

High Commission of India
Pretoria

Report on the Festival of India in South Africa, July-August 2014

1. The Festival of India in South Africa was **officially inaugurated** on 25 July 2014 at the State Theatre in Pretoria. High Commissioner of India Mr Virendra Gupta and Director General of the South African Department of Arts & Culture (DAC) Mr Sibusiso Xaba jointly inaugurated the Festival. Joint Secretary from Ministry of Culture, GOI Mr V Srinivas and the Director WZCC Mr Shailendra Dashora, attended from India. The inaugural speeches were followed by a breath-taking dance performance by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi** artists who performed “**Nrityarupa**” a collage of Indian classical dance forms. The audience was left spell bound; such was the magnificence of the performance, which showcased and fused several classical forms. South African musicians and dancers performed before the main dance performance by SNA artists, and at the end, in a collaborative spirit, both groups performed together in a grand finale. The function was well-attended by about 400 guests from South African government, civil society, and Indians.

2. The Festival of India in South Africa in 2014 was different from our earlier festival, as well as from that of other country festivals held in South Africa, not only in the sheer variety offered but also by the fact that the Festival was not restricted to the usual large metropolitan cities. Rather, for the first time, artists and performances were also taken across to a different and new set of audiences in Tier-II cities, who hitherto had not seen such magnificent performances.

3. Thus, **Nrityarupa** performances was held at three other provincial cities: (i) The Johannes Stegmann Theatre in **Secunda**, in Mpumalanga Province, in collaboration with the provincial government and local Municipality. About 150 guests attended the event on 26 July 2014, including members of the Indian community, students and locals. (ii) The next performance was at **Polokwane**, capital of Limpopo Province on 28 July 2014 to a packed audience of more than 300 persons and much appreciated. The national Deputy Minister for Culture, Government of South Africa, MEC (state govt minister) for Culture, Limpopo province, and the Mayor of Polokwane were among the dignitaries who witnessed the show. A small skit on the history of South Africa was presented by

school children from Polokwane to mark 20 years of democracy. (iii) Nrityarupa was then performed at **Mafikeng**, the capital of the North West Province, on 30 July 2014, again to a packed audience of over 300 people, including a large section of Indian origin people settled there. The state govt minster for Arts and Culture was the chief guest.

4. Another group of artists from the Sangeet Natak Academy then presented **Kathak Dance recital** “Kathak Prabha” at the Civic Theatre **Bloemfontein** the capital of Free State province on 4 August 2014. It was an outstanding success as the audiences were exposed to a different form of Kathak for the first time. It was followed by a reception hosted by the Free State Department of Arts Culture Sports & Recreation. The hall had a capacity audience of 180. The prominent dignitaries were Adv Malakoane, Head of Arts & Culture Department of Free State, & Judge Soma Naidoo of the Bloemfontein High Court. The next performance was at **Pietermaritzburg** and held on 06 August 2014 at Truro Hall. The local people from different walks of life of Pietermaritzburg attended the show along with several local dance schools. The event had an audience of 180; prominent among them was Speaker of Msunduzi Municipality Cllr. Babu Baijoo, Director of Arts & Culture Dr. R.T. Govender, President of the Midlands Hindu Society Mr Ranjiv Nirghin. The 10-member Kathak dance troupe then went to **Cape Town** in Western Cape province and performed to a jam-packed hall of more than 250 persons on 8 August 2014. High Commissioner and dignitaries from the Department of Culture and Western Cape Government along with a large number of cultural enthusiasts witnessed the performance.

5. Performing arts continued with **Odissi Dance performances** by ICCR sponsored artist Ms Vani Madhav. The first performance was held on 11 August 2014 at Atterbury Theatre in **Pretoria** and much appreciated by about 150 attendees. The next was at the **Soweto** Theatre on 13 August 2014 in which a performance by the Indlunkulu Musical Group, South Africa preceded the Odissi performance. The final performance was in **Maseru**, the capital of Lesotho, a country landlocked within South Africa.

6. The Festival of India had several other aspects to it. Since the festival was to celebrate 20 years of bilateral relations, which also coincided with the centenary of Gandhiji’s return from South Africa to India, and with South African icon Nelson Mandela’s death still fresh in everyone’s minds, an exhibition on the Mandela-Gandhi theme was

mounted, in a digital format, showcasing India's expertise in the IT area. The **Mandela-Gandhi Digital Exhibition** was presented at the **Constitution Hill** (Old Fort Complex) **Johannesburg** from 18 July-10 August 2014. It was inaugurated by High Commissioner in the presence of high dignitaries from the South African Department of Art and Culture on 18th July, the birthday of Nelson Mandela. The exhibition showcased the parallel lives of the two great icons of our time, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. The digital cum photo exhibits displayed the lives of the two leaders and at the same focused on their common ideals and values. Extensive materials were drawn from the national archives of both countries as well as the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Almost during the same period, a Gandhi – Mandela interactive Wall was also put up at the Nelson Mandela Foundation premises in Johannesburg.

7. The Mandela-Gandhi Digital Exhibition was then moved to the District Six museum in **Cape Town** from 29 August to 14 September, 2014. It was inaugurated by Dr. Denis Goldberg, a veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and a close friend of late Nelson Mandela and Professor (Mrs) Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, great granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi in the presence of a large number of dignitaries closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Mr. Birad Yajnik, Curator of the exhibition also spoke about the exhibition.

8. **Mandela-Gandhi Youth Summit:** A Youth Summit to expose South African and Indian youths to the inspirational lives and ideals of both the icons was held on 19 July 2014 at the Constitution Hill, Johannesburg. About 300 students from 30 public schools from Soweto, Tembisa, Katlehong and Alexandra and 15 students from India participated in the Summit. At the Summit, the youth from the two countries also got an opportunity to interact and exchange ideas on their respective societies, cultures and aspirations.

9. **Tolstoy Farm / Garden of Remembrance:** A historic celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's return from the shores of South Africa to India took place at the Tolstoy Farm (a settlement founded by the Mahatma in 1910, now near Lenasia on the outskirts of Johannesburg) on 20 July 2014. A formal structure to revive the settlement in the form of a "Garden of Remembrance" was also launched on the occasion. The event was attended by more than 500 people, consisting of South African Indian community members, notably Chief Guest Ms Mani ben Sita, a leading anti-apartheid activist; Minister

for Road and Transport of Gauteng Province Mr. Ismail Vadi; Ex-national Minister Mr. Essop Pahad; Councillor and leading member of the African National Congress Mr Prema Naidoo; family members of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela; distinguished representatives of the Government of South Africa; and prominent members of the Indian community. In tribute to Gandhian politics and way of life, a 5 Km long community walk was organised as part of the celebration.

10. **Exhibition on India – South Africa Cricket Relations:** As part of the Festival of India in South Africa, an exhibition “**Cricket Connects**” was held from 26 July to 15 August 2014 at the **Wanderers Stadium** in Johannesburg. The exhibition was inaugurated on 26 July 2014 by High Commissioner of India, Mr. Virendra Gupta in the presence of Joint Secretary Ministry of Culture Government of India Mr V Srinivas, and Mr Andy O’ Connor, Board Director & Chairman of Cricket Committee of Cricket South Africa, and other dignitaries. Showcasing the fascinating relationship by recalling its history, underscoring its political significance and celebrating the thrilling sporting accomplishments on the field of play, the exhibition used a range of sources and images – documentary, visual and audio – to highlight the unique value of sport in illuminating the longstanding relationship between India and South Africa. The exhibition was designed and developed by the National Council of Science Museums, Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

11. The Cricket exhibition was thereafter shifted to **Kingsmead Sahara Stadium** in **Durban**. The inauguration function was attended by about 150 invited guests. The exhibition received good participation and attracted substantial media attention. Apart from the individual visitors, the exhibition was also viewed by bus loads of school students.

12. As part of the Festival of India, a **Hindi Literary festival** was inaugurated on 25 July 2014 with a cultural programme & reception / Dinner at the Aryan Hall in **Pietermaritzburg**. There were around 230 guests. The informal interactive session between the Poets and the audience was well received and appreciated. Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa was the partner organisation for the Hindi festival. The subsequent sessions on 26-27 July were held at the Conference Centre of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh’s head quarters at Kharwastan in **Durban**. Interesting & vigorous discussions on the Trends in Contemporary Hindi Literature & the Kavi Sammelan on the final day had the participants asking for more.

13. The Hindi Literary Festival then moved to **Johannesburg**, with a **Hindi Kavi Sammelan** held at the Consulate General of India on 31 Aug 2014. It was attended by a more than 125 persons comprising Hindi lovers in the city including Hindi speakers from the South African Indian community and expatriates. Celebrated Hindi Satirist, Shri Ashok Chakradhar, led the 8-member team sponsored by the Sahitya Academi of India at the Sammelan. Earlier on 30 July 2014, a workshop on Hindi was also organised at the Consulate in Johannesburg where the poets interacted with a diverse group of people from all communities learning Hindi.

14. As part of the Festival of India in South Africa, a **Qawwali** group Niazi Nizami Brothers & Party led by Ghulam Qadir Niazi performed at Park Rynie on 07 August and 08 August in **Durban**. The event was well received by the community as part of Eid celebrations with over 350 in the audience. Both events had capacity audiences. Prominent among them were Mr. A.V Mohammad, Chief Trustee of Juma Masjid in Durban, Director of Arts & Culture Dr. R.T. Govender, President of Buzme Adab Mr Nazir Maek. The group then performed on 09 August at KitKat Hall, **Pretoria** in collaboration with Buzme Chishtia International. The performance was well attended with more than 400 lovers of Qawwali music. They then performed at **Roshni**, outside Johannesburg on 10 August 2014 enthraling the 250 plus audience with their mesmerising Qawwali.

15. The inauguration of the **Indian Film Festival** was on 30 July 2014 in the Auditorium of our Consulate in **Durban**. The opening Bengali movie screened was the suspense thriller by late director Rituporno Ghosh's "Satyvenshi" followed by light refreshments. The total number of guests were 80 & included mostly Bengali professors from University of Kwa Zulu Natal. The subsequent full- house film screenings in Tamil & Telugu at the Suncoast Cinemas was followed by the block buster Sholay. The free Popcorn & Coke sponsored by the Department of Arts & Culture was enthusiastically welcomed by the 140 guests. The dignitaries included the Director of Arts & Culture Dr. R.T.Govender, Speaker of Ethekwini Municipality Councillor Mr Logie Naidoo, President of the Tamil Federation in KZN Mr Richard Govender.

16. In **Gauteng**, the Indian Film Festival was inaugurated by the High Commissioner of India on 3 August 2014 at the Indian Culture Centre, **Johannesburg** with the screening of the historic 1913 film 'Raja Harishchandra'. The festival ran concurrently at the ICC and the Killarney Mall Cinema from 3-7 August and a total of 9 films were shown,

including 4 Hindi language and one each in Tamil, Bengali, Marathi and Telugu languages (Making of the Mahatma, Guide, Sholay, Taare Zameen Par, Satyanweshi, Nayagan, Vihir & Stri). The Film Festival was organised in collaboration with AVLON Group, Utkarsh Projects, & the Department of Arts & Culture, Govt. of South Africa. Six films were supplied by the Directorate of Film Festivals, M/O Information and Broadcasting, GOI and three films were supplied by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

17. An **Indian Food Festival “Kebabs, Curries and Biryani: the best of Awadh”** was organised at the Sandton Sun Hotel in **Johannesburg** from 1-6 August 2014. Two chefs from the Indian Tourism Development Corporation, New Delhi were flown in for the event. The Festival offered an array of mouth-watering dishes from the famed Awadhi kitchen. It was inaugurated by High Commissioner in the presence of high dignitaries from South African Government, leading members of the South African Indian community and expatriate Indians and a large media contingent. At the inaugural reception, the culinary skills of master chefs from ITDC gracefully combined with the rhythms of musicians from Routes 2 Roots, New Delhi to create a perfect Awadhi evening. Some 300 people participated in the six day festival.

18. The Food Festival then moved to the Beverly Hills Hotel in **Durban** from 09-13 August 2014. The inauguration took place on 8 August with a small group of fifty specially invited guests. The Press eagerly covered the opening and publicity was good. The sponsor Hotel was also very pleased with the response from the public and the Festival was a great success.

19. **Exhibitions on Monuments of India and Indian Cinema:** Exhibitions on Monuments of India (from ICCR) and Indian Cinema (from Routes to Roots) were displayed at the prestigious **National Museum of Cultural History (NMCH)** in **Pretoria** from 31 July to 13 August 2014. The exhibitions were inaugurated by High Commissioner, Shri Kashinath Das (painter of the exhibition on Monuments of India), Shri Rakesh Gupta of Routes to Roots, and the CEO of NMCH. The function was attended by about 100-125 invited guests and the exhibitions were well-appreciated. The exhibitions were then displayed at the Empangeni Art & Culture Museum in Richards Bay from 29 August to 30 September 2014.

20. Also as part of the Festival of India, an **India Business Seminar “Leveraging Business Opportunities in post-election India”** was held in Johannesburg on 6 August 2014 at the Sandton Convention Centre. The seminar was organised in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry. The Seminar was inaugurated by High Commissioner of India. Other panellists in the seminar were Mr. Subhomoy Bhattacharjee, Deputy Editor of The Indian Express, New Delhi; Mr. Abdullah Verachia of the India-African Business Network at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, Johannesburg; and Mr. E.B. Rajesh, Regional Director for Africa, Middle East and the Gulf, Confederation of Indian Industry. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Robert Appelbaum, an expert in India business, and Head of South Asia at the Webber Wentzel law firm in Johannesburg. An interactive session with more than 100 guests from the industry and media followed the presentations by the panellists.
