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EDITORIAL

As the season changes from Summer to Autumn and festivals are observed across India, we should also take note of what Mother Nature is telling us. The devastating flash flood in Nepal and Tibet in August, caused by the partial collapse of a glacier, reminds us of the fragility of human life and the delicate balance of nature that faces increasing threats from global warming caused by human activity.

This general issue of the *IIC Quarterly* is released during the IIC Experience, the Centre's annual cultural festival. This year, the festival's theme is 'Prakriti: Ecology and Existence'. In keeping with the theme, this collection includes several articles that offer insights into different aspects of the natural world.

In 'A Birdwatcher's Delight', Manjula Mathur describes her journey to the remote island of Narcondam in the Andaman Sea. There she observed the rare Narcondam Hornbill in the only place on Earth where this unique bird lives. Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar reflects on non-absolutism as the language of nature and how we have much to learn from earthworms and other creatures with whom we share our planet. Shraman Jha urges us to look beyond carbon and explains why water security is the missing centre of the climate debate. The extract from the Himalayan Collection of the Durgabai Deshmukh Library of IIC is a fascinating account of an expedition by the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, who trekked to what he believed was the source of the Indus River in 1907. The photo essay features sketches of the Lodi Garden, its tombs, trees, birds and visitors. In a few spare lines, T. K. Manoj Kumar reveals facets of their personalities, capturing stones that speak and trees that whisper, through the ages.

The 157th birth anniversary of M. K. Gandhi was observed on 2nd October, in India and across the world. In remembrance

of Gandhi's role as the 'Father of the Nation', K. P. Fabian explores his continuing relevance and Praveen Davar asks if Partition could have been prevented.

Articles on the present state of India include a dialogue between Prakash Singh, the architect of India's police reforms, and Vipul Mudgal, 20 years after a landmark judgement by the Supreme Court. An opinion piece by Kamal Malhotra on India's 2047 *viksit* (developed) aspiration and its hope of realising strategic autonomy analyses the many challenges that our country faces.

The life and legacy of J. P. Das, a literary luminary who passed away earlier this year, is recollected through personal reminiscences by N. K. Bhattacharjee. The debate on female succession in the imperial family of Japan, a nation where women outnumber men, is delineated by Rajaram Panda.

The book reviews range from analyses of India's recent political history, the global aspect of caste and contemplative expressions in poetry.

The cover visual depicts a landscape from the Northeast, crafted in the woodcut technique. The work, by an artist from Assam and trained in Santiniketan, portrays the serenity and repose offered by nature.

As winter approaches and a new year is about to begin, one looks forward to the year to come and wishes readers the very best.

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K. E. PRIYAMVADA