



INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

International Conference on Angkor Wat: The Monument and the Living Presence

Concept Note

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is a premier research institute dedicated to holistic understanding and expression of Indian arts in their inter and multi-disciplinary nature. The IGNCA's view of the arts encompasses a wide area of studies ranging from literature, oral tradition, the visual arts, the performing arts to the fairs and festivals, which has an artistic dimension. Starting from India, the Centre expanded its horizons to other civilizations and cultures. To study the common threads of art and culture with South East Asian countries, the IGNCA has established South East Asian Studies under its area study programme. Overtime, IGNCA created a vast resources of study materials on South East Asian Studies in the form of books, monographs, visuals etc. for further research. In continuation of its activity, IGNCA signed an MOU with the APSARA National Authority, Siem Reap (Cambodia) to study the common threads of cultures.

Angkor Wat, a largest religious complex built by Suryavarman II, is situated 5.5 Kilometres north of the city of Siem Reap in Cambodia. In Khmer, Angkor Wat, means "Temple City" or "City of Temples". It is a vernacular form of the word *nokor*, which comes from the Sanskrit word *Nagara*. Wat is the Khmer word for "temple, grounds", also derived from Sanskrit *vāṭa* meaning "enclosure". The original name of the temple was Vrah Viṣṇuloka (in Sanskrit) or Brah Bisnulōk (in Khmer) which means the sacred dwelling of Vishnu, the presiding deity. The initial design and construction of the temple took place in the first half of the 12th century A.D. The temple represents a classical style of Khmer architecture. Angkor Wat combines two basic plans of Khmer temple architecture: the temple-mountain and the later galleried temple. It is designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the *devas* in Hindu mythology. The temple has a moat and an outer wall 3.6 Kilometres long are three rectangular galleries, each raised above the next. At the centre of the temple stands a quincunx of towers. Unlike most Angkorian temples, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west. The temple is admired for the grandeur and harmony of the architecture, its extensive bas-reliefs, and for the numerous deities (*devata*) adorning its walls.

The IGNCA proposes to organize a three-days International Conference titled “Angkor Wat: The Monument and the Living Presence”. The proposed conference will a landmark academic event, attempting for the first time a holistic interpretation of the world famous monument both in time and space, tracing the journey of Khmer civilization, locating ourselves at the majestic west gate of the monument, and recapitulating long-standing India-Cambodia friendship. Prospective paper presenters are requested to write their paper, keeping Angkor Wat as centre piece and looking at the evolution of Angkor civilization in retrospect and prospect.

We propose the following panels for your reference, inviting you to suggest new themes and issues related to the Angkor Wat in wider context of Khmer, Indian and Asian symbiosis.

Some suggested panels:

1. Visiting Angkor Wat: the Problem of *Prasavya* and *Pradakshina* (temple or Tomb)
2. Search for *Amrita*: Interpreting the *Samudramanthan* Gallery
3. Was Angkor a temple or temple-city? Results of recent excavations inside the Angkor Wat Temple compound
4. Restoration of APSARAS divine female figures of ANGKOR Wat
5. Moat of Angkor Wat in the wider context of water as symbol of Khmer and Indian civilization
6. The battle of Lanka and the *Mahabharata*: as chiselled by the Khmer Artists
7. The Buddhist Transformation of Angkor Wat, beginning of the process and its culmination
8. Angkor Wat as the symbol of Khmer National Unity
9. Restoration of Angkor Wat through the ages: from the post-Angkorean times to the modern period.
10. Angkor Wat: Heaven on the earth (*Paramavishnuloka*): The *Vaishnava* linkage between Indian and Cambodia.
11. Cultural Administration

As an output of this conference, a Roadmap for collaborative projects during next five years and documentation of the site by the joint team will be carved out. The conference will be held at the Conference Hall, Media Centre No. 3, Dr Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi 110001 from 28-30 March 2018.