



Indian Council for Cultural Relations

presents

International Webinar

on

“Independent India@75 : Democratic Traditions”


on the occasion of

International Day of Democracy

September 15, 2021


at 4.00 PM

Venue : Conference Room, ICCR, New Delhi

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Table of Contents

- 03 Concept
- 04 Programme
- 06 Inaugural Address by
Dr. S. Jaishankar,
Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs of India
- 07 Welcome Address by
Dr Vinay Sahasrabuddhe,
President ICCR
- 08 Panel 1
Theme: Philosophy of Indian
Democratic traditions
- 12 Panel 2
Theme: Democracy in Practice
- 17 Discussions during the
Webinar
- 26 About
Indian Council For Cultural
Relations

Independent India@75: Democratic Traditions

Indian Council for Cultural Relations organized an International Webinar on the topic **Independent India@75: Democratic Traditions** on the Occasion of International Day of Democracy on 15th September 2021 under the several events being organized on Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorating the 75th Year of India's Independence.

Dr. S Jaishankar, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister gave the Inaugural (Video) message while Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President ICCR and Member of Rajya Sabha, gave the welcome address. This conference witnessed participation of eminent national and international panelist who shared their diverse views especially on India and its Democratic Traditions. These included: Stephen Harper, Former Prime Minister of Canada, Chairman and CEO of Harper & Associates Consulting (Canada), H.E. Mr Erik Solheim, Former Minister of Environment and International Development (Norway), Mr Julian Leeser, MP Member for Berowra, New South Wales (Australia), Shri Swapan Dasgupta, Member of Rajya Sabha (India), H.E. Gonching Ganbold, Former Ambassador of Mongolia in India (Mongolia), Prof. Eghosa E Osaghae, DG, NIIA (Nigeria), Prof. Werner Menski, Professor Emeritus of South Asian Laws at SOAS, University of London (UK), and Shri Swaminathan Gurumurthy, Chairman VIF, journalist and editor (India).

The discussions took place under two panels: a) **Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions**, which was moderated by Shri Dinesh K Patnaik, Director General, ICCR and, b) **Democracy in Practice** which was moderated by Ms Indrani Bagchi, Senior diplomatic Editor, Times of India

The Conference highlighted India's historical journey to become a unique democracy with unsurpassed diversity and unity on a global stage and bring awareness globally to the unique legacy of India which is a part of the inherent character of the social milieu. It also focused on the challenges which democratic governance faces and way forward.

The webinar was live telecast on all the social media platforms of ICCR and was also shared with all the Missions, Regional Offices and Indian Cultural Centers for wider publicity. The link of the International webinar is as below:

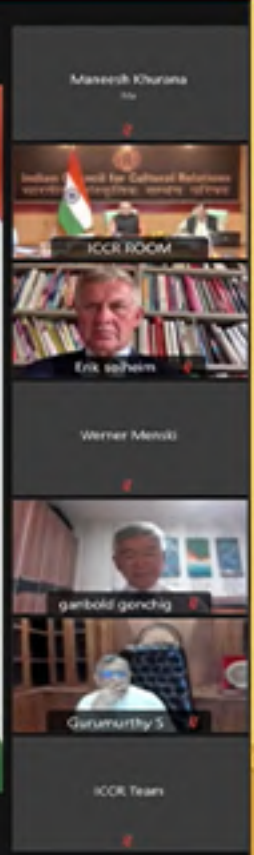
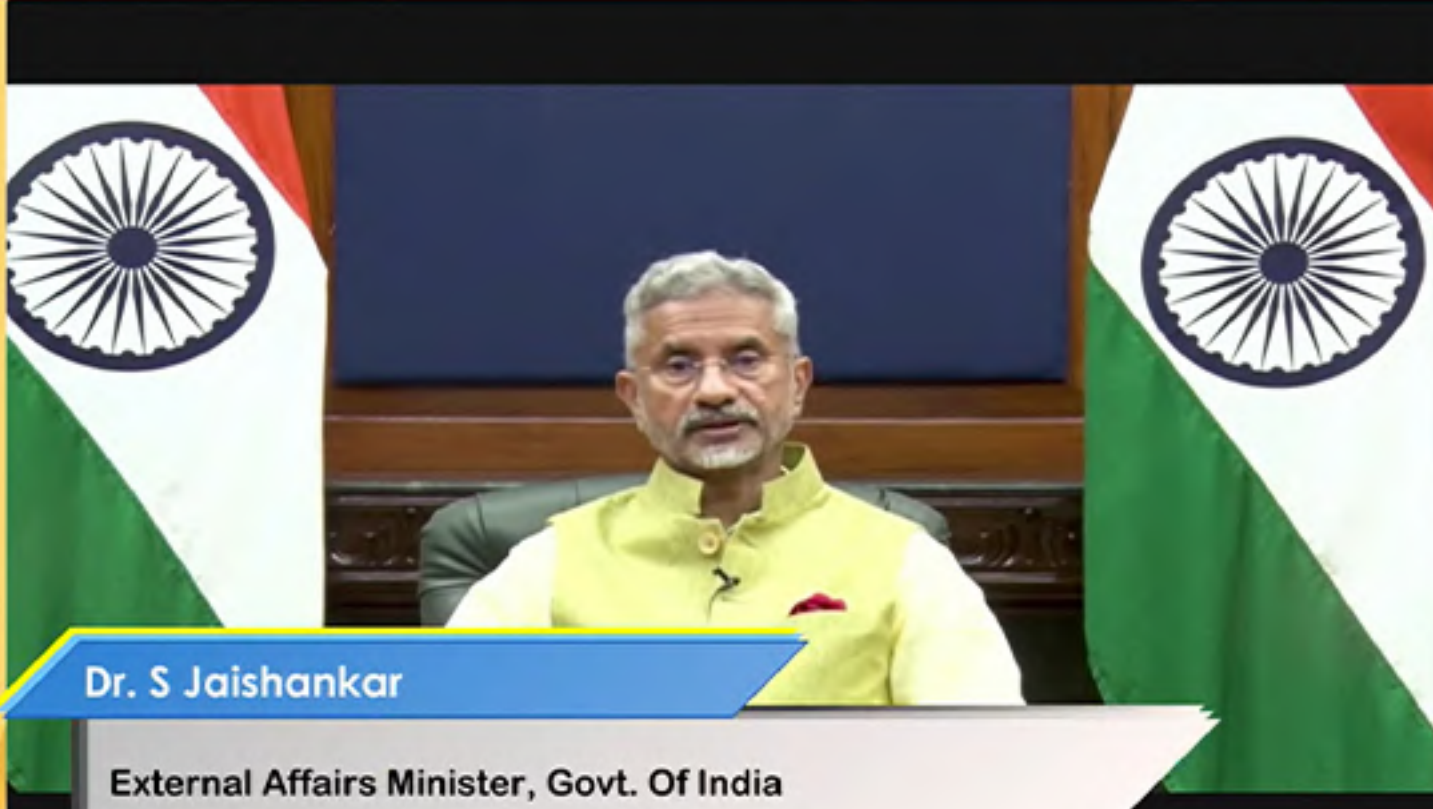
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Programme

S.NO	TIME	DETAILS
1.	4.00 PM to 4.10 PM	Welcome Address by President, ICCR
2.	4.10 PM to 4.20 PM	Inaugural Address (Video Message) by Dr. S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister
3.	4.20 PM to 5.05 PM	<p>Panel 1 Theme: Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Dinesh K Patnaik, DG, ICCR</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Mr Julian Leaser, MP Member for Berowra, New South Wales (Australia) (Video Message)</p> <p>Prof. Eghosa E Osaghae, DG Nigerian Instt. of International Affairs (NIIA) (Nigeria) (Video Message)</p> <p>H.E. Mr. Gonching Ganbold, Former Ambassador of Mongolia in India (Mongolia)</p> <p>Mr. Swaminathan Gurumurthy (Chairman VIF, journalist and editor) (India)</p>
4.	5.05 PM to 5.15 PM	Q & A
5.	5.15 PM to 6.05 PM	<p>Panel 2 Theme: Democracy in Practice</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Indrani Bagchi, Senior Diplomatic Editor, Times of India</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Mr. Stephen Harper, Former Prime Minister of Canada, Chairman and CEO of Harper & Associates Consulting (Canada) (Video Message)</p> <p>H.E. Mr Erik Solheim, Former Minister of Environment and International Development (Norway)</p> <p>Mr. Swapan Dasgupta, Member of Rajya Sabha (India)</p> <p>Prof. Werner Menski, Professor Emeritus of South Asian Laws at SOAS, University of London (UK)</p>
6.	6.05 PM to 6.15 PM	Q & A



"Independent India@75 : Democratic Traditions"



"Independent India@75 : Democratic Traditions"



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Dr. S Jaishankar

External Affairs Minister



Earlier Dr. S Jaishankar was President – Global Corporate Affairs at Tata Sons Private Limited from May 2018.

He was Foreign Secretary from 2015-18, Ambassador to United States from 2013-15, Ambassador to China from 2009-2013, High Commissioner to Singapore from 2007-2009 and Ambassador to the Czech Republic from 2000-2004.

He has also served in other diplomatic assignments in Embassies in Moscow, Colombo, Budapest and Tokyo, as well in the Ministry of External Affairs and the President's Secretariat.

Dr S. Jaishankar is a graduate of St. Stephen's College at the University of Delhi. He has an MA in Political Science and an M. Phil and Ph.D in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

He is a recipient of the Padma Shri award in 2019.

“
As India rises
and its
capabilities &
capacities
grow, it will
naturally
contribute
more to the
world.
”

said during inaugural
address at the conference

WELCOME ADDRESS

Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe

President, ICCR



Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe is a nationalist social worker at heart, a researcher cum student of political science and a trainer in democracy by profession and a Parliamentarian by elevation! Dr. Sahasrabuddhe is a post-Graduate in English Literature and a PhD in Political Science, both from the University of Mumbai. Since January 2018, Dr. Sahasrabuddhe is the President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

“
Democracy is
without any
doubt a way of
life.”

said during his welcome
address at the conference

As a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Indian Parliament), Dr. Sahasrabuddhe represents the state of Maharashtra since July 2016. Currently, he is also the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, and Youth & Sports. During 2014-2020, Dr. Sahasrabuddhe was the National Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India's principal ruling Party. Besides, Dr. Sahasrabuddhe is founding Director General and Vice President of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini (RMP) (www.rmponweb.org), a unique institution for honing leadership skills through training and orientation. In the past, Dr. Sahasrabuddhe has worked on the Management Council of the University of Mumbai. Between 2012-15, he was also the Vice President of 208 years old Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Dr. Sahasrabuddhe has authored or edited about over half a dozen books in Marathi and English, couple of which have received distinguished awards.

PANEL 1

Theme: Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions



Mr. Dinesh K Patnaik
Director General, ICCR

H.E. Ambassador Mr. Dinesh K. Patnaik (IFS:1990) is a career diplomat of the Indian Foreign Service with experience of 30 years in a variety of interesting and challenging assignments. He has served in Indian Missions in Geneva, Dhaka, Beijing and Vienna. At Headquarters, he has served in the Europe West, External Publicity, Africa and UN Divisions. Shri Patnaik served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Vienna from 2009 to 2012.

He was India's Ambassador to Cambodia from 2012 to 2015 and India's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco from 2015 to 2016. He was Deputy High Commissioner of India to London from 2016 to 2018. Prior to joining ICCR, he served as Additional Secretary (Indian Ocean Region) and thereafter Additional Secretary (CPV&OIA) in the Ministry of External Affairs. Ambassador Patnaik holds a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Kolkata. He also holds a Master's degree in Advanced International Studies from the University of Vienna and Certificate in International Studies from the Diplomatic Academy, Vienna.

PANEL 1

Theme: Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions



PANEL 1

Theme: Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions



Mr. Julian Leeser

MP, Member for Berowra, New South Wales

Mr. Julian Leeser was born and raised in Sydney and lives in Pennant Hills with his wife Joanna and baby son, James. Mr. Julian Leeser was elected as the Member for Berowra in July 2016. Prior to his election, Julian was a senior executive at Australian Catholic University. Julian was previously Executive Director of the Menzies Research Centre. He also worked as a lawyer at Mallesons Stephen Jacques (now King & Wood Mallesons) and was an associate to High Court Justice Ian Callinan.

Serving the community has been a life-long passion for Julian. He was the youngest councillor in Australia when he was elected to Woollahra Council at age 19. Julian was also an elected delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1998 as part of the No-Republic ACM team. Julian and Joanna have been actively involved in the Berowra community through the Hornsby Hospital Community Participation Committee, the Beecroft-Cheltenham Lions Club, the Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association and Lifeline. Julian is a proud patron of the Hornsby Rockets Tenpin Bowling Team, Hornsby Connect, ACIA and the Hornsby Gang Show. Julian is a person of faith and is committed to a strong diverse Australia. Julian is the first Jewish person elected to the House of Representatives from New South Wales for the Liberal Party. Julian has degrees in arts and law from the University of NSW and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He spent 2006-2007 as a Visiting Fellow at the Taubman Centre at the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He has co-authored or edited a series of publications including, *An Australian Declaration of Recognition* (2016), *State of the Nation* (2013), *Don't Leave Us with the Bill: The Case Against an Australian Bill of Rights* (2009) and *State Policy Perspectives* (2006)."

Prof. Eghosa E Osaghae

DG Nigerian Instt. of International Affairs (NIIA) (Nigeria)

Eghosa E. Osaghae, is the Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, NIIA, Nigeria's foreign policy and international affairs think tank. A tenured Professor of Political Science at the University Ibadan, he was Vice Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria's premier private University, for a record fourteen years (2004-2018). Professor Osaghae is a Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Studies, STIAS, and the 2019 Claude Ake Chair at the Uppsala University, Sweden.

He was the 2017 Van Zyl Slabbert Professor of Politics and Sociology at the University of Cape Town and the 2014 Emeka Anyaoku Visiting Chair of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London. His Anyaoku Chair Inaugural Lecture, *A State of Our Own: Second Independence, Federalism and the Decolonisation of the State in Africa*, in April 2014 became the first inaugural lecture by a Nigerian in the



in the history of the University of London. He was a Rockefeller 'Reflections on Development' Fellow (1989/90), and was most recently a MacArthur Fellow. Professor Osaghae served as Chair of the Panel on Quality Assurance Assessment, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011-2012, and served on the Steering Committee of the Consortium for Development Partnerships, a successful model of North-South intellectual collaboration that involved institutions from North America, Europe and Africa between 2005 and 2012. He is a member of several learned societies and serves on the editorial boards of reputable social science journals. Professor Osaghae has published extensively on ethnicity, federalism, governance and state politics in books and journals, and attended over 300 conferences, workshops and seminars in different parts of North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. He is married to Veronica Amen (nee Jatto), and they are blessed with children and grandchildren. In December 2008, he was ordained a Reverend of the Anglican Church by the Bishop of Benin Diocese (Anglican Communion), Rt. Rev. P.O.J. Imasuen.



H.E. Mr. Gonching Ganbold

Former Ambassador of Mongolia in India (Mongolia)

Gonchig GANBOLD is Ambassador of Mongolia in India since 2 September 2015. He studied in Ulaanbaatar, New Delhi, Moscow, Oxford, Geneva, Hawaii and Munich. Joined the Foreign Service in 1980, served at Ministry of Foreign Affairs(MFA). He worked at Mongolia Embassies in New Delhi (1988-1991, 1996-2000 and 2015-), Washington D.C., London as well as Ministry of Finance, National Security Council, Mongolia. He contributed articles to the media and translated two dozen books.

Mr. Swaminathan Gurumurthy

Chairman VIF, Journalist and Editor (India)

Swaminathan Gurumurthy, popularly known as a writer and journalist in India and a chartered accountant by profession, is a corporate adviser of high standing. Highly rated for his investigative writings, he has ceaselessly campaigned against corruption at high places, exposing the bribery in Bofors arms deal and the nexus between corporates and government. A beleaguered government arrested Gurumurthy and persecuted Gurumurthy, but faced humiliation with the entire media standing by him.

The issues raised by Gurumurthy became elections issues, which led to the defeat of the most powerful government since independence. Hamish McDonald, a well-known Australian journalist, wrote in his book 'Polyester Baron', that Gurumurthy's investigative work 'must rank among the most powerful examples of investigative journalism anywhere in the world', emphasising that Gurumurthy had 'a strong sense of probity'. Business Baron magazine rated Gurumurthy's knowledge of economics, finance and accounts as 'outstanding'. In his biography on the media baron Ramnath Goenka, BG Verghese, a highly respected editor and writer, described Gurumurthy as a 'brilliant chartered accountant and exceedingly astute amateur lawyer'. Gurumurthy is the Visiting Faculty of IIT Bombay in the domains of Economic, Financial and Management. He is also the Distinguished Professor Legal Anthropology in Sastra University.



PANEL 2

Democracy in Practice



Ms Indrani Bagchi
Senior Diplomatic Editor,
Times of India

Indrani Bagchi is Associate Editor with The Times of India, where she has been reporting and analyzing foreign policy issues for the newspaper since 2004 as the Diplomatic Editor. Indrani covers daily news on foreign affairs in the foreign office, as well as interpreting and analyzing global trends with an Indian perspective. She writes news stories; opinion articles; news features and a blog, “Globespotting”, and curates a weekly newsletter WorldWatch+.

Earlier, Indrani worked for India Today, a premier news magazine, The Economic Times and The Statesman. She graduated from Loreto College, Calcutta University with English honours. Indrani was a Reuters Fellow at Oxford University in 1997. In 2010, Indrani was awarded the Chang Lin-Tien fellowship by the Asia Foundation to study US-China relations at Brookings Institution, Washington DC. She is a Fellow of the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship Class 3 of the Ananta Aspen Centre and a member of Aspen Global Leadership Network. She tweets @horror06 and @IBagchiTOI.

PANEL 2

Democracy in Practice



PANEL 2

Democracy in Practice



Mr. Stephen Harper

Former Prime Minister of Canada,
Chairman and CEO of Harper & Associates Consulting (CANADA)

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper served as Canada's 22nd Prime Minister from 2006 to 2015. Today, as Chairman and CEO of Harper & Associates Consulting, he spends most of his time working in the financial services, technology and energy sectors.

In 2004, Harper co-founded the modern Conservative Party of Canada and won three successive national elections, in 2006, 2008, and 2011. A strong advocate for free trade and open markets, Harper led a government that focused on pragmatic, growth-oriented economic policies and results-driven social policy. Under his leadership, Canada reduced federal taxes to their lowest level in 50 years, created 1.3 million new jobs, balanced the budget while making critical investments in health care and infrastructure, attracted new investment and fostered innovation. During his time in office, Harper oversaw historic trade negotiations to expand Canada's commercial relationships including: the conclusion of the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement, the Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement, the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, a modernized Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, and Canada's entrance into the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Additionally, he served as an ally to developing economies, encouraging market liberalization in jurisdictions such as Colombia and Tanzania through bilateral investments, trading relationships and development assistance.

Harper implemented a clear and principled foreign policy. He oversaw Canada's involvement in a series of complex conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, and stood staunchly by besieged allies Israel and Ukraine. Under his leadership, Canada was an unwavering supporter of the State of Israel's right to exist, and Prime Minister Harper became the first Canadian Prime Minister to address the Knesset.

Harper also oversaw a dramatic deepening of relations with India, and developed a strategic and balanced relationship with successive Chinese leaders while refusing to shy away from raising issues of human rights and trade imbalances. As the host leader of the 2010 G-20 summit in Toronto, and as an economist by training, Prime Minister Harper helped shape financial reform frameworks, implemented a sustainable approach to fiscal stimulus, and led the call for open markets and pragmatic, growth-oriented economic policy.

Harper also applied a pragmatic and results-oriented approach to international development challenges. He is known for his leadership in securing nearly \$11 billion in new funding under the Muskoka Initiative to improve the health of mothers and children in the world's most impoverished nations. In addition to his commercial work, Harper currently serves as the Chairman of the International Democrat Union, the global alliance of more than 80 centre-right political parties. He is also Chairman of the Friends of Israel Initiative, a global network of current and former high office holders committed to opposing efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel and its right to live in peace within safe and defensible borders. Prime Minister Harper resides in Calgary.



Mr. Swapan Dasgupta

Member of Rajya Sabha (India)

Swapan Dasgupta straddles the twin worlds of politics and writing. Educated at St Stephen's College, School of Oriental & African Studies and a post-doctoral Fellowship at Nuffield College, Oxford, he set out to be a historian of modern India. Instead, he went into media and the world of opinion writing. Since 1985, he has been published extensively in the Indian media and was once a regular on TV, particularly election programmes.

With an abiding interest in politics, he began combining his writing with political involvement. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 2016 and he sits on the backbenches as a member of the BJP. He maintains that he is a non-award-winning writer because his views tend to be well outside the Left-Liberal consensus. He was however awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2015. A self-professed right-wing conservative and an Bengal bhadrakok Anglophile, he remains an oddity in the political world.

H.E. Mr. Erik Solheim

Former Minister of Environment & International Development Of Norway

Erik Solheim is a well known global leader on environment and development as well as an experienced peace negotiator. He served as Norwegian Minister of Environment and International Development from 2005-12. During that period he initiated the global program for conservation of rainforests and brought through game changing National legislation - among them the Biodiversity Act and legislation to protect Oslo city forests. He brought Norwegian development assistance to 1%, the highest in the world.

Erik Solheim has been chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (the main body of world donors) as well as Executive Director of UN Environment. He led the peace efforts in Sri Lanka as the main negotiator of the peace process and played a vital role in peace efforts in Nepal, Myanmar and Sudan.

Currently he is Senior Adviser at World Resources Institute and President of the Belt and Road Green Development Institute in Beijing. Erik Solheim is Chief Mentor of Global Alliance for Sustainable Planet and Chairman of the Board of Afroz Shah Foundation in Mumbai. He is adviser to April/RGE, world's largest paper and pulp company in Indonesia, to Aker Horizons, Norway's leading green industry player, and to Norwegian electric battery company Morrows. He serves as Chairman of the development roundtable in Green Hydrogen Organization as well as co-chair of Treelion a green blockchain company in Hong Kong.





Prof. Werner Menski

Professor Emeritus of South Asian Laws at SOAS, University of London (UK)

Dr. Werner Menski, MA PhD, is Professor Emeritus of South Asian Laws at SOAS, University of London. He completed an MA (with Distinction) in Indology, Geography and English from the University of Kiel in Germany in 1977 and started his academic career as a Lecturer in Sanskrit and Hindi. He took a PhD in Hindu Law, titled Role and Ritual in the Hindu Marriage, from SOAS at the University of London in 1984, focused on the historical development of Hindu marriage rituals since Rigvedic times. Since 1980, he taught courses on Comparative Law, Hindu law, Muslim law, Law and Society, Family Law, Public Law, Immigration Law and Ethnic Minorities & the Law at SOAS (1980-2014), supervised many Independent Study Projects and more than 40 doctoral students. Until retirement in 2014, he also acted as Careers Adviser in Law for 20 years and became a well-known expert for courts on South Asian laws and cultures.

His major books are Comparative Law in a Global Context: The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa (Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed, 2006); Hindu Law. Beyond Tradition and Modernity (Oxford University Press, 2003); Modern Indian Family Law (Curzon Press, 2001; Routledge, 2016); Muslim Family Law (with David Pearl, Sweet & Maxwell, 1998); South Asians and the Dowry Problem (Trentham Books, 1998), plus several recent co-edited books.

His detailed study of Hindu law. Beyond Tradition and Modernity (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003) has been reprinted numerous times and is widely used all over the world. In addition, he has written many articles especially on Indian marriage and divorce laws and on customary laws. He is also particularly interested in ethnic minorities in the UK and Europe and has been instrumental in pioneering such studies. His home is in Leicester, where he is immersed in Hindu community life and supports the work of his wife, Nilima Devi, MBE and her Centre for Indian Classical Dance [www.cicd.org.uk], which is currently in 2021 celebrating 40 years of work focused on promoting Indian classical dance forms, specifically Kathak.

He was area editor for South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Oceania and Latin America for the Oxford International Encyclopedia of Legal History (6 volumes, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and has held visiting appointments at universities in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, France and Germany. Professor Menski continues to edit South Asia Research (New Delhi: SAGE, ISSN 0262-7280, <http://sar.sagepub.com>) and remains active, in this way, in mentoring young scholars and nurturing the next generation of globally recognised specialists on South Asian and particularly Indian Studies.

Discussions during the Webinar

Indian Council for Cultural Relations organized an International Webinar on the topic **Independent India@75: Democratic Traditions** on the Occasion of International Day of Democracy on 15th September 2021 under the several events being organized on Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorating the 75th Year of India's Independence.

The **Welcome address** was given by **Dr Vinay Sahsrabuddhe, President ICCR**. During his address, he emphasized on the need of revisiting and reassessing democracies and deliberating on the aspect: "Are democracies delivering?" He said that democracies, both old and new, have to work hard on quality of deliberations, management of diversity and mastering the art of deliverance. Today, when the global community is grappling with the challenges posed by terrorism and a monopolistic approach, in social spiritual and cultural matters, one cannot undermine the importance of equality and security in every way for each diverse group.

He upheld the fact that "Democracy is without doubt, a way of life" and emphasized that it can never be denied that it is after all, first and foremost, a system of governance. The merit of democracy are and will have to

be measured by its ability to govern effectively. He appealed to the community of researchers in the area of democracy to work further on the idea of taking democracy from sound tradition of democracy to deliverance of democracy. The sense of vibrancy of Indian democracy is in its journey from tradition to result orientation.

Lastly, he suggested that global governance and developing partnership should also take into consideration the cultural aspect of partnership. He emphasized that, "spiritual democracy is the only guarantee of sustainable pluralism."

Dr. S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister gave the **Inaugural (Video) message**. He said that it is important that the International Day of Democracy is commemorated with particular enthusiasm with the world's largest and most energetic democracy in the world i.e. India. Since, in India democracy is not just a choice made in 1947 but a way of life well before that. He gave examples of the pluralistic and democratic societies that existed in ancient India like the Licchavis republic or the organization of village Panchayats with the local governance, which was established system during the Chola era, that speak of our inherent attribute of transparency, democracy and pluralism.

He mentioned that contemporary India takes pride in its electoral democracy. He highlighted that 'every five years, a general election in India sets a new record for the world's largest such festival. In 2019, around 912 million people were eligible to vote, which is more than the entire population of all the democracies combined and highlighted the fact that 2 of every 3 voters made an effort to go and vote, which is a contrast to the indifference in various other societies. He remarked; 'a fateful reflection of the society in its elected representative is what gives any democracy its real strength and that is what we see in India today', and emphasized that "Democracy is not just complete without delivering. This can even effect its very credibility."

EAM highlighted that; the equality of votes must necessarily coexist with equality of human dignity. One is pointless without the other. Seen in that framework: India's ongoing accomplishments are validating its democratic traditions." He also elaborated that a country's external outlook inevitably gets out its country's internal values. It is only to be expected that the nation and the people would be comfortable with others with a similar bent of mind. It also encourages the like minded to work together on global issues. This also explains the context of the India's quest for the global commonness for norms and rules for political and

cultural arrangement that accommodates diversity and multi polarity and for trade infrastructure and community projects that are determined by transparency, sustainability and buying of host commodities.

Dr Jaishankar affirmed that; 'as India rises and its capacities and capabilities grow, it will naturally contribute more to the world. It will rise from a civilization stage to a global stage, that is drawn on its heritage, which will create its own image that is truly democratic. Such an India will be more India rather than more West. Its developmental conflict and its embracing a wider responsibility will draw even greater attention to the salient of its model.' Lastly he remarked that; "as India becomes ever more democratic, democracy will also become ever more Indian, both in its sensibilities and in its texture." Thus the International Day of democracy is an ideal occasion to discuss, cherish and celebrate that symbiosis.

The deliberations of the webinar took place in two panels. The first panel on the theme **Philosophy of Indian Democratic traditions** which was moderated by **Shri Dinesh Patnaik, DG ICCR** who in his remarks said, while initiating the deliberations that 'democracy and development go hand in hand because democratic structures and democracy leads to greater Inclusive Development.' He

He elaborated that, "Though modern democracy is prevalent in the world for last 200 years, however India has witnessed democratic system through centuries. Democratic values are embedded in Indian societies and people have always played a very strong part in the governance of the region and their area. Even when monarchies reigned and kings were in power, their power was checked by assemblies and 'Body of Elders' who in many cases had a power to even remove the king. Democratic values therefore were not a new concept but had existed since a long time in India.

Mr Julian Leaser, MP Member for Berowra, New South Wales (Australia) was the first speaker who participated through a recorded message. He emphasized the commonness of democratic traditions on which Australia and India shared a common ground. He also hailed the connection of India and Australia which has existed for more than 4000 years through trade. He highlighted the fact that the troops of both the countries fought side by side in both the World Wars to protect freedom which both the countries continue to do till today. This long thrust of engagement and cooperation is now formalized in the respective foreign policy structure. He highlighted the strategic partnership which has been formalized by the Governments of both the countries last year.

Mr Leaser highlighted that India has democratic traditions since 4th Century BCE when there were republics and monarchies that have limited the power of its ruler through agencies making decisions through votes. That was similar to many modern western democracies who developed in a similar fashion with advisory councils and assemblies, which was the first step to a popular sovereignty and universal adult suffrage, and which constitutes modern democracy today.

He referred the mutual support both the countries shared during the hard times of the COVID pandemic along with the shared emotions. He also highlighted that both the nations even shared the dates of the last general elections and how both the countries celebrate democracy through its people, where the participation is evident through large turnouts in common events like rallies and road shows. He also expressed his desire to personally witness such a celebration of democracy in India, which offers much to learn.

Mr Leaser conveyed that the "Democratic India will fast become a place where political campaigners from all over the world will come and learn about new campaign technique and technology." As Indian technological sophistication and know how is increasing, especially in the

Silicon Valley of Bengaluru, it may develop new methods of engaging voters.

Prof. Eghosa E Osaghae, DG Nigerian Instt. Of International Affairs (NIIA) (Nigeria) in his message congratulated India for its reputation of the world's largest democracy, which the world recognizes that there is lot to learn from. Prof. Eghosa highlighted how Nigeria and India shared lot of similarities, be it the colonial rule of the British, or the diversities of both the countries. He said that, had Nigeria not experienced the military domination, it would have followed the path of India in terms of development. He also elaborated that the presence of a multi party system has helped the democratic system in India. The system represents India's diversity and India's social and national cohesion, and the parties have articulated those differences in a democratically progressive manner and that has made India do well. He also appreciated the multilayered system of local governance like the Panchayat system which made the governance very adaptive. Professor Eghosa referred to 1965 when India set up a commission to look at the feasibility of the ethno linguistic criteria for creating states. That has continued to be of priority, which is similar to Nigeria. He appreciated India's economic progress, rising from an agrarian economy to be an industrial economy and gave example

of how India faced the challenge of COVID 19 and became a pharmaceutical supplier where even USA had to rely on India to address the challenge.

In the end, he acknowledged that India has shown that it is possible to democratically manage the challenges of a huge population with diversity and has done so because of its adaptive technology and innovative system.

Shri Swaminathan Gurumurthy (Chairman VIF, eminent journalist and editor) in his remarks highlighted that 'today the world of democracy is challenged by the world of autocracy'. He stressed on the 'need for democracies to come together and this has been acknowledged by G7 in June 2018, where for the first time they talked about an alliance of democracies.'

He quoted the Brooklyn Institute who said in 2019 that "Indian is a silver lining for democracy because as all the nations are fatiguing in democracy it is India which is shining and giving democracy hope." He emphasized that it is in this context that we need to see how India as a democracy is differently rooted and how it is not just a game of numbers. He also said that 'Culture and religion are related to democracy and Hinduism has a strong co-relation with democracy.'

Shri Swaminathan shared the view that democracy is not wielded by law or constitution. It is actually the outcome of the way of life. He presented the study done by World Bank in 2017 which made 03 main points:

(a) all religious traditions of India fostered a culture of debate and dialogue.

(b) India defies all preconditions of democracies which western democracies have laid down and yet emerged as a successful democracy, the foundation of which is tolerance powered by debate.

(c) it is philosophy and not ideology which has guided India to deal with such diversity, because it's the values and ideas which define India and it is a product of conciliation. He gave various examples from historical and contemporary perspectives in that regard.

He also highlighted that in India the land always belonged to people and therefore the British Government could not acquire the land till it passed a special law for acquiring land. Even in ancient times, a king had to request the people for donation of land for a temple project. This demonstrates the power of common man.

He emphasized that 'we need more India-oriented research, as western liberal democratic system is fatiguing and an alternate civilizational democratic platform has to be

prepared and India is the only country which can offer this civilisational driven democracy under modern conditions. He also proposed that ICCR exert and institute a project so as to access how India has been able to foster an alignment between electoral democracies and their traditions.

Mr. Gonching Ganbold, Former Ambassador of Mongolia in India (Mongolia) congratulated India on its celebration of 75 years of Independence. He highlighted the age old relations between India and Mongolia and its ever increasing bond of friendship and collaboration. He thanked India for its continuous support towards Mongolia in its setting up of the democratic government, drafting of its Constitution and its presence in UN which was strongly supported by the then PM Pt. Nehru. He mentioned the visit of Indian PM Narendra Modi in 2015 and his generous offer of huge credit for the establishment of refineries as Mongolia is a big exporter of crude oil.

Ambassador Ganbold also emphasized the 3 D's on which the relations of India and Mongolia are based: a) Democracy, b) Development and c) Dharma. Dharma is a huge part of cultural exchanges with Mongolia who have great affiliation with the land of Buddha and learning. Mongolia also enjoys a great support in education and research where its students are

supported in research and advanced studies also through ICCR and are achieving greater heights.

He emphasized on India's role and importance in democracy for not only the Indian subcontinent but also for developing countries like Mongolia. He also appreciated the way the Parliamentarians have interacted with his country and guiding in its establishment of various democratic systems and their functioning.

The deliberations in Panel 2 were on the theme **Democracy in Practice**. The deliberations were moderated by **Ms Indrani Bagchi, Senior diplomatic Editor, Times of India**. In her remarks, she said that democracy is a continuous work in progress. In India, we are proud to maintain our democratic process and we have had an uninterrupted sphere of election and have adopted technology like no other democracy has done in the world, apart from Estonia. She emphasized that the importance of elections cannot be undermined as democracy at its heart is the freedom to choose and or replace ones representatives.

The session started with a video message from **Hon'ble Stephen Harper, Former Prime Minister of Canada, Chairman and CEO of Harper & Associates Consulting (Canada)** who at the onset expressed his love for India and a desire to visit India again.

He conveyed that while in office, India was always a priority in his agenda for various reasons: firstly, Canada and India share a strong bond because of a common political heritage. He stated that he "marvels at the miracle of the Indian democracy which, despite of continuous challenges has continued to demonstrate its resilience. He affirmed to be a friend of India who wishes to see the country succeed in its development and in its status as a confident global power. Hon'ble Stephen Harper also said "Amidst the gathering clouds of global turbulence and disruption India's rise as a self defining democratic power holds a great promise for the world. Even before the trauma unleashed by Corona pandemic, globalization and rapid advances in technology have been reshaping our societies."

The former PM of Canada said that the challenges posed by the present time do not undermine the fundamental importance of the democratic model, which continues to provide unparalleled prosperity, security and resilience when it is fully embraced and thoughtfully applied. But this requires champions and only few are capable to hold this mantle as India. Despite its monumental challenges, multiple divisions and colonial past, its socialist legacy, the Republic of India stands as a tribute to potential of freedom and democracy."

Mr. Harper presented that India's rise is also occurring against the

contest of global supremacy between China and US along with the increasing decoupling of the economic order. Most emerging economies are seeking to prioritize their development and seek to avoid any strategic competition, but the real choice being thrust upon is the free market governed by the rule of law and democratic norms versus the state directed neo-mercantilist model of trade investment and debt. He hailed that "India by its nature is a pluralistic society that will naturally resist any inclination towards authoritarian governments. Thus, as Indian customer emerges from its new acquired legacy and becomes a consequential leader in the international arena, its success will rest on the democratic norms at home and abroad."

He appreciated the policies directed by the current Indian Government which needs to be admired and encouraged as together they indicate clear understanding of India's needs and its potential and reflects its growing importance in the world. With India's steadfast leadership and acquired partnerships with the US, Japan and Australia, they show that the major democracies are engaging in the kind of a democratic alliance what the world needs

He concluded to rest by saying that; "India has put the notion that democratic governments and economic progress are somehow

incompatible with extreme social diversity and high levels of poverty. Since its Independence, India has left the past behind. Since 1990's, India has taken an economic transformation that is destined to achieve great heights and now India should continue to make right choice."

The next speaker was **Mr Erik Solheim, former Minister of Environment and International Development (Norway)**. He affirmed that 'Democracy is much secure in India then anywhere in the world.' Further, experts especially from outside India in 1947 were of the opinion that India was too poor, diverse and had no tradition of democracy and all these have been proven wrong by India in the past 75 years.

He emphasized that democracy is not about exact structure and technicalities, and elaborated three underlying ideas of India's democracy: a) Peace, which is the foundation of democracy. India has experienced 75 years of amazing peace, barring a few incidences of violence, it has maintained peace overall. b) Democracy is successful in maintaining the diversity of India. He gave the example of the number of people of each religion, which is way larger than any other country living in harmony and this is a remarkable feat. c) Hinduism in India is the most tolerant of all global religions. He quoted Gandhiji : "we can be activists and

Hindus at the same time.” As the chief negotiator in Sri Lanka during its turbulent times, he upheld the ability of India to be a federal state which is at the core of India’s diversity and democracy and is an example for others. He exclaimed if federalism can work in such a diverse nation like India, how can it not work in smaller nations like Sri Lanka?

While speaking on the future of democracy, he said: if democracy has to survive and become strong it must be based on the foundation of unity and safe life. He said that his belief that there is an enormous road to future for India and supported EAM’s view that a strong and vibrant India should be more Indian than western and will modernize on the basis of India’s strength, traditions and achievements.

Prof. Werner Menski, Professor Emeritus of South Asian Laws at SOAS, University of London (UK) at the outset said ‘Indian democratic practices offer a series of lessons as to how to manage diversity in every respect. It is indeed something to celebrate.’ He identified Indian democracy as an ancient tradition which nobody can deny, as there was ancient latent consciousness of the same.

He elaborated on the ancient Indian texts which speak at length regarding the ruler, leader, Niti and the ways to rule. He also elaborated

regarding the knowledge of election, rule of law. Ancient Indian traditions have sown rich co-existing concepts, leading to Indian democracy in practice today, which is not a copy of any western model. It is a unique culture, that is highly pluralistic. He said that while the Indian Constitution is an English document, it is the corner stone of the country’s foundation but there is something which is far less visible and is much more powerful that is the Indian Constitution is clearly a people’s Constitution.

Shri Swapan Dasgupta, Member of Rajya Sabha started by quoting Prof. Amratya Sen’s description of India of being an ‘argumentative society’, which depicts the complex nature. Democracy, he said, has come in somewhere in between to reconcile various contradictions and find ways in a go-go flow. When India became a functioning democracy with the election of 1951, there was a great deal of skepticism about how well or adequate this would be. The sheer statistics of the turnout of the elections from one general election to another testifies the sense of participation and the sense of involvement which has been deepening in every decade and while Indian politics and Indian public life can give the appearance of being rather fractious, it also has enhanced the sense of involvement of people, where as in the West for instance the element of turnout is often dependent on the

social status. The poor vote less and the better lot vote more, in India it is quite an opposite, he said. The poor vote quite resoundingly and the better off vote rather indifferently.

The second feature he highlighted in the Indian context is the social basis of political leadership that has enlarged exponentially. If one looks back at the leadership in 1920's and 30's or even earlier and compares it with the social groups which are now most active in politics and making decisions, one can find there is a considerable enlargement of the terrain of the politics. In terms of social grouping we have seen far greater involvement of people who were not even registered in the political scene. While some call it greater fragmentation of politics, he said he sees, it as greater participation.

Thirdly, he reiterated, the increasing trend of other institutions like media, judiciary etc. who are becoming more active players in the process. Judiciary, has called final shots many times, and has ascertained check on executive access which is undeniable.

Finally, he mentioned about uniformity. He quoted a popular saying; 'everything which is true about India, the opposite also stands to be true'. There is no question as regards cultural practices, food, linguistic diversity etc. which is very prominent, he said.

He also discussed the question of political systems and to what extent they can have a measure of uniformity. He pointed that for the first time in India, we have got a reasonably uniform tax structure as one of market principles, and what Europe has been thinking of creating, has been adopted by India in form of GST. It has a wonderful measure of revenue sharing which involved Center and States "giving the part of their sovereignty" and pooling it together. He also mentioned about the discussion on Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code, as they were linked to uniformity in the country. However, he mentioned, we have still not reached a stage where we have prepared a draft of Uniform Civil Code and could present it to the people of India that will ensure that all traditions are protected, which may be a happy blend of tradition and keeping in mind the modern practices of 21st century. He expressed his concern that in India, sometimes democracy is taken for granted. However, he also expressed his hope for a brighter future while expressing that "there is a lot of churning happening in India" which is intellectual, economic and social, this is facilitated by larger structure of democracy which we have created in India and our attempt is how to improve it. Lastly, Indian Democracy of 75 years which we are celebrating can be taken with a sense of pride and one can say: 'It may not be perfect, but it is damn good too!'



Indian Council For Cultural Relations



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad the first Education Minister of Independent India, founded the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) on 9th April 1950.

The objectives of the Council are to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes relating to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people; to establish and develop relations with national and international organizations in the field of culture. ICCR is about a communion of cultures, a creative dialogue with other nations. To facilitate this interaction with world cultures, the Council strives to articulate and demonstrate the diversity and richness of the cultures of India, both in and with other countries of the world.


The Council prides itself on being a pre-eminent institution engaged in cultural diplomacy and the sponsor of intellectual exchanges between India and partner countries. ICCR's activities are aimed at reaching out to the hearts and minds of the people through a dissemination of its heritage, values and philosophy to create an endearing and everlasting image and promote India's soft power overseas.




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