

## Cooperation in the field of Arts and Culture

*Art is the Dance of the artist's heart upon the medium of Time with the brush of Culture.  
Looking at ink is Culture. Seeing through ink is Art.  
Looking at Art is Culture. To look at a sunset is Culture. To see a sunset is Art.  
A piano playing is Art. A piano being played is Culture.  
Art is the gateway into All-time. Culture is tomorrow, today, and yesterday.  
Culture is a recipe for a good meal. Art is in preparing the meal.  
Culture is getting comfortable. Art is going for a ride.  
Culture is the boundary and Art the border points of passage.  
Art is the ticket into Realms of Being that are boundless.  
Culture is the descriptions of those Realms of Being  
and how, why, and what is boundless.*

Lizanne Fisher

### Historical Background

Centuries ago, travellers - adventurers, merchants, men of arts and literature - came to India with different targets in mind. Some came seeking fortune, patronage, wisdom, knowledge, inspiration and/or salvation, while others came in search of spices, ivory, sandalwood and timber. India, the timeless mystery, with its eternal natural beauty has always fascinated the foreigners - the Persians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch, French and finally the British. They sailed the high seas and ran high risks to reach their final destination: **INDIA**.

In the year 1498, the Portuguese, Vasco de Gama, landed at the south western coast of India. Subsequently, his compatriots established many trading posts from Gujrat to present day Kerala. After sixteen hundred, the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) took over the spice trade from the Portuguese. The Dutch established their spice factory in Malabar on the western coast and in Coromandel on the eastern coast. One settlement was in Pulicat in the north of Chennai, the present day Madras, founded in 1610. Another settlement was in Kochi. They obtained Indian calicoes and valued commodities like fine chintz, pepper and indigo. By the mid 1690, the *V.O.C.* expanded its operation to West Bengal. They established a trading post in Chinsurah, near Calcutta, from where they bought saltpetre, opium, raw silk and metals for export to Europe.

The *V.O.C.* started submitting its regular reports on India and Indian culture to its headquarters. India was no longer *the Orient* - the fabulous land of the Middle Ages. It was the country of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, temples, *maharajas*, *gurus*, age-old cultures, different races, fascinating languages, exotic styles and richness, not to forget the timeless mystery and beauty. Thus, India became the most known land outside Europe in eighteenth century. The reports were much more than normal business correspondence.

The Dutch traders became more interested in their personal wealth than the wellbeing of their parent company, the *V.O.C.*. Having lost their interest in Indian trade, the *V.O.C.* moved to Sri Lanka. The British East India Company conquered Kochi in 1795.

The Dutch resisted, but fate and destiny had different plans; in the struggle for power that followed, finally the Dutch lost. British rule followed. It would have been very different today if the Dutch East India Company would not have lost to the British East India Company. Most probably, instead of English, Dutch would have been the official language of India.

There were commercial and academic contacts between the Netherlands and India during the British rule. Sanskrit was taught at Leiden University as far back as 1865. Hendrik Kern was inaugurated Professor of Sanskrit on 18 October 1865 at the university. Indian literature made an inroad into Dutch literary circles.

One of the earliest Indian classical works, studied in the Netherlands, was Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, and so was the *Bhagavad Gita*, another key to the treasure house of India's thought, history and *culture*. Modern thinker-writers such as Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore too had their admirers in the Netherlands. The Dutch interest was much deeper than something purely academic. India was the land of spiritual wisdom and ancient texts, full of philosophical insight, written in a language of a civilisation which blossomed even before Europe had any idea of the use of paper. The Indian wisdom was placed above the Western knowledge. This spiritual wisdom of India was self evident, like vodka and Russia, whisky and Scotland, wines and France, and cheese and the Netherlands.

Nonviolent and peaceful struggle for the independence of India eventually bore fruit, and finally the world witnessed the emergence of India as an independent nation on 15 August 1947. A new phase in Indo-Dutch relationship started. However, even after the independence, the contacts between the Dutch and the Indians continued almost on literary, spiritual and philosophical grounds; hardly any cultural activity existed.

### **Cultural and friendship societies**

It is obvious that cultural and friendship societies play an important role in expanding cooperation in the field of culture between two nations. These are mass-based societies and reflect the deep and abiding friendship between the peoples of the two countries. One such cultural and friendship society saw its daylight in the early fifties.

The Netherlands-India Association brochure records as follows:

In April 1951, under the guidance of Prof. Dr. B. Landheer, a few Dutch people who were interested in philosophical and varied cultural aspects of Indian society, started the Netherlands-India-Ceylon Association. At that time, very few Indians were living in the Netherlands. Consequently, its membership was largely confined to the Dutch people. The primary activity of the Association was to organize lectures and talks on aspects of Indian religions, culture and philosophy. From 1960 onwards, the number of Indians coming to the Netherlands started increasing. By 1969, the number of Indians living in the Netherlands had become significant, and the composition and character of the Association started to reflect the socio-cultural interest of its Indian members. The Netherlands-India Association has two objectives:

1. To promote knowledge and understanding of the culture, history, philosophy, religions and social structure of India and the Netherlands among the people of both countries.
2. To further friendly relations between the peoples of India and the Netherlands by widening and deepening personal, cultural and social contacts.

The Netherlands-India Association has come a long way since its creation in 1951. It has contributed actively to the development of Indo-Dutch cultural relations. This contribution became even more meaningful in the eighties in the context of the rapid increase in various contacts and cooperation agreements between India and the Netherlands.

In order to cultivate cultural understanding between India and the Netherlands and to locate and identify Dutch (historical) relics in Chinsurah and elsewhere in India, the *India-Netherlands Friendship Society of Chinsurah* (near Calcutta) was established in 1986.

## Culture

The Dutch are *cultural consumers*. Books are published in many languages - even in Hindi; theatres and concerts are booked full in advance - also for the performances by Indian groups. India has always enjoyed the Dutch admiration and understanding for its culture and achievements. With this background, developing friendly feelings for the independent people of India was easy for the Dutch people. That is why the Indo-Dutch relations are of a special type: special initiatives blossomed and cultural exchanges started. During the last few decades, there has been a significant growth in accepting and understanding the culture, arts and crafts of India. Both within and outside, there has been an awakening of interest.

Thus, the 1983 - 1986 activities of the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (*IDPAD*), have been reviewed in the following words:

Between 1976 and 1980, a number of Indian and Dutch social scientists had a series of discussions on several areas of common concern. The main objective of these dialogues was to arrive at a programme of joint research which would contribute new approaches to the process and problems of development. Thus *IDPAD* (The Indo-Dutch Programme of Alternatives in Development) was born in December 1980.

Exchange of scientists and researchers paved the way for exchange of ideas and understanding of each other's culture on personal level. Indian nationals were invited to take up training courses in Dutch institutions. The medium being English, the students did not face any difficulty adjusting to the Dutch way of life.

## Music and dance

M. Varadarjan, reviewing the forty years since 1947 and India's culture, writes:

When one looks in retrospect at the past 40 years, one is naturally inspired to recount the enormous strides that Indian agriculture or industry, commerce or health or technology have taken. But when it comes to culture, one can only recount with pride the giant steps that have been taken and the important milestones in the process of dissemination, both in India and abroad, of the resplendent artistic and cultural heritage of India. It has been possible to secure wide ranging international awareness of Indian cultural history and tradition, through the Indian Festivals abroad and exhibitions, thereby sharing with the world, and increasingly on a reciprocal basis some of the finest repositories of the artistic manifestations of the Indian civilisation as well as its ancient and current art forms.

Indian music is the oldest music in the world and dates back to the Vedas. So vibrant is it that it has retained its currency to date. It is basically melodic in content, and differs altogether from European music which has shed its original melodic content and developed into a harmonic one in the course of history. In Indian culture, music is firmly interwoven with its social fabric and no social and religious assembly can do without it.

Indian classical music was known to the West. Nevertheless, it is Pandit Ravi Shankar who reintroduced it, and the Beatles carried it further. Indian classical music and dance have become a popular name for Western culture since then. Indian artists visit the Netherlands regularly. Almost all the well-known artists from India have given their performances in the Netherlands. Now and then, the artists visit the Netherlands under a Cultural Exchange Programme. They are sponsored by private parties mostly.

Cultural exchange is not a *one way traffic*. Performing artists from the Netherlands visit India too. A recent example is the performance of *Internationaal Danstheater* in various cities of India, and also in the Netherlands. Prof. Rokus de Groot of the Netherlands produced *Ode to Meera Bai*, a project

specially set up for *India's 50 years of Independence*. The cast consisted entirely of local artists.

It is the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (*ICCR*), which usually sponsors Indian artists for performances in the Netherlands. One of the major problems faced by the organisers at this end is the short notice given by the *ICCR* to organise a programme. Therefore, often, organisers have to decline offers made by the local Indian Embassy on Council's behalf.

The Dutch admirers of Indian classical music have created a very fertile environment for the acceptance of such music and dance:

Many dance schools have sprung up in various places, where one can learn Indian classical dances, such as the *Bharatnatyam*, *Kathak* and *Odissi*, and also folk dances. Students visit India to refine their techniques and skills. *Kalakshetra* of Chennai is a source of inspiration - a significant institution where the Dutch students pursue their higher studies in this discipline. *Mrs. Rajamani* of Amsterdam, *Mrs. Sardha Raghuraman* of Leiderdorp and *Mrs. Chandrika Sundararaman* of Zoetermeer are pioneers in this field.

Another area of growing interest is the classical music. Lessons can be followed to master the art of playing *bansuri*, *dholak*, *sitar*, *sarangi*, *harmonium*, *tabla* and *tanpura* at World Music Schools in *Alkmaar*, *Almere*, *Enschede*, *Utrecht* and *Rotterdam*. The *Conservatorium* in *Rotterdam* and *Amsterdam* run courses in Indian music leading to graduate degrees. Among the Surinamese (*Hindustani*) and Indian community there is a growing interest in Indian film music, and for light classical music like the *ghazal*, *bhajan*, *khayal* etc.

One of the well-known organisers of Indian classical music and dance is the *Stichting India Klassiek* of *Abcoude*. *The Royal Tropical Institute* of *Amsterdam* and *RASA* of *Utrecht* are two other important organisers of Indian musical programmes. *The Netherlands-India Association*, *Culturele Stichting India - Nederland*, *Swaraswati Arts* and *Stichting voor Traditionele Indiase Muziek* of *Amsterdam*, *Sri Vani Stichting Cultuurbehoud Zuid India* of *Arnhem*, *Sarasvati Bhavan* of *Naarden*, *Federatie Eekta* and *Stichting Tagore* of *The Hague*, and *Stichting Lala Rookh* of *Utrecht* are also active in this field.

Theatrical performance is another area where Indian theatres are exposed to the Dutch public. *Kattaikkuttu*, a popular theatre of the lower castes in South India is a specific theatrical form of art and music, dance and dialogue which became known to the Netherlands. *The Kalai Manram Foundation (Fine Arts)* of *Amsterdam* is responsible for this. Street theatres, folk artists from different parts of India, brass bands are some other areas where Indian artists play for the Dutch audience.

## Art

Sandip Sarkar writes in his article on modern Indian art:

It is commonplace to think of Indian art as a vast monolith. What is not understood is that Indian art now, as it was before, is a confluence of regional variety and diversity within the great tradition. The issue is further complicated because people the world over think of it as a stereotype and as tradition-bound. What complicates the issue even more is that they expect Indian artists to conform to their heritage. The artist may as well ask which heritage? Indian primitive cave art? Art of the prehistoric Indus Valley civilisation? Maurya? Sungha? Kushan? Gupta? Pala-Sena? Moghul? Rajput? Not knowing that Indian art has a history of several thousands of years, many would be taken aback and find it difficult to answer the question of the artists.

For the Indian artists, the task is doubly difficult. They are expected to reveal their exotic cultural identity, yet what that identity is, is left vague. Furthermore, they have been exposed to the art of humankind throughout the centuries to the present day, through higher studies and tours abroad, travelling exhibitions from different

countries and through books and media. Amusingly, it is not known in the West that Indian art, like art the world over, has been cross-fertilised by alien contact and domination.

In the five millennia of its history, it has adapted itself to cultural confrontation. New techniques have been accommodated with alertness, new forms and aesthetic ideas assimilated and transformed with tact and ingenuity. It is this agility to adapt to changing times that gives Indian history and art a continuity and marks it out from extinguished ancient civilisation of Egypt and West Asia. Indian art throughout the centuries has made major innovations in the areas of iconography, symbolism, technique, form and enriched the contents of its aesthetic adventure. Indian artistic genius has always had the vigour to be able to select and transform the influences radically after absorbing the initial shock of a strong cultural impact. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, the apostle of Indian art to the West, once said that Indian art should be appreciated *not because it is Indian but because it is art*.

Dutch artists were not only inspired but were also influenced by Indian art. It is said that some works of the Dutch great master, Rembrandt, were also influenced by India. Rembrandt specialists are of the opinion that about 20-25 sketches of Rembrandt, dating back to the period 1654-56, are copies of *Moghul* miniature paintings. According to them, it is still unknown how Rembrandt obtained these paintings.

Dutch artists and sculptors visit India regularly for short periods to work with their Indian counterparts, to get inspirations and ideas. In order to cater to the needs of the modern Dutch artists, there is an *International Centre for Cultural Development* in Tiruvananthapuram (*Trivandrum*). The aims and objectives of the *ICCD* are to promote and support artists with different backgrounds. *ICCD*, which provides lodging facility to the visiting artists, encourages them to work plus to promote exhibitions, performances, lectures *etc*. It also helps to develop contact between foreign and Indian artists. The centre also provides resources for socio-cultural research, *e.g.* to scientists, journalists and architects. Artists of all the disciplines are welcome visitors to the centre. The Dutch writer Aya Zikken was one of the first to work on a book there. Other Dutch artists who stayed and worked there, include Roy Villevoy, Fransje Killaers, Hanneke Reijbroek and Vroegop/Schoonveld.

Work of Indian painters is supported by the *Foundation of Indian Artists of Amsterdam*. They regularly exhibit works of Indian artists. Other galleries which display works of Indian artists and sculptors are *Artimediary of The Hague* and *De Galerie Bunders of Sint Oedenrode*. Prestigious department stores, such as *Bijenkorf*, also display Indian artists' works. Some Indian artists of international fame have chosen to settle in the Netherlands, like Ms. Usha Bhalla and Mr. Bhaskar Handé.

## **Literature**

Indian classical and modern works are translated into Dutch language. Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru, Iqbal, Mulkraj Anand, Premchand, R.K. Narayan, V. Kulkarni, Tariq Ali, Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdi, Geeta Mehta, Nayantara Sahgal, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Saratchandra Chattopadhy, Githa Hariharan, Vikram Seth and Arundhatti Roy are well-known names here today. Indian writers are regularly invited by the local NGOs to read from their own work and then to participate in general discussions.

Some Dutch authors' works are also translated and published in English. These publications are available in India also.

## **Languages**

The study of Indian languages in the Netherlands, specially Hindi became more popular. At the university level, Hindi is being taught at the Leiden University. For the beginners, institutions like the *India Institute* of Amsterdam play an important role. One can study *Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Urdu*. There are also several private schools where Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit en Tamil are being taught. The *Hindi Parishad Nederland* has several branches and spreads the knowledge of Hindi among the Dutch. Another factor for growing interest in Hindi is the presence of a large number of Surinam Hindustani's in the Netherlands. In India in the metropolitan cities one has the possibility to study the Dutch language.

The influx of Indian asylum seekers has created a new group. It is the interpreters. Most of the new comers can express themselves only in their mother tongue. In order to communicate with them, the Dutch public authorities formed a group of people - both Indian and Dutch - who can speak with them in Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu or Urdu. In the Netherlands there are several translators of Indian languages.

### **Libraries**

Libraries are vital in the development of a nation - an informed citizen is an integral part, nay, component of a vibrant democracy. In different libraries - both general as well as specialised - in different parts of the Netherlands there are special sections devoted to India. For example the library of Kern Institute of Indology, Leiden has a collection of about 42,600 volumes on ancient and modern Indian literature and culture. Besides this library has also about 4,000 photos of South Asian works of arts originating from the archives of *Archaeological Survey of India*. After the merger with the Indology Department of Utrecht University's Institute for Asian Languages, the collection of the Kern Institute Library increased to more than 50,000 volumes.

One of the organisations, which is actively involved with publications on India, is the *Landelijke India Werkgroep*. It publishes a bi-monthly magazine, *India Nu* (India now), dealing exclusively with India and with socioeconomic insight into it.

### **Television, cinematography, films and radio**

Bilateral cooperation between Indian and Dutch news media and TV organisations is also on the upgrade. One of the major players is the OHM (*Organisatie voor Hindoe Media*). OHM was established by the *Sanatan Dharam, Arya Samaj* and the Dutch Branch of the *World Hindu Federation*. The OHM, in its own way, promotes the integration of Hinduism with the Dutch multicultural society. They aspire to achieve it through their radio and TV programmes which lead the public to the world of Hinduism, thus contributing to a better understanding for the Dutch public. Presently, there are local Hindustani TV channels in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. Overseas Hindi and Urdu programmes cater to the needs of the local listeners of Indian origin.

Cooperation in the cinematography started in the early seventies although Satyajit Ray's film was presented to the Dutch public around 1966. In the early seventies Indian films were screened once a week in the Seinpost film theater at Scheveningen. Soeterijn theater of Amsterdam organises Indian film festivals. Indian films participate in the International Film Festival, Rotterdam.

Indian films are also screened in the Dutch theatres. There are special video shops for Indian films in major Dutch cities. *Bollywood* video films and the latest *CDs* with Indian hits are released almost simultaneously in the Netherlands and India.

The Dutch Ministry of External Affairs gave subsidy to produce films like *Punky en Ganshyan, Chachaji, My Poor Relation, Radha and Krishna, Wheels*, etc. The Indian Embassy, The Hague has also several films. One of them is *Women of India* which shows the emancipation of women in India.

Every major city has a Hindustani radio programme. VPRO, a major Dutch radio network regularly airs Indian classical music.

## **Puppetry**

From time immemorial puppetry has been the most popular and easily understood form of entertainment in Indian villages. It is an ancient folk form that has survived the ages and pleased millions of people throughout the world. Both as a conveyance for pervading ideas as well as an entertaining medium puppetry remains an important medium among folk art forms. Indian puppeteers visit the Netherlands and participate in programmes like the *International Micro Festivals, Dordrecht*.

## **Religion**

India is the land of many ancient, yet living religions and is an ideal place for a journey into mysticism. This has resulted in a strong flow of religious and spiritual teachings from India into the Netherlands. Another factor for this strong interest in Indian religion and philosophy is the Independence of Surinam in 1975 and the migration of more than 100.000 Dutch nationals of Indian origin from Surinam to the Netherlands.

One can find Hindu temples, built in cities such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague. There are several Hindu community schools where religious teachings are compulsory part of the curricula. Hindu organisations, like the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* or World Hindu Federation, have their offices in the Netherlands. Some of the religious and spiritual streams, originated in India and currently active in the Netherlands, are as follows:

*Amma, Ananda Marga, Arya Samaj, Auroville, Babaji (Herakhan Baba), Brahma Kumaris, Brahma Rishi Divine Light Mission, The Divine Life Society, Hare Krishna-ISKON, Krishnamurti, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Osho Rajnesh, Radha Swami, Ramakrishna, Sanatan Dharm, Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Satya Sai Baba, Shri Chinmoy, Shri Chaitanya Gemeenschap, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, Shri Ram Chandra Mission, Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji, and Vimala Thakar.*

Interest in Buddhism has grown enormously in the last few years. The followers of Buddhism are from three main schools: *Hinayana, Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*. Besides the three main schools, one comes across followers of *Tibetan Buddhism, Tantrism, Lamaism, Amida* and *Zen* also. Many Buddhist organisations and study groups are also active.

## **Yoga**

Yoga and Indian philosophy, religion or spirituality are inseparable from each other. People are drawn to yoga for various reasons. Yoga teachers and yoga schools can be found all over the Netherlands. The main forms of yoga practised in the Netherlands are: *Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga* and *Hatha Yoga*. There are also schools for *Kundalini Yoga* and *Yoga according to the Kashmir method*.

## **Sport**

Cooperation in the field of sports is also gaining momentum. Hockey and cricket matches between the two countries are regularly held. In 1988, Holland won the inaugural hockey tournament, organised in memory of the late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. India participates in tennis tournaments held in the Netherlands. The name of Anand, the chess master from India, is well known here.

## **Influence of student groups**

The Dutch student community shows a keen interest in the development of India, Indian art and culture. Recent study tours to India were organised by INDUSTRIA (*Study Association for Industrial Engineering and Management*) of TU Eindhoven, ICR (*Stichting International Contract Research*) of Leiden and Erasmus University, STOLA (*Stages in Ontwikkelingslanden*) of Medical Faculty of Erasmus University and Kosten & Winst Dispuut PACIOLI of Erasmus University. These tours expose the students to day-to-day life in India, Indian business community and India's culture, helping them to look to India from a different angle, creating a better understanding of cultural heritage of India. After their return, they organise seminars and present their findings to interested public.

Students from India also follow courses in various Dutch universities. When they go back to India after completing their courses, they take with them the acquired academic knowledge and also the cultural heritage of the Netherlands. Some of them are already involved with founding local associations to further the friendship between the two countries. One such association is the *Netherlands Alumni Association of India*. This is an association of ex-students and graduates of the *Institute of Social Studies, The Hague*.

## **Tourism**

Tourism has always been recognised as a powerful instrument to promote better understanding among peoples, cultures and nations, and a motivating force to enhance goodwill. As a result of the Indian policy of economic liberalisation, there has been a substantial upswing in the tourism industry between the two countries. In other words, it is an engine of growth for the economic development of India. The tourists have discovered India.

Indian Tourist Office, based in Amsterdam, plays a major role in providing tourist information to the Dutch public. There are more than 100 operators in the Dutch tourist market, offering individual plus group travel; their guided tours cover all aspects of India and Indian life. There is choice of staying at a five star hotel with all modern amenities, or in a hut in an Indian village or in an *ashram*. This brings the visitors to the heart of the Indian culture, and contributes to enriching their knowledge about India and Indians. When they come back, they are able to understand better the people of India and its art and culture.

Group travels usually bring the tourists in contact with classical Indian art. They do not get a chance to come into contact with modern art.

As compared to Dutch tourist flow to India, there is a slow growth of tourists in the reverse direction. Nevertheless, Indians, too, are discovering the *Keukenhof*, windmills, wooden shoes, *Rembrandts* and the Dutch beer.

*Air India*, the Indian national carrier, opened its office in Amsterdam on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1961. *KLM*, the Dutch national airline, has 19 offices in different parts of India. *Air India*, together with Indian Tourist Office at Amsterdam, sponsors Dutch writers regularly to visit India. They are encouraged to publish articles over both ancient and modern India. Dutch newspapers and periodicals regularly cover India's political, social, economic as well as cultural aspects. Every major Dutch newspaper has its own correspondent, stationed in India.

## **Indian cuisine**

Another side effect of this exposure to India, is the development of taste for Indian food. When the travellers return to the Netherlands, they are in a better position to appreciate the Indian cuisine. Indian restaurants are mushrooming all over the Netherlands to cater to the needs of Dutch public. Amsterdam alone has more than 35 Indian restaurants. The first Indian restaurant *Tandoor*, opened in



1971 at Leidseplein of Amsterdam, is still running. Lessons in Indian cooking are given at several places in the Netherlands.

### **Archaeology and architecture**

To have a better understanding of the cultural heritage of a country, one cannot ignore the archaeological sites and monuments and the architecture. Protection and preservation of old monuments play a vital role in creating such understanding. To achieve this end, the *Dutch Department of Monument Care* is taking an active part in the preservation of seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch historical monuments, situated at *Chinsurah* in *West Bengal*.

Some of the Dutch contributions of Dutch presence in South India are:

- *Dutch Place of Kochi*: It was built by the Portuguese and presented to the Raja of Cochin in 1555. It was renovated by the Dutch during their short lived regime there.
- *Jewish Synagogue*: Built in 1568, the building was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1662 and rebuilt by the Dutch two years later.
- *Dutch Cemetery*: Near St. Francis Church (oldest Protestant church built by the Portuguese in 1510. Vasco de Gama, who died in 1524, was buried here).
- *Bolgatty Island*: A beautiful island close to Ernakulam. Built by the Dutch in 1774, Bolgatty Palace is here.

In recent years, some Indian architects have also made their debut on the Dutch architecture scene, specially in urban planning. One of them is *Ashok Bhalotra*. His designs of the new towns give a fresh look to the monotonous structure of rows of houses in a newly built town. The *Netherlands Architecture Institute*, Rotterdam organises exhibitions and lectures on Indian Architecture. One of the recent exhibitions, as well as a series of lectures on Indian architecture, was organised under the title *Tradition and Innovation: Four Visions of Indian Architectural Tradition*. Messrs. Balkrishna Doshi, Charles Correa, Raj Rewal and Ms. Rewathi Kamath, four important Indian architects, gave their vision of the present day Indian architecture.

### **Museums**

Following are the museums where one comes across some objects of Indian art and culture:

*Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*, South and South East Asian Arts Section has a small collection of Indian paintings and objects.

*Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam* has a collection of Indian items which can be used for educational purpose.

*Museon, The Hague* has a collection of 18 objects from India.

*Museum Gerardus van der Leeuw, Groningen* has a mobile museum called *India from a bus (India vanuit een bus)* for primary schools.

*Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden* has a collection of items from Gandhara and Pala Sena sculptures to metal objects, miniature paintings, clothing *etc.* from this century.

*Museum voor Volkenkunde, Rotterdam* has a collection of about 5,000 coins and medals from India.

### **Mahatma Gandhi**

Like any other country, Mahatma Gandhi is held in high esteem in the Netherlands also. This can be judged from the organisations that are active in the field of nonviolence and the celebration of the Mahatma's birthday. The very fact that Gandhiji's birthday is celebrated here, is more than enough to show that although the Dutch and Indian civilisations may not be very similar to each other, but the Netherlands and India share the same objectives and ideals for universal peace. The maintenance of peace depends on political and economic arrangements, but its lasting endurance is founded on the

culture in its broadest sense.

As far back as in 1969, UNESCO Centrum Nederland invited speakers like Dr. Prem Kirpal to deliver a series of lectures on subjects, including *The relevance of Gandhi to problems of today*. *Stichting Vredesopbouw*, established in 1960, devoted complete issues of their periodicals to Mahatma Gandhi. Organisations like *Economists Allied for Arms Reduction*, *War Resisters International*, *Kerk en Vrede*, *Burger Vredes Teams Nederland*, *Nationaal Comité Gandhi Hardenking*, *Stichting voor Aktieve Geweldloosheid*, *Omslag*, *International Fellowship of Reconciliation*, *Stichting Gandhi Vredescentrum* etc. are inspired by Gandhi's teachings. It means implicitly that they are also influenced by Indian culture. *Gandhi Foundation* of Amsterdam, besides celebrating the Mahatma's birthday and arranging symposia on that occasion in the Netherlands, has erected his statue on their own initiative at Churchillaan, Amsterdam in October 1990.

### **Indian names**

In order to honour the great sons and daughters of India, who contributed to the progress and development of the country and its culture, several Dutch cities have named some of their streets after them. Twenty-five Dutch cities have their streets named after *Mahatma Gandhi*; three cities named their streets after *Indira Gandhi*; another two cities named streets after *Pandit Nehru* and one city named a street after *Rabindranath Tagore*. Streets are named not only after the famous Indians but also after well known places. There are four cities in the Netherlands which have a street called *Bombay*.

### **Influence of Dutch private organisations**

Besides the government and semi-government organisations, there are innumerable Dutch organisations in the private sector as well which are active in India. Most of these organisations are run by volunteers. They are active in the areas like child adoption, agriculture, charity, education, horticulture, medical care, maternity and child care, religion etc. There is a constant flow of information, exchange of ideas and field visits by the persons concerned. This brings the people of both the cultures closer to each other and builds bridges for better understanding. In cases of adoption of Indian children by Dutch foster-parents, it leads to deeper and meaningful contact with India and its culture. Some of the organisations active in this field are as follows:

*Stichting Actie Calcutta, Stichting SLO, Landelijke India Werkgroep, Stichting Calcutta Rescue Fund Nederland, SOS Kinderdorpen, Amnesty International, NCO, Foster Parents Plan, etc.*

### **Business contacts**

It was the *V.O.C.* which started the first business contact with India. At present there are multinationals like Philips, Shell and Unilever and a vast range of Dutch companies doing business with India. On the other hand there are Indian companies active in the Netherlands. Doing business also helps to make the cultural bond between the two countries stronger. There is a constant flow of business contacts and interpersonal relationship. Nationals from both the countries are exposed to each others history, culture, arts, architecture etc. thereby creating a better understanding for each other.

### **Bilateral cooperation:**

Visits of various leaders of the two nations have brought the two countries closer to each other. As a result of these visits, intergovernmental agreement on cultural and educational exchange was signed between the two countries. It has laid the firm foundation for coordinating the programmes for

cultural exchange on government level. This agreement has become a useful vehicle for an exchange in the fields like education, culture, performing arts, research and mass media which may prove to be mutually beneficial .

The first cultural agreement was signed in 1985. The important points of the present bilateral agreement are as follows:

On government level both India and the Netherlands make every effort to further mutual understanding and friendship through exchanges in the fields of education and culture by encouraging organisations and institutions in their respective countries which are active in the fields of education, culture, science, technology and research, history, archaeology and archives, media and information, language and literature, the performing arts and visual arts, sports, and other fields related to cultural and educational cooperation, to establish direct contact with each other in areas of mutual interest and benefit.

Organisations and institutions in the two countries cooperate directly with their respective counterparts in the other country by granting scholarships, arranging seminars, workshops, lectures or lecture-cum-study tours, participating in national and international conferences, exhibitions and sports events, exchanging visits, through exchange of books, papers, journals and other relevant materials, theatre, music and dance performances, exhibitions related to the visual arts and courses in Indian studies in the Netherlands and Dutch studies in India covering history, language and literature.

Both India and the Netherlands seek to establish more permanent forms of educational and academic cooperation through structural cooperation between institutions of education. Both countries took the initiative to establish a university chair related to the study of Dutch culture and society at an Indian university, and Indian culture and society at a Netherlands university. The award of reciprocal scholarships for students and scholars is linked, as far as possible, to the structural relationships between universities and their institutions of higher education. Bilateral cooperation is also used as a basis for strengthening cooperation at a multilateral level. For this purpose the following exchanges have been agreed upon:

#### *Education and Science:*

India and the Netherlands provide 20 scholarship months per academic year for senior visiting scholars/researchers to engage in research work at academic institutions recognised as such by the relevant authorities.

The Netherlands offers 40 scholarship months per academic year for PhD and postgraduate students as well as 40 scholarship months per academic year for undergraduate students. Each grant is awarded initially for a period of 10 months.

India will offer scholarships of maximum of 40 months annually for undergraduate, postgraduate and higher studies/research.

India and the Netherlands offer 40 weeks per year for visiting scholars/experts/university staff members to give lectures and/or to participate in workshops and seminars in institutions/universities recognised as such by the relevant authorities.

#### *Art and Culture:*

India and the Netherlands facilitate the exchange of professionals in the field of arts and culture for visits of approximately seven days each, depending on the purpose of the visit, for a total of no more than 150 person (?) days per year.

Both India and the Netherlands encourage direct contact between their respective institutions in the field of culture and arts. Such activities are supported in the broadest possible sense within the framework of the respective cultural policies.

*Other fields:*

Other exchanges, including joint research, seminars and workshops and sport events, which fall under the exchange programme are arranged through the diplomatic channels.

*Languages:*

Both India and the Netherlands emphasize the great importance they attach to education in and knowledge of Dutch language and culture in India and to education in and knowledge of Indian languages and culture in the Netherlands. All matters regarding the promotion and teaching of the Dutch language in India are in the hands of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (NTU). In this respect the university of Pondicherry plays an active role. As of January 1992 there is a Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature.

*Cultural Heritage:*

Both India and Netherlands encourage cooperation in the field of the preservation and restoration of historical monuments.

The *Cultural and Educational Exchange Programme* between the Netherlands and India has played and is still playing a major role in the advancement of understanding between the peoples of the two nations.

These exchange programmes have not only been a powerful vehicle for mutually profitable exchanges in relevant and specific fields but have also served as an instrument for forging enduring institutional links between Indian and Dutch universities and/or other institutions of higher learning and research.

We hope that the area covered by the Treaty will be broadened in coming years and that a wider section of public will have access to the facilities provided by it. It is only through cultural understanding that human beings can be harnessed as productive forces in socio-economic development. That is why investment in culture has increased in recent years as a recognised imperative; no doubt, it is an investment that is bound to increase further in the cause of future friendship and understanding between the Netherlands and India.

**Conclusion**

It is impossible to catalogue exhaustively the activities in the area of culture and arts that between the two countries have taken place in the past 50 years. But from the foregoing it can be concluded that after the independence of India the need for promotion of cultural values and the creative arts between the Netherlands and India was recognised both by governmental as well as public organisations. Since independence innumerable organisations and individuals are busy to promote the musical, literary, performing arts. A very highly active dialogue between the Netherlands and India is going on to promote cultural consciousness across international boundaries.

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