



**Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS),  
South Asian University, New Delhi**

*in collaboration with*

**Valley of Words (VoW), Dehradun**

राष्ट्रवादी

VALLEY  
OF  
WORDS

INTERNATIONAL  
LITERATURE &  
ARTS FESTIVAL

*Presents*

**South Asian Festival of  
Arts & Literature (SAFAL)**

**Venue: LS001,  
South Asian University,  
New Delhi**

**24th-25th  
October, 2024**

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## About Collaborating Partners

### Valley of Words (VoW)

Valley of Words (VoW) is a one-of-a-kind, not-for-profit and volunteer-driven initiative of The Valley of Words Foundation Trust, which has now become a pan-Indian celebration of writing and artistry. Over the course of the last 6 years, VoW has brought together writers, artists, critics, thespians, craftspeople, readers, and listeners in its Literature and Arts Festival, which also encompasses the annual Book Awards.

Valley of Words Shabdavali believes that literature and art have the potential to engage people of all age groups—especially students and the youth—to look beyond the immediate, place “facts” in perspective, question the “why”, engage in lateral thinking, and explore options that have the potential of making the world a better place. A keen focus on intergenerational dialogue encourages the young and old alike to explore new passions, re-discover the art of listening, engage in critical discourse, and appreciate excellence in others!

### Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), South Asian University

South Asian University (SAU), is an international university established by the eight member nations of the SAARC, viz, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, with a mandate to build bridges across borders in South Asia. The mission of ISAS, as a competent and rigorous think tank, anchored in the broad academic and institutional mandate and mission of the SAU, can be described briefly as generating knowledge and augmenting capacity from a regional perspective to facilitate the common quest of South Asian countries for sustainable futures and common security.

# South Asian Festival of Arts & Literature (SAFAL)

Day One

Tea & Registration | 10.30 am - 11.00 am

Inauguration Ceremony | 11.00 am - 11.30 am

Chair: Prof. K.K. Aggarwal, President- South Asian University

Co-Chair: Dr. Sanjeev Chopra, Valley of Words , Ex-Director, LBSNAA

Lighting of Lamp: By Dignitaries

Introduction to the Festival: Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Director,  
Institute of South Asian Studies, South Asian University

Welcome Address: Prof. K.K. Aggarwal, President- South  
Asian University

Concluding Remarks: Dr Sanjeev Chopra, Valley of Words.  
Ex-Director, LBSNAA

Vote of Thanks: Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi, Department of  
International Relations, South Asian University.

Nutrition Break & networking

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## Day One

Keynote Address | 11:45 am - 12:30 pm

### Does Geography determine Political Destiny?

Speaker: Ambassador Shyam Saran, Former Foreign Secretary of India

Chair : Prof. K.K. Aggarwal, President- South Asian University

Session 1 | 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

### Food Cultures of the subcontinent

Speakers:

Navtej Singh Johar, – Award-winning Bharatnatyam exponent and choreographer; Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award,

Kiranmayi Bhushi – Faculty, School of Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi; Author.

Gunjan Goela – India Chairperson for Culinary Arts, renowned food consultant, historian on Indian gastronomy, and celebrity chef

Chair : Pushpesh Pant, – Former Professor of International Relations, JNU; Noted academic, food critic, historian, and recipient of the Padma Shri award

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**SAU**  
SOUTH ASIAN  
UNIVERSITY

# South Asian Festival of Arts & Literature (SAFAL)

राष्ट्रमन्त्री

**VALLEY  
OF  
WORDS**

INTERNATIONAL  
LITERATURE &  
ARTS FESTIVAL

**Day One**

**Lunch Break | 1:30 pm – 2:10 pm**

**Session 2 | 2:15 pm - 3:20 pm**

**Strengthening a friendship : Cultural connect and  
Political contests between India and Nepal**

**Ambassador K.V. Rajan – Former Ambassador of India to  
Nepal; Retired Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs,  
Government of India.**

**Atul K. Thakur – Policy professional, columnist, and author.**

**In conversation with:**

**Arvind Gupta – Director, Vivekananda International  
Foundation, New Delhi**

**Sanjeev Chopra – Director of the Valley of Words Literature  
Festival; Former Director, LBSNAA.**

**Session 3 | 3:25 pm – 4:10 pm**

**One Poet : Two Anthems - The history of the many  
partitions of Bengal**

**Speaker: Debashish Mitra– Entrepreneur and  
Author**

**Chair : Amna Mirza - Associate Professor of  
Political Studies, University of Delhi**

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Day One

Break (4:10 pm - 4:30 pm)

Session 4 | 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm

## Durand's Curse : Will it last forever

Chair: Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, South Asian University.

### Speakers:

Ambassador Rajiv Dogra – Former Consul General of India in Karachi and Ambassador to Italy and several other countries, author, and media commentator on foreign affairs.

Tilak Devasher – Author and former Special Secretary in India's Cabinet Secretariat, currently a member of the National Security Advisory Board.

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## Day Two

Session 1 | 09.30 am - 10.20 am

### Good Governance: Replicating Best Practices from India

Chair: Sanjay Chaturvedi, Director, ISAS (SAU)

Speaker: Shri V. Srinivas, Secretary to  
Government of India, DARPG

Discussants: Jayashree Vivekanandan and Dhananjay Tripathi,  
Dept. of International Relations, SAU

Session 2 | 10.30 am - 11.30 am

### South Asia from the Lens of Journalists

Chair: Prof. Dhananjay Tripathi

Speakers: Kallol Bhattacharjee, Author & Journalist- The Hindu  
Nayanima Basu, Author & Journalist, ABP Live  
(ABP Network)

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Atmashikhar Bhargava, Atmashikhar Khatwani

## Day Two

Session 3 | 11.35 am - 12.35 pm

### The Relevance and Application of the Mahabharata in Contemporary Thought

Chair : Lt Gen PJS Pannu, Former Deputy Chief of  
Integrated Defence Staff

Speaker: Bharat Thakker, Retired CA, and Author

Session 4 | 12.40 pm - 01.20 pm

### The Journey of 'Nanak' to 'Guru Nanak'- Symbol of Oneness

Chair : Sanjeev Chopra, VoW, Former Director of  
LBSNAA

Speaker: Amardeep Singh, Indian Researcher,  
photographer and documentary filmmaker based in  
Singapore

Lunch Break : 01.30 pm - 02.30 pm

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## Day Two

Second Keynote Address 02.35 pm - 03.30 pm

### Is Jinnah Relevant in the Pakistan of Today

Chair : TCA Raghavan, Former Indian High commissioner to Pakistan and Singapore, Author, Former Director of ICWA

Speaker : Ishitaq Ahmed - Swedish Political Scientist of Pakistani descent, Professor Emeritus at Stockholm University

Session 5 | 03.30 pm - 04.45 pm

### The Challenge of Climate Change : Our Shared Destiny

Chair: Sanjeev Chopra, VoW, Former Director LBSNAA  
Advocate Jay Cheema- Projects, Energy Natural Resources and Climate Change lawyer, Author and Keynote Speaker

Discussants: Vivek Atray- Renowned motivational Speaker, Bestselling Author, Former IAS Officer  
Justice Anil Kr Sinha - former Judge of the Supreme Court of Nepal

Closing Remarks | 04.50 pm - 05.10 pm

Sanjeev Chopra & Sanjay Chaturvedi

Vote of Thanks : Dhananjay Tripathi

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**Prof. K.K. Aggarwal**

## **Prof. K.K. Aggarwal**

President, South Asian University

Prof. K. K. Aggarwal is an Engineer by training and has been an accomplished academician and administrator. He received his PhD in Reliability Evaluation and Optimization from Kurukshetra University, Haryana. He pursued his Master's Degree from the same university securing first position. He obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Panjab University, Chandigarh as the topper.

Prof. Aggarwal has served the National Board of Accreditation, India, as its former Chairman. He was the Founding Vice Chancellor of Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, where he served for ten years from 1998 to 2008, leading from the front. Before this, he was the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar, for three years. He is also the former Chairman of the Board of Governors, MNIT, Jaipur.

He had a distinguished career of 27 years as an academic at the National Institute of Technology, Kurukshetra, where he was engaged in teaching and research activities in Computer Engineering and Information Technology. Prof. Aggarwal has authored several books, including *Reliability Engineering and Software Engineering*, many of which have undergone numerous rounds of reprints. He has published over 400 research papers in the domain of Electronics and Computer Engineering in academic journals of repute, about half of which are international journals.

Apart from his contributions in the academic field, Prof. Aggarwal has made a very strong impact in the industrial world. The industry has widely consulted him, most notable being his contribution towards the Reliability Analysis for PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) of the Indian Space Mission. He has also delivered lectures and conducted programmes in several leading industrial organisations in India and overseas. He was declared as the Man of the Decade, Man of the Century and Man of the Millennium by American Bibliographical Institute, USA. He was also awarded the Delhi Ratan by the All India Conference of Intellectuals. International Biographical Centre, England published his biography in "*The Fint Five Hundred at the New Millennium*" in July 2000.



**Sanjeev Chopra**

## **Sanjeev Chopra**

A chronicler of post-Independence history, Sanjeev Chopra, who superannuated from the IAS as the Director of the LBSNAA in 2021. The Hindi translation of his recent book '*We The People of the States of Bharat: The Making and Remaking of India's Internal Boundaries*' was released on 15th August 2024. His forthcoming works include 'The Intangible Heritage of Bharat' on the Geographical Indicators, and a full-length biography on Lal Bahadur Shastri. An alumnus of JNU, Dr Chopra holds a PhD in management, besides degrees in law, history and literature. He has conferred the Hubert H Humphrey Fellowship at Cornell, the Robert S McNamara Fellowship at the World Bank, elected a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, is a Distinguished Fellow of the USI, New Delhi, as also of the LMFSAI, Harvard University. Together with his better half, Rashmi Chopra, he curates the Valley of Words, International Literature and Arts Festival at Dehradun in November each year, focusing on classical music and dance, theatre, debates, folk arts and crafts, recent publications, dialogues on environmental issues and military history, travel writings and literature of G- 20 countries



**Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi**

## **Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi**

Prof. Sanjay Chaturvedi was Lala Lajpat Rai Chair Professor in Political Science at Panjab University, Chandigarh before joining South Asian University (SAU), New Delhi, as a Professor in International Relations in June 2018. He served as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) from September 2018 to September 2021. Serving his second term as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS), he is also the Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS).

During the early 1990s, he pursued post-doctoral research on 'Polar Regions in International Relations' at the University of Cambridge, England, with a Nehru Centenary British Commonwealth Fellowship. This was followed by the award of Leverhulme Research Grant at the University of Cambridge, where he was employed as a Research Associate to work on the research project, 'The Future of the Antarctic Treaty System and its Relevance for the Arctic', at Scott Polar Research Institute, from 1993 to 1995. A major output of his research stint at Cambridge, which also

involved lecturing to M.Phil. in Polar Studies, was *The Polar Regions: A Political Geography* (Chichester. John Wiley, 1996), which remains widely cited.

Currently, he is the President of the Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG), an Observer in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Chief Editor of its flagship journal, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* (Routledge). He serves/has served on editorial boards of several journals including *Geopolitics* (Routledge); *Political Geography* (Elsevier), *Cooperation and Conflict* (Sage), *Journal of Borderland Studies* (Routledge), *Strategic Analysis* (Routledge), *The Polar Journal* (Routledge, as a Regional Editor); *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* (Sage), *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal: A Quarterly of the Association of Indian Diplomats* (Prints Publication), *Journal of Global Faultlines* (Pluto), and *Journal of Land Ports and Border Economy* (Sage).

### **Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi**



**Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi**

Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi is a Senior Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at South Asian University (SAU), India. His research focuses on Regional Integration (Europe & South Asia), Border Studies, and International Political Economy. He has authored several notable works, including *Development Role of the European Union in South Asia* (2011) and co-edited *Afghanistan Post-2014: Power Configurations and Evolving Trajectories* (2016).

Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi has contributed to leading academic journals such as the *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *International Studies*, and *Eurasia Border Review*. He is also the co-editor of a special issue of the *Journal of Borderlands Studies* titled 'South Asia: Boundaries, Borders and Beyond.'

In addition to his research, Dr. Tripathi serves on the editorial boards of prominent international journals, including *Alternatives*, *Estudios Fronterizos*, and the *BIG Review*. He is also the coordinator of the SAU-BIG Border Studies Scholarship program.



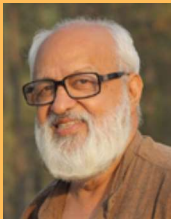
**Amb. Shyam Saran**

## **Ambassador Shyam Saran**

Shyam Saran is a former Foreign Secretary of India and has served as Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change. After leaving government service in 2010, he headed the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, a prestigious think tank focusing on economic issues (2011-2017) and was Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board under the National Security Council from 2013 to 2015. Shyam Saran is currently the President of the India International Centre and an Honorary Senior Fellow with the Centre for Policy Research. He is the author of widely acclaimed books, "*How India Sees the World*" (2017) and "*How China Sees India and the World*" (2022).

On January 26, 2011, Shyam Saran was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India for his contribution to Civil Service. The Padma Bhushan is the third-highest national award in the country. The Emperor of Japan decorated him with the Spring Order, Gold and Silver Star on July 30, 2019, for his services to promoting India- Japan Relations.

## **Prof. Pushpesh Pant**



**Prof. Pushpesh Pant**

Prof. Pushpesh Pant is a noted Indian academic, food critic and historian. He retired as a Professor of International relations from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He is one of India's leading experts on International Relations as well as Indian cuisine, and as a columnist has written for a number of major publications like Forbes, Open, Outlook, Times of India and The Tribune. He has authored many bestseller books like *The Cookbook* (2011) which was also named by The New York Times as one of the best cookbooks of the year. He was also featured in an interview in The Australian.

The Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in 2016. Professor Pant has published widely on travel and tourism, with over a dozen books to his credit. Pant is a regular contributor to English and Hindi newspapers and periodicals. He also anchors TV programmes and produces documentaries from time to time.



**Navtej Singh Johar**

## Navtej Singh Johar

Navtej Singh Johar is a dancer-choreographer, yoga practitioner, scholar and social activist. His work within all fields of his varied interests remains consistently body-centric. It twines practice with critical theory and social action while it traverses freely between the traditional and the contemporary. Johar teaches Dance Studies at Ashoka University, India, and is the founder-director of Studio Abhyas, New Delhi where he teaches two practices that he has devised over the years, The BARPS Method of Asana and Abhyas Somatics. Navtej now partly lives in a village in Punjab.



**Kiranmayi Bhushi**

## Dr. Kiranmayi Bhushi

Dr Bhushi is currently a Professor in the Faculty of Sociology at IGNOU. She obtained her doctoral degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has had a brief teaching stint at Columbia College, Chicago, USA. She also taught at Ambedkar University, Delhi. She was a visiting faculty at Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Italy. Her research interests lie in the areas of diaspora studies, migration and transnationalism, food studies and popular culture. She has published several articles and research papers in leading journals. Her recent publication is from Cambridge University Press titled: *Farm to Fingers: Culture and Politics of Food in Contemporary India, which won a gourmet award, Paris (2019)*. She also co- founded the restaurant 'Gunpowder'.



**Gunjan Goela**

## Gunjan Goela

Gunjan Goela is a renowned celebrity chef with over 25 years of experience, celebrated for her expertise in slow foods, sustainability, and Indian vegetarian cuisine. A modern traditionalist, she has masterfully combined ancient culinary traditions with contemporary gastronomic techniques, playing a pivotal role in reintroducing traditional Indian cuisine to major hotels, restaurants, and banquets despite the strong presence of international cuisines.

Gunjan is passionate about the role of food in sustainability and has been a strong advocate for slow foods, aligning her culinary philosophy with the pressing needs of both the nation and the planet. Her deep understanding

of Indian food culture has made her a familiar face on leading television channels such as BBC, TLC, History Channel, NDTV Good Times, Star TV, and Doordarshan, where she has showcased her culinary skills. She was also the driving force behind the successful 'Delhi ka Khana' initiative at Delhi Haat, INA from 2002 to 2009, attracting over 50,000 visitors.



**K.V. Rajan**

### Ambassador K.V. Rajan

K.V. Rajan is a former Member of the Indian Foreign Service and retired as Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. His diplomatic service outside India included the following (in the capacity of Head of Mission) France, USA, Zambia (with concurrent accreditation to Botswana, Angola, Namibia and South Africa and (then) Rhodesia, Algeria, UK and Nepal. As India's longest-serving Ambassador to Nepal to date (1995 to 2000), and subsequently, in various other capacities, he has unmatched personal experience of Nepal and an understanding of various aspects of India-Nepal Relations.

Rajan's additional responsibilities at different levels of seniority in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, included Adviser to the External Affairs Minister; Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the African Union; Co-Chair, Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Project; Special Adviser to the Foreign Secretary of India; Head of Coordination Division, Ministry of External Affairs; Head of Europe Division, Ministry of External Affairs. He is the author of several articles on Foreign Policy issues for leading publications and the Editor of an anthology of essays by distinguished senior former Ambassadors, *The Ambassadors Club* (HarperCollins).



**Atul K. Thakur**

### Atul K. Thakur

Atul K. Thakur is a policy professional, columnist and writer with specialisation in the interface of economics and policies. His interest in writing and research is quite diverse and includes Public Policy & Affairs, Macroeconomic Policies, International Affairs and Sustainability, with a special focus on South Asia. He is an alumnus, inter alia, of Banaras Hindu University and Pondicherry University and has worked across the sectors, spanning public policy & affairs, management consultancy, think tanks,

journalism; publishing and media.

His *India Now and in Transition* (Niyogi Books, 2017) is his second and most widely acclaimed book. In 2013, he edited *India since 1947: Looking Back at a Modern Nation* (Niyogi Books), a major non-fiction book on modern India. In 2021, he curated and edited (with Nepal's former Finance Minister Mr. Madhukar SJB Rana), *An Alternative Development Paradigm for Nepal* (Vajra, Kathmandu). His latest book is "*Kathmandu Chronicle: Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations*", published (in 2024) by Penguin Random House India.

Among others, he has extensively written for The Kathmandu Post, The Hindu, Firstpost, News18, The Indian Express, Financial Express, The Economic Times, DailyO, Mail Today, The Pioneer, Tehelka, Outlook, Mainstream, The Daily Star, Daily Times, Republica, The Record, India Quarterly (ICWA), Strategic Analysis (IDSA), ORE, Gateway House. As a public intellectual and industry insider, he plays an important role in shaping India-Nepal economic cooperation."

### **Dr Arvind Gupta**



**Dr Arvind Gupta**

Dr Arvind Gupta is the Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. He was the Deputy National Security Adviser and Secretary, National Security Council, Government of India during 2014-17. Earlier, he was Director-General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi during 2012-2014 and a former career diplomat, he has served in the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian missions abroad. He speaks regularly at various Indian universities, military, para-military, police, and diplomatic academies on foreign policy and national security issues. He has guided research students at premier educational institutions. He is a member of the Board of Studies of the School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University and has honorary academic positions at Punjab University and Andhra University. Author of five books, his last book *Opportunity for India in a Changing World* was published by KW publishers Pvt Ltd in 2021. His book *How India Manages Its National Security* was published by Penguin in 2018. In 2020, Sage India published a coedited (with Anil Wadhwa) volume titled *India's Foreign Policy: Surviving in a Turbulent World*. He



also co-edited with Arpita Mitra, a volume titled *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The Relevance of India's Ancient Thinking to Contemporary Strategic Reality*, (Aryan book International, New Delhi).



**Amna Mirza**

### **Amna Mirza**

Amna Mirza is an Academician, Author, Social Entrepreneur, and Curator of Ideas. She is Associate Professor SPM College, University of Delhi, and a former Associate Professor at the Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia. She has published ten books, has more than 20 research papers in reputed peer-reviewed journals, and has participated in more than 150 conferences at the national and international level for paper presentations and as a resource person to deliver invited lectures, among others. She has patents awarded by the governments of Australia and India, supervised PhD candidates, pursued research projects, and contributed towards MOOCs, among others. She has also pursued additional coursework from HarvardX, amongst others.

Her research areas include Digital Transformation, Industry 4.0, Foreign Affairs, Digital Society, International Political Economy, Globalization, and International Relations. An avid traveller, voracious reader, and vegan, her academic initiatives have taken her to the University of Duisburg-Essen (Germany) and the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), among others. She is a recipient of 'The Godfrey Phillips Golden Ovary Award', the St. Stephen's College Centenary Medal for 'Character Combined with Learning', the Bharat Nirman Award for Women Entrepreneurship, the Mook- Nayak National Award, and the Business Rankers Women Achievement Award, among others. She has been associated with art and culture festivals and regularly contributes columns to several newspapers in multiple languages.



**Debashish Mitra**

### **Debashish Mitra**

A corporate professional with over 44 years of corporate and entrepreneurial experience including significant global and local exposure, especially working with small and marginal farmers in remote rural areas in Southern and Eastern India, and building markets for them, in Europe and America. His passion is to integrate small and marginal

farmers into Global Value chains, which he did successfully when he pioneered India's presence in the global Gherkins market, first as CEO of Global Green, India's largest company in this category, and then his own enterprise Calypso foods India is now a global leader, in some measure due to the pioneering work done by him and his team, benefitting thousands of small and marginal farmers and creating an eco- system of MSMEs that have grown on the platform of his efforts. His work was recognised by such entities like Monitor Group, the eminent consulting company in their B60 livelihoods improvement initiatives. He has served in companies like ITC, PepsiCo and Ballarpur Industries and then set out on his entrepreneurial journey.

He was the only private sector representative on the Prime Minister of India's National Knowledge Commission on Agriculture as well as a member of CII's national committee on Agriculture, as well as its Horticulture Mission Committee. CII is India's premier industry association. He was awarded the President's special award for 2000, by the All India food processor's Association. He was President of the National HRD Network, India's pre-eminent association of HR professionals. Bengal: *The Three Partitions of 1905, 1947 and 1971, A Fractured Land and a Fractured people*, is his first book.



Rajiv Dogra

## Rajiv Dogra

A former diplomat, Rajiv Dogra is an author, television commentator and an artist. A career foreign service officer, he was India's Ambassador to Italy. In Rome, he was also the Permanent Representative to the United Nations agencies based there. Prior to that, he served as Ambassador to Romania, Moldova, and Albania and was the last Indian Consul General in Karachi, Pakistan.

He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oradea in Romania and is an honorary professor at the University of Targoviste. An active public speaker, he is one of India's foremost commentators on foreign policy and strategic issues and is noted for his considered and assertive views. He is the bestselling author of seven books, including *Where Borders Bleed*, *Durand's Curse*, *India's World*, and *Wartime*. *Durand's Curse* received the VoW award for Best Book in the non-fiction

category



**Tilak Devasher**

## **Tilak Devasher**

Tilak Devasher is the author of four widely acclaimed books on Pakistan: (i) *Pakistan: Courting the Abyss* (2016) which was termed “easily the best book on Pakistan” by a noted Pakistani commentator – Khaled Ahmed; (ii) *Pakistan: At the Helm* (2018), that a Pakistani reviewer in Dawn termed as “a book that any future leader of Pakistan ought to have by their bedside, simply because it is the sum of all that has gone before”; (iii) *Pakistan: The Balochistan Conundrum* (2019) that a Pakistani reviewer in Dawn held was “far better than the books written on the subject by our own academics and writers”; and (iv) *The Pashtuns: A Contested History* (2022) that a reviewer held to be a welcome addition to works by Indian policymakers on other parts of South Asia and will be of great interest to anyone interested in a deeper understanding of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He has also edited four books for the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) titled '*Pakistan Insights 2019*', '*Pakistan Insights 2020*', '*Pakistan Insights 2021-22*' and '*Pakistan Insights 2023*.'

Tilak retired as Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India in October 2014. He is Member, National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), Consultant, Vivekananda International Foundation, Emeritus Resource Faculty at Rashtriya Raksha University and Distinguished Fellow, United Services Institution of India.

During his professional career, Tilak Devasher served in J&K, Delhi and abroad. He specializes in security issues, especially pertaining to India's neighbourhood. Post retirement, he has continued to take a keen interest in such issues with special focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan. Devasher has taken to writing after superannuation. Apart from his books, he has written articles for a host of newspapers, magazines and think tank journals. He has also appeared frequently on TV talk shows, on-line platforms and podcasts and also lectured at various Defence Training Institutions. He did his schooling from Mayo College, Ajmer (1965-1970) and his under-graduation and post-graduation in History from St Stephen's College, Delhi (1971-76).



**Shri V. Srinivas**

## **Shri V. Srinivas**

V. Srinivas serves as Secretary to the Government of India Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances and the Department of Pension and Pensioners Welfare since December 2021. He represents India on the Council of Administration of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Brussels, for the period 2018-2023. He has served as Special Secretary, Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary in the Government of India from the years 2000 to 2021 in the Ministries of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Health & Family Welfare, Culture, Textiles, Finance & Company Affairs, External Affairs and Petroleum & Natural Gas. He has served as Private Secretary to the External Affairs Minister and as Private Secretary to the Finance Minister in the years 2001-2003 and as Advisor to the Executive Director (India) in the International Monetary Fund in Washington DC from 2003-2006, and represented India on the International Cotton Advisory Committee from 2010-13. V. Srinivas held additional charge of Director General National Centre of Good Governance for the period 2020-2022 and Director General National Archives of India in 2013-14.

V. Srinivas is a recipient of the Digital India Award 2020 for e- Office, the Kaya Kalp (Clean Hospital) Awards for the years 2015 and 2016 for Clean and Green AIIMS campaign, the AIIMS Leadership Excellence Award for 2017, the National Productivity Council Awards for Highest Productivity in Rainfed Agriculture in 1995, 1997, Independence-Day certificates of appreciation for outstanding work from Chief Ministers of Rajasthan in 1998 and 2019. He is a recipient of two Indian Council of World Affairs fellowships for his books "*India's Relations with International Monetary Fund 1991-2016*" and "*G20@2023 - The Roadmap to Indian Presidency*". He has also authored his third book *The March to New India: Governance Transformed 2014-2019* (2019). He has authored 3 books, published 199 papers/ articles and delivered 100 orations.



Dr. J. Vivekanandan

## Dr. Jayashree Vivekanandan

Dr. Jayashree Vivekanandan is Chairperson and Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi. She holds a PhD in International Politics from the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She was a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, in 2017.

Dr. Vivekanandan is the author of *Interrogating International Relations: India's Strategic Practice and the Return of History*, Routledge, New Delhi, and London, 2011. Her articles have appeared in *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, *India Review*, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *Postcolonial Studies* and *Studies in Indian Politics*, among others. She was the guest editor of the special issue on 'Chronicling the Histories of India: The Politics of Remembrance and Commemoration', *India Review*, 20 (5), 2021. Her most recent publications include 'Not just 'Somewhere South of Sovereignty and East of Equality': Indian Strategizing in the Age of Transnational Solidarities', *Studies in Indian Politics*, 12(1), 2024, and "Where We Need Water, We Find Guns Instead": *Understanding the Securitization of Sovereignty Claims on the Brahmaputra*, *India Review*, 23 (2), 2024.



Kallol Bhattacharjee

## Kallol Bhattacharjee

Tripura-born Kallol Bhattacharjee is a Senior Assistant Editor with *The Hindu*, where he writes on India's foreign affairs and the South Asian neighbourhood. He is the author of *Nehru's First Recruits: The Diplomats Who Built Independent India's Foreign Policy* (HarperCollins Publishers India, 2024), *A Singular Spy: The Untold Story of Coomar Narain* (Bloomsbury India, 2024), *The Great Game in Afghanistan: Rajiv Gandhi, General Zia and the Unending War* (HarperCollins Publishers India, 2017).

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**Nayanima Basu**

## **Nayanima Basu**

Nayanima Basu has extensive experience of writing on international affairs, strategic issues, geopolitics and business and trade relations. For more than two decades, Basu has worked at senior editorial positions in prominent mainstream Indian as well as international media organisations such as ABP Network, ThePrint, Business Standard, Bloomberg Law, The Hindu, The Deccan Chronicle and Indo-Asian News Service. She has also contributed articles to several independent international publications. Her ground reportage from Afghanistan during the takeover by the Taliban won her praise from several media organizations and experts. Her recently published book *'The Fall of Kabul: Despatches From Chaos'* by Bloomsbury India has received several accolades in Indian and international press. She can be reached at [nayanimabasu@gmail.com](mailto:nayanimabasu@gmail.com). Follow her on X @NayanimaBasu.



**Lt Gen PJS Pannu**

## **Lt Gen PJS Pannu**

Former Deputy Chief, Indian Integrated Defence Staff (Operations), Lt Gen Pannu was responsible for coordinating military operations of the three services. He was responsible for raising the Defence Space and Cyber Agencies, as well as the Special Forces Division. He conducted the first ever space exercise in India nicknamed IndspaceX in 2019. He served three tenures in the Military Operations Directorate at Army Headquarters and on two UN missions, Mozambique and Sudan both as Chief Operations Officer. He was the Chairman of the Executive Committee of CENJOWS (Centre for Joint Warfare Studies) and USI (United Services Institute) of India both premier Defence Think Tanks. He is a distinguished fellow at the USI, India. He is pursuing a PhD in 'Indigenisation of Defence Industry'. He is a regular contributor to publishing articles and a regular speaker on media channels. He has recently published the USI National Security Paper 2021 on the Role of Niche and Disruptive Technologies in India's Deterrence and War Fighting Capabilities.



**Bharat Thakker**

## **Bharat Thakker**

Bharat Thakker has authored two books, one of which focuses on the *Mahabharata's Contemporary Relevance*. A Chartered Accountant from Kolkata, he relocated to London in the 1990s to explore new opportunities. He has held leadership positions in industries such as Steel, Financial Services, Real Estate, and Telecom Software in India, the UK, and the UAE. After retiring, the notion that “what is in the Mahabharata is somewhere, and what is not is nowhere” sparked his interest in the Epic. He sought to understand the immense power inherent in the 100,000 verses comprising the Epic, particularly when the 700 verses known as the Bhagwat Gita have captivated countless thinkers and preachers. He pursues his research interests while playing golf, listening to Indian music, and with his wife, Smita. His book, *Mahabharata: Relevance and Application in Contemporary Thought* was listed as a Bestseller by the publisher and ranked 13th as a Hot New Release by Amazon. The book focuses on the Epic's events and delves into; 'why it is there'; and its practical relevance in our lives beyond the spiritual realm, an emphasis which enlightens and inspires. In the book, the author presents events from the Epic in a clear and accessible manner and offers commentary on its contemporary relevance. Just as light passing through a prism reveals rainbows, the events in the Epic can be seen through multiple dimensions and related to our lives.

His interactive approach ensures that readers are not passive recipients of information but active participants in their learning.



**Amardeep Singh**

## **Amardeep Singh**

Amardeep Singh, a resident of Singapore, was educated at The Doon School (Dehradun, India), Manipal Institute of Technology (India) and pursued a Masters in Business Administration at the University of Chicago, USA. Before becoming an independent visual ethnographic researcher, Amardeep worked in the financial services sector for 25 years and was the Head of Revenue Management for the Asia Pacific region at American Express. He has authored two books, *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, and *The Quest Continues: Lost Heritage, The Sikh*

*Legacy in Pakistan*. He has produced and directed two short documentary films on the Sikh legacy remnants in the Indus region, Peering Soul and Peering Warrior. His latest work, the 24-episode docuseries on Guru Nanak in 4 languages, available at TheGuruNanak.com, was awarded the Hofstra University (USA) Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize in 2022. At present, Amardeep Singh is leading a five-year effort under the 'Oneness in Diversity' project to create two documentaries and educational content aimed at strengthening the message of Oneness based on the concordance of the Indic saints of the Bhakti movement. Amardeep's wife, Vininder Kaur, plays an equal creative role in all their past and future projects



Prof. Ishtiaq Ahmed

### Prof. Ishtiaq Ahmed

Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stockholm University; Honorary Senior Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. Latest publications, *Jinnah: His Successes, Failures and Role in History*, New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2020 won the English Non-Fiction Book Award for 2021 at the Valley of Words Literary Festival, Dehradun, India; *Jinnah: His Successes, Failures and Role in History*, Vanguard Books, Lahore 2021; *Pakistan: The Garrison State, Origins, Evolution, Consequences (1947-2011)*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013; and, *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012- It won the Best Non-Fiction Book Prize at the 2013 Karachi Literature Festival and the 2013 UBL-Jang Groups Best Non-Fiction Book Prize at Lahore and the Best Book on Punjab Award from Punjabi Parchar at the Vaisakhi Mela in Lahore, 2016. I can be reached at: [billumian@gmail.com](mailto:billumian@gmail.com)



T C A Raghavan

### T C A Raghavan

Raghavan is a former India's High Commissioner to Singapore and Pakistan. He has also served in Kuwait, Bhutan and the United Kingdom. His first book *Attendant Lords, Bairam Khan and Abdur Rahim- Courtiers and Poets in Mughal India* was awarded the Mohammad Habib Memorial Prize for Medieval India by the Indian History Congress in 2017. He has also authored *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India's Relations with Pakistan (2017)*; and *History Men: Jadunath Sarkar, G S*



*Sardesai, Raghubir Singh and Their Quest for India 's Past (2020)*. He was awarded the Sir Jadunath Sarkar Gold Medal for 2023 by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. He has a PhD in history from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has also served as Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs at Sapru House in New Delhi (2018- 21). He is a member of the Governing Council of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, Adjunct Professor, School of Conflict and Security Studies, National Institute of Advanced Study, Bangalore and Visiting Professor at the School of International Studies, JNU. His latest book is *Circles of Freedom- Friendship, Love and Loyalty in the Indian National Struggle* (Juggernaut, 2024)



Advocate Jay Cheema

### Advocate Jay Cheema

Jatinder Cheema (Jay) is the Projects, Energy and Natural Resources lawyer. He is qualified in multiple jurisdictions to practice law i.e. India, Canada and Africa. In addition to General Corporate law across sectors, has diversified experience in Regulatory, Policy, Transaction Advisory, and Dispute Resolution in the LNG, Renewables, Natural Gas, EV, Hydrogen, projects, and natural resources space. He has advised several international clients, particularly in Canada, Africa, Brazil, the Middle East, and China. He has advised FII and PE funds on their investments in aviation, SEZ development, manufacturing companies and projects and infrastructure. Jay advises project developers, Investors, Lenders, Regulators and Suppliers & Contractors on diverse commercial / transactional issues. His projects, energy and energy,natural resources practice has three major sub-practices, viz. Oil & Gas, LNG, natural Resources, Infrastructure and dispute resolution in these practice areas. Jay has assisted the Parliament of Canada as a legal counsel on an ethics investigation and drafted free-zone laws of a Middle-East Country. Apart from his professional engagements, Jay is a visiting faculty at the prestigious IIM (Lucknow), Management Development Institute (MDI), (Gurgaon), and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (A Government of India Undertaking), Manesar where he lectures on recent developments in M&A, Private Equity, and Corporate Laws. Jay also extensively writes about the developments in Energy Law and International Law in law journals, National Dailies and Magazines. Jay is a LL.B from India and LL.B (University of Toronto, Canada), LL.M (University of Ottawa), and Barrister- at-law. He is called to the Bar in

India, Canada and Africa.



**Vivek Atray**

### **Vivek Atray**

Mr Vivek Atray, ex IAS, is a Motivational Speaker, Author, Mentor, Advisor, Columnist and Visiting Professor. He resigned from the Indian Administrative Service, IAS, in 2017. He has 8 TEDx Talks and 5 highly popular JOSH Talks. He is the founder of SUVICHAR Think Tank, Visiting Professor and Chair of the Yogananda Centre for Theology at Shoolini University. He is also a founder of the Vibrant Networking Forum, Playwrite Foundation, Chandigarh Literary Society and Co-Convenor of INTACH Chandigarh. He is a member of the Governor's Advisory Council for Chandigarh UT. Vivek Atray is an acclaimed orator and has spoken in India and abroad at events of HORASIS, NASSCOM, CII, TIE, NCGG, LBSNAA, IIFT, ISB, Universities, Colleges, Schools and private companies. His novels are "Move on Bunny!" & "Dubey ji Bounces Back". He writes a fortnightly column- Random Forays- for the Hindustan Times. His new books are *It's a Wonderful Life and Finding Success Within*. As Director IT and Tourism he was the man behind the Chandigarh IT Park. He spearheaded the award-winning e-SAMPARK project.



**Mr. A.K Sinha**

### **Mr. A.K. Sinha**

Honourable Mr. Anil Kumar Sinha has served as the judge of the Supreme Court of Nepal. With over 34 years of legal practice, he specializes in commercial law, including company law, foreign investment, banking, insurance, and taxation. Prior to his judicial appointment, he served as both Senior Advocate and Advocate at the Supreme Court, where he was deeply involved in legal counsel, litigation, and various consultancies related to public-private partnerships, hydropower law, and foreign investment regulations. Justice Sinha has played a pivotal role in legal reforms, drafting legislation such as the Customs Act and the Foreign Investment Manual. Justice Sinha has received several prestigious awards, including the Prasiddha Prawl Janasewa Shree (Second) and the Prof. (Justice) A.B. Rohatagi Jurist Award in 2019. He has also contributed to various legal publications, co-authoring key manuals for the Nepal Bar Association and writing extensively on legal issues in national journals.



