

INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
DARA SHIKOH CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

present

THE **SYNCRETIC** TRADITIONS IN THE SUBCONTINENT:
VOICES PAST & PRESENT

With the support of

Bharat Ram Research Grant
&
Parzor Foundation

12 and 13 October 2026
Venue: Seminar Rooms I to III, Kamaladevi Complex, IIC

**Seminar on The Syncretic Traditions in the Subcontinent:
Voices Past & Present**

12 and 13 October 2026

Seminar on The Syncretic Traditions of the Subcontinent: Voices Past & Present

The Dara Shikoh Centre, Parzor Foundation and IIC with the participation of students from Lady Shri Ram college, are presenting a two-day Seminar on the Syncretic Traditions in the Subcontinent, on the 12th and 13th of October, 2026. The first edition of the conference was held in November 2024, following a paper presented at the Parliament of World religions at Chicago, 2023. Given the response to the seminar it was felt that the vast resources and cultural richness and diversity of the subcontinent, calls for a bi-annual conference on the same theme to explore some of the ways in which these traditions manifest in the Arts, Architecture, and Sacred and Material practices.

On each day we are covering an array of themes, with a format which includes a keynote address, invited speakers who are experts in their fields and panel discussions. Dr Karan Singh will deliver the keynote address on 'Syncretic Traditions of India and the Subcontinent,' on the 12th October. The following sessions include 'Sacred Geographies and Devotional Cultures', 'Modes of Expression: The Sacred and the Profane', 'The Syncretic in Material Cultures' and a concluding session with students on 'Colonial Archives and Knowledge Production'.

On Day 2, 13th October, Ms Amita Baig, will deliver the Keynote Address on the Syncretic in Traditional Architecture. Other sessions include 'Regional and Cultural Multiplicities', 'Representing Cultural Communities', 'Reimagining Histories through the Literary and Artistic' and a concluding panel discussion with students, entitled, 'Mediating the past through Visual Narratives'.

A publication with the research papers of LSR students under the mentorship of Prof. Arti Minocha and Dr Jonathan Koshy will be released through the Parzor Foundation by Prof. Shernaz Cama.

The 13th evening will conclude with a vocal music recital by Ustad Fareed Hassan of the Dilli Gharana at the C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium. The performance will express the syncretic core of the subcontinent through, *Thumri*, *Khayal*, *Ghazal* and *Bhajan*. Ms Shailja Khanna will introduce the performers.

In continuation of the Syncretic traditions project, the Dara Shikoh Centre and Temple of Understanding India Foundation will bring an Independent theatrical adaptation of *The Conference of the Birds*, Farid-ud-din Attar's Sufi allegorical work, reimagined as a multifaith production that draws upon Sufi poetry, the *Ram Charita Manas* of Tulsidas and Tibetan Buddhist scripture, originally presented as a long poem by Suryakanthi Tripathi. The production includes an original musical score, dance and puppetry and is directed by M.K Raina. The play, *Ghat Ghat Baje Naad*, will be performed at 7pm on the 23rd and 24th of October at the National School of Drama Abhimanch Auditorium.

Jyotsna Singh, Founder Director, Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts.

Shernaz Cama, Director, Parzor Foundation

Co- Convenors of the Seminar

PROGRAMME

ON MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2026

10 am to 10:20 am	<i>Registration</i>
10:30 am to 10: 45 am	Welcome by Ambassador Shyam Saran, President, India International Centre
10:45 am to 11:00 am	Inaugural Remarks by Dr Jyotsna Singh, Convenor of the Seminar, Director, Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts
11:00 am to 11:30 am	Keynote Lecture: Syncretic Elements Dr Karan Singh , statesman, philosopher, and lifelong advocate for India's pluralist civilisation; he has served as International Chairman of the Temple of Understanding, President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and Chairman of the Auroville Foundation
11:45 am to 1:00 pm	SESSION I Sacred Geographies and Devotional Cultures "Making Sense of Udasi Panth: Limits of Syncretism" Dr Yogesh Snehi , Associate Professor of History, School of Liberal Arts at Dr B.R. Ambedkar University "Between Empires: The Suriyani, the Russians and Inter-Imperial Subjectivity" Dr Jonathan Koshy Varghese , Assistant Professor, Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women "Ekam Sad Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti": Unraveling Co-existence, Conflict and Assimilation in Early India" Prof. R. Mahalaxmi , Professor, Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University Moderator: Dr Nayana Dasgupta , Assistant Professor, Department of History at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm	SESSION II PANEL DISCUSSION Modes of Expression: The Sacred & the Profane "The Liminal Performer: The <i>Tawa'if</i> and the Syncretic Histories of Music and Culture in 1900s-1930s" Dr Shweta Sachdeva-Jha , Associate Professor, Department of English at Miranda House, University of Delhi "Divine Myths Retold" Ms Bulbul Sharma , painter and writer with an illustrious career in both fields "Divine Kashmir and its Syncretic Traditions" Commodore Dalbir Sodhi (retired), is an author, and alumnus of the National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Technology and College of Naval Warfare.

Moderator: **Prof. Arti Minocha**, Department of English, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University

2:30 pm to 3:45 pm

SESSION III
The Syncretic in Material Cultures

“Sharing Objects: Makers, Users, and the Everyday Syncretism of Craft”
Dr Ritu Sethi, Editor, *Global InCH—Journal of Living Heritage*, and Founder-Trustee, Craft Revival Trust, India

“The complexity of shared traditions: Architecture in Sultanate and Mughal India”
Dr Swapna Liddle, historian, author, curator and heritage conservator

Moderator: **Prof. Shernaz Cama**, Director, UNESCO Parzor Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage

3:45 pm to 5:00 pm

SESSION IV
Panel Discussion: Colonial Archives & Knowledge Production
Participating Researchers from LSR College

Bhaibhabhi Hazra (History): “Reading the Lines: Cartography, Sovereignty and the Making of Boundary as Legal Fact in Colonial South Asia “
Satyapriya Narang (Psychology): “Economics of Travel in *Varthamanapusthakam*”
Sivaranjani Iyer (History): “Minting Authority: Reading Nineteenth-Century British Colonial Coins as Everyday State Practice”
Aditi Mishra (History): “A Letter Without a Sender: Reading a Woman’s Travel Writing”

Panel Chair & Discussant: **Prof. Uma Chakravarty**, historian and filmmaker whose body of work has focused on the history of Buddhism and that of ancient and 19th century India

ON TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2026

10 am to 10:45 am

Keynote Lecture: Architecture of Confluences
Ms Amita Baig, Former Executive Director, World Monuments Fund, heritage conservation consultant with more than three decades of experience managing historic sites across India and the wider Asian region.

11:00 am to 12:30 pm

SESSION V
Regional and Cultural Multiplicities

“Syncretic Traditions of Goa”
Mr Subodh Kerkar, painter, sculptor, and installation artist, and the Founding Director of the Museum of Goa

“The Himalayan Table: Language of Syncreticism through the Conduit of Food”
Mrs Rohini Rana, an expert on Nepali Cuisine, author, social worker, entrepreneur, and restaurateur

“Living with Thumri’s Syncreticism”

Ms Vidya Rao, a leading exponent of *thumri-dadra* and *ghazal* singing within the Hindustani classical tradition

Moderator: **Dr Jyotsna Singh**

12:30 to 1:30 pm

**SESSION VI | Panel Discussion
Representing Cultural Communities**

“Graphic Memory Keeping from Peoples Movements”

Ms Ita Mehrotra, graphic novelist, illustrator, and artist-educator based in New Delhi

“Pastoralism: A Living Tradition of the Subcontinent”

Dr Javaid Rahi, scholar, writer and pioneer of documentation on the pastoral and nomadic communities of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Gujjars and Bakarwals and Gaddis.

Moderator: **Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan**, political scientist, former Professor at the Centre for Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

**SESSION VII
Reimagining Histories through the Literary & Artistic**

“Ganga-Jamuni-Sarayu Tehzeeb: Kalyan Malla's *Suleimain Charitra* and the Hindu-Muslim-Jewish Syncretism of North India”

Prof. Jonathan Gil Harris, Professor of English and Founding Dean at Ashoka University

“The Women Behind the Image: Reimagining the History of the Illustrated Book”

Ms Ritika Kochhar, writer, art researcher and founder of ArtRadio, a platform exploring South Asian art, culture and visual storytelling

“Syncretic Traditions through the lens of Music, Literature and Films”

Ms Amrita Bhalla, Associate Professor (retired), Jesus & Mary College, University of Delhi

Moderator: **Ms Parvati Sharma**, author, with a background in Literature and History; she has also worked as a travel writer, editor, and journalist.

3:30 pm to 4:45 pm

**SESSION VIII | Panel Discussion
Mediating the Past through Visual Narratives**

Participating Researchers from LSR College

Molli Sharma (Psychology): “The Colonization of God in *Varthamanapusthakam*”

Khushi Joshi (Psychology): “Do Archives Have Feelings?”

Sakshi Singh (English): “The Liminal Body in *Varthamanapusthakam*”

Yoganjana Singh (English): “The Architecture of Lisbon, *Varthamanapusthakam*”

Moderator: **Dr Jonathan Koshy Varghese**

4:45 pm to 5:00 pm	Closing Remarks by Prof. Shernaz Cama , and Release of the young scholars' Publication by Mr K. N. Srivastava
5:00 pm to 5:15 pm	Valedictory Address Mr K.N. Shrivastava , Director, IIC
6:00 pm to 8 pm	Performance by Ustad Fareed Hasan, a Hindustani classical vocalist and a prominent representative of the Dilli (Delhi) Gharana. The performance will include khayal, thumri, Sufi, and ghazal and bhajan singing. Vocalists: Fareed Hasan Khan, Mehboob Husain Khan Tabla: Rameez Khan Violin: Azhar Shakeel Guitar: Tauqeer Khan Vocal Support: Taseer Khan, Rajab Ali The performance will be introduced by Ms. Shailaja Khanna, a fifth-generation musician and writer on Hindustani classical music Venue: C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, IIC Main Block

Participants and Abstracts

Shyam Saran

Ambassador Shyam Saran is a former Foreign Secretary of India, a position he held from 2004 until his retirement from the Indian Foreign Service in 2006 after a thirty-four-year career that included postings as Ambassador to Myanmar, Indonesia, and Nepal, and High Commissioner to Mauritius. Following retirement, he served as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Indo-US civil nuclear issues and later for climate change, acting as India's chief climate negotiator and the Prime Minister's Sherpa at several G8 and G20 summits. He chaired the Research and Information System for Developing Countries from 2011 to 2017 and the National Security Advisory Board from 2013 to 2015. He was elected President of the India International Centre in June 2022, having earlier served as a Life Trustee. He is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research and the author of *How India Sees the World* (2017) and *How China Sees India and the World*. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2011.

Jyotsna Singh

Dr Jyotsna Singh is a philosopher and cultural leader holding a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Delhi. She is the founder and director of the Dara Shikoh Centre in Srinagar, a space for youth engagement with the Himalayan region's cultural and natural heritage, and she directs the Amar Mahal Museum & Library in Jammu. As a Trustee of the Temple of Understanding India Foundation, she promotes interfaith harmony and has represented the organisation at global interfaith forums. She is also the curator behind the Tawi Festival in Jammu, celebrating regional heritage, arts, and dialogue. Her work centres on intergenerational education, the preservation of pluralistic traditions, and interfaith dialogue across the subcontinent.

Dr Karan Singh

Keynote Speaker | "Syncretic Traditions of India and the Subcontinent"

Dr Karan Singh has spent much of his public life articulating and defending the syncretic, pluralist character of Indian civilisation. He is a former Member of Parliament; an author and public speaker and holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Delhi. His scholarship on comparative religion spans Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity, reflecting a lifelong conviction that India's strength lies in its capacity to integrate diverse philosophies through dialogue rather than dogma. As International Chairman and later Chairman of the Temple of Understanding, a global interfaith organisation, he has for decades promoted dialogue among faith traditions, drawing on the Rig Vedic dictum "Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti" ("Truth is one, the wise call it by many names") to argue that interfaith exchange is not about establishing the superiority of one tradition but about recognising a shared pursuit of truth; he has also hosted the program *Ekam Sat* on Rajya Sabha TV where representatives of different faiths shared their perspectives. He has spoken widely on Kashmiriyat, the region's centuries-old ethos of co-existence rooted in Sufism and shared cultural life, framing it as a living example of syncretism under strain and in need of renewal. His major writings on this theme include *Essays on Hinduism*, *Essays on Indian Culture*, and, most recently, *Sanatan Dharm: An Exploration* (2026), distilling decades of engagement with Hindu philosophy and its pluralist core. He also converted the historic Amar Mahal Palace in Jammu into a museum and cultural centre, preserving regional heritage for public access. He has served as President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Chairman of the Auroville Foundation.



Yogesh Snehi

Dr Yogesh Snehi teaches history at the School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi, where he has been on the faculty since 2011, and was previously a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla (2013–2015). He completed his graduation, post-graduation, and doctorate at Punjab University, Chandigarh. His research examines the social and cultural history of Punjab and South Asia, with particular emphasis on popular Sufi shrines, religious identity, memory, and the long-term processes of region formation, offering a critical counter to communally reductionist historiography of the region. His monograph, *Spatializing Popular Sufi Shrines in Punjab: Dreams, Memories, Territoriality* (Routledge, 2019), examines saint-veneration practices in post-Partition Indian Punjab. He has also co-edited *Modernity and Changing Social Fabric of Punjab and Haryana*, and has curated a digital image repository on Sufi shrines through the University of Heidelberg's *Tasveer Ghar* and heidICON projects.

Making Sense of Udasi Panth

Punjab's religious traditions are dominantly seen through the reformist lens of the 'Khalsa' Sikh or 'Sanatani' Hindu lens. Both of these perspectives were products of the religious shifts of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which sought to establish the 'original' essence of Sikh and Hindu practices. Today, it is difficult to argue that the religious worldviews of these traditions could have been different in the nineteenth century. There is already a plethora of scholarship that presents these pre-reformist worldviews as 'eclectic', sometimes seen as antithetical to the reformist agenda of the twentieth century. As a student of religious traditions, I shall not seek to romanticise what these traditions were in the past or contrast them with what becomes of them today. On the contrary, I shall try to place them within the historical shifts of the twentieth century and make sense of their relevance today. It is important to underline that religious traditions have always been in-the-making. Our textbook view of these traditions does not allow us to see them as 'processes'. By foregrounding the case of Udasi Panth, a sacred tradition that appears Hindu today, yet remains umbilically connected with Sikh inheritances, I shall argue for a fluid lens to make sense of its presence in contemporary Punjab. In order to do that, I shall use the case study of two Udasi shrines: Tap Asthan Baba Shri Chander Ji Akhara Bhram Butta, Amritsar, and Tap Asthan Mandir Bhagwan Shri Chander Ji Udasin Ashram, Nanak Chak. The former is located along the parikarma of the Golden Temple, the holiest of the Sikh shrines, and the latter is a rural shrine near Batala; both are managed locally. These shrines are defined both by the presence of Guru Nanak, yet the absence of Khalsa, the presence of Hindu religiosity, yet the absence of Sanatan essence. Can we use the term Udasi to define their religious essence? Or would that too be a misnomer? The ruminations will shape the structure of this paper.

Jonathan Koshy Varghese

Dr Jonathan Koshy Varghese is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College, and an Associate Researcher at the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH), New Delhi. He holds a PhD from the History and Civilizations department of the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris, where his doctoral research traced the transoceanic history of the Suriyani (Syriac Christian) community of Kerala through law, narrative, and archival practice. His scholarship reads petitions, colonial-state surveillance papers, and judicial statements alongside religious sources to construct a critical, secular history of the Suriyani community's negotiations of faith, conversion, and belonging from the nineteenth into the mid-twentieth century — work that speaks directly to questions of syncretism, communal identity, and sacred geography in the subcontinent. His recent article, "Mārggākār: States of Conversion and Unbelonging in Kerala" (*Philological Encounters*, 2025), and his earlier IIC lecture and publication, "In Search of Ephrem the Syrian: Suriyani and the Materiality of Faith" (2018), extend this inquiry into the lived and textual dimensions of Kerala's Christian communities. He

has been published in many journals including *Public Humanities* (Cambridge Core), *Philological Encounters* (Brill) and the *IIC Quarterly*; he also contributes essays on writing, aesthetics, and visual culture to *The Hindu*.

“Between Empires: The Suriyani, the Russians and Inter-Imperial Subjectivity”

This paper recovers the Suriyani from the colonial archive to reconstruct a fragmented, transnational history of the Indian Ocean network. Rather than treating the Suriyani as a bounded communal or religious category, Varghese approaches them as an inter-imperial subject whose movements across British and Russian imperial spheres unsettle fixed territorial and confessional boundaries. His central archive is a body of colonial surveillance documents—intelligence reports, correspondence, and political intercepts—generated to monitor Suriyani overtures toward the Russian Orthodox Church, seen by British authorities as a potential channel of Russian influence in South India. Reading these files against the grain, he traces how the state's anxious cataloguing of contacts, letters, and clerical visits inadvertently maps a sacred geography that refused imperial coherence. He argues that this Russian-Suriyani connection, as documented in surveillance, destabilizes conventional cartographies of empire and prompts a rereading of sacred geographies.

R. Mahalakshmi

Prof. R. Mahalakshmi is Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she has taught since 1999. Her research focuses on religious institutions, practices, and beliefs in early India, drawing on Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, and Telugu sources. She is the author of *The Making of the Goddess: Korravai-Durga in the Tamil Traditions* (Penguin, 2011), awarded the best book prize by a woman historian by the Indian History Congress, and *The Book of Lakshmi* (Penguin, 2009), among other volumes. She has been Visiting Professor at Humboldt University, Berlin, and serves on the International Advisory Board of its Centre for Advanced Study in Heritage in Transformation. A member of the Sectoral Programme Planning Group on History at the India International Centre, Delhi, she has also served as Sectional President of the Indian History Congress and chaired GSCASH, JNU's Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment.

‘Ekam Sad Viprā Bahudhā Vadantī’: Unraveling Co-existence, Conflict and Assimilation in Early India

This evocative statement in the ‘*Asya Vāmīya Sūktam*’ of the the *Rg Veda*, translated as “the sages speak of the one in many ways”, draws attention to the pluralistic beliefs that were prevalent in the second millennium BCE, in the earliest text known in the Indian sub-continent. A contextual understanding reveals that be it the agro-pastoral Vedic tribes of north India, or the later agrarian societies in different parts of the sub-continent, they developed cultures - religious and social - that were complex, engaging with other communities, assimilating their ideas and practices, and also competing with or contesting these. This paper seeks to historically situate the multiple ways in which socio-cultural formations took place, drawing upon the Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil language cultures.

Nayana Dasgupta

Moderator

Dr Nayana Dasgupta is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. She specialises in medieval Indian history, with a research focus on the cultural history of medieval Bengal and particular interest in women's history of the period. She has contributed study material on early medieval polities and devotional traditions in India for the National

Institute of Open Schooling and the Indira Gandhi National Open University, including a chapter on “Devotional Paths to the Divine” for the NCERT Class VII history textbook.



Shweta Sachdeva-Jha

Dr Shweta Sachdeva Jha is Associate Professor, at the Department of English at Miranda House, University of Delhi. She completed her BA, MA, and MPhil in English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, and her PhD as a Felix Scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Her research spans the history of the *tawa'if*, genre fiction in Urdu, crime fiction, children's picture books, visual culture, and digital history, and has appeared in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes with national and international publishers. She has led funded research projects on children's picture books in India (Delhi University Innovations Grant, 2015–16) and on Punjabi Christian women and Partition (Tata Trusts–1947 Partition Archive Research Grant, 2021), and continues to direct the Miranda House Archiving Project, initially supported by the Dr Avabai Wadia Archive Fellowship, Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT University (2020). Her recent work includes open-access curatorial essays on digital history, gender, and feminist themes, supported by fellowships including the Curationist Fellows Program (2024) and Serendipity Arts' Writing Initiatives (2022).

“The Liminal Performer: The *Tawa'if* and Syncretic Histories of Music and Culture in 1900s-1930s”

In 1934/35, Jaddan Bai (1892-1949) acted in a film adaptation of Premchand's story ‘Seva Sadan’ and three years later in 1938, Bibbo or Ishrat Sultana (1906-1972) composed music for the film *Gramophone Singer*. Reading Premchand's ‘Seva Sadan’ in tandem with the history of recording industry and broadcasting in the 1930s, unravels a complex history of *tawa'ifs* as significant figures in syncretic histories of music, social reform and culture in northern India. Liminal in their identities, these travelling performers and their subsequent generations moved across camps (*deredar*), princely courts, bazaars, cities, recording studios and radio stations from the 1800s to the 1930s. Although displacement, exploitative circuits of slave trade and migration shaped their itinerant lives, the *tawa'if* repertoires of *thumri* and *ghazal* made it possible for gramophone companies and and broadcasting to transform practice, performance and reception of music, and opening avenues for women in middle class homes. In my reading, the *tawa'ifs* survived and adapted to distinct forms of patronage, technology and music making, thus shaping syncretic as well as “popular” cultures of music. The *tawa'ifs*, I shall argue, moved across the worlds of the scared and the profane, singing bhajans, recording ghazals and producing music for films making our musical cultures, rich and diverse, recognising them is to value this past and understand their agency.

Bulbul Sharma

Ms Bulbul Sharma is a painter and writer based in New Delhi. Born in 1952, she studied Russian language and literature at Jawaharlal Nehru University before going on to study at Moscow State University. She returned to India in 1973 and built a career first as a painter — her work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Lalit Kala Akademi, and the Chandigarh Museum, among others — before turning to writing full-time from 1985. She has authored more than twenty books that move between fiction, folklore, and nature writing, including *My Sainted Aunts*, *The Anger of Aubergines*, *Eating Women*, *Telling Tales*, and *The Book of Devi*. She has also written extensively for children, retelling Indian epics and mythological tales, and is known for her writing on birds and gardens around Delhi.

Divine Myths retold

From time immemorial, divine yet lovable, sacred yet everyday stories about Hindu Gods and Goddesses have been an important part of the fabric of our life. Our painting traditions, both folk and classical, celebrate these age-old stories in hundreds of rich and varied forms that continue to fascinate us to this day. Our incredibly complex music and dance traditions highlight so many aspects of these well-loved stories. Radha stealing out on a dark night to meet her divine lover Krishna is depicted over and over again in beautiful, heartrending and intricate ways. Shiv's dance of grief and rage over his beloved Sati's death is there in music, painting, dance and countless tales for us to witness with awe. To celebrate these ancient tales, Sharma's recent book *Epic Love* narrates these stories once again to make that wonderful journey into our rich heritage wealth yet again. From remote villages to cities, from the shade of a banyan tree to crowded street corners, we listen to these tales, we know and love each one of these stories of sacred love and they never fail to enthrall us.

Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi

Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi (Retd.) He is an alumnus of the National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Technology and College of Naval Warfare- a former Navy officer, he served in the Navy's submarine arm and was decorated with the Nau Sena Medal. He had the distinction of commissioning the first and second Indigenous submarines in India. Writing in the *Daily Excelsior* on the history and ethos of India's submariners ("Sentinels of the Deep"), he reflected on the discipline and quiet risk that define service beneath the sea. Since retiring, he has turned to writing on the religious and cultural history of Jammu and Kashmir, authoring *Kashmir Divine Connect and Sikh Rule*, a study of Sikh religious and political presence in the region, and *Woman of Substantial Character*. In February 2026, he presented copies of both books to Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. He frequently writes for regional publications; and was recently rewarded with the Lal Ded literary award.

"Divine Kashmir and its Syncretic Traditions"

Kashmir's syncretic traditions emerged not from proclamation but from centuries of layered human interaction. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sufism, Rishism, and Sikhism did not succeed one another in Kashmir — they intersected, absorbed, and transformed each other, producing a civilisation defined by shared language, dress, music, architecture, and shrine culture. This paper traces that composite heritage from Kashmir Shaivism and Sufi mysticism through the philosophy of Kashmiriyat, examining how these traditions sustained communal life, withstood the trauma of militancy and displacement, and remain essential to the region's cultural and spiritual renewal.

Arti Minocha

Moderator

Prof. Arti Minocha teaches at the Department of English, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi University. She has taught various courses in Indian Literature, Modern British Literature, World Literatures, and Women's Writing. Her research, facilitated by fellowships and grants from the Charles Wallace Foundation and King's College, focuses on gender and print cultures of colonial Punjab. Her work seeks to re-inscribe women into histories of print and literary cultures and language debates in 19th century Punjab. She has worked extensively on archival collections housed in India and the United Kingdom, some of which she is currently translating. She has published essays in national and international journals, and book chapters in the areas of Indian Theatre, Print Culture Studies, and Gendered Histories of Colonial Punjab. Her edited volume, *Women in Print Culture of 19th Century Punjab* (2022) and forthcoming monograph, *Inhabitations in Print: The Life and Writings of Hardevi* (De Gruyter, 2026), are both based on a gendered re-assessment of the Punjab archives.



Ritu Sethi

Dr Ritu Sethi is the editor, Global InCH journal of living heritage, in addition to overseeing Asia InCH Encyclopaedia on the heritage arts, textiles, and crafts of India and the wider South Asian region. Her research explores the cultures and histories of textiles, arts, and crafts, and their continuities and reinterpretations in contemporary design, fashion, and the everyday. Her publications include: *Handmade for the 21st Century: Traditional Indian Textiles* (UNESCO), *Embroidering Futures - Repurposing the Kantha* (India Foundation of the Arts (IFA); *Painters, Poets, Performers—The Patuas of Bengal* (IFA); Co-edited volumes include: *Designers Meet Artisans - A Practical Guide* (UNESCO); *Heritage Threads: A Tapestry of Indian and Indonesian Textiles*; *Kasuti Embroideries* (in process), besides numerous essays on cultural histories of hand-making, sustainability and policy in international and national publications. She works on advisory committees in India and overseas, and is founder-trustee of Craft Revival Trust, India.

“Sharing Objects : Makers, Users, and the Everyday Syncretism of Craft”

Syncretism in Indian material culture is nowhere more legible than in the practices of craft, whose long history of coexistence is inscribed in the very objects craftspeople produce. Though examples are legion, this talk narrows its focus to a single state-Uttar Pradesh, and three heritage traditions: the woven textiles of Banaras, the embroidered forms of Chikankari and Zardozi, and the ubiquitous glass bangle. Attending to the commonplace as much as to the celebrated, it shows how makers and users of different faiths are gathered into single objects, and argues that these everyday convergences preserve a record of interreligious life that is often overlooked.

Swapna Liddle

Dr Swapna Liddle is a historian, author, and heritage conservator based in Delhi, specialising in the history of the city. She holds a BA from St Stephen's College, an MA and MPhil from the Centre for Historical Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, and a PhD from Jamia Millia Islamia. She served as Convener of the Delhi Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) from 2016 to 2021, having been closely associated with the organisation since 2006, and has led heritage walks across the city for over two decades. Her books include *Delhi: 14 Historic Walks* (2011), *Chandni Chowk: The Mughal City of Old Delhi* (2017), *Connaught Place and the Making of New Delhi* (2018), and *The Broken Script: Delhi Under the East India Company and the Fall of the Mughal Dynasty, 1803–1857* (2022).

The complexity of shared traditions: Architecture in Sultanate and Mughal India

The division of architectural history and traditions into 'Hindu', 'Islamic' and 'Buddhist' is a legacy of colonial scholarship that persists not only in the popular imagination, but also informs the thinking of the institutions that teach about and manage historic monuments. This presentation seeks to uncover how the people who commissioned and those who constructed these buildings might have seen them. It will also use examples from historic buildings and precincts to illustrate the process through which a composite culture, derived from some diverse and some shared traditions, developed in the subcontinent.

Shernaz Cama

Moderator

Prof. Shernaz Cama taught at the University of Delhi from 1983 till earlier this year, including as Head of the Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women. Her doctoral research, undertaken at the British Museum and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, examined William Blake and Zoroastrianism. In 1999, she was invited by UNESCO to initiate the Parzor Project for the Preservation and Promotion of Parsi Zoroastrian Culture and Heritage, which she continues to direct as Honorary Director, recording oral traditions and Parsi heritage across India. She curated the largest-ever exposition on Zoroastrians, *The Everlasting Flame* (2016), and led the successful multinational

candidature for Navroze's UNESCO recognition as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. She has also authored the seminal *Threads of Continuity: Zoroastrian Life and Culture*. She continues to teach through the LSR–TISS Parzor Programme on Zoroastrian culture and civilisation. Her honours include the Mazda Education Foundation Award, the Mancherji Edalji Joshi Memorial Award, and the World Zarthushti Community Service Award received at the 12th World Zoroastrian Congress, held in 2022 in New York.



Uma Chakravarti

Moderator

Prof. Uma Chakravarti is an Indian feminist historian and filmmaker. She completed her master's degree in history at Benaras Hindu University and taught at Miranda House, University of Delhi, from 1966 until her early retirement in 1998. Her scholarship spans the history of Buddhism, ancient India, and the nineteenth century, examining the intersections of gender, caste, and class, and has been influential in the field of feminist historiography in India. Her books include *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*, and *Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens*. Beyond academia, she has been a leading figure in India's women's movement and the movement for democratic rights for more than four decades, and has participated in numerous fact-finding investigations into communal violence and human rights violations, including the International Tribunal on Justice for Gujarat.



Amita Baig

Keynote Speaker | Architecture of Confluences

Ms Amita Baig former Executive Director World Monuments Fund, India, has over three decades of experience in managing conservation projects and historic sites in India and the Asia Region. She is the recipient of the Raja Kakil Dev Award for Excellence in Preservation of Heritage and Architecture 2022. She has been a member of the Senate of the School of Planning and Architecture Vijayawada and a member of the Council of Nirmal Bhartia School. She has served on several Government committees including the World Heritage Advisory Committee in India and the Ministry of Environment and Forests Environment's Expert Committee on Industry. Amita has worked with UNESCO Asia Pacific Region in the development of the Lijiang Models for Stakeholder Participation, and was also a consultant to the Gulbenkian Foundation, Taj Mahal Conservation Collaborative; amongst others. She is a published writer and has co-authored *Taj Mahal Multiple Narratives* with Rahul Mehrotra and written *Forts and Palaces of India*. She joined the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage at its inception in 1984 headed the Architectural Heritage Division from 1993 to 1999.

Subodh Kerkar

Mr Subodh Kerkar is a painter, sculptor, and installation artist born in Goa in 1959, and the founding director of the Museum of Goa (MOG), one of the largest privately-owned contemporary art spaces in India, and the Kerkar Art Complex in Calangute. Trained as a doctor at Goa Medical College, he left medicine to devote himself to the visual arts, carving a distinctive niche in conceptual art, land art, and performance installation. Drawing on the ocean, the coastline, and Goa's cultural landscape, he works with materials including mussel shells, pebbles, palm leaves, and sand, addressing themes of culture, language, ecology, and contemporary social life. His work has been shown internationally, including at the Busan Biennale, Sculpture by the Sea in Denmark, the Kochi Muziris Biennale, and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. He has also exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London.

Syncretic Traditions of Goa

Nothing in culture exists in isolation. Ideas, beliefs, foods, languages, rituals and artistic forms travel across borders, meet one another and change in the process. Goa, with its layered history of indigenous traditions, trade, migration, different rulers and colonial encounters, offers a fascinating example of how cultures come together and continually reshape one another.

This paper explores the many syncretic traditions that have emerged in Goa and continue to shape everyday life; from food and architecture to festivals, dress, language, rituals and social customs. It looks at how influences from Hindu, Islamic, Christian, European and other cultural traditions have been absorbed, adapted and made distinctly Goan. Rather than viewing these influences as separate or fixed, Goa can be understood as a cultural palimpsest, where older traditions remain visible even as new layers are added. Contemporary art by Goan artists provides a way of entering these histories and stories. Through their works, the paper explores how cultural memories, practices and influences are carried forward, transformed and reinterpreted, continually shaping the evolving syncretic cultural landscape of Goa.

Rohini Rana

Rohini Rana, also known as Dolly, was born into the royal family of Awagarh, Uttar Pradesh, and educated at St Mary's Convent, Naini Tal and Sophia College, Ajmer. She married General Gaurav S.J.B. Rana—great grandson of Maharaja Chandra Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana, a former Prime Minister of Nepal, and himself a former Chief of Army Staff of the Nepal Army. Across a life spent as an army wife, homemaker, social worker, entrepreneur, and restaurateur, she developed a deep engagement with Nepali culinary heritage. She is the author of *The Rana Cookbook: Recipes from the Palaces of Nepal* (2021), documenting the cuisine of Nepal's Rana prime ministerial families, and *The Nepal Cookbook: 108 Regional Recipes* (2024), which surveys the culinary traditions of Nepal's diverse ethnic communities, from the Sherpa and Thakali of the high Himalaya to the hill regions consisting of the Brahman, Chetri, Tamang, Gurung, Newar, Rai and Limbu communities to the Tharu and Madhesi of the Terai. Her third, and latest book, *Memories on a Platter My Fusion Cookbook* (2026) recounts her memories from her childhood in India to her life in Nepal after marriage as well as her global travels all through the conduit of food.

The Himalayan Table: Language of Syncretism through the Conduit of Food

The presentation will feature the synthesis of food culture in the subcontinent, including the closely embedded ties of the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal and Tibet. The Silk Route was instrumental in shaping the Syncretic Traditions of the Regions it passed through, enriching its culture, literature and cuisine through centuries of exchange. Rana, born in India, married in Nepal, absorbing both cultures and traditions to recreate the best of both countries through fusion cuisine, she illustrates this best in her three books. Her books discuss the exchange of ingredients, techniques, rituals, festivals and memories that transcend borders. She also focuses on spices, grains, lentils and techniques that are similar yet unique. Through examples of her life and work, her presentation will be a shared table, exploring the syncretic food traditions of the subcontinent.

Vidya Rao

Vidya Rao is a leading exponent of thumri-dadra and ghazal singing within the Hindustani classical tradition, and one of relatively few singers who bring together the delicate shringar (romantic sentiment) of thumri gayaki with the starker, spiritual register of Kabir's verse. Born in Bombay, and raised in

Hyderabad, she moved to Delhi for postgraduate work in Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics, and also in order to seek training in *thumri gayaki*.

Trained in thumri under stalwarts Naina Devi, Shanti Hiranand and Girija Devi, her training in khayal was under B N Datta and Mani Prasad. Her repertoire extends to the songs of medieval Sufi and Bhakti poets and verses from Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic devotional traditions.

In addition to her career as a performer, Vidya has written extensively on music and the performing arts. She has been the recipient of a Ford Foundation fellowship, The Ministry of Culture's Senior Fellowship, a Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Nantes, France. She has been Artist in Residence at Smith College, USA; Visiting Professor at JNU's School of Arts and Aesthetics, and Visiting Fellow at the School for Cultural Texts and Resources at Jadavpur University.

Living with *Thumri*'s Syncreticism

It is almost impossible to be involved in the world of music—as a student, a teacher, a listener—and not be steeped in the sense of the syncretic nature of that world. Using recorded musical illustrations, Rao will attempt to share her experiences of being a student and a performer of *thumri gayaki*, and to demonstrate the syncretic nature of the form, where multiple traditions draw from and enrich each other, and so, support and nourish those who inhabit it.

Jyotsna Singh

Moderator

Dr Jyotsna Singh is a philosopher and cultural leader holding a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Delhi. She is the founder and director of the Dara Shikoh Centre in Srinagar, a space for youth engagement with the Himalayan region's cultural and natural heritage, and she directs the Amar Mahal Museum & Library in Jammu. As a Trustee of the Temple of Understanding India Foundation, she promotes interfaith harmony and has represented the organisation at global interfaith forums. She is also the curator behind the Tawi Festival in Jammu, celebrating regional heritage, arts, and dialogue. Her work centres on intergenerational education, the preservation of pluralistic traditions, and interfaith dialogue across the subcontinent.



Ita Mehrotra

Ms Ita (Sunandita) Mehrotra is a graphic novelist, illustrator, and artist-educator based in New Delhi. She holds a degree in Philosophy from St Stephen's College, Delhi University, with an exchange year at Sciences Po, Paris. Her non-fiction comics, often shaped by a feminist lens and by her engagement with social movements, have appeared in *First Hand: Graphic Non-Fiction from India*, *Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back*, and publications including *The Wire* and Goethe Institut projects. She is the author of *Shaheen Bagh: A Graphic Recollection* (2021), documenting the anti-CAA protests in Delhi, and of *Uprooted* (2025), which follows community-led forest rights struggles in the Uttarakhand Himalayas. She leads visual storytelling programmes with community libraries and rural schools across India, and is Visiting Faculty at Ashoka University.

"Graphic Memory Keeping from Peoples Movements"

To draw, make marks and carvings on rock surfaces, walls, paper and even skin, as methods of inscribing 'that which was' and telling its story visually, is an ancient impetus. What happens to this urge of visual record keeping, when we find that in a world inundated with sharing apps and devices, somehow events and processes that rupture the logic of an oppressive state, are still removed from memory – murals wiped clean, photos and videos suddenly go missing online, and conversations are

silenced. How does the 'slow process' of drawing within witness based graphic narratives, often from wandering with people, such as with the Van Gujjar forest dwelling community in the lower Uttarakhand Himalayas and their buffaloes, allow for a shift in temporal gaze – and what do we see and hear within that shift? What does it mean to also form associations based on friendships through collective drawing within communities, and how is a visual narrative held by the very fiber of fodder that buffaloes chew on.

Javaid Rahi

Dr Javaid Rahi is a prominent tribal researcher, writer and social reformer of national repute. His pioneering work on the documentation of culture, literature, heritage, and pastoral traditions of the Gujjar, Bakarwal and Gaddi communities has earned recognition from govt institutions, universities and research organisations. He has authored 24 books including four dictionaries in tribal languages. He has edited and compiled 300 issues periodicals, and supervised 59 translation and research-oriented publication projects later published as books. His contribution to social reform has also been widely recognized, including his inclusion among India's Greatest Reformers in *51 Extraordinary Stories* by K. L. Johar, former Vice-Chancellor. He is presently working on a project documenting Pastoral Knowledge of Jammu and Kashmir.

His honours include the J&K Govt Award for His work on Tribal communities, National Fellowship of the Union Ministry of Culture on tribal Culture, Best Book and Best Play Script Awards from the J&K Cultural Academy, the Tribal Pride Award from the Department of Tribal Affairs, and recognitions and honours from the University of Jammu, IIT Jammu and a number of institutions.

“Pastoralism: A Living Tradition of the Subcontinent”

Pastoralism, one of humanity's oldest livelihood systems, sustains nearly 500 million people globally and over 200 communities in India alone. Encompassing nomadic, transhumant, and agro-pastoral traditions — from Gujjars and Bakarwals to Changpas and Rabaris — it represents a living system of indigenous knowledge, ecological adaptation, and cultural resilience. This paper examines pastoral communities' historical negotiations with changing landscapes, their oral traditions and resource-management practices, and the contemporary pressures they face, arguing that pastoralism remains a dynamic, sustainable way of life essential to India's cultural diversity, food security, and ecological balance.

Gurpreet Mahajan

Moderator

Gurpreet Mahajan is Professor of Political Science at the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she has taught since 1986. She has chaired both the Centre for Political Studies and the Centre for Philosophy at JNU. Her work focuses on multiculturalism, minority rights, secularism, and the relationship between religion, civil society, and the state in democratic theory, particularly in the Indian context. She has held a Senior Fulbright fellowship at Columbia University and the University of Chicago, a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Hull, and visiting fellowships at the University of Toronto and the *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*, Paris. Her books include *Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences* (1992), *Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India* (1998), and *The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy* (2001), alongside several edited volumes.



Jonathan Gil Harris

Jonathan Gil Harris is Professor of English and Founding Dean at Ashoka University, where he has taught since 2013. He is the author of ten books, including *The First Firangis: Remarkable Stories of Heroes, Healers, Charlatans, Courtesans & Other Foreigners Who Became Indian* (Aleph, 2015), *Masala Shakespeare: How A Firangi Writer Became Indian* (Aleph, 2018) and, most recently, *The Girl from Fergana: Secrets of My Mother's Chinese Tea-Chest* (Aleph, 2026), his memoir of his mother's deportation from Poland to the Fergana Valley and the syncretic histories of Jewish interactions with non-Jewish neighbours across the Silk Roads, from Persia to China and India.

Ganga-Jamuni-Sarayu Tehzeeb: Kalyan Malla's *Sulaiman Charitra* and the Hindu-Muslim-Jewish Syncretism of North India

Modern Ayodhya may be associated now primarily with the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the subsequent construction of the Ram Mandir. It is hard to believe now that the city was once the location of a remarkable exercise in religious pluralism and literary syncretism: a Sanskrit text called *Sulaiman Charitra* (The Story of Solomon), written in about 1500 CE by the Hindu poet Kalyana Malla at the request of the son of Ahmad Khan, the Muslim king of Awadh. In the story's prologue, Prince Lad Khan commands Malla to use the "language of the gods" – Sanskrit – to tell the life story of "the wise and learned Sulaiman." The tale Malla proceeds to narrate describes the life not just of Sulaiman, the Arab and Persian name of the Israelite King Solomon, but also of his father, King David (or Dawood), and his mother Bathsheba (whom Malla renames, in Sanskrit, Saptasuta). Malla's sources, then, were Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish. We often hear of the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb, the pluralist Hindu-Muslim ethos that sprang up in India's Gangetic plains from Delhi to Bengal alongside the banks of the intersecting Yamuna and Ganges rivers. But *Sulaiman Charitra*, written next to the Sarayu river, hints that this Hindu-Muslim confluence also included Jewish tributaries. My paper unpacks this now forgotten triple confluence, contextualising the *Sulaiman Charitra* in relation to highly syncretic Silk Roads traditions of mysticism and Jewish trade along north India's river networks, from Ayodhya to Delhi to Patna.

Ritika Kochhar

Ritika Kochhar is a writer, art researcher and founder of ArtRadio, a platform exploring South Asian art, culture and visual storytelling. Her work examines how mythology, narrative and visual culture shape ideas of history, identity, social memory and civilizations, with particular interests in syncretic traditions, Mughal and South Asian art, gender, ecology and cultural heritage. She has written four books and her essays and criticism have appeared in *The Hindu*, *Frontline*, *Business Standard*, *India Today*, *Open* and *Art Asia Pacific*, among other publications. She has also lectured on South Asian art and visual culture at institutions including the India International Centre, City Palace Jaipur and RIC Jaipur. Her current research focuses on illustrated manuscripts of the Timurid and Mughal worlds and the movement of stories across languages, cultures and artistic traditions.

"The Women Behind the Image: Reimagining the History of the Illustrated Book"

The history of the illustrated book in South Asia has largely centred on male artists and court ateliers. This presentation recovers the women who inhabited that world — as artists, patrons, writers, readers, and custodians of cultural memory — tracing figures from a woman artist of the Khalji period through Hamida Banu Begum, the painter Ruqaiya, and Jahanara Begum, to Amrita Sher-Gil. It argues for a rethinking of the illustrated book as a collaborative space in which gender, patronage, authorship, and visual imagination intersect.

Amrita Bhalla

Amrita Bhalla is a faculty member in the Department of English at Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi, specialising in Feminism and Indian Writing in English. Her research focuses on the representation of women and minorities during the colonial struggle for independence and the shaping of Indian womanhood in colonial and post-colonial literature, with particular attention to the work of Shashi Deshpande. She is the author of *Shashi Deshpande* (Northcote House, 2006), part of the internationally recognised Writers and Their Work series, and co-editor of *Indian Writings in English* (Primus Books, 2013). Her other published work includes an introduction to Shashi Deshpande's *Collected Stories* (Penguin, 2003) and essays in several edited volumes on Indian writing. She has participated in podcasts on Amrita Pritam, Keki Daruwalla, and Amitav Ghosh. She has contributed to Asian Literary Society's talks and has served on the Steering Committee for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature.

"Syncretic Traditions through the lens of Music, Literature and Films"

"East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet," are the opening lines of Rudyard Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West*, 1889. Samuel Johnson said in 1799, "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together"—the Syncretic Traditions that blend together seamlessly will be discussed through Music, Literature and Films.

Parvati Sharma

Moderator

Ms Parvati Sharma is a Delhi-based author who has studied English literature and Indian history and worked as a travel writer, editor, and journalist. Her debut, *The Dead Camel and Other Stories of Love*, earned her a cult following for its depiction of love and sexuality in urban India, and she has also published a novella, *Close to Home*. She turned to Mughal history with *Jahangir: An Intimate Portrait of a Great Mughal* (2018), praised as an audacious and psychologically astute biography, followed by *Akbar of Hindustan* (2022), examining Akbar's political strategies, religious policies, and cultural legacy. She has also written two books for children, *The Story of Babur* and *Rattu and Poorie's Adventures in History: 1857*, and has served as a jury member for the JCB Prize for Literature.



Jonathan Koshy Varghese

Moderator

Dr Jonathan Koshy Varghese is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Lady Shri Ram College, and an Associate Researcher at the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH), New Delhi. He holds a PhD from the History and Civilizations department of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris, where his doctoral research traced the transoceanic history of the Suriyani (Syriac Christian) community of Kerala through law, narrative, and archival practice. His scholarship reads petitions, colonial-state surveillance papers, and judicial statements alongside religious sources to construct a critical, secular history of the Suriyani community's negotiations of faith, conversion, and belonging from the nineteenth into the mid-twentieth century — work that speaks directly to questions of syncretism, communal identity, and sacred geography in the subcontinent. His recent article, "Mārggākār: States of Conversion and Unbelonging in Kerala" (*Philological Encounters*, 2025), and his earlier IIC lecture and publication, "In Search of Ephrem the Syrian: Suriani and the Materiality of Faith" (2018), extend this inquiry into the lived and textual dimensions of Kerala's Christian communities. He has been published in many journals including *Public Humanities* (Cambridge Core), *Philological Encounters* (Brill) and the *IIC Quarterly*; he also contributes essays on writing, aesthetics, and visual culture to *The Hindu*.

Fareed Hasan Khan

Ustad Fareed Hasan Khan is a Hindustani classical vocalist and a prominent representative of the Dilli (Delhi) Gharana, specialising in *khayal*, *thumri*, Sufi, and *ghazal* singing. He is the eldest son of vocalist Nizamuddin Khan, grandson of sarangi maestro Mohammed Ahmed Banney Khan, and great-grandson of the vocalist "Taan Samrat" Naseer Ahmed Khan. He trained initially under Zafar Ahmed Khan and his father, and later received intensive taleem from Iqbal Ahmed Khan, then Khalifa of the Dilli Gharana. He gained wider recognition after appearing on the television programme *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* in 2010, and his rendition of the traditional bandish "Sakal Ban Phool Rahi Sarson," attributed to Amir Khusrau, was featured in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's series *Heeramandi* (2024). He frequently performs in jugalbandi with his brother, Mehboob Hussain Khan, and the duo are known for carrying the Dilli Gharana tradition to a new generation, including through the Amazon Prime series *Bandish Bandits*.

Shailaja Khanna

Ms Shailaja Khanna is a fifth-generation musician and writer on Hindustani classical music, and has worked as an archivist with the Sangeet Natak Akademi. She writes regularly on music for *The Hindu's Friday Review*, *The Tribune's Sunday Spectrum*, and *The Patriot*, and contributes to *Sruti* magazine, as well as occasional book reviews for *The Asian Age*. Her writing chronicles India's classical music festivals and institutions, gharana traditions, and the changing character of classical music audiences in India. Currently she is writing a book on khayal singer Kishori Amonkar.



Dr Jyotsna Singh

Convenor of the Seminar, Director, Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts

Dr Jyotsna Singh has a Ph.D in Philosophy from the University of Delhi where she also taught for some years. She has trained as a potter and is now an Enamelist working from her home studio. She is the founder of the Dara Shikoh Centre which is a forum for the arts which has an inclusive spiritual and cultural orientation.

Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts

The Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts is a centre that promotes interfaith understanding and dialogue. It also aims to foster a culture of tolerance and liberal views, and to develop ideals of peaceful coexistence and pluralism among the young. The Dara Shikoh Centre for the Arts organizes conferences, seminars, and workshops. It also collaborates with organizations that work for interfaith dialogue and understanding on national and international levels.

India International Centre

India International Centre is a non-government institution widely regarded as a place in the national capital New Delhi where statesmen, diplomats, policymakers, intellectuals, scientists, jurists, writers, artists and members of civil society meet to initiate the exchange of new ideas and knowledge in the spirit of international cooperation. Against the frenetic pace of city life, IIC offers an ambience for reflection and leisured conversation.