



INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

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Editorial

Ever since I joined the Centre, preparations for the IIC Experience, the Centre's annual cultural festival, had occupied the attention of virtually every person who works here. Weekly catch up meetings assessed the progress of the arrangements, last minute changes were made and led to frantic reorganizing, and then, as if to test one's endurance, dengue broke out in Delhi. Doomsday prophets wondered whether our outdoor venues would draw any audience. However, our Programme Division took all this in its stride and predicted that all the Cassandras would be proved wrong. And thus, another Festival was held in the calm, unhurried way that one has now come to regard as the IIC's unique hallmark.

Each evening, as oil lamps were lit amid the marigold garlands, the Centre was transformed into a magical setting. From the Zen-like Gandhi-King Plaza where Daroz's splendid warriors stood guard, to the inner court with our 'Scholar tree' bent in greeting, to the open air stage beyond, every inch of the IIC celebrated the Festival. Mornings and afternoons brought hundreds of film buffs to the Auditorium, while the 3 spectacular art exhibitions spread over the Annexe and the main building drew gasps of delight. Each evening, there was a feast fit for a king as the IIC chef and his staff rustled up a range of gourmet meals. The huge success of the entire exercise is best expressed in the comments that were left in our visitors' books: they speak for themselves.

The festival spirit continued over Diwali and Eid and inspired us to consider ringing in some changes. So, along with a new editor this issue brings a new look for the *IIC Diary*, with an elegant masthead that now matches our Programme cards.

■ IRA PANDE



Urdu Poetry

TALKS: *Overview of Urdu Poetry-Part 1*

Speaker: Dr. Shahid Mahdi

Chair: Dr. Gopi Chand Narang, Sept. 13

Overview of Urdu Poetry-Part II

Speaker: Dr. Shahid Mahdi

Chair: Dr. Mushirul Hasan, Sept. 16

Attempting to provide an overview of Urdu Literature in two lectures spread over two days is a bit like filling the ocean in a pail. Yet Shahid Mahdi, diplomat and former vice-chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, rose to the occasion with aplomb and a judicious mix of the many contrasting textures that weave the tapestry of Urdu. To this Herculean task, he brought his formidable and eclectic reading of Urdu prose and poetry and the passion of one who has sipped long and lovingly at the fount of learning.

Unabashedly subjective, Mahdi dwelled on personal favourites such as Insha, Mir, Momin, Sauda, Nasiq,

Aatish, Arzu Lukhnavi, Nazir Khairabadi, Firaq and Yagana, choosing to go lightly over luminaries such as Ghalib and Iqbal. Beginning with the sixteenth-century Wali Dakkani, Mahdi traced the changes in style and language, the use of embellishments, symbols and images (interestingly, Mirza Sauda in the nineteenth century used the horse as a symbol for the weakness of the empire!).

Chairing the first lecture, Prof. Gopichand Narang stressed how great poetry speaks at more than one level, different ages interpret great poetry in different ways and the ghazal is being written not just in every Indian language but even in English! Chairing the second part, Prof. Mushirul Hasan, felt that the classification for such overviews could be thematic or chronological. To avoid surveyors tripping over personal biases, he felt that the focus in such 'synoptic surveys' should be on the evolution of 'dominant trends' rather than individuals.

The IIC, however, would do well to cajole Mahdi to do an encore – this time with a focus on the less-heard Wali Dakkani, just so he can regale audiences with his sonorous rendition of *aabista aabista*.

■ RAKHSHANDA JALIL

...*about Ram* was an ambitious experiment that combined two different media—puppetry and digital animation. The talented young artists, Vishal K. Dar (digital animation) and Anurupa Roy

(puppeteer) brought a freshness into the well-known story of Ram. The only puppet, Ram, handled in the expressive *Bunraku* style was both well crafted and expressive. There was a constant interplay between the actors/puppeteers and the puppet so that the puppeteer effortlessly also becomes a prop, a sympathetic onlooker or a masked dancer/demon.

About Ram

DANCE: ... *about Ram*, a collaborative performance of puppetry and animation. Presented by Vishal K. Dar and Anurupa Roy, Sept. 1

The performance was choreographed around Ram in the throes of *About Ram*

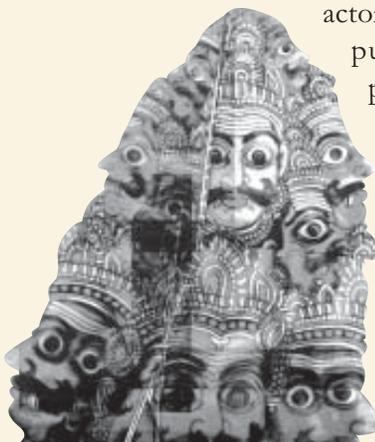
despair and helplessness, as he has lost Sita. Desperate to reach her in faraway Lanka, his strong desire to reach Sita arouses his alter ego to come to life... and Ram becomes Hanuman!

This transformation was beautifully choreographed.

In the first scene the moving images recreated Ram's memories in Panchvati. The forest was vividly portrayed with magical blossoms and swaying trees. A golden deer looped across the scene, its tail twitching fetchingly. The war scene was complete with fantastic war machines from a distant mythological time.

Nothing could be further from the ethos of the *Ramayana* than digital animation; yet, the animation provided a vibrant counter-point to the stark action. The changing mood and emotion in each scene was highlighted by the music. Sensitively composed by Abhijit Bhattacharya it became an important link as there were no words in this performance.

■ RANJANA PANDEY



More than a decade ago, India opened up its doors to the world, and along came the geographical dispersal of production, services, and the integration of diverse economic activities, erasing national and

cultural boundaries. The Information Technology (IT) industry rewarded India with rapid growth in the economic structure, employing thousands and bringing about large-scale revenues.

With the development of India's economic structure came social and cultural transformations, moulding of the workforce to match the global high-tech rulers in the IT industry, giving birth to complexities in the workforce, and the manipulation of global rulers with

Negotiating Identities in the Wake of the New Global Economy

LECTURE: *Reinventing India in the New Global Economy—Negotiation of Identities in the Software Outsourcing Industry*

Speaker: Carol Upadhyay

FILM: *July Boys: New Global Players* by Gautam Sonti, Sept. 7

respect to cultural differences and time zones.

All these and more were addressed by anthropologist Carol Upadhyay through Gautam Sonti's film, *July Boys: New Global Players*. The ethno-

graphic film proved to be an observational one and provided an open-ended reading for the viewers, putting forward questions about rethinking the very nature of India's existence in the changing scenarios of the global economy, the acceptance of an Indian software company in the global market and whether Indians catering to negotiate their identities to match global leaders is at all worthwhile.

■ ANURADHA PATHAK

Challenges of Globalization

LECTURE: *Globalization and Security*

Speaker: Dr. Arun Shourie

Chair: N.N.Vohra

Collaboration: IDSA, Oct. 3

While Vohra lamented that 'we have no coherent national security policy', and pleaded for an adequate administrative and legal framework for it, Shourie provided data on the challenges and opportunities of globalization.

Globalization, for Shourie, impacted national security by the 'pace and scale' of changes caused by free trade, 'titanic movements' of capital, technology, culture and 'Islamic ideology'; the 'transformation of the mode of production' by the 'fossil fuel-based, technology-driven, consumer-culturist' version of globalization. 'We must organize ourselves to influence global institutions', like China, 'its biggest beneficiary with the largest war-chest' including US government securities. He warned against the 'mesmerization with China', which is facing problems of its fast-track globalization with a 'floating population'

of 140 million, 120,000 annual suicides, and 90 per cent people without health insurance. Its transformation of economic growth to military power through new technologies to use 'acupuncture points' for subverting critical global institutions, along with its global chain of 'Confucian institutions', has already chastened the US policy-makers to reverse their initial corporate-based euphoria to a more realist Pentagon-projected security concern.

However, India is excited about the new trade-route through Sikkim. It denies the reality of Pakistan's transformation into the 'nursery of terrorists' by describing it as its 'victim'; embraces the Indo-US nuclear deal, manifestly aimed to 'halt, cap, and roll-back' India's nuclear researches under the guise of 'energy security'. US dependence on Musharraf is bound to be at the cost of India in Kashmir, he said. To Shourie, the emphasis on primary education, NCERT text-books, 'admission by birth rather than competence', and the Employment Guarantee Scheme are mere 'populism'. He pleaded for a new Constitution to ensure election of a more representative majority, better resources for higher education and R&D and aggressive diplomacy to influence decision-making over scarce resources

■ ASWINI K. RAY

The seventh Howard Memorial Lecture was an occasion where women's leadership and vitality in arenas surrounding bio-diversity and agriculture were put on centre stage. The event also celebrated Gandhi's birth anniversary by conferring the Gandhi Award on the Amazonia Defence Front from Brazil.

Food and the Future

7TH HOWARD MEMORIAL LECTURE:

Women Shaping the Future of Food

Speakers: Renate Kunast and Caroline Lucas

Special Guest Speaker: Judy Wicks

Chair: Dr. Vandana Shiva

Collaboration: Navdanya, Oct. 2

chemical-free agriculture by Indian peasants. Since the Howard lecture was held on Dussera, Dr. Shiva referred to the two speakers as the 'Mahisasur Mardini' of today. The first speaker was Renate Kunast, erstwhile Agriculture Minister of Germany and currently leader of the Green Party. She discussed the increasing significance consumers and parent communities play in strategies for promoting sustainable, pesticide-free agriculture. Caroline Lucas, Leading Member of the European Parliament for the Green Party, documented how industrialized agriculture is causing disease, fuelling climate change and dampening livelihoods and food systems. Judy Wicks, the founder of White Dog Café, America's first local organic food restaurant, offered interesting insights into how private enterprise could further the cause of ecological security.

The proceedings were inaugurated with the screening of a Green Peace documentary highlighting the plight of Amazonia due to global agribusiness, specifically soya bean production for which vast forest reserves are being depleted. The Front was hailed as being pivotal in people's resistance to ecological devastation and distress.

The event also celebrated the connection embedded in Indian society between non-violence and agriculture. Sir Albert Howard, an imperial scientist sent to India to educate Indian farmers, eventually spent his time being taught methods of

■ SHRAYANA BHATTACHARYA

Intizar Husain

THE FIRST NIRMAL VERMA MEMORIAL

LECTURE, 2006: *Problem of Communication in Literature: Then and Now*

Speaker: Intizar Husain, **Chair:** Krishna Sobti

Collaboration: Nirmal Smriti, Oct. 23

Writers, artists and friends came together to remember the gentle Nirmal Verma at the first Nirmal Smriti Memorial lecture on 23 October 2006. Gagan Gill set the events in motion by thanking those friends who helped her cope with the trials of the last year. Harish Trivedi conducted the programme, which was divided into two distinct sections.

The first saw the launch of several books: a staggering nine titles, including an anthology of Nirmal's unpublished works, edited by Gagan Gill; a collection of Amrita Bharati's verse, *Aaj ya kal ya sau varsh baad*, dedicated to Nirmal Verma. New editions of some popular Verma titles were also launched.

Ashok Vajpeyi then introduced the speaker for the evening, Intizar Husain, who had forsaken Eid celebrations back home to be here among friends. Husain saheb is well known in India, his stories are often published in Urdu literary magazines and in translation. A pioneer of a tradition that attempts to paint ancient and native patterns within a modern idiom, he considers it important that a writer is aware of his roots.

He spoke at length of how the stories in the *Kathasaritsagar* have influenced his own work to a large extent and took a hard stand against critics and so-called intelligentsia – even comparing them to nannies at a point!

The event was chaired by Krishna Sobti, who wrapped up the proceedings in her own inimitable style.

If the organizers had invested some energy into planning the evening better, the multiple activities packed into this event could have been handled more smoothly.

■ NEETA GUPTA

Dance Bonanza

DANCE: *Adbhuta—Vision of Wonder*,
Malavika Sarukkai, Oct. 6

The Throw of Dice, Anjika and Priti Patel, Oct. 12

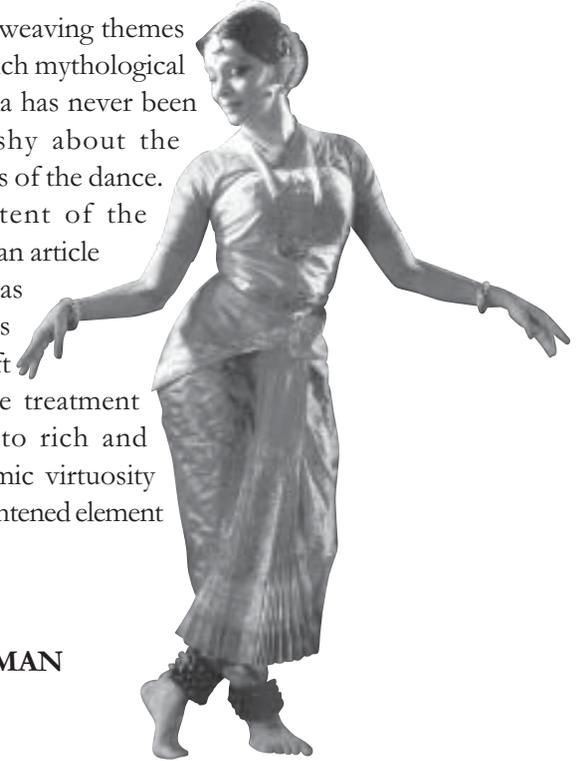
This year's festival had its curtain-raiser in Malavika Sarukkai's Bharatanatyam recital, 'Adbhuta—Vision of Wonder', with items strung round the sentiment of wonder, a dominant state of being in all dance inspired by consciousness of the divine other.

The starting *Mallari*, despite exaggerated moments, was in the nature of a Malavika leitmotif—the scene and imagery a frequent elaboration woven into most of her *varnam* delineations. However, the item of the evening was *Mohana Krishna* with the text evoking lyrical and intense responses from the dancer. The exquisite detailing, despite some overplay, in every frame of the dance narrative with sculpturesque freezes as punctuation points had the melodic backdrop of very sensitively conceived music, the *Taanam* reprieve, like a shower of melodic petals, ushered in a new mood of joy. "Krishna Nee Begane Baro" the *padam* made one wonder as to what had happened to Malavika's generally restrained *mukhabhinaya*.

Wonder in Bhakti was illustrated through an exaggerated *Samarpanam* based on verses from *Ramacharitmanas*, wherein Hanuman, in the joyous wonder of his first glimpse of Rama, experiences an inexplicable moment of recognition.

With her skill in weaving themes inspired by our rich mythological cosmos, Malavika has never been apologetic or shy about the spiritual concerns of the dance. While the content of the programme was an article of faith, what was unexpected was the paradigm shift in tone of dance treatment with the hitherto rich and dominant rhythmic virtuosity replaced by a heightened element of theatricality.

■ LEELA
VENKATARAMAN



Malavika Sarukkai



Throw of Dice

As Draupadi, Priti looked mesmerizing in her white shimmering costume and moved *rasikas* with her touching *abhinaya*. The last scene, with lighted torches held by the entire cast, created a thrilling climax.

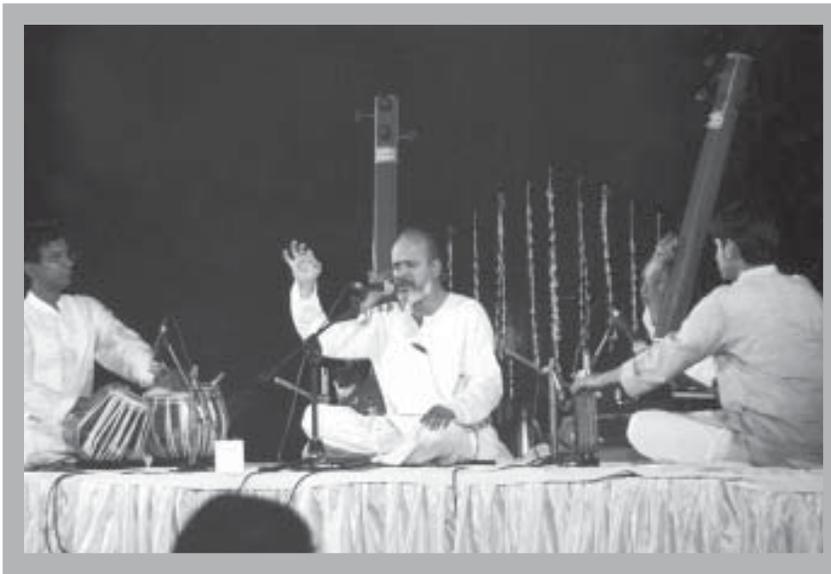
'The Throw of Dice', the finale of the IIC Experience 2006, was presented by the Anjika Centre and choreographed by Priti Patel. Inspired by the famous *Mahabharata* episode, Priti's ballet used the game of dice as a creative metaphor. Priti has conceived this production to raise a voice against terror, for she feels that today Manipur has become a playground for games of power.

The imaginative set had a *machan*-like upper level where the lead players gambled with dice while the lower level became a *chaupada* spread, with dancers frozen like pawns. Priti drew on not just classical Manipuri's graceful *rasaleela*, Lai Haroba and the vigorous Thang-Ta movements, but even local Manipuri games. By merging the beauty of dance, the flow of narrative and communication of emotions, she brilliantly heightened the dramatic effect.

■ MANJARI SINHA

Musical Bouquet

MUSIC: *Hindustani Classical Vocal Concert—Pt. Rajshekhar Mansur, Oct. 7; Carnatic Music, Oct. 8; Rohi Rang: Colours of Rajasthan by Mir Singers of Pugal, Oct. 10*



Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur

mridangam (Dandamudi Sumathi Rama Mohana Rao), *kanjira* (Latha Ramachar), *ghatam* (Sukanya Ramgopal) and *morchang* (Bhagyalakshmi M. Krishna); and the coming together of all kinds of instruments, string (veena, Suma Sudhindra; violin, Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi); wind (flute, Sikkil Mala Chandrashekhar) and both kinds of percussion,



Carnatic Vadya Ensemble

The second evening of the IIC Experience featured Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur, son and disciple of the Jaipur-Atrauli *gharana* maestro, Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur. Rajshekharji's music, grounded in this legacy, preserves both the pristine quality of his *gharana* and its rich repertoire that includes a vast range of *layakari*, rare ragas and *bandishes*. And this is what enchanted his audience. Opening with a rendition of *Raga Lalita Gauri*, his

second choice was the seldom-heard *Raga Khokar*, with a sweetness reminiscent of *Bibagda*. These were followed by *Ragas Bibari* and *Meghvali*, rarely heard in a standard concert repertoire. After *Raga Adambari Kedar*, Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur concluded with a haunting *Bhairavi*. He was accompanied on tabla by Durjay Bhowmick and on harmonium by Vinay Mishra.

The next morning featured Vadya Sammelanam, a Carnatic classical concert by an all-women's instrumental ensemble. Two unique aspects stood out—the percussionists were rare, perhaps the only, female players of *mridangam*, *ghatam* and *morchang*. The ensemble opened with a *Varnam* composed by violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman and closed with a *Tillana* also composed by him. Their *Ragam Tanam Pallavi* in *Raga Bilahari* set to *aditala* was a true delight, as was the following *Raga Malika* and the *talavadya* thereafter. The performance was notable not just for the artistry of this exceptional ensemble, but for the sheer joy with which this was communicated. No wonder they were given a well-deserved standing ovation at the end.

The Mir singers from Pugal, near Bikaner, presented a programme of

Sufiana Kalam. Their tradition draws mainly from the work of Khwaja Ghulam Farid of Bahawalpur, and the evening featured many of his compositions, most rendered in the full-throated voice of Mir Mukhtiyar Ali with its colourations of the Shyam Chaurasi *gharana*. Most of the singing was in Saraiki or Punjabi, except for the compositions of Kabir (*Jhini jhini*) and Amir Khusro (*Chhap tilak*). The audience response was enthusiastic, some carried away by nostalgia for pre-Partition Panjabiyat and others responding to the hypnotic rhythms of *been* and *dhhol* which echoed long after the concert was formally over in a spontaneous and informal musical session.

■ ASHARANI MATHUR



Mir singer

Music for the Soul

MUSIC: *Concert by Indian Ocean, Oct. 9*
Just Jazz Concert, Oct. 11



Indian Ocean

Indian Ocean (founded 1990), an eclectic, four-man ensemble, and the Babush Santana Jazz Quintet contributed substantially to the success of the IIC Experience 2006, an annual autumn extravaganza now a major event in the capital's cultural calendar.

Comprised of Asheem Chakravarty (tabla, tarang, other percussion and vocals), Susmit Sen (guitar), Amit Killam (drums, recorder), and Rahul Ram (bass guitar, vocals), Indian Ocean have taken their innovative creations of Hindustani music to four continents. They began with an Om invocation entitled 'From the Ruins', rendered devotionally by Asheem before moving on to the Siva-centric, fatalistic 'Kya Maloom'. 'Melancholic Ecstasy' followed and then a number from the film *Swaraj* for which they scored the music.

A Kabir rhyme, 'Bandhe' from the film *Black Friday* on the 1993 Mumbai explosions, a Baul folk rhythm and the evergreen 'Kandisa' completed their concert. Encore requests were declined as Amit had just recovered from dengue.

The Santana quintet had Babush Santana (drums, trumpet, violin, vocals), Laura Santana (vocals), Lawrence Ireland (keyboard, piano), Jude Manuel (bass guitar) and a guest artiste Joe D'Costa (lead guitar) from Mumbai. Their concert was finely balance between 'old' and 'new' jazz. In the former category were 'The Very Thought of You', 'Lullaby of Birdland', Ella Fitzgerald's 'Ode to Paganini', 'Take Five', an all-time favourite, and 'Everybody Loves Me'. The modern numbers included 'Yatra Box', 'Blow It Away', 'Round About Midnight' and 'Drummer's Blues', which had the veteran percussionist in the limelight.

Why 'uski awaz'? Why put poets into not one but two straightjackets: of being women and The Other? Clearly, only a man could have thought of thus describing a reading by contemporary women poets! Had the 'designer and coordinator' of this programme been present, he may have done a better job of explaining this unfortunate double whammy; for the explanation offered by his stand-in, Anamika, was long-winded, dubious and far-fetched.

Poetry Feast

POETRY: *Uski Awaz: A Women's Mushaira*, Oct. 8

restrictions, the Iraq war, insurgency in Kashmir, the status of Urdu, on a mother growing old and frail, and of small everyday joys.

The evening clearly belonged to Shahla Nigar, an MA student from Jamia Millia, who read with passion and verve and, for one so young, a fair degree of skill. As her voice rose and fell in the softly-lit terrace, it served to underline the purpose of the IIC Festival, that there is space in the IIC for everyone—men and women, young and old, known and less-known.

■ RAKHSHANDA JALIL

Mughal Manuscripts

EXHIBITION: *Mughal Miniatures and Manuscripts from the Raza Library, Rampur*, Oct. 6-12



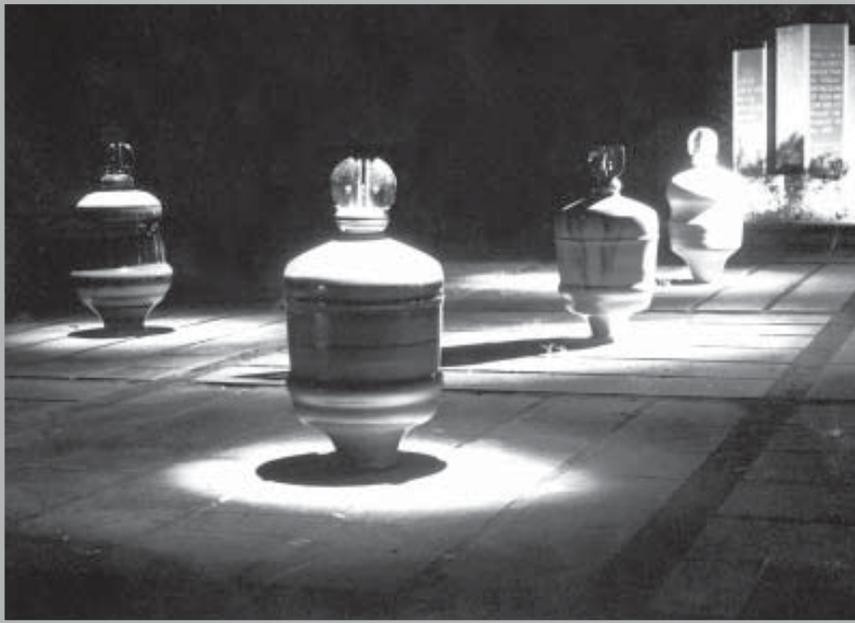
A Mughal nobleman on horseback watching women bathing in a river; Jahangir playing Holi with his noblemen (circa, seventeenth century); three boats in a river painted by Ghulamman (sixteenth century); a European-inspired Madonna painted during Jahangir's reign; illuminated Qurans—there was all this and much else for the senses to feast upon. Albums devoted to ragas—*Panjum Raag Asavari, Malkos, Hindol, Bhairon*—brought to life the many moods of the seasons and the many splendoured life in the country. Pictures from Akbar's *Tilisms*, patterns on the dresses worn by noblemen, ornaments worn by women, men engrossed in a game of chess, a prince enjoying a cup of wine vied for space with Valmiki's *Ramayan* in Persian, *Ras Rang* and *Madhumalti*.

Culled from the fabled Rampur Raza Library, the exhibition showcased 134 exhibits from among its vast treasure trove of manuscripts, miniature paintings, astronomical instruments, objets d'art and calligraphic writings. From its home in the hundred-year-old Hamid Manzil to the Conference Room of the IIC, it was indeed a long journey. From its hallowed halls and chandelier-lit reading rooms, these paintings and manuscripts brought with them a whiff of a long-ago past. They provided, more effectively than a dozen lectures by a dozen experts, a glimpse into the life of medieval India. The excellent digital reproduction of the miniatures enhanced the life-like quality of these tableaux frozen in time.

■ RAKHSHANDA JALIL

Warriors

EXHIBITION: *Warriors*, P.R. Daroz, Oct. 6-12



Daroz's Warriors



A Warrior's headdress

Ceramics today have broken new ground and challenge past traditions by suggesting new meanings and possibilities to old functions and habits of seeing. P.R. Daroz's ceramic installation 'Warriors' found the right combination of nature and dramatic ambience in

his exhibition at the IIC Festival. They stood like sentinels at the Gandhi-King Plaza, straddling the realm of the physical and the ethereal, bathed in pools of warm light cleverly designed by Sumant Jayakrishnan.

Daroz had skilfully combined the imagery of samurai warriors, Kathakali masks and traditional Andhra jewellery to create strong 'armoury' headdresses that give character and identity to the robust forms of the urns. Swirling colours in muted glazes sweep in strong bands across the clay surfaces, highlighting the vagaries of form. Small attention

to details was visible in the metallic-like nuts-and-bolts placed at strategic junctures. There was a purity of line and monumental quality about this group of Daroz's work that changes our perception of the ceramic object.

His other remarkable outdoor installation was set up at the farmhouse of Rakesh Aggarwal in Baroda, completed in 2001, which begins with a series of four tall arches leading into a fantasia swimming pool like a Gujarati stepwell, where the blue glazed tiles of the floor of the pool are an underwater dreamworld with multi-coloured fish forms. Six other free-standing columns upto 9 ft. in height recall the dry stalks and bushels of wheat in the nearby fields.

A new sense of self is emerging in ceramic arts. The vessel is still the touchstone of the ceramic arts. Its subtlety and expression have been able to inspire man for over 7,000 years and it will continue to do so as an idea and metaphor in the future search for the ceramic artists' contemporary context.

Photographing India

EXHIBITION: *Journeys with Raja Deen Dayal and Henri Cartier Bresson, Oct. 6-12*

These two photographers—one Indian and the other French—were legends in their lifetimes. Both photographed India and, not surprisingly, saw two different Indias—yet with visions they seem to have exchanged across their cultures. Juxtaposed in the basement of the IIC Annexe, the exhibitions became a great chance to explore two visions of photography in India—photographs as historical documents and photographs as Art.

Deen Dayal, in his Portrait Studios and in his documentation of Indian monuments and the people, continued to work in a largely colonial mode. It was the Frenchman, Henri Cartier Bresson, who tried to bring a certain Asian sensibility to his work. Influenced by Zen, his photographs are about photography as Zen. The *dhyan* of their ‘decisive moment’, was not just about a peak moment but also about the aesthetics of a split second, 35mm, Leica frame, a frame that was about bringing a pictorial order to the chaotic reality of the Indian street.

The gaze of Deen Dayal’s ‘Indian’ eyes, and the



Raja Deen Dayal



Raja Deen Dayal

Frenchman’s focus on the Indian street remain the western gaze of outsiders. Deen Dayal, an Indian ‘insider’, adopted and worked within the form and format of his colonial contemporaries. And Bresson, despite his empathy with India and sensitivity to Asian culture, remained an ‘outsider’ seeing history in the making, but framing ‘decisive moments’ that are more about the formalist aesthetics of the photographic frame than about a decisive social and historical document.

In the end, one was a little disappointed. The works were digital duplicates that don’t do justice either to the tonal perfection and patina of nineteenth-century prints or to the neutral grey scale that Bresson used for his work. But then, it may be that we are being weaned away from the idea of the original, and being prepared to accept a world and a time where the original will be kept out of sight, salted away in salt mines (a la Bill Gates) and all we will experience will be the Digital Duplicate.

■ SATISH SHARMA

A Moving Feast

FILM: *Film Festival Review*, Oct. 6-12

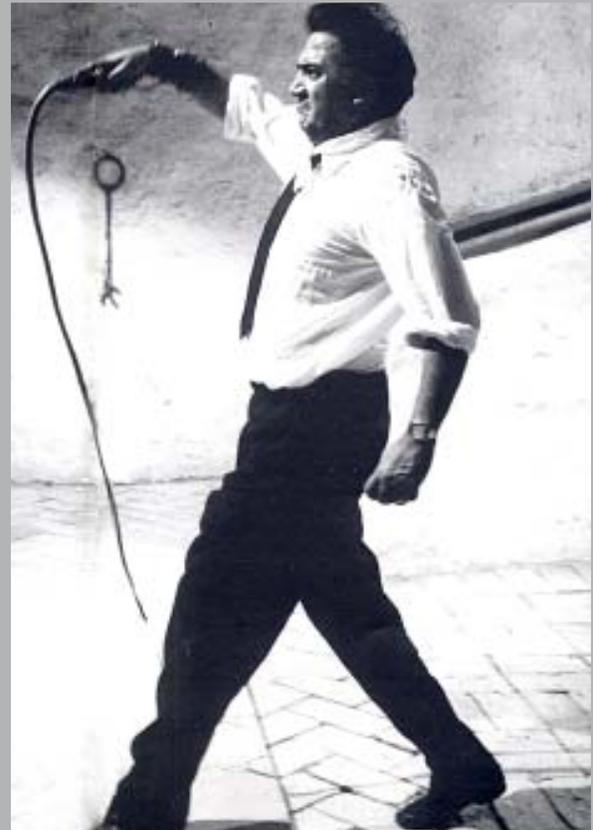
There was a feast of films at the third IIC Experience in October. The selection was eclectic, and for most part rewarding. Among the perennials was Ingmar Bergman's *Smiles On a Summer Night* (1955) a generous, perceptive black and white adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* set in the Sweden of early 1903.

Three of Yashujiro Ozu's late masterpieces in Japanese: *Tokyo Story*, *Equinox Flower* and *Late Autumn*, all shot in colour in the last decade (1953-63) of his illustrious career, proved conclusively that if one had the vision, it was possible to make extraordinary films out of ordinary situations. Ozu's province was the family, and through it he engaged most knowledgeably with his own society and the world at large. Even more astonishing is that Ozu, like his worthy contemporaries—Mizoguchi, Kurosawa and Naruse—was a studio employee, a commercial film director.

Two of the late Italian master Federico Fellini's films—*La Strada* (1955) and *Nights of Cabiria* (1957)—revealed the power of black and white cinematography and the astonishing histrionic range of Giulietta Masina who plays a sad stooge of a Road Show strongman in the first, and a repeatedly betrayed, lovelorn, eternally optimistic prostitute in the second. Fellini was the master of elusive emotions and, in this respect, he remains unsurpassed in cinema.

Three Shyam Benegal films from the 1970s—*Manthan*, *Bhoomika* and *Junoon*—were also screened, followed by a *Meet the Director* session with Shohini Ghosh. Benegal spoke candidly about the problems of being an educated maverick within the Hindi film industry.

Brazilian Walter Salles' *The Motorcycle Diaries*, structured like a travelogue and splendidly photographed found many adherents and a few critics. It is based on the diaries resulting from 'Che' Guevara's historic 8,000 km trip across South America as a callow youth with his friend Alberto Gravado. The film's treatment is evangelical and



Fellini



Walter Salles' classic duo

classic Hollywood. It would be a mistake to look here for the communist revolutionary that Che became later.

*What an aesthetic treat to see these ceramics—robust, valiant,
brave and beautiful—peaceable warriors.*

L.M. Singhs

*An exquisite collection of visual history of
the nineteenth and twentieth century. . . .*

Lola Seth

*An apt example to show my children the magnanimity
and potential of ceramics. I hope it will inspire them to
view ceramics' beauty with a different eye.*

Nien Siao

*Specially came from Ambala to see
the exhibition. Really good. . .*

Akul Syal

Thank you for sharing this treat!

Sanjna Kapoor

*Grand food, service and arrangements.
Only the IIC can do this.*

F.S Bhambri

Great food, superb ambience, wonderful service.

Shishir Dholakia

*Superlative food, service and
organization. Many thanks.*

N.D. Jayal

*I have no words to express the way we (my family)
were looked after. We have had good food, ambience
but for the first time I have (experienced) seen, good
food, ambience and the amount of love which was
shown in serving food and treating guests.*

Suresh Sharma

Thank you for turning the page

Of time for us.

Your legacy shows us how near

The past links us here.

Save the colours of these manuscripts

From a poet's tear.

Amit

*Please preserve and protect these invaluable manuscripts from the
prying eyes of the State Dept. and Bush after razing down to
ground zero the Baghdad Museum. . . . Congratulations—An
extremely moving exhibition of Hindu-Muslim amity and solidarity.*

N. Dey

Suman Dubey has trekked in the Kumaon-Garhwal hills for almost 40 years. In May 2006, he led a band of trekkers, including Harish Kapadia, to the Obra river valley in northwest Uttarkashi. From here, they set off at the same time as the village god, Someshwar, made his annual pilgrimage to rest in a cave at the end of the Devkyari meadow, where Dubey's group too was headed at the end of a four-day trek.

Traditional devta yatras are common to the entire sub-Himalayan area from Kinnaur to Kumaon.

Dubey's film juxtaposes the traditional yatra with a modern trek in an engaging manner. Devotees from Jakhol gathered in the Devkyari *bugyal* (alpine meadow), resplendent with wild garlic, primulas and marsh marigolds, surrounded by snow-clad peaks to watch the devta 'descend' upon an oracle. Then, the chief pujaari pierces his mouth with short spears and, to the

Of Travelling Men and Gods

FILM: *With the Devta in the Obra Valley—A Walk in the North-Western Corner of the Garhwal Himalaya*

A film by Suman Dubey

Introduction: Sudhir Sahi, Sept. 25

rhythm of a drum, banishes the demons leading them in a ritualistic dance.

Such yatras connect the human spirit with the haloed ground the yatris tread upon, and are the inchoate thread that helps bind hill societies. Thus, in an interesting blend of Brahmanic ritual and shamanistic rites, these hill communities keep their gods and myths alive in a rapidly changing world.

■ MANJU KAK

The Magic Box

MUSIC: *Dialogues Between Music and Painting in Italy from Romanticism to the XX century*

A concert by The Rome String Quartet

Collaboration: Italian Embassy Cultural Institute
Sept. 28

A 'magic box' enclosing sound and colour, the concert by the Rome String Quartet sought to highlight such dialogues between music and painting in Italy, playing musical works from Romanticism to the twentieth century, with paintings from the same periods used as a backdrop.

The concert began with a rather regal portrait of Matilde Juva Branca by Hayez projected on the screen. As Donizetti's allegro from his Quartet no. 5 emerged from the strings of the violins, viola and cello played by Vittorio and Stefano di Lotti, Aldo Giovagnoli and Nicolino Chirivi, the connection between painting and music was not immediately evident. The music seemed more a

homage to the lady on screen, than an interactive dialogue. The second piece by Ricordi featured some plucked string passages, providing a different texture from the bowed notes. The 'Portrait of the Step-daughter' by Florentine Macchiaioli painter Fattori provided a poignant backdrop, the blurred edges of the figure reminiscent of impressionist paintings. The interplay between painting and music became more apparent as the next two pieces progressed into the twentieth century. Puccini's marvellous 'Crisantemi' accompanied Modigliani's 'Woman with Tie', the cross-gender reference reinforced by music that had dissonant passages and borrowings from Oriental scales. Casella's 'Five Pieces' accompanied surrealist Chirico's 'Hector and Andromache'. The music played key against key and rhythm against rhythm in restless counterpoint, like the faceless painting on the screen.

Perhaps the most convincing demonstration of this motif was in their second encore, the light, airy strains of Mozart creating mental dissonance with the modernist Chirico still on display in the background!

■ PUNITA SINGH 13

End of Disinformation

IN CONVERSATION: *Aruna Roy in conversation with Ashok Vajpeyi on issues pertaining to artists and the Right to Information Act*

Collaboration: *Seher and the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, Oct. 24*

In what turned out to be an intellectually stimulating dialogue, artistes, poets and members of other creative streams interacted with activist Aruna Roy, who has been at the vanguard of the movement for right to information.

Initiating the dialogue, eminent poet Ashok Vajpeyi said, 'Democracy sustains artistic freedom. Hence the creative-community has a great stake in an accountable government; and the Right to Information Act will ensure that.' With government still the biggest patron of the

arts, state-honours and state sponsorship will, hopefully, be more transparent now.

Celebrated actor and director Girish Karnad said, 'Both as a citizen and an artiste, I value the right to seek and get information as a fundamental one.' He said that it is the fear of getting one's authority diluted that makes the bureaucrats oppose this law. This smacks of a mentality dating back to colonial times, when those in positions of authority believed that they possessed a superior faculty of judgement and hence had the right to make choices on behalf of others.

An interesting intervention came from a member of the audience, who introduced herself as 'a bureaucrat's wife' and was 'worried about my husband's career after this law'. Aruna Roy took up the mike to explain the Act to allay her fear. She said that the Act will actually protect an honest officer from corrupt bosses as it would remove stone-walls and enforce transparency.

■ KALYAN PONDA

The journeys of two senior Indian journalists to Lebanon and Iran offered a compelling narrative of how individuals and governments respond differently to threats and challenges. Seema Mustafa chronicled her experiences in war-torn Beirut, and Siddharth Varadarajan recounted his interactions in Tehran as they deconstructed the events leading up to the two crises—the West Asia conflict and the Iranian nuclear issue—which engaged the attention of the world for weeks on end.

Sharing their take on the developments with the members of a discerning audience, both speakers observed how Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian President Mahmud Ahmedinejad came to occupy mindspace in 'wars' that were fought in the minds of nations. Seema felt the West Asia conflict highlighted the 'secularization of Arab response'; how people exerted pressure on governments and forced pro-United States regimes in

Lebanon and Iran Revisited

LECTURE: *Lebanon*

Speaker: Seema Mustafa

Chair: Nihal Singh, Sept. 18

Iran

Speaker: Siddharth Varadarajan

Chair: Hamid Ansari, Sept. 22

Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan into isolation.

She felt the conflict flowed from anti-imperialism and resistance and not necessarily religion. 'Washington has been forced to review its West Asia policy and the conflict has exposed Israel's military invincibility,' she added.

Siddharth Varadarajan, in turn, talked about how the Iranian leadership stood up to the pressure exerted by the international community and forced a rethink in certain world capitals. For him, the Iranian nuclear issue highlighted that force and sanctions cannot deter a country from developing nuclear weapons and that if anything can work, it is diplomacy and dialogue. He felt the United States and its European allies ran the risk of miscalculating their response to Tehran's ambitions.

■ RAMESH RAMACHANDRAN

Conduct and Commerce of Art

MUSIC: *Conduct and Commerce of Art Today—With Special Reference to Indian Music*

Speaker: Shubha Mudgal

Collaboration: Crafts Revival Trust, Sept. 13



Performers and listeners alike welcome the expanding reach and commercial potential of the electronic media into Indian music. This is a positive step, Shubha Mudgal said, apprising listeners of the need for setting some parameters on the acknowledgement of musical inputs, and the problems that may arise.

Shubha Mudgal

Highlighting the contentious nature of this issue, she dwelt upon the folk number *Nimbooda* and its current format presented in the Ismail Darbar version, which has sparked off a thorny debate. Her conclusion was that it is not just lack of will to acknowledge the source, but the complex nature of the source itself. Thus the customary *nazrana* to the originator of a song number or the gracious public acknowledgement of a *gharana bandish*, explained Mudgal, is often not feasible given the oral heritage of Indian music.

Globalization, said Shubha Mudgal, made it necessary to examine that side by side with the work of electronic conversion, it was also necessary that rules and regulations be put in place about artistic copyrights and the patenting of Indian music. By publicly speaking about this grey area of Indian music, Shubha Mudgal prioritized and activated the brief for saving Indian music from becoming a prey to undesirable piracy and acrimonious legal wrangles.

■ SHUBHRA MAJUMDAR

Birds of IIC

AUTHOR: Samar Singh

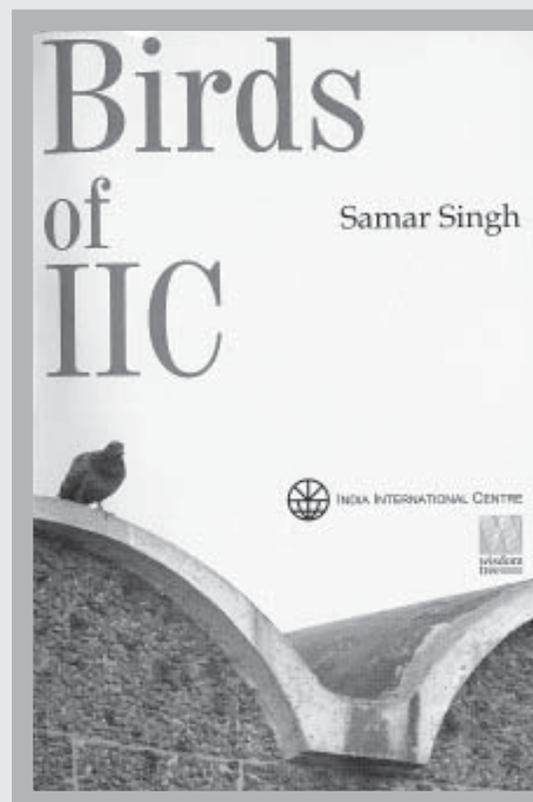
Hardcover (7"x5"); 45 colour plates

Published by IIC and Wisdom Tree; pp.134

Price Rs. 295

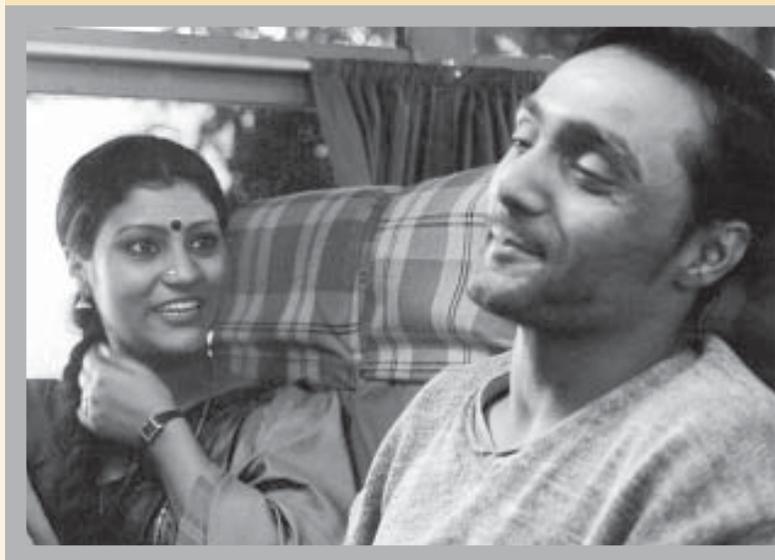
This compact illustrated guide lists all 83 species of IIC's most beautiful members—its birds. Complete with details of their scientific names, family, habitat and behaviour, it is designed to appeal to amateurs and specialists. The text is provided by Samar Singh, distinguished environmentalist and dedicated bird-watcher. In addition, selections from other renowned bird watchers, including Salim Ali, are given at the end of the book. The book has 45 full-colour photographs taken by Nikhil Devasar and Amano Samarpan. A must buy for all Delhi's bird watchers, this delightful handbook makes a pretty gift as well.

Available at the IIC.



Three Films of Aparna Sen at the IIC

MEET APARNA SEN: 36, Chowringhee Lane, August 28
Mr. and Mrs. Iyer, August 29; 15, Park Avenue, August 31



Mr. and Mrs. Iyer

Three films by Aparna Sen, the well-known off-beat filmmaker from Kolkata were screened in August. 36, *Chowringhee Lane*, made twenty-five years ago, was her first film but it still remains her best. It evoked the lonely but not fallow life of Miss Stoneham, an ageing Anglo-Indian school teacher in the Calcutta of the late 1960s. Sen handles with elegance and sensitivity the simple and touching story of a woman bypassed by history and time, with an older brother in a Home for the Aged and a niece who migrates to Australia.

Jennifer Kendal, as Miss Stoneham, carried the film on her shoulders. Bansi Chandragupta's art direction and Ashok Mehta's cinematography helped bring warmth and lilt to a composition in a minor key.

Mr. and Mrs. Iyer (2003) was intended originally to be a poignant love story along the lines of David Lean's *Brief Encounter*. Then, after the Gujarat carnage of 2002, Sen changed her story. Somewhere in North Bengal a bus coming down to the plains is attacked by Hindu communalists, and all hell breaks loose. Among the passengers are an old Muslim couple who are betrayed and killed, and Meenakshi Iyer, her baby son Santhanam, and Raja, Jehangir Choudhary, a wild-life photographer and her escort. He is saved by Meenakshi because she declares to the thugs that he is her husband, Mr. Iyer. Sen's treatment is sincere but schoolgirlish. Her quest for a metaphor for communal harmony where there is a bonding at a fundamental level, however brief, as between Meenakshi and Raja, is all but misdirected.

15, Park Avenue (2006) is about a schizophrenic, manic-depressive, epileptic Mitali-Meethi Mathur, a one-time journalist from Kolkata. Like the other two, this film is in English. The script, despite all the research that has gone into it, is amateurish. Why an editor should send a talented but unstable girl to crime-infested Dhanbad all on her own is anyone's guess. Meethi gets raped and goes permanently off the rails. Her family and ex-boyfriend are guilt-ridden and the director is left without an ending to her film.

However, Konkana Sen Sharma here, as in *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*, gives a brilliant performance.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

Obituary

List of Members who have passed away

M-3194 Justice Ashok A. Desai

M-3334 Shri P.K. Sarma

This issue of the *Diary* has been assembled and edited by Ira Pande, Chief Editor; Rachna Joshi, Asst. Editor; and Ritu Singh, Asst. Editor. Published by K.N. Venugopal, for the India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi-110 003. Designed by Poonam Bevli Sahi at FACET Design, D-9, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110 024, Ph: 24616720, 24624336 and printed by Mastan Singh at I.G. Printers, 104, DSIDC Shed, Okhla Phase-I, New Delhi - 110 020