ

Material and Non-Material Power

TALK: *Infrastructure and Chinese Influence in Southeast Asia*

SPEAKER: Selina Ho

CHAIR: Shivshankar Menon

COLLABORATION: *Centre for Chinese Studies, Ashoka University; and NYU Shanghai*

21 September 2023

Selina Ho's talk was rooted in in-depth research conducted in seven Southeast Asian countries, China and the United States. More than 200 stakeholders from 150 organisations were interviewed, as well as workers at construction sites, farmers and NGOs. Chairperson Shivshankar Menon rightly observed that there could be no better person than Ho to speak about 'Infrastructure and Chinese Influence in Southeast Asia'.

Her talk focussed on some key questions: How should we understand Chinese power? How do small and middle powers deal with bigger and more powerful states? How does China negotiate with its partners? What is the relationship between domestic and foreign policy behaviour? What are the problems in implementation?

She examined Chinese structural and discursive power, the third and fourth faces of power, through the lens of the country's mega-infrastructure vision, the Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI). She argued that power, both material and non-material, is embedded in infrastructure. Her research shows that China is relatively successful in wielding structural and discursive power in Laos and Indonesia, despite the differences in the two countries' political systems, and economic and population sizes. Chinese domination, however, does not mean that subordinate states do not have agency. Exploring the different facets of Chinese power is critical for a proper understanding of how China strives to shape the structure and discourse of the global order.

China's increasing material capabilities stand at the heart of the US–China power transition. The focus on material power reflects a realist definition of power based on the possession of resources. However, material capabilities alone do not necessarily translate into influence and do not always determine outcomes.

Non-material power matters at least as much as material capabilities. China under President Xi Jinping views power differently from previous generations of Chinese leaders. While material power remains important, Xi has paid greater attention to strengthening Chinese non-material power, specifically structural and discursive.

Drawing from the findings of her book, *Rivers of Iron: Railroads and Chinese Power in Southeast Asia*, Ho questioned how China wields infrastructure as a source of power in Southeast Asia. To what extent has China been successful in converting infrastructure power into influence? And how have Southeast Asian states responded to China's infrastructure initiatives?

■

A Journey through Texts and Traditions

EXHIBITION: *Evam Vadati Pustakam: Manuscripts Tell their Stories*

INAUGURATION BY: Dr. S. Jaishankar,
Minister of External Affairs

COLLABORATION: Ministry of External Affairs
13 to 28 September 2023

One may wonder if a two-week-long exhibition is enough to shed light on the long history of manuscript writing as well as the rich repository of manuscripts in the Indian subcontinent. It, however, managed to present a coherent narrative tracing the manuscript tradition in the subcontinent developed from the use of materials like birch bark and later paper, both gilded and dyed.

As a lay viewer walking along the aisle, one can comprehend the vastness of the collection that will soon be available on the digital platform SAMHITĀ, but also grasp the range of themes and ideas these manuscripts cover. Assisted by audio-visual aids, the exhibition highlighted major ideas about varied themes like astrology, medicine, literature and poetry, and cosmology to draw attention to the literary traditions of the country.

Interspersed between images of text portions from the manuscript were instruction plaques on how to read a manuscript as well as how it was created and by whom. The exhibition was laid out in a manner that the viewers,

by the end, acquire a sense of how manuscripts evolved from being short text to long scrolls with painted images, tables and *maṇḍalas*, and simultaneously drew attention to the complexities of script and language that defined the manuscript tradition of the region.

However, it would have been helpful if more attention had been paid to arranging the displays so that a chronological evolution of the manuscripts' tradition could be comprehended with better clarity.

There were a few other noticeable concerns that would possibly not escape a historian's oculus. For instance, in the opening section, the Harappan script and inscriptions were placed together, giving the impression that both are manuscripts. This may have been inappropriate as they are vastly separate sources, with the former still undeciphered. Anything with writing is not a manuscript, and not all manuscripts may have writing.



■ MERCY DUTTA

Postcards from the Past

EXHIBITION: *Legends of Bengal School*

CURATED FROM: *The Private Collection of Banbehari Ghosh*

9 to 21 August 2023

In times when communications by email and various forms of social media are the norm, it is a pleasure to come across the postcard. And that too a postcard painted by a noted artist and inscribed by him as well. The elegantly curated exhibition 'Legacy of Bengal School', a journey of artistic camaraderie, showcased the collection of prints, cards and sketches owned by Banbehari Ghosh, a student of iconic artist and teacher Nandalal Bose of Santiniketan's Kala Bhavana in the inter-war years.



Apart from a close relationship with his teacher—affectionately called *Mastermoshai*—Ghosh had strong ties with fellow students Benode Behari Mukherjee and Ramkinkar Baij who later went on to become important figures in what became known as the Bengal School of Art.

Looking at the small but interesting collection of painted postcards one couldn't help feeling that an innovative area of research for art students could be the role of the hand-painted postcard. Why did these artists choose this genre? Again, were these ever posted or merely hand-delivered?

Nandalal Bose chose to do detailed studies of fish on a few he sent to Ghosh while Manishi Dey who specialised

in portraits had sketched a bejewelled village woman on his. A valuable part of Ghosh's collection are the graphite sketches by Baij. Known for his powerful sculptures and paintings, images of the sinews and muscles of the male body were perhaps preparatory for work to follow. His village scenes, bullock carts and rolling fields are strongly reminiscent of the rural countryside around Santiniketan.

The exhibition based on a legacy well preserved by the heirs of Ghosh reminded one of the value of personal collections—be they works of art, photographs, postcards, printed or painted, stamps, coins and other ephemera. In a world where memories are fragile, these are important leads to the past.

■ MALAVIKA KARLEKAR

Capturing Uniqueness

EXHIBITION: *Parsis of Ahmedabad*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY: *Bindi Sheth*

COLLABORATION: *Parzor; Museo Camera; and India Photo Archive*

26 August to 6 September 2023

Unlike Mumbai or Ahmedabad, which boast of inhabiting the Parsis, exposure to this minority yet culturally rich community for north Indians has essentially been through their representation in Hindi cinema. In films they have typically been featured as people with quirks and broken Hindi, rarely focussing on the depth of their characters or community. This exhibition, therefore, was a pictorial delight and a walk into their world, fresh and profound.

What started as a one-picture assignment with three Parsi homes in 2021 became a long-term project for photographer Bindi Sheth. She went on to document 65 homes, Navjote ceremonies, weddings and an engagement. The carefully chosen 81 photographs in the exhibition included intimate details of bedrooms or kitchens, mundane lives, to the vibrant gardens and the scale and moods of the weddings and festivals. A few photographs had also been discreetly printed in black and white or sepia, perhaps to invoke a sense of nostalgia and stillness of time and space.

Sheth, who grew up in Mumbai with Parsis being a part of her formative years as friends, school teachers or principal, stated in her exhibition note: 'As an outsider, I realised that I



have an advantage of noticing minor details that set them apart and make them a unique intriguing community.'

While the families that were documented were socially and economically diverse and their homes dispersed, what connected them was the shared sense of being, represented through photographs of relatives, the toran, antique floral crockery, reverence for fire, pets, their love for nature apparent in everything, including the use of floral prints, decorative flowers, old heirloom furniture, the lingering influence of the British, and at the centre of it the host families interaction with all.

'These photographs are about some observations and feelings the spaces and people evoked in me, helping me understand the nuances of this micro-community—how they change and adapt with the passage of time despite fast depleting numbers, yet bearing a beautiful resilience that retains the friendly culture and values,' wrote Sheth in her note.

■ SHWETA KESHRI

The Powerful Strokes

EXHIBITION: *Enver Ahmed: The Cartoonist who Belonged to All*

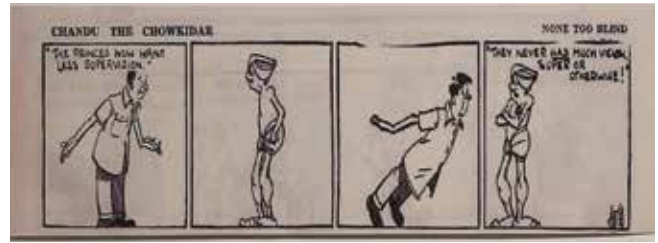
CURATED AND PRESENTED BY: *Ritu Gairola Khanduri*

12 to 19 August 2023

Newspaper cartoons succinctly chronicle current political and social conditions. For 30 years, Enver Ahmed was one of the foremost cartoonists of India, simultaneously featured in three leading newspapers, *Pioneer*, *Dawn* and *Hindustan Times*, each of which held distinct political views.

Ritu Gairola Khanduri's research is reflected in the *Caricaturing Culture of India: Cartoons and History in the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press India, 2014) and her in-depth study was visible in this small exhibition. Arranged in nine clusters, the works began with colonial times when the portents of World War II loomed large, moving chronologically to the independence period, and then to the politics of the newly formed country. Book illustrations depicting Indian life for mainly Western readers comprised two sections in different illustration styles. The other sections featured standalone cartoons and cartoon strips featuring the fictional 'Chandu' as protagonist.

Ahmed's 'bold lines and brilliant caricatures' expressed his anguish at the repeating cycles of violence unleashed and perpetrated by political systems that ignored human rights to achieve self-centred goals. His bold expressions led to death threats, and he left India with his family, continuing his cartoon strip, which was renamed 'Chandu Abroad'.



Khanduri, supported by *Times of India* cartoonist Sandeep Adhwaryu, offered a walk-through, which was lively and interactive. We learned that the leading cartoonist David Low, who contributed to *Pioneer*, set the style that Ahmed, K. Shankar Pillai, Bal Thackeray and others aspired to imitate. It took them many years to try to explore their visual vocabulary.

Cartoonists of that era had no recourse to computers, and the mastery of Ahmed's strokes, with no trace of hesitation or quiver, together with his calligraphic prowess, was highlighted.

Many of the cartoons displayed could, with minor tweaks, depict contemporary situations. Exhibitions like this are important as they help review the past, keep it alive, and hopefully prevent repeating old mistakes.

■ BHARATI MIRCHANDANI

India's Moral Compass

DISCUSSION: *The Morality of India's Constitution: The Path Still to be Traversed*

PANELLISTS: *Syeda Hameed; Ashis Nandy; Neera Chandoke; Kapil Sibal; and Ashok Vajpeyi*

CHAIR: *Harsh Mander*

COLLABORATION: *Centre for Equity Studies*
17 August 2023

In one of the darkest yet most inspiring moments in the history of our country, this panel of academics, activists, politicians and poets showed light by reaffirming the need to rebuild the vision of India. The discussion around the Indian Constitution, its morality and central values was driven by the idea of reposing a strong belief in this document.

Harsh Mander set the stage by invoking the troubled times during which the Indian Constitution was framed. He highlighted its journey since then as a storehouse of aspirations and dreams. The panellists presented their understanding of the nature of the Constitution and the

path that needs to be traversed in these turbulent times. Neera Chandoke termed it a political document, later made legal in both regulatory and prescriptive senses. She took the audience on a poetic journey about the efforts of artists, academics, writers and society at large to display solidarity post-partition. She emphasised the legacy of the Indian independence movement that made us write our Constitution as a shared project and not merely a social contract, making it the most respected document. According to her, building solidarity lies at the heart of moving forward.

Kapil Sibal extended the characterisation to say that the Constitution is a political compromise, with its moral underpinnings enshrined in the Preamble. He indicated that the political class is far removed from these morals,

and unless they reflect and change, the situation will not improve.

Ashok Vajpeyi spoke in the capacity of a citizen and lamented the violations of constitutional values not just by the ruling dispensation but also by the people. He traced the sources of this guiding document to establish that it is a repository of principles that need to be preserved. Syeda Hameed spoke as a 'citizen who now has to consciously think of her Muslim identity'. In her moving account, she recollected the times of the partition and her upbringing in a composite culture of India that was envisioned by her grandfather and his generation of leaders. She recited his couplet to bemoan the erosion of that vision from our daily lives.

■ SAURYA MISHRA

An Evening of Grace

PERFORMANCE: *IIC Monsoon Festival of Dance*

MANIPURI RECITAL BY: *Sudip Kumar Ghosh from Kolkata, disciple of Th. Chourajeet Singh and N. Amusana Devi*

ODISSI RECITAL BY: *Arunima Ghosh, disciple of Sharon Lowen*

17 August 2023

Holding the attention of the audience can be difficult sometimes for a solo classical dance performer when it is performed to recorded music, but Sudip Kumar Ghosh managed to do so with his graceful rendition of the Manipuri dance repertoire.

Since Manipuri dance has its roots in *Natya Shastra*, an ancient text on performing arts, it is considered a form of worship. In keeping with this tradition, Sudip Ghosh began his recital by paying tribute to the Sun God through the 'Surya Pranam'.

His piece based on Sankirtana was a glimpse of the deep-rooted and abiding faith in Lord Krishna. As the Ashtapadis of *Gita Govinda* by 12th-century poet Jayadeva are very popular in Manipur, he selected one of its popular pieces, Dashavatara. Sudip Ghosh used delicate body movements and subtle facial expressions to narrate this story of the 10 incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

Just how many different ways Dashavatara can be showcased was seen in the second performance of the evening. Presented in the Odissi style by dancer Arunima



Ghosh, this interpretation of Dashavatara wove the lyrical with the theatrical with more fanfare.

The presence of the accompanying musicians played a considerable role in engaging the audience and enhanced the performance with their skills.

The mellifluous sound of the flute set the tone at the start of Arunima Ghosh's opening piece, an ode to Lord Jagannath. Prafulla Mangaraj on *mardala* and Sukant Nayak on vocals provided excellent support to the presentations that followed, whether it was the ebb and flow of 'Saveri Pallavi', a pure dance item, or Arunima Ghosh's self-choreographed piece inspired by lyrics from Valmiki's *Ramayana*. The latter was expressed through a combination of abhinaya and rhythmic steps to convey joy at being one with nature, especially during the rains.

Both were graceful and pleasing to the eye. The addition of a shloka choreographed by her teacher Sharon Lowen at the end of her concluding piece 'Moksha' was a befitting close to an evening of creative expression.

■ SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

History in Everyday Objects

DISCUSSION: *Objects and Histories*

ILLUSTRATED LECTURE BY: *Sudeshna Guha*

CHAIR: *Surajit Sarkar*

18 September 2023

The illustrated lecture by Sudeshna Guha, author of the recently published *A History of India Through 75 Objects* (Hachette India, 2022), was held in the 'Frontiers of History' series. The talk covered a selection of 'objects', some well-known and others scarcely, from various periods of Indian history. They direct our attention towards interrogating our notions of a knowable past and fixed national history. 'Objects' illustrated and spoken about, such as the Chenchu flute, photographs, refugee map, 1857 bed with an image of the relief of Lucknow, copy of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* amongst others highlight the many unknowns that objects and antiquities direct us to see. 'Objects' have their own life histories with multiple and changing meanings, and they allow us to recall histories that have been sidelined and also narrate transnational histories.

Objects give a sense of four things—that seeking histories through them demands a careful study of one thing concerning the other that are associated with them; the shifting 'valuation' of objects over time; claiming ownership of traditions, heritage, culture and historical genealogies are refashioned through time; and objects as replicas and souvenirs create a tangibility of past.

While on the one hand the role of photography, as archaeology's visual histories, is a rich source for gauging an absent past, photographs essentially remain a neglected topic of research inquiry. Photographs speak of histories of encounters, civic negotiations, the ways they are used or displayed and the process of information.

Also, while researchers often engage with the museum and archive catalogue cards as unimpeachable sources, the institutional databases inform us about curatorial practices and encourage us to ask how sources are produced. Museum histories must be placed at the forefront of scholarship and museums should be considered a method of historical and archaeological inquiry. Being a formal storehouse of excavated artifacts from archaeological excavations, museums are equally field sites for archaeological research.

■ **SUSAN VERMA MISHRA**

Remembering the Musical Genius

SEMINAR: *Gagan Mandal Beech Me Aawaz*

SPEAKERS: *Satyasheel Deshpande; Anubhuti Sharma; Madan Soni; Arun Khopkar; Partho Datta; Neela Bhagwat; Jyotirmoy Sharma; Vidyadhar Vyas; Madhup Mudgal; Asteek Vajpeyi; Priyavrat Soni; Manjari Sinha; Dhruv Shukla; Udayan Vajpeyi; Rajiv Vora; Shabnam Virmani; Kalapini Komkali; Kumar Shahani; Ghulam Mohd. Sheikh; and Bhuvanesh Komkali*

COLLABORATION: *The Raza Foundation*

26 August 2023

Introducing the day-long seminar on the life and music of the late Kumar Gandharva on the occasion of his birth centenary, Ashok Vajpeyi stated, 'Celebration of Kumar Gandharva is like celebrating the summit of creativity and ideological thinking achieved in Indian classical music during the 20th century.'

The seminar was divided into four segments. A galaxy of scholars and musicians expressed their thoughts on

Kumar Gandharva's musical vision, his musical practice and his creativity in raga and folk music.

Opening the inaugural session, Satyasheel Deshpande quoted Kumar Gandharva, 'It's easy to study the theory of music or become a vocalist, but understanding the essence of music is the most difficult aspect. Music is culture-specific, whether Western harmony and counterpoint or raga *sangeet* which defines and authenticates Indian culture.'

Kumar Gandharva brought a sense of liberation within the constraints of 'parampara' by giving a personal context to 'swaras'.

Vidyadhar Vyas explained how Kumar Gandharva had explored a new dimension of swaras. In guru-shishya parampara, one learns through imitation of the guru, followed by inspiration and improvisation. Gandharva, however, went further to internalisation and innovation. He explored new avenues of creativity.

Madhup Mudgal emphasised Kumar Gandharva's contribution of 'Dhun-Ugam Ragas' and the 'Jod-Ragas' that were not created by distortion but with rational and logical thinking. He hummed and demonstrated the 'Shree-Kalyan', where both Shree and Kalyan co-exist amicably.

He also mentioned 'Kamodvanti', a combination of ragas Kamod and Jaijaiwanti, and the seamless union of 'Sohini-Bhatiyar'.

The first-hand accounts of Kalapini Komkali, Kumar Gandharva's daughter and disciple, and Bhuvanesh Komkali, his grandson, were remarkable. The latter's account of his grandfather's presence and absence at their home in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh, was moving.

Film-maker Arun Khopkar gave a visual and poetic description of *Geet Varsha*, one of Kumar Gandharva's theme-oriented productions with the minutest details.

Neela Bhagwat remembered Kumar Gandharva in the context of Kabir, and Shabnam Virmani showed clips of her film on him.

■ MANJARI SINHA

The Power of Time in Literature

POETRY: *JaduNama with Legendary Poet and Writer, Javed Akhtar*

IN CONVERSATION WITH: *Aalok Shrivastav*

INTRODUCTION: *Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC*

25 September 2023

Shri Shyam Saran introduced legendary poet and writer Javed Akhtar as someone who, apart from being an author and a poet, is also an acclaimed lyricist, scriptwriter and activist, and has been honoured with several awards and titles in India and internationally.

Aalok Shrivastav started the evening with candid conversation about religion, casteism and fundamentalism.

Akhtar used the metaphor of toys appropriately in referring to the social recognitions such as religion, caste or lineage which are presented to children who may continue to play with them as they grow older.

Explaining further, he said he didn't take pride in his lineage and heritage, as inheritance was not as important

to him as the environment of poetry that he was born into. He recited two of his poems at the beginning of the programme—'Waqt' and 'Aansu'—to the eager audience in the packed auditorium.

He took it as a compliment when Shrivastav commented that while the poet called himself an atheist, some of his works like 'O Paalanhaare' from *Lagaan* and 'Shiva Tandav Transcreation' reflect devotion. He responded that his profession demands that he write differently, depending on the script.

While talking about lyrics and sad songs that used to be featured in old Hindi films but have disappeared in present cinema, he said that in writing them, 'We had to surrender to the time and norms.'

In the discussion about the debate around original Indian language, Akhtar said that Hindi and Urdu have a similar origin. Urdu is written in Persian script while Hindi in Devanagari; eventually the script is just Hindustani. Hindi and Urdu merged to bring the best poetry and literature.

With *ghazals*, *nazm*, *shayari*, anecdotes and thought-provoking conversations, Akhtar gave a glimpse into his poetic world and journey.

■ MANDIRA GHOSH

A Rendezvous

DISCUSSION: *Sadho Dekho Jag Baurana: Celebrated Classical Musician and Vocalist, Madhup Mudgal in Conversation with Sujata Prasad and Oron Das*

COLLABORATION: *Ahad Anhad*
30 September 2023

The conversation between Madhup Mudgal, Sujata Prasad and Oron Das provided an insightful glimpse into the life and music of the maestro. It covered his early years, training under illustrious gurus, musical accomplishments and contributions to music, and unravelled lesser-known facets of his persona.

The programme commenced with a documentary by Arushi Mudgal, showcasing a beautiful montage of key moments of Mudgal's life. It set the stage for a trip down memory lane, to his school days and early compositions. He recalled composing a song for the school choir, 'Tere

Chaman Ke Phool Hain Ham, Tu Baghbaan Hamara', at a remarkably young age. He attributed it to the unconscious influence of the musical environment at home and the guidance of his school music teacher. His other youthful interests, including diving, water polo, cricket, and his fascination with The Beatles and Carlos Santana were also discussed. He regaled the audience by singing a fun composition from his younger days, 'Tune Mujhe Maaraa Chaantaa, Maine Tujhe Shikanji Pilayee', thus revealing a relatable and endearing image of his schoolboy days.

Contributions of his father, Vinay Chandra Maudgalya, who played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of Delhi by founding Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, promoting music education and organising concerts of great artistes, were fondly remembered.

The dialogue explored Mudgal's training in the Gwalior Gharana tradition under his father, Vasant Thakar, and

his mentor Kumar Gandharva. He did not agree with the observation that Kumar Gandharva was a rebel. He mentioned that Kumar Gandharva taught traditional ragas, as in Sargam, and then inspired students to find their own path and space, not mechanically copying the guru.

With great artists, personal anecdotes resonate with larger narratives of universal appeal. Hence, the conversation ventured into topics of broader significance, such as the role of cities in nurturing musical sensibilities, classical music's distance from mainstream media due to its non-programmable nature, and the pivotal role of parents in fostering musical appreciation in children.

Brief renditions by Mudgal in his deep, soulful voice of 'Sadho Ye Jag Baurana' and 'Hum Pardesi Panchhi Baba' were the icing on the cake, leaving the audience longing for more.

■ AMITABHA KHARE

Voicing Gender Fluidity

PERFORMANCE: *Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya*

DRAMATISED READINGS: *Beyond Gender—Extracts (in Hindi and English) from Satish Alekar's Begum Barve and Mahesh Dattani's Seven Steps Around the Fire*

PRESENTED BY: *Three Arts Club and Katyayani*

SOLO PERFORMANCE: *Human Spirit—by Kaushal Kumar*

COLLABORATION: *Maharashtra Sanskritikani Rannaniti Adhyayan Samiti*

23 September 2023

'Maharashtra Sanskritik Sandhya', an annual feature, comprised dramatised readings, 'Beyond Gender', on LGBTQ communities from two plays—Satish Alekar's *Begum Barve* and Mahesh Dattani's *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. They were directed and produced by Sohaila Kapur and Anuradha Dar, respectively.

Begum Barve, a Marathi musical, features a quartet of characters—Begum Barve; an exploitative employer, Shyamrao; and two clerks, Jawdekar and Bawdekar, who, trapped in a life of penury and prejudice, use their caprices as an escape from it. In the selected excerpt for performance, Begum Barve and Jawdekar celebrate

a fictitious pregnancy during a baby shower, helping Barve to fantasise that (s)he could conceive. The scene ends in his humiliation; Shyamrao strips Barve of his fantasy and robes, scorning his manhood. The creation of a female fantasy character, Nalawadebai, bridges the impersonator's male identity and the clerk's desire for a traditional family life. This complex narrative challenges conventional storytelling, weaving a tapestry of gendered social meanings and re-evaluating contemporary perceptions of womanhood.

Seven Steps Around the Fire depicts the miserable plight of eunuchs who make a living performing at marriages and childbirths. A eunuch is murdered at her wedding. Her friend, Anarkali, is arrested without proof by the SP, Suresh Rao. His wife, Uma, a journalist who is also the daughter of the DCP, decides to catch the culprit through investigative reporting. The performance was just an excerpt where Uma interviews the imprisoned Anarkali.

Although the murderer is known, the police trap Anarkali to protect the actual criminal who is an influential person. The subaltern *hijras* are too scared to speak. Anarkali says, 'One hijra less in this world does not matter to your husband.' In self-defence, Anarkali tells Uma that she treated the deceased Kamla as her sister. Uma realises the bond of love among the hijras is even greater because they are isolated from society.

The evening concluded dramatically with Kaushal Kumar's intriguing body painting improvisation involving audience participation.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

For Effective Governance

TALK: *We, the People of India, and the Constitution of India*

LECTURE BY: *Shri N. N. Vohra,
Life Trustee, IIC*

CHAIR: *Shri Shyam Saran, President, IIC*
26 September 2023

Shri N. N. Vohra underscored the importance of citizen awareness about the Constitution. Despite taking an oath to uphold the Constitution, public servants, including ministers, often lack adequate knowledge of its core features, goals, Fundamental Rights, duties and Directive Principles. This deficiency in constitutional understanding hampers the ability of both elected and appointed officials within the executive to ensure that government policies align with constitutional precepts and the rule of law. He made a compelling case for effective governance being possible by being rooted in constitutional principles, and constitutional standards being a yardstick to determine the effectiveness of governance.

He began with a magisterial view of governance in India. The implementation of national welfare programmes has inherent inequities. Mismanagement of benefits distribution results in injustice and unfairness. The absence of

universally applicable governance standards complicates the assessment of government quality. Consequently, the primary gauge for assessing governance is the satisfaction of the people at the grassroots level, and whether their basic needs are met fairly. India's governance landscape is intricate, and political interference in democratic institutions hampers success. He highlighted the successes in governance as well as the challenges. These include economic empowerment of the economically weaker sections, eradication of corruption, reducing inequality, and addressing the vast diversity of India's religious, ethnic and linguistic communities.

Shri Vohra emphasised the need for Indian political leaders to uphold constitutional ideals. He believes that governance rooted in the Constitution and the rule of law would ensure honest, efficient and equitable administration. The Constitution has held the nation together for over 75 years and should not be thoughtlessly modified.

He further made a compelling argument for constitutional consciousness to not remain restricted to lawyers, judges and jurists. He flagged the issue of governance to underline the need for the executive and others involved in policy issues to remain rooted in the Constitution. The need of the hour is not change in the Constitution but a deeper engagement with it. One recalls the words of Learned Hand: 'Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no Constitution, no law, no court can save it...'

■ PRASHANTO SEN

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.



MS. NASREEN ZUBERI
A-4653



SMT. MEERA TAHILIANI
A-7063



MS. SHUKLA SEHGAL
A-5237



SHRI S. P. KAPUR
A-0109



**DR. SAROJA
VAIDYANATHAN**
A-2121



**DR. (SMT.) P.E.
MIRCHANDANI**
L-0166



SHRI S.M. BAGAI
M-2996



**DR. BINDESHWAR
PATHAK**
M-2340



**SHRI NARENDRA
KUMAR**
M-2068



**SHRI NIRANJAN
N. DESAI**
M-3639



**SHRI P. G.
MURALIDHARAN**
M-1889



SHRI AJIT KUMAR
M-2951

And the following Member (photograph not available):

SHRI SUBIR BISWAS
M-0469



Message from the Director

Dear Members,

September saw the culmination of the year-round preparations for the 18th meeting of the G20 Summit, where India played host. The IIC, too, celebrated this honour. Before Delhi closed for three days to welcome an array of world leaders for the Summit, the Centre launched a one-month long G-20 Film Festival featuring seminal films from the participating countries. The selection included films that reflected the issues and concerns of each country.

To facilitate Members to book hostel rooms and party venues, make dining reservations, order food, recharge their Smart Card, pay bills and annual subscriptions, etc., online, it has been decided to upgrade the existing software with new technology and features. A committee of experts has been formed to advise in the matter. Considering the unavailability of a software suitable to IIC's requirements in the market, it has been decided to develop a new software in-house. The additional workforce required for the project has been hired through the empaneled vendors of National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICS). The first in the two-phase project will focus on revenue generation processes and is estimated to be completed and launched in April, 2024. The second phase will cover the backend operations. With this project, we attempt to minimise paperwork, automate the process, and optimise the technology to interact with members remotely.

The President, IIC, has emphasised that a premium location like IIC should be able to offer competent and contemporary meeting places for the users. Considering this, the renovation of Annexe Committee Rooms 1 & 2 has been planned in consultation with the Architecture Design Advisory Committee (ADAC) and House Committee and is estimated to be completed by the end of December. The audio-conferencing system and projector of CR-II have been replaced with a digital system and laser projector, respectively. The EPABX systems, used to manage multiple phone lines and extension numbers, have been updated to NEC which is scalable and futuristic. It will enable the adoption of newer technologies like Internet protocol phones, conferencing features, etc., in the future.

Cultural programmes at the Fountain Lawn are a regular feature. However, hired equipment and stage materials make us incur exorbitant costs. While some expenses are unavoidable considering the capital investment, we have imported robust and 'easy to assemble and dismantle' stage materials to reduce recurring costs. The stage, with the new material, will be inaugurated during the Festival in October.

It has also been decided to modernise the interiors of the Hostel rooms while maintaining their simplicity, grace and values that the Centre represents. For this, the ADAC is guiding the preparation of a design brief and RFQ (request for quote), and will help to identify a competent interior design consultant. The renovation will begin with three categories of rooms, followed by the implementation of approved designs in the other rooms.

The carpet at the Annexe reception area has been replaced and the replacement of the upholstery of the sofas is under process. The curtains of the Library are soon to be changed as well. The trees at the Main Centre and Annexe have been barcoded and can be scanned for information.

The IIC kitchen, too, has been undergoing upgrades with the installation of new equipment like ice cube and bakery machines. Stevia-based sweeteners are being incorporated in desserts, bakery products, etc., at the suggestion of Members. The IIC catering team has undergone special training in Burmese cuisine, which was served during an event. For a seamless service, it has been decided to keep the CBO office operational during weekends for venue bookings.

K. N. SHRIVASTAVA

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