

Dear SIETAR members and friends,

We wish you a splendid 2015 filled with moments of insightful discovery.

The theme for this newsletter is the celebration of freedom- not just the freedom of expression but also freedom from knee-jerk responses and polarized mindsets which is at the heart of intercultural competence. What better way to celebrate these freedoms and cultivate empathy than to listen to writers/journalists, artists speaking of their own lived experience or their work as they put themselves in the skins of others to narrate their stories. With the tremendous success of the Jaipur Literary Festival drawing eminent writers and artists from the entire world and within India, many Indian cities play hosts to literary festivals offering the possibility of listening and interacting with at least some of these great minds. In our editorial this month, Sunita Nichani who attended the Hindu Lit for Life in Chennai shares some of her takeaways with you.

## NEWS AND EVENTS

### SIETAR Europa conference in Valencia, May 21 to May 23

Theme of the conference: Refreshing the Cultural Paradigm: Sharing Stories, Theories and Next Practices  
To register click on <http://www.sietareu.org/seucongress2015>

### Message from Sietar Indonesia: Call for proposals AFS-AAI-Sietar Bali conference to be held on 15-17 Aril, 2015 in Bali

SIETAR Indonesia in collaboration with AFS and AAI, invites proposals from presenters in India for the very first Asia Pacific Regional Intercultural Conference to be held in Bali. The theme of the conference is Learning to Live Together: Intercultural Education: From Ideas to Action. Should you wish to present at this conference or attend it, send an email to [afs.aai.sietar2015@gmail.com](mailto:afs.aai.sietar2015@gmail.com).

## THE CHENNAI LITERARY CONFERENCE BY SUNITA NICHANI

A few of my favorite things from the Chennai Literary Conference- The Hindu Lit for Life

**My favorite quote:** ascribed to the late U.R.Ananthamurthy, the acclaimed writer from Karnataka who had said "You cannot talk of freedom of speech till you learn the art of listening" .

**My favorite talk:** The First Firangis: remarkable stories of Heroes, Healers, Charlatans, Courtesans and other Foreigners who became Indian- an illustrated talk on his book by the same name by Jonathan Gil Harris. Much has been written about Europeans in India during the colonial times. This author presents the stories of Europeans who came to India either to escape religious persecution or seek better prospects or even as slaves and integrated into the subcontinent well before the British colonial rule. The stories of their adaptation, of what it meant to become Indian are thought provoking.

**My favorite theme:** Challenging the Status Quo: Powerful Women in Conservative societies: Leila Seth and Jung Chang. These two women were path breaking in their times – Leila Seth the first Indian woman to be the Chief Justice of a state High court and Jung Chang, who grew up in Mao's China when books were burned, spoke of their incredible fight against prejudices, in order to make their unique contributions as professionals and as women.

**My favorite intercultural moment:** When Eleanor Catton, winner of the 2013 Man Booker prize spoke of her commitment as a writer to withholding judgment as a modern woman when describing the world view of a female character in Victorian times.



Sunita Nichani

PRESIDENT



Sreemathi Ramnath

SECRETARY



Anantadeb Bandyopadhyay



Lakshmi Kumar



Line Mark Rugholt



Mala Malkani



Jill Sheldekar