



EMAIL NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2019

Dear SIETAR India members and supporters,

After our hugely successful conference in Pune, we are delighted to break our long silence with this newsletter. The SIETAR India Board held a virtual brainstorming session earlier this year to decide on how we can continue to offer value to our members while increasing their active participation. It is crystal clear that our conferences are the time when we all connect and learn from each other. These are the moments we cherish the most. However, we do believe that it is highly important to sustain these connections and learnings through out the year via newsletters and webinars. These initiatives will give everyone the opportunity to explore new themes and connect with more audiences.

The board is deeply committed to being inclusive and would like for our newsletters and webinars to reflect your voice and to give you a platform to share and learn. We invite you to send us your contributions to our newsletter at sietarindia@gmail.com.

For this edition, we are excited to have an article from Dolon Gupta, Head of Language and Culture initiatives at Tata Consultancy Services. Inspired by the Pune conference, the TCS contingent attended and presented at the SIETAR Europa conference in Leuven. In this article, she shares with us their takeaways and impressions of the SIETAR universe outside of India. The second article is by Divya Amarnath, Senior Lead Principal - Learning and Development at Infosys. Her presentation at the Pune conference left many of us deeply moved. We are proud to announce that Divya has joined the SIETAR India Board and we look forward to collaborating with her. Our guest writer is David Sanford - an intercultural training specialist and author of *Spilling the Beans: A Guide for Indians to Understand and Communicate Successfully with U.S. Americans*.

Join us in congratulating Dr. Lakshmi Kumar, our founder Board member and a stalwart in the field of education. Lakshmi has been awarded a doctorate from Sweden for her contribution to Sweden India exchanges.

Last but not the least, a huge thank you, to Mala Malkani, who brings her brings her considerable expertise in marketing and branding and our fabulous Executive Director, Jill Sheldekar and her company Ethnosynth Consulting for providing the support needed for putting out these newsletters and hosting the webinars. Thank you to Upasana Mahajan for designing our newsletters.

Now its up to all of us to breathe life-giving energy into our newsletters and webinars.

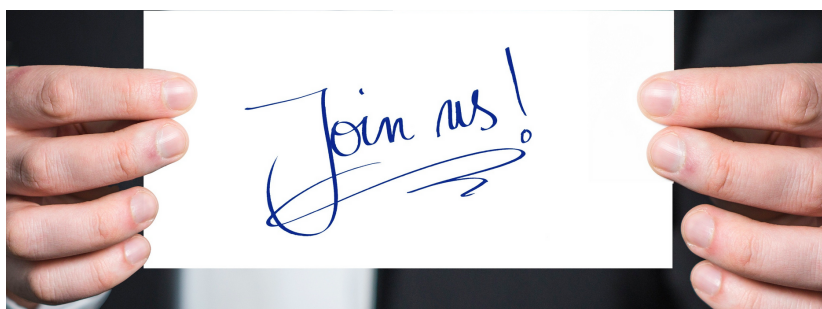
For the SIETAR India Board
Sunita Nichani,
President, SIETAR India



SIETAR INDIA 2020 Webinar Proposal

SIETAR India is excited to launch its Webinar series (one per quarter) with the objective of continuing to share, learn and staying virtually connected with the intercultural community and all those who have a strong interest in interculturalism. We invite you to send in your proposal on a topic that you have developed expertise in.

If you are interested in presenting a webinar in 2020, please complete the online survey mentioned below. SIETAR India appreciates and values presentations that provide a quality and an original learning and sharing experience on themes that are relevant to the intercultural field. No promotional content please.



The Calendar for our webinars is as follows:

Jan- March:

February 11th, 2020 at 20:30 IST/ 17:00 CET/ 11:00 EST

April- June:

April 28th, 2020 at 20:30 IST/ 17:00 CET/ 11:00 EST

July- Sep:

25th August, 2020 at 20:30 IST/ 17:00 CET/ 11:00 EST

Oct-Dec:

December 1st, 2020 at 20:30 IST/ 17:00 CET/ 11:00 EST

The deadline for submission of your proposals is January 15th, 2020 and you will be notified of acceptance by 31st January, 2020.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Submit your proposal using the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/sietarindiawebinarproposal>

Warm regards,
SIETAR India Team

SIETAR Europa Congress 2019: Takeaways & Reflections

by Dolon Gupta

Head of Language and Culture initiatives at Tata Consultancy Services



The SIETAR Europa Conference on the theme “Building Dialogues on Diversity”, took place in the charming medieval town of Leuven, Belgium, at Katholieke Universiteit – the oldest existing Catholic University in the world. Sessions were offered across 5 tracks: Business & Organizational Challenges, Socio-political Concerns, Migration, Education and Intercultural Professions and Academics.

As with any SIETAR experience, it was intensely enriching. The learnings were a full sweep: from the latest research studies from across the world to new cultural dimensions of China & Japan. There were presentations on specific techniques of using image or movement during trainings and a campfire session with the greats like Richard Lewis, Milton Bennet, Marie-Therese Claes and George Simons. I came back with two powerful messages:

- The palpable impact of the immigration situation in Europe
- The global presence of India in the world of business

Immigration situation in Europe

Immigrants and integration were not just themes for sessions, the topic recurred and re-recurred over coffee, lunch and dinner. How much of one’s identity would an immigrant or a native person need to lose, retain or adapt for one to say that integration has been successful? What role can interculturists play at this critical moment when unfamiliar values and beliefs are tugging, not just at the edges but at the very core of Europe’s identity? Is Europe culturally equipped to take this historic leap into the future?

Interesting offline conversations revealed how some interculturists were battling their own biases. One person from Germany whose town had witnessed a flood of immigrants was not interested in this topic only as an interculturist but as a citizen. On one hand, she had vehement questions like “Why should we accept them if they hold on to a differentiated cultural territory so strongly?” On the other hand, as an interculturist, she said “Understanding is the key to tolerance. Both sides need to engage. It will take time.”

Global presence of India

Another factor that came as quite a revelation was the effect of the burgeoning Indian market and how far its ripples have reached. Almost everyone I chatted with had either conducted training in Indian organizations or trained people working with Indians. During a conference in Europe, even a couple of years ago, I had been pleasantly surprised by the level of interest in Indian business. Today, that interest has matured to engagement. My session on the topic “Cultural Barriers to Language Management in a Multinational Organization” presented a view of the Indian market and its current needs, challenges and possible solutions in the space of linguistic and intercultural training. The audience, comprising of participants from Europe, US and Asia, asked insightful questions that demonstrated a clear understanding of modern India. India has come a long way indeed from being a land of snake charmers! Questions that had been echoing in my mind have gained momentum as a result – why do Indian universities not offer Intercultural Studies as a subject? What is the role we, as interculturists, need to play in India? Special mention: exceptional chocolate and beer helped sweeten and enliven conversations.



We'll Respect You for Trying

by Divya Vikas Amarnath

Senior Lead Principal - Learning and Development at Infosys

Not long ago, I received a gift at my office that arrived from the Netherlands. It was a phone cover that said in Hindi, Devanagiri Script, '*Shanth raho aur Biriyani Khao*'. A literal translation of this would be 'Keep Calm and Eat Biriyani'. This was a gift from a team of our Dutch banking clients, sent as a thank you for a workshop I facilitated on Cultural Partnerships. The customized gift was accompanied with a thoughtful letter about their experience and learning from the interaction. It was a reminder that other cultures value the language of other lands. As I return from a visit to Utrecht City, I recall my top three moments of truth:

BALANCING WHEELS

I visited the cycle parking space of the Utrecht Centraal Station, which is one of the biggest in the world. Even the walkways with steps had a ramp for riders to walk their cycles up to the top. True, the infrastructure of this country amazed me. It also reminded me that this is one of the rare countries where working professionals in full suits, ride a cycle with carriers called *bakfiets* to escort their children to school before going to work.

BALANCING LIVES

After one of our workshops, I was speaking with a Dutch colleague about preferences around friendships at work. We discussed the findings of Gallup® and the famed question they have as part of their 12 questions survey for Employee Engagement: "Do you have a best friend at work?" She laughed about this and said "Certainly we do have good friends at work, but that is where the friendship ends. In fact we are particular to keep these relationships such and not invite colleagues to our home for as long as we still have a working relationship with them."

BALANCING FRIENDSHIPS

Over the weekend, my colleagues and I were keen on savoring a meal by the side of the canal. All of the restaurants were full. It seemed like the entire population of the city was out on the streets, celebrating the weekend with a meal and their dear ones. At the table, I learnt how important it was to order a drink and hold a glass throughout the meal. The choice of drink was not judged, whether coffee or alcohol, juice or even still water. However, it was important to order a drink to be considered part of the community and share the warmth.

As I walked away from the Netherlands saying *dankjewel* or thank you for all these wonderful experiences, a friend suggested that perhaps I would soon feel *fernweh*. A beautiful German word for *awaysick*. "No wonder so many of my colleagues had signed up for language lessons," I thought to myself. "We respect you for trying" said my Dutch coach.

Riding the Waves of Technology

by David C Sanford

*Intercultural training specialist and
author of Spilling the Beans*

The world continues to knock at our door through our screens. Whether it be from our smart phones, computers, tablets or now wrist devices, we are so much more connected these days. The American author and columnist Thomas Friedman said it best more than ten years ago by coining the phrase, “The World is Flat.” The fact that we can access global news as it happens, speak or video with a friend or colleague located on the opposite side of the globe, or transfer funds from one account to another all while taking a walk through a park is the new reality of 24/7 connectivity.

In any given moment, an Indian professional stationed in Pune or Noida may be communicating with someone in New York City, London or Tokyo; global business is now at our literal finger tips. There's a good chance that these two parties are communicating via text, email, or a phone call. As such, cultural nuances, assumptions, language differences, behavioural expectations and habitual patterns of how to work and communicate effectively are thrown into question. This makes the act of being understood often times laborious, awkward and unpredictable at best. For example, recently I had the opportunity to consult with a U.S. American and Indian joint venture which primarily operates virtually with associates based in both countries working together on IT software solutions. It was not until we had a “Zoom” video meeting with the entire team from both sides that the Americans understood that typically it had only been the Indian manager offering input, despite there being four other Indian team members present on their weekly calls.

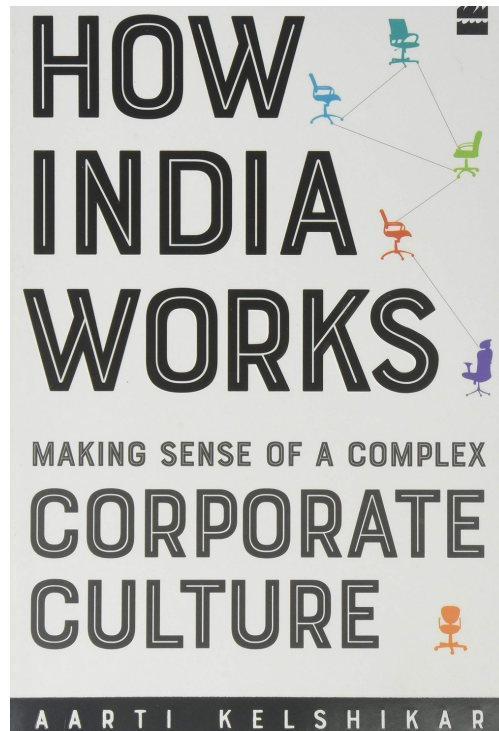
After we discussed the differences in managerial styles and team member participation it was agreed to adjust the communication protocol to give all the group members an opportunity to offer input. The result is that now all members from both sides have been sharing their input and opinions on the topic or challenge at hand, even in between the weekly check-in's.



The truth is, face-to-face communication is being substituted by virtual SMS/texting or emails which is essentially taking the personal touch out of our communication process. This is where meaning and emotional content is being replaced by quick, functional and impersonal exchanges. The art of building and maintaining meaningful relationships is being compromised.

The evolution of technology has forevermore changed how we communicate. One question that each of us must answer for ourselves is how are we going to ride this technology wave while building meaningful relationships, opening up to new ways of communicating and working successfully together across country borders.

WHAT WE ARE READING?



Both of these books focus on Indian work culture, combining inputs from the intercultural field and the voices of corporate leaders.

WHAT WE ARE WATCHING?

The second season of the Indian version of the “The Office” released on the streaming service Hotstar. If you have seen the UK and US versions, its interesting to watch from an intercultural perspective. Don’t take it too seriously though because its highly exaggerated for fun.





SOCIETY FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESEARCH

The Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research (SIETAR) - India is a non-profit association of educators, researchers and trainers from a wide range of practical and academic disciplines who share a common concern for intercultural relations. SIETAR-India provides an opportunity to learn from and share with colleagues in the intercultural arena and advance the body of knowledge and practice in the field.

SIETAR - India is part of the global network of SIETAR organizations.

Established in 1974, SIETAR has over 3500 members world-wide with affiliates in many countries. SIETAR holds Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) status with the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Contact Us:

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For more information or to submit a guest article please contact:

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