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EDITORIAL

The name on every Indian's lips these days is Chandrayaan, as we celebrate this incredible scientific feat in the 21st century and the men and women behind it.

But the moon has fascinated every culture and country for centuries and continues to be a powerful symbol in literature, music, art and religion.

I began writing this editorial on 31 August, the night of the blue moon. The blue moon is not blue, as we know, but refers to the third full moon in a season, a phenomenon that occurs infrequently. The moon here is used metaphorically, and that is the origin of the phrase 'once in a blue moon'.

From as early as the 14th century, the moon has featured in the works of poets like Shelley, Dickenson, Plath, Tagore, Kabir and many, many more. Gulzar once said that he had 'copyright on the moon'! And who can forget the timeless melody and lyrics of *Chaudhvin ka Chand*.

But the moon has a dual personality and depending on its waxing and waning it can be both benign and not so benign. Chandamama is nurturing and caring, but looking up at the moon during a lunar eclipse and on Ganesh Chaturthi are considered harmful.

Many myths also abound, but the fascination with the moon will never wane, and why it fascinates us so much remains a mystery. Later this year, London's Museum of the Moon's India Tour will be held at the Global Science Festival in Kerala, for a dialogue between scientists, artistes, designers, architects and musicians to link science and the public. But as science gears up for more moon missions, let us remember that planet Moon belongs to no one.

The other name that is at the forefront of our minds is Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, chess Grandmaster at the age of 12 and FIDE World Cup 2023 runner-up Grandmaster at age 18. With his proud mother by his side, he said with a winning smile in an interview, 'I have the potential to become world champion.'

We don't doubt that! Twenty-nine Indian Grandmasters are from Tamil Nadu, according to a feature in the *Indian Express*, including the first female Grandmaster, Subbaraman Vijayalakshmi. Chennai has come to be known as India's 'mecca of chess', largely because it always had dedicated volunteers who used to run chess clubs. Even more impressive is that Tamil Nadu has supported the sport consistently and will no doubt continue to draw many more to the sport.

This issue is not thematic, but it consciously leans toward the arts, history and literature. Shubha Mudgal's article was specially commissioned to mark the birth centenary of Pandit Kumar Gandharva, one of the most famous Hindustani classical singers in India, known for his unique singing style. From there we move on to pioneers in dance; the role of play and art in childhood education; the use of theatre in mental health practice; and an examination of the political language dynamics within the specific context of Pakistani literary discourse in Urdu. Three articles look at lesser known colonial history: the making of a print culture; the Coloured People of South Africa; and the Nizam of Hyderabad's Railway. Moving to the contemporary are reflections on religion; on women breaching male bastions; and on the nightmare of COVID-19. Chitvan Gill's photo essay is titled 'Life in the Shadows'. Through portraits and images of women's lives, she gives us the all too real story of women's lives at the margins.

This issue will be in your hands at the conclusion of the 2023 edition of the *IIC Experience: A Festival of the Arts*, which we hope you will have enjoyed as much as any other. It will also be at the conclusion of the G20 Summit. It has seen its share of critics, even denouncers, but the words of International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva sound hopeful: 'India's G20 presidency is a powerful reminder that when the international community comes together to solve global problems, much can be accomplished.'



OMITA GOYAL