# I KEEP YOU AS A POEM / Sangeeta Gupta

I keep you as a poem
in the core of my  existence
I sing all day
You my song
You often shine as the evening star
in my lonesome dreams
You hold my hand
When I am lost in the wilderness
You, the lifeline of a poet
I keep you as a poem
in the core of my  existence

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# Barun Chanda’s Murder in the Monastery: A Mini Review / Raj Ayyar

Yet it vanishes leaving a distraught abbot, tense monks running around, and two murders linked to the missing manuscript.
Chanda, unlike Dan Brown, manages a credible, minimalist diplomatic secularism—though the murderer is s hired goon of some Christian sect or other, Chanda does not point fingers at the Catholic church or Opus Dei, a la Brown in ‘The Da Vinci Code’.
I liked the erotic undercurrents in the novel overall—the steamy one-night stand between Miriam the fair-skinned Coorgi

Catholic nun novice and Tenzing, the fully grown adolescent Buddhist monk novice, is deliberately understated and leaves the reader’s pornographic imagination to fill in the details.

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# Siesta at Charles De Gaulle Airport by Shanita Vichare

Siesta at Charles De Gaulle Airport !
Down The Memory Lane…..

( my flight was delayed )
No hurried spaces, to foot fall
I sat;
Raising my hopes, for the next flight
On Time…”Qui “……
Feeling for my dimes; I finally had a fancy……
At Cafetie’re
Had some quickbites Chargrill & Cappuccinos…..
Croissants & puffs…not forgotten my penchant
For
Caramel ! …Irresistible…..!!!!
Such ‘Delicacies’ on my palate…..!!! ( I think, every thing had gone well then on the contarary)
Meal….was a Deal !

….What next ?….
I skirted on the ‘Vogue’ stands…..
Now; nothing more would I have ever wanted,
Out of The Blue ! I had Missed The Flight….( next was after 7 hours)
Now It was Calling……
Perfect ! Timing……

I made rounds at ….. ‘Christen Doir ‘ N ‘Gucci ‘Perfumes
Bought A Freaking ‘Poison’….a Duffel Bag !
Those Were The Days! My Friend….. ( when you have no worries )
Sheer ! Delight …
To smoothen my ruffled feathers , I bet !!
…..The Lounge ! Was the best place…..now…. I perched On the seats,
By Jove ! I saw a beauty….
Jolie Belle femme ! …from Cypress ….
A Royal Persona…..
Picture Perfect ! Well,
We soon got …talking ….and of lands far, across the seven seas !
It was a day….Out of The Blue !
“Qui “
Princess; Treated me ……
…..Wafted scents and aroma…..Spread over
The Tableau
For a Lavish Dinner;
Holding The Long Trimmed Goblets…..
Of Chardonnay N Champagne !
Vintage And
Signature Dishes ! Well Famished .
Well,
Long after, the days have set I still …
Carry The Memories …of the day !
Some Days are Blessed !
But The Journeys are Destined !

(Scribbled at Paris Airport when I was stranded for more than 10 Hours – Shanita Vichare)

# Dharti Arts Residency 2018 | Public Talks – Pallavi Paul | 13 June

Serendipity Arts Foundation

http://www.serendipityartsfoundation.org/

Dharti Arts Residency 2018
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As part of its programming, Dharti Arts Residency 2018 is hosting a series of public talks by artists, performers, and cultural practitioners. Invited speakers will give an illustrated lecture about their practice, which will be followed by a conversation with the audience.

13-06-18 | 6pm – 7.30pm
Find Out More (http://www.serendipityartsfoundation.org/)

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# Neeraj Gupta Wins Silver in Florence Biennale

Sculptor Neeraj  Gupta became the first Indian artist to get the  Lorenzo il Magnifico SILVER  medal in sculpture in XIth Florence Biennale,  the second highest award of  an important art event of Europe.  The award is significant because it comes from the Birth Place and work place of the most important  artist of the history Michelangelo.

Michelangelo not only established the role of an artist in the society but also took the art to a new high. He proved that the best in the art is yet to come and demolished the myth that best art was created in Roman Era.

So this important award to an Indian sculptor improves the Image of India in terms of artistic capability on the international scene  but also proves that Indian are second to none intellectual and art areha also.

The award was also significant because there was a staff completion from more than 1000 participating artist from around 73 major nations. Their award will help put the contemporary Indian  art in international  focus.

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# The Poetry Page – LS Bajpai / Antonio Blunda

# The Poetry Page Laxmi Shanker Bajpai

**Those People**

Those were the people who

with tiny boxes filled with fine sugar
would go in search of anthills

They would scatter seeds on terraces
for birds to feed on.

They would get troughs of water
made outside their houses for
thirsty animals passing by.

and before eating their own meal
They would set aside a portion for cows and
other creatures.

They wouldn’t let anyone pluck a single leaf from the trees
after sunset
lest the resting trees be disturbed.

They would start conversations on their own
and ask strangers for introductions
They would heartily help those in need

and if someone asked them for directions
they would gladly
escort the person to his destination.

and if at some odd hour a lost traveler
happened to come to their
door they would provide him with
food and a place to rest

maybe such a species does still exist
in some remote village or hamlet
I wish it were possible to create a museum for them
So that generations to come would learn that
This too was a way of living.

# Quelle persone

**Italian Translation of L.S. Bajpai’s poem by an Italian Poet: Antonio Blunda**

Quelle erano le persone
che con minuscoli cassetti
colmi di zucchero a velo
andrebbero in cerca di formicai

spargerebbero i semi su terrazze
per nutrire gli uccelli.

metterebbero trogoli di acqua
costruiti fuori dalle loro case
per gli animali assetati che transitano.

e prima di mangiare il loro pasto
metterebbero da parte una porzione
per le vacche
ed altre creature.

Non lascerebbero che nessuno
cogliesse una singola foglia dagli alberi
dopo il tramonto
affinchè il riposo degli alberi
non fosse disturbato.

Inizierebbero le proprie conversazioni
chiedendo a stranieri di presentarli

Aiuterebbero di cuore coloro che lo necessitano

e se qualcuno chiedesse loro di guidarli
essi lo farebbero volentieri
conducendo la persona a destinazione.

e se all’ora più casuale
ad un viaggiatore disperso
capitasse di giungere alla loro porta
essi offrirebbero cibo

ed un posto per riposare

Forse una tal specie ancora esiste
in qualche remoto villaggio o borgo

Vorrei che fosse possibile creare un museo per loro
così che le generazioni venissero ad imparare
che anche questo
era un modo di vivere.

(Traduzione in italiano: Antonio Blunda)

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# Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism

**Book Mark**

**Book Review and Book Launch Coverage**
**By**
**Divya Raina**

A well-attended panel discussion at the India International Centre Annexe held last month (December 23, 2008) more than made up for my disappointment at the sudden cancellation (on Eid) of a public lecture at the same venue in the same month. The occasion was the launch of Professor Javed Majeed's book,*Muhammad Iqbal: Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism*, published by Routledge. Professor Majeed was in town for the occasion along with his wife, Swarna Aiyar, who is a historian in her own right. A good omen that Professor Majeed referred to about the book's launch was that on their trip to Agra the previous day, their guide to the Taj Mahal was,

coincidentally, also called Muhammad Iqbal!

Javed Majeed is Professor of Postcolonial Studies at Queen Mary, University of London, and his book is the first in the Routledge series “Pathfinders”. The series editor, Dilip M. Menon, who introduced the author and flagged off the proceedings, explained how the series is planned to reflect India’s intellectual, literary, artistic and cultural traditions. They are aimed at the general reader as well as those who have an academic interest in the subject.

In his brief address and introduction to the book, Professor Majeed quoted historian Romila Thapar’s statement about the “tyranny of labels” and how stereotyping of the kind that exists in today’s context is particularly dangerous and how this study in particular provides a complex and detailed account of Iqbal so that it is no longer possible to appropriate him into any one political agenda.

In fact, the book aims to show how Iqbal combined a variety of positions in his texts, and how the tensions between these positions were kept in play in his poetry. Further, the book attempts to reveal how the style in which Iqbal’s poems imagine an Islamic community, both globally and within South Asia, distinguish the nature of that community. It identifies how Iqbal used and inverted Persian and Urdu aesthetic traditions to imagine a global Muslim community and an Islamicised postcolonial identity. Apparently, it was through complex inversions and appropriations of tradition that Iqbal created what the author calls “harmoniously dissonant verse” in which the relationships between an innovative individual selfhood and a reconstructed Islam were figured.

Apart from the author those who also spoke on the occasion were Professor Alok Rai from the Department of History and Professor Farhat Hasan from the Department of History, both of Delhi University. Shammi Mamik, Publisher, Routledge India, proposed a vote of thanks and with a couple of questions from

the audience, the evening came to an end.

Details about the book:

Name of the book : **Mohammad Iqbal:Islam, Aesthetics and Postcolonialism**
Name of the author : **Javed Majeed**
Name of the Publisher: **Routledge**
Price not known

Available at:
Taylor and Francis Books India Pvt Ltd,
512 Mercantile House,
15 Kasturba Gandhi Marg,
New Delhi: 110 001.

Tel.: (00 91 11) 23706110 (Direct), 23712131
Fax: (00 91 11) 23712132

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# Staring in the Subway

A Chilling Short Story from London

**Staring in the Subway**
**by**
**Manasvi Gautam**

"Subway" (from *Ruckus Manhattan*), 1976– Red Grooms

A woman had been through a long and hard day at the office and was coming back home in the late evening. The day had seemed to drag on; she was exhausted and looking forward to getting back home where she would hit the hay. She went into a metro station where she got on a train and made herself comfortable on a seat. She noticed a woman sitting opposite her who was staring at her intently. She tried to ignore it but each time she looked over, the woman was there with her eyes wide open and the woman had not blinked or moved in any way at all. That strange woman carried on staring at her.

At one of the stops a passenger got onto the train and sat next to her. He quietly advised her to get off at the next stop; she decided to take the advice because she was apprehensive about what the woman wanted. The next stop was a busy one and she thought if that woman tried to follow her, she would be able to lose herself in the crowd.

When the train came to the next stop, she hurried off the train and the man followed her. The man was relieved and said to her "I'm going to contact the police. That was really frightening. I didn't want to alarm you on the train but the woman sitting opposite you was dead and there were two men sitting either side of her, keeping her upright."

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# Recovering the Republic

## Recovering the Republic

**Anisha Shekhar Mukherji**

1.Plastic Salt Container, in Urban Kitchens 2. Traditional Salt Container 3. Traditional coconut scraper

(Courtesy: Ira Chaudhuri)

I would like to begin with a question. A question asked by an external juror to the first year post-graduate students of Industrial Design in the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture, at the end of their research presentations comparing a traditional craft with its modern counterpart. “Which is more important, the survival of the craft or the survival of the craftsman?”

Considering the abysmal conditions that most traditional crafts-people practice their art in, and the pittance they receive for hours of strenuous creative work, this question is entirely apt. It sums up

the entire dilemma in reviving the manifest arts and crafts of India. Traditional craft is today unable to give either dignity or money to support its practitioners in our Republic. To ensure their own survival they abandon it, in favour of the most feasible employment alternative available—as road or building construction labourers, factory workers, domestic help. Such literally back-breaking unskilled work earns them some money. But it gives no surety of tenure, no provision of basic human dignity, no respect for their persons or their labour. We have all seen these labourers in our cities, their children lying unattended in a corner of the dusty road, their habitation consisting of a few plastic sheets. It appears that while soon there may be no traditional artists, having either starved or taken on other jobs marginally better than starvation, the relics of their art will survive as museum pieces in this country and in others, such as the beautiful traditional coconut scraper, from the private collection of Sankho Chaudhuri, Courtesy: Ira Chaudhuri

**What then should we do?** We who praise and display the skilled products of such hands and minds, in safe and comfortable environments so different from theirs? We do not have to look too far back in space or time for the answer. It was given more than seventy years before, by none other than Mahatma Gandhi. He wrote in 1934,

'In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager'. [1]

We have as a country disregarded this advice. The inaction or actions of our own government has resulted in the destruction of traditional habitats and the cultures that such habitats foster. Despite the manifest artistic talent of the villager, our way of life today routinely favours 'articles produced in big cities, even if they are obviously inferior in workmanship *and* design. We have segregated things of beauty from things of utility. They reflect our own segregation of lives where we separate work and pleasure into different compartments. Thus our homes and places of work, both from the outside and the inside, use materials that degrade the environment

and consume huge amounts of energy in their design, manufacture and maintenance. Most products of daily use in even the homes of the relatively well-off and well-educated are *devoid* of aesthetic form or detail. What better example to demonstrate this, than to compare the domestic container for salt, the humble but vital ingredient of food that Gandhiji chose to use as his symbol for self-reliance from the British? The photograph above depicts a salt container collected from a rural home, by Sankho Choudhuri in the course of his travels over the length and breadth of the country and beyond. Contrast this with the usual salt container in a kitchen today.

We instill the same lack of feeling for art in our children, in the choices that we make for them. Though traditional hand-made toys, such as the wooden Benaras toy shown below, are practical objects to play with and are beautiful both as examples of craft and of design, it is the mass produced plastic toys of similar price available commercially, which most of us prefer to buy for our children today.

Traditional *Banarasi* handmade parrot

Plastic mass-produced toy dog

This is a reflection of the ‘colonization of our minds’. We have been conditioned into believing that the *only* way to progress is to imitate the cultures of the Western countries. This perception continues today, even when it is increasingly evident that the western mechanized model of development is neither congenial to individual creativity, nor sustainable for the earth’s resources. We all know that its factories occupy substantial land, and consume *quantities* of minerals, water and electricity *only* in order to mass-produce standardized objects devoid of individual characterization, and made of energy-intensive materials. When they are thrown after use they poison the earth and irremediably harm our habitats. Contrast this with the cycle of production, use and disposal of traditional crafts. Produced in a home environment which does not require any extra investment in separate land or buildings, the natural materials that they overwhelmingly use such as clay, wood, cocoanut shells, reeds, bamboos, do not degrade the environment, but add to its fertility after they are broken or have outlived their use. Thus, the input as well as the output of small-scale craft and design activity is far more humane and superior to the ‘environmental and human cost’ of large-scale mechanization.

Despite this evident fact, and despite a famed artistic tradition that still continues in some measure today, our institutions give credence only to book-knowledge or machine-skills. Most designers and artists graduating from reputed national universities cannot craft anything with their own hands to equal the skill of traditional designers. This is why perhaps they produce banal work that is merely a copy of repackaged and repetitive Western ideas. Those that are in positions to do so, refuse to heed the economic potential of the vast human resource of traditional craftsmakers, which can not only support itself with practically no government investment, but can also earn the country much money through its craft and design skills. Some of our policy documents such as the revised Draft National Design Policy, do state that they would ‘promote value added designs focusing on India’s unique position as a country with a rich cultural

heritage…'.[2]But in real terms many rare crafts-skills, far from being promoted, actually face extinction because they are even refused recognition as an economic industry. Student research shows that possibly the only remaining family in Paharganj in Delhi which practices the craft of hand-woven *chiks,* have been refused PAN numbers, since only pit-loom woven chiks are recognized by the government as a craft industry![3]

Historically, such craftsmen and artists of India have been famed over the world since centuries. So much so, that the eighteenth-century Persian invader Nadir Shah took care to carry hundreds of craftsmen along with all the wealth that he looted from India. The crafts have often reached their pinnacle in cities, and in or around the courts of kings and noblemen. How was it that we earlier managed to develop the potential talents of our people, while we are unable to do so today despite our democracy? In earlier times, as Dharampal, the noted Gandhian historian has recorded '…the sciences and technologies…in countries like India…[were] in tune with their more **decentralist** politics and there was no seeking to make their tools or work places **unnecessarily** gigantic and grandiose. Smallness and simplicity of construction, as of the iron and steel furnaces or of the drill ploughs, was in fact due to social and political maturity as well as arising from understanding the principles and processes involved'. [4]

There was also no active discouragement to village organizations. And an important component of the economy of villages was local talent. The presence of such talent was nurtured, and the best amongst these were given patronage in the cities. Thus in the mid-seventeenth century, the imperial urban palace of the great Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, in his new capital of Shahjahanabad, had areas reserved within it for artists and craftsmen from the city. These *karkhanas,* surrounded by gardens and courtyards, had some of the best such artists working within them. Imagine such a situation today. That some of the many rooms within the *Rastrapati Bhawan*, are given over for master-craftsmen to practice their craft, secure in the knowledge that they are under the patronage of the President! That they will not have

to beg or run from pillar to post for raw-materials for their craft, or for buyers for their finished products. It would be a wholly suitable use for the hundreds of empty rooms in the Rashtrapati Bhawan maintained at public cost, but most of us would find it unacceptable, if not downright unthinkable.

The city of **Shahjahanabad**, a mid-19th century map of which you can see above, held to be an ideal example of town-planning in its design and functioning, followed the example set by the Emperor. **Despite being the capital of one of the largest and richest empires in the medieval world, areas of governance within the city were decentralized.** Houses of noblemen and princes were surrounded by that of their dependents, artists and craftsmen. **Workplaces and homes were integrated.** *Our*cities today forcibly separate places of work from residential areas, even in the case of professions which do not pollute the environment in any way. Our law-enforcers separate poorer people into the fringes of the cities. The only end of work appears to be to make money, lots of it; that work can afford creative pleasure is a luxury most of us are afraid to even imagine.

The downfall of a local level of crafts and technology, that in turn fed a corpus at an urban level, began, really speaking with the advent of the European trading companies, three hundred years before Mahatma Gandhi campaigned for the revival of village industries. The sole purpose of these companies was to amass wealth for themselves in the

name of fair trade, by deliberately undermining local craft and technical skills 'by hook or by crook'. The personal and state correspondence between British traders and British rulers and administrators, shows their active connivance to ruin this economic base while at the same time extracting economic and other benefits for themselves from indigenous Indian knowledge. They also show that the fountain head of this knowledge has been the villages. That it still remained in sufficient amount even a hundred odd years after the start of the British operations, shows the spread and tenacity of this knowledge base.[5] Thus in the mid-eighteenth century, in the time of the renowned ruler of Jaipur and Amber, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the architect and town planner *Vidyadhar*, despite hailing originally from Bengal—a land many miles east of Amber—could practice his talent with dignity and freedom in Jai Singh's court. His remarkable design of the city ofJaipur, with its feel for local needs that most of our modern architects and town planners are bereft of, continues to function well till today. The city's unique identity, unlike its faceless or facile modern counterparts, stems from an integration of local building skills as well as a response to local climate and culture. Vidyadhar could visualize and construct the city in this way because though he came from a culture, whose details and landscape were different from that of Rajasthan, the process of thinking itself was not different. It depended on an elaboration of the local building theme, which was known as much to the local users as to the local builders. The formal basis for this theme was in the Sanskrit texts and building manuals.

For most of us bred to the superiority of city learning, it would be no doubt amazing to realize that we owe the existence of the world-renowned Jantar Mantars as much to a village priest of humble origins as to the famous Maharaja of Jaipur. Jai Singh II met Pandit Jagannath, a Brahmin village priest in the Deccan, whose knowledge of astronomy and religion was so manifest that it catalysed the Maharaja to take the priest back with him to Amber. This also demonstrates that learning was not limited to cities or courts. Pandit Jagannath went on to become Jai Singh's chief aide in his astronomy researches and in the theory and practical construction of his unique masonry instruments of astronomy. It should also give us some food for thought

that this is described as one of the darkest periods of Indian history, by many Western historians.

In what seems to be a perverse joke of history, the very nation that once led the race to wipe out indigenous Indian methods of living and crafts production, has now adopted a direction of economic growth that depends to a large extent on crafts and creative industries. The merely 32,000 crafts makers of Britain surpass the earnings of its organized industries of motorcycle or sports good manufactures.[6] Ironically, despite our estimated population of 'over a crore of handloom weavers, and an equal, if not larger, number of crafts people engaged in diverse crafts from pottery, to basket-making, stone-ware, glass-ware, hand made paper products and multifarious other utility items made out of local, available materials',[7] *our* policy makers assiduously continue to court a centralized large-scale, high-investment, and polluting model of western development.

The fact that there is a global market for Indian crafts is quite evident from the quantities that are bought by visiting foreign tourists, and by the fact that China is now mass-producing objects in factories that *imitate* Indian crafts, to tap into this demand. However, the export of crafts does not always imply the preservation of the artists. Thus, despite earning huge amounts of foreign exchange, the woodcraft of Saharanpur no longer succors the traditional craftsmen. Even local demand is by itself not enough. Despite a continuing demand for gold jewellery, traditional goldsmiths in Tamil Nadu from the *Vishwakarma* community, are starving. Customers now go to showrooms owned by jewel magnates which stock machine-made jewelry instead of the custom-made designs of traditional goldsmiths. One imported jewel-making machine does a year's work of a*hundred* goldsmiths in about ten hours. From the late 1990s, this increasing mechanization in jewelry-making has led to the suicide of several goldsmiths, many with their entire families, by consuming cyanide, which every goldsmith uses to polish gold. Most of the remaining two lakh goldsmiths in the state, are in debt. About two thousand of them are now reduced to selling liquor in government run shops.[8]

Not content with wiping out indigenous craft and technology by patronizing large scale industrial investments, even the land of rural communities is being taken away. The recent Bill devised by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development, appears to be even more exploitative than the archaic Land Acquisition Act of 1894 that it seeks to replace. The new Bill according to Medha Patkar, the veteran activist who leads the National Alliance for People's Movements, (NAPM), removes the more public-spirited provisions in the colonial government's Act. It instead, includes a clause that may be invoked to assist private companies in acquiring public land for 'any project relating to the generation, transmission and supply of electricity' and even 'mining activities'.[9]

This is why, despite protests by village groups, Gautam Adani, ranked 91 on the Forbes' World Billionares list, has been able to buy land at rates between Rs 1 and Rs 8 per square metre[10, 11] from the Gujarat government for the SEZ coming up on the northern shore of the Gulf of Kutch in and around the Mundra port. This land, including government revenue and forest land, and more than 1400 acres of *gauchar* or grazing land under panchayats, has been leased to other companies by the Adani Group at *Rs 1000* per square meter.[12] The Adani group, the new 'company bahadur' has killed fragile ecosystems including more than a crore of mangrove trees, appropriated common property resources, and displaced 'local people who since centuries earned their livelihoods based on access to the land and the sea'. 570 hectares of mangrove forests have been cleared through industrial activity, the fish-species they spawned have been destroyed, the local *Wagher* fishing community's and the traditional cattle/buffalo rearing *Rabari*community's livelihood has been permanently lost. Country-craft builders at the Old Mundra port which generates an annual income of a crore to the Maritime Board are also at risk. The smooth roads and infrastructure that the SEZ boasts as justification for all this destruction and displacement, are a stark contrast to the *kuchha* roads outside its boundaries without basic water and sanitation where its more than 10,000 migrant labourers are made to live. Despite such obvious exploitation, our obsession with foreign investments and stock

markets have made us as a country blind to such usurpation of the lives and rights of village communities.[13]

How then, to return to the original question, do we ensure the survival of crafts people and their art, against the new colonists?

**First**, we must understand that it is only in the village, that these craftspeople can survive with dignity, in a familiar environment that promises them the security of some level of relationship with their land and with its society. **Second**, we need to ensure that their craft brings them and their families enough to live in the villages, without fear of starvation or eviction. Third, we must place the invaluable knowledge embodied in craftsmen, on an equal footing with that of the degreed faculty who teach in our institutions at enviable salaries.

To do all of these, craft has to come out of the ambit of merely 'decorative objects' After all, how many carved elephants or statues can one display in ones homes? They must regain their status as objects of utility that are also beautiful. If all objects of daily use are designed and crafted using the manifest skills of our traditional artists—plates, glasses, spoons, knives, lamp-holders, furniture pieces, photo frames, hair-grips, there will be a real demand for such objects and they will be part of a living tradition of use. This in turn, will ensure that there is a continuous demand for such objects, which will afford craftspeople sustained employment in producing them. As Sankho Chaudhuri has said, 'The time has come to ask ourselves what we want to [do] with the potential talent of the artisans. We have to consider whether the village and tribal crafts should be used only as a means of earning foreign exchange and keeping alive otherwise meaningless, moribund forms and crafts (like gold sequins and brocade work on velvet or rose water jars) or whether we could apply their skills to evolve designs of utility, and develop simple cheap objects of daily use which every villager can afford, like clay toys, deities, oil lamps and so on, and try to create an economic base for these artisans to survive in the villages.'

It so happens that most of us are now used to certain conveniences, and if crafts objects are to replace mass-produced objects of daily use, they must have a certain convenience of use and ease of maintenance. Their appearance and detailing also needs to be in tune with more contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. Craftspeople additionally need help with access to raw-materials as well as packaging and marketing-skills. Therefore, we must decentralize the ***practice*** of craft and technology as well as the *decisions* that govern them; and foster interaction between those taught in the present design and technology schools and those trained in traditional arts and technologies, so that there is mutual transmission of learning. This is not in the realm of the impossible. It can be done. The collaboration between traditional Bidri artists whose fine metalware craft with inlays of silver, brass or copper is now almost exclusively centred in Bidar near Hyderabad, and Vikram Sardesai-a Bangalore based designer- has produced new designs which are distinctive, beautiful and useful, like Serving Plates designed with new motifs, manufactured and embellished according to the traditional techniques of *Bidri* ware &Keychains manufactured and embellished according to traditional techniques of*Bidri*ware.[11]

The range, quality and packaging of these products has, as Vikram Sardesai says, made the corporate world look '…at indigenous solutions, rather than constantly buying from the West and China…'[15]. However, well-detailed crafts-objects suitable for daily needs of modern living, need to be stocked at neighbourhood shops within the ambit of*ordinary consumers* as well. For this, we have to generate a local demand for such products, within our own cities, towns and villages, so that there is a steady market that does not depend on huge production numbers. This will foster the necessity for local artistic talent. From this talent, those who do come to cities in the lure of fame and wealth, will like their historical counterparts be among the best practitioners, ensuring that they are not led to do downgraded jobs as today, but instead are elevated to positions of respect. And since most villagers and small-town dwellers aspire to be like the city-dwellers, this demand for village-crafts must come *from*

*city-dwellers*. It is surely a small thing to ask, that we use objects that fill our daily life with beauty, which additionally help to keep alive in dignity those of us who have the talent to create such objects?

As Mahatma Gandhi said so many years ago:

'Each person can examine all the articles of food, clothing and other things that he uses from day to day and replace foreign makes or city makes, by those produced by the villagers in their homes or fields with the simple inexpensive tools they can easily handle and mend. This replacement will be itself an education of great value and a solid beginning.' [14]

Everyone present in this conference, can resolve to move beyond discussions, to use as much as possible articles produced by indigenous crafts-people in our offices, and in our homes. We need to convince as many people as we interact with daily, our families, our friends to do the same. Whichever of us are teaching in institutions, must initiate the inclusion of traditional knowledge-bearers on the staff- as visiting lecturers, as faculty, as part of special training measures. Those of us in the government can set an example to use indigenous alternatives for office décor and office stationary, such as bamboo chiks instead of plastic blinds. We also need to facilitate the making and transformation of the houses which often double as workplaces for craftspeople, into well-lit, ventilated and healthy spaces, whether through trained advice or through the promulgation of rules which legalize such multi-use dwellings. At a policy level, the Government of India needs to ban the setting up of large mechanized efforts that compete with indigenous craft and technology, and enforce laws that forbid large-scale machine production of traditional skills such as of gold-jewelry and instead propagate and practice decentralized methods of production.

. Only then can we recover the basic tenets on which our Republic was founded. Otherwise, our very existence will be a mindless copy, like the idols we worship—now being produced by machines in factories in China. I would like to end with one such Chinese machine-made idol,

displaying facial features reminiscent of the land that it was manufactured in, with the hope that true to the spirit of our tradition, our gods and goddesses shall prove an auspicious omen for the revival of Indian arts and crafts and their practitioners.

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# Book Mark – Saath Chalte Hué • Rowing Together

***Meenakshi F Paul  Reviews the Book of Poems which will be read out live by the two poetesses at IIC on April the 28th***

Poet to poet translation, infrequent in the past, is gradually increasing as a dynamic collaboration between creative imaginations. Transcreation requires sensitivity, understanding, felicity with words, sensibility and imagination to avoid being wooden and clumsy. Often, writers are averse to their works being translated because the process becomes a mere faithful rendering, rather than catching the essence and flavour of the work.

Therefore, it is a good idea to have poets translate each other's writings, thus, giving the poems a whole new persona in clothes of different fabrics and hues while preserving the essential grain and spirit of the inspiration. Since 2005, the collaborative "Poet to Poet Translation Project" of Cove Park Resource Centre, British Council Scotland, and Edinburgh:UNESCO City of Literature successfully showcased how mutual transcreations across cultures and languages may be rewarding, both for the poets and for the readers. In India, Sukrita and Savita Singh have brought together *Saath Chalte Hué • Rowing Together* with reciprocal transcreation of poems into Hindi and English. This commendable creative cooperation between the two poets reveals how creative egos are channelled to a rich partnership; as both claim each other's poetry for themselves, imbuing them with their own colours through the prisms of their experience and imagination. The title evokes the words of Sri Chinmoy: "O my friend, / Let us claim each other first. / then let us walk together / Towards our destined goals." This kinship is apparent throughout the ambulations

of the poets alongside each other.

The rendering of *Saath Chalte Hué* into *Rowing Together*, or vice-versa, is an apt pointer to the travellers who veer away from the everyday and the obvious to burrow deep into the undiscovered, the unexplored. 'Rowing' suggests the effort made in concert, the delight of the voyage and the joy of arrival. It also gives weight to the importance of mutual trust and equal energy and commitment in the enterprise.

The poems are divided thematically into eight sections with poems by Sukrita and Singh in the original juxtaposed with the transcreated versions. The name of the 'original' writer is given at the bottom of the page, the translation alongside is by the poet rowing with her. Both blend seamlessly together largely because of the empathy between the poets, which helps them encompass not only the words but also the silences of the poems.

The first section: Hona • Being has eight poems, five by Sukrita and three by Singh. The poems revolve round the desire to be and the trepidation of the unknown. "Jab Saanp Ashray ke Liye Aaye • When the Snakes Came for Shelter" by Sukrita is a powerful and intense poem, which uses the symbol of the snakes to foreground the struggle for freedom inZimbabwe and the continued peacetime battle against treachery and oppression of women everywhere. The translation into Hindi, for the most part, matches the English and is able to catch the sinister undertone admirably: "Her long dark limbs / Glistened /And entwined in the coiling / snakes/ As darkness slithered / Towards the break of dawn / Haunting Salvador Dali"—"Uske chharharey kaley ang / Chamakte thhé / gunthhe hué kundali marte / saanpon se / Jab pahuncha andhera rengta hua / Bhor ke ujale ki taraf / Salvador Dali ko haunt karta hua". Singh's "Prem ke Baare Mein • Of Love" captures the lost promise of Sylvia Plath's life and the poetry she could have created. The pathos of her death in lonesomeness and despair questions the man-woman relationship and the haloed idea of love.

The second theme: Srijana • Creating has five poems by Singh and four by Sukrita. Singh's poems explore the agonizing process of writing, of

translating the imagined on paper: “For some times now / A poem lay within me / I told her wait as yet […] / Why is life for such as us / so troubled / So difficult” (“Hum Jaison ka Jivan • Life of Such as Us”). In “Gallery Mein • In the Gallery” Sukrita dextrously interplays images of steel, human flesh and trees to underscore the paradoxes of livings just like the tree trunks as pieces of art can be “A withering or a blossoming”.

Section three entitled: Anyata • Othering consists of four poems by Singh and three by Sukrita. Singh uses concrete imagery in “Sara ka Sundar Badan • Sarah’s Beautiful Body”, “Allen ka Dost • Allen’s Friend”, and “Ruth ka Sapna • Ruth’s Dream” to evoke alienation and emptiness. Singh employs the snow motif in many poems to underline the difficult and the sad but, paradoxically, desired experience by the poet. Sukrita’s poems are musings on the life of the elderly in a materialistic and individualistic society (“America mein Budhate Hué • Ageing inAmerica”) and of the homeless but spirited poor in the workers’ world (“Hum Beghar • We the Homeless”) The poems are vignettes of the close ‘other’ within us who we are afraid to encounter. “Sunami ke Snapshots • Tsunami Snapshots” brings out the fundamental unease of the poet with the random draw of hand by natureprovidence. The helplessness of a sensitive mind while grappling with the tsunamic ironies and paradoxes of life is feelingly articulated.

The fourth theme: Nirkhana • Seeing contains four poems each by the two poets. Sukrita delves into the ineffable bond between mothers and daughters. The continuity of ties in womanhood through the generations is represented by the unsevered umbilical cord of the heart. The pain of birthing and separation is placed hopefully and contrapuntally to the joy of oneness: “I am, / I know now, / my mother, / as you / are yours” (“Itihas • History”). Singh’s poems vivify the objectification and suppression of woman as well as her joys and strivings. “Jaise Ek Stree Janati Hai • The Way a Woman Knows” brings out these themes in an interesting metaphor: “Who can get to know the body/ As a woman would / Who can know which boat she can make with it / Which river she can cross.”

Section five: Palna • Nurturing puts together three poems each by Singh and Sukrita. Singh evokes nature imagery in her attempts to "make a nest" of belonging and identification in the face of disjointedness: "Once when I told them my name / I too am a tree I explained / Every tree refused to recognize me". Sukrita, once again, bridges the past and the present, the self and the other with resonant simplicity. An example of her layered verse is apparent in ("Ant se Prarambh • End from the Beginning", in which the primordial forest with an unfathomable well is seen "inviting lovers / to come down the spiral steps / carved on his chest, / to reach the womb of time / and touch the / beginnings of history").

The sixth theme: *Chintana* • Reflecting has one poem by Singh and four by Sukrita. The mood in this section is contemplative and gentle with nature imagery and the theme of bonding foregrounded once more. In this section, despite the loss there is an undercurrent of hope as is made clear in these words: "A suspended story, a void / That was filled / By you and you, / My children" ("Chetana Pravah • Stream of Consciousness"). The seventh section: Pira • Suffering consists of three poems by Sukrita and two by Singh. The section begins with an extremely penetrating "Akhet • The Hunt" on the Gujarat riots in the larger perspective of the brutal, mindless violence in the cycle of creation and destruction, of karma and retribution. It resurrects the: "Ghosts of unborn children / not resting till / they enter bodies of / their killers and of / those who raped their mothers". All the poems in this section make for compelling reading in these times of escalating intolerance and schisms in society. The pain and the mourning of women seek sanity in the encompassing reality where Singh laments: "So many wounds on the body / Many more on the mind / Even more on the map of the country" ("Desh ke Manchitra Par • On the Map of the Country").

The final section, entitled: Basera • Dwelling, houses three poems by Sukrita and five by Singh. "Bevafa Yaadein • Unloyal Memory" uses crisp imagery of a locked-up house to capture the nebulous eroding of remembrances with every re-memorying. "Jo Narcissus ke Saath Dub Gaya • That which Drowned with Narcissus" is a yearning for beauty that is

unalloyed, perfect. “Sach Kahin Chala Gaya • Truth has Wandered Away” is a longing for freedom and truth when “We are left only with lies now / That can take us far / […] Freedom is merely a suspect word / Power is the real issue.”

*Saath Chalte Hué • Rowing Together* is a navigation of the broad stream and the backwaters in camaraderie and team spirit. The distinct personalities of the poets complement each other even as they bring their own quintessence to the venture. The reader is taken into the boat as a partner who maps the passing landscape and the stopovers as the poets take up the oars. In midstream the currents of what is meant by ‘original’ work, interlanguage exchanges, and translation as creation are met and grappled with. The baggage of the supremacy of one language is tossed overboard for a lighter, smoother sailing. Both the oars, one of Hindi and one of English, are grasped with equal fervour and command. The craft of poetic creation and transcreation is finely balanced in the rhythm of the rowers. Thus, the deep clear waters as well as the tumultuous rapids of ideas, images and words are negotiated in tandem by both the poet-translators with fluid, clean, and assured strokes. There are, naturally, a few instances when a piece appears more forceful and flowing in one language than the other. For instance, in “When the Snakes Came for Shelter” these lines of underlying portent: “She smelt no danger / Nor did they, / there’d be no holding the venom / if they did”) are somewhat watered down in the Hindi rendering. However, such log jams are very small and occasional. They do not take a bit away from the captivating world that the poets take us to sight downstream. Many poems, such as “Hum Beghar • We the Homeless” obscure the barrier of the original with the transcreated. Each version is complete in itself. Both are ‘original’ even as one is a flawless transcreation of the other. In *Saath Chalte Hué • Rowing Together* the “signposts of having co-travelled” are clear and vivid as the two poet-translators inhabit each other’s imaginative worlds in words and in silences. Medha Singh’s sketches are beautiful icons of the themes and add to the experience of reading the verse. It is hoped that this excellent volume will fuel more such collaborative literary expeditions and discoveries.

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