

IIC AUTUMN 2017
Quarterly

ISSN NO. 0376-9771

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Ink and watercolour on paper,

15" x 11", 1986

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Autumn 2017

Volume 44, Number 2

India International Centre Quarterly is printed and published by Naresh Verma India International Centre, 40, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi 110 003

Price: ₹ 125

Annual Rate

IIC MEMBERS

India: ₹ 350; Abroad: \$ 35 (by airmail)

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BANK CHARGES for Outstation Cheques:
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Payments should be made by money order or bank draft or cheque payable to **INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE** at New Delhi

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Rohit Singh (Tel: 24609330);
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Typeset at Glyph Graphics Private Limited, Delhi 110 096
glyphgraphics2013@gmail.com

Printed at Naveen Printers, New Delhi

The India International Centre is a society promoting understanding and amity between the different communities of the world by undertaking or supporting the study of their past and present cultures, by disseminating or exchanging knowledge thereof and by providing such other facilities as would lead to their universal appreciation

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EDITORIAL

There is a lot to reflect on, but not enough space. Ram Rahim does not deserve space at all, but there have been encouraging commitments to civil society in the judgement relating to triple talaq and the inclusion of right to privacy as a fundamental right. But I want to consider something else. In the early 1980s, a friend of mine went abroad to study Artificial Intelligence (AI). I didn't even pretend to know what that meant. She said AI was the future.

Today, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg, two of the world's greatest 'techies', are in a heated debate about AI, but at opposite ends. For Musk, AI is the 'biggest risk we face as a civilisation', while Zuckerberg, for whom AI is a priority in his company, thinks he is an 'irresponsible naysayer'. At this very moment, two incidents have made us pause to listen to what they have to say. The first is the supposed suicide of Knightscope K5, a security robot outside an office building in Washington DC. While this drew a lot of mirth in social media, Blue Whale does not; it is deadly serious and frightening, another form of violence, inflicting harm and virtually legitimising all sorts of immorality. Of course one can't compare the two, but they share one thing in common: AI. Is this the future they envisaged? Surely not. Or is AI moving too fast for us to catch up? What is clear is our meagre understanding of the mind. Many years ago, when I contemplated studying psychology, a psychiatrist told me that while advances had been made in treatment, the brain was perhaps the only organ that defeated comprehension. It is even more difficult to understand the power of virtual reality.

This issue has a lot for those inclined to literature and the arts. Carlos Gamerro writes about Jorge Luis Borges' bond with India; a bond he forged without ever visiting India, yet portraying a fascinating picture of an imagined city.

In a moving narrative, Bilquees Daud describes the genre of poetry called *landay*. Landay are Pashto couplets recited mostly by women, and often in remembrance of the men who migrate for

work. Ironically, it is the autumnal months that are melancholic, while almost everywhere else, autumn has an enduring appeal.

Irfanullah Farooqi tries to understand Bob Dylan's Nobel for Literature. He acknowledges his extraordinary lyrics, but asks the deeper question of what literature means.

Subir Rana looks at the life and work of the brilliant and enigmatic artist, Amrita Sher-Gil. Using images of seven works, he reflects on Sher-Gil's interest in the female body and her subversion of the 'ideal feminine'.

Sri Lanka has a long history of internal strife. However, this has never stood in the way of creativity. Plays and tele-dramas are an integral part of life, and several have engaged with issues of peace. Neluka Silva presents one such drama that emphasises the need for peace at the level of civil society.

Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake deals with the experience of south Indian indentured labour migrants and their descendants in the wider context of migration and refugee flows from Sri Lanka, from which resulted a 'South-South Asian Diaspora' identity.

Both Anvita Abbi and Karthik Venkatesh discuss the significance of language. Abbi writes about language diversity, on the one hand, and the rapid extinction of languages on the other. Venkatesh historicises the question of what constitutes 'Hindi'.

Kalyan Shankar and Rohini Sahni have worked on the sex workers' community for many years. Their paper looks specifically at the state's engagement with prostitution.

This year marks 100 years since the Champaran Satyagraha. We conclude with one short article by Indra Shekhar Singh and an interview with Vandana Shiva on Navdanya's *beej satyagraha* which exemplifies their belief in the pertinence of the Gandhian philosophy of swaraj, swadeshi and satyagraha.

'Pristine'. The title of the photo essay captures the essence of Navin Sakhuja's body of work. As he says, he has always been fascinated by the 'unknown, the unexplored and the untouched parts of the planet'.

As always, you will read this issue with the closing of the *IIC Experience*. I take this opportunity to wish our readers the very best for the festive season. May it be a time of peace and joy for everyone.



OMITA GOYAL