

## Bonjour India commences in Ahmedabad with Convergence, S. Thala, and A Trip to France

- *Convergence* exhibition to display photographs of India from two and a half centuries
- *S. Thala*: a contemporary dance performance based on Marguerite Duras' haunting novel – *L'Amour*
- *A Trip to France*, exhibition to showcase photos by Parmanand Dalwadi

**Ahmedabad, March 24, 2022:** Bonjour India, France's cultural festival in India, will commence in Ahmedabad with the inauguration of three key events – ***Convergence: Photography's French connections in India*** (March 24<sup>th</sup>), ***A Trip to France*** on (March 25<sup>th</sup>) and the dance performance, ***S. Thala***, (March 25<sup>th</sup>). The elegant dance performance *S. Thala* is based on Marguerite Duras' haunting novel *L'Amour*. The two exhibitions are visual sensations that will delight audiences of all ages and backgrounds. They are intended to foster lively discussions around the centuries-old relationship between India and France by sharing the stories and experiences of those who played a part in reinforcing this relationship. These men and women were intrepid artists, travelers, journalists, photographers, and writers. Their learnings, magical journeys through sometime uncharted lands, and rich lives serve as the narratives that populate the vast canvas at the two exhibitions.

The ***Convergence: Photography's French connections in India*** exhibition will be inaugurated on Thursday, at 6:30 pm at the Amdavad ni Gufa in presence of the curator, Rahaab Allana, and will be on view until 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Visitors to *Convergence* will see photographs of India taken over two and a half centuries by Indian and French photographers who travelled or lived in India from the mid-19th century till the 1970s. Notable among them are Louis Rousselet, who came to India in the mid-nineteenth century, and Marc Riboud, a French journalist who travelled across Asia in the 1950s. Works by other European masters such as Denis Brihat, Paul Almahsy, and Michel Semeniako who took trips to India from the 1950s until the 1970s will also be showcased.

Captured in the many photos are the beautiful faces of ordinary Indians going about their lives. Unadulterated by modern influences, the expressions will seem enigmatic to every Indian today. One such photograph is that of a humble woman vending prawns. Another of a parched grain seller, shows a man who despite being indigent, radiates tremendous dignity.

Marc Riboud's photograph called *Scene at the Ghat*, taken on the banks of the Ganges in Calcutta, shows people calmly standing or swimming in water as a large ship passes in the backdrop. Another taken on the outskirts of Mumbai shows two people engaged in intense discussion. His images combine poetic appeal and realism, lyricism and rough-readiness.

Some other images showcase the work of the French surgeon-turned-photographer Jean-Baptiste Oscar Mallitte (1829-1905). He arrived in Calcutta from Bordeaux in July 1857, joining a British expedition to the Andaman Islands for purposes of territorial survey. He took the first photographs of the islands, and in 1858 he began teaching as 'a practical photographer' at the Calcutta School of Industrial Arts, which had

recently introduced photography into the curriculum. Mallitte, like other Indian photographers including Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1834-1880) earned renown and respect for his albumen prints that were widely exhibited in the photographic societies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras; in 1862 his works were awarded a prize by the Bengal Photographic Society. He remained in India for the rest of his life and was buried in Calcutta, almost fifty years after his arrival. His photographs include a group portrait of young boys working with metal and another outdoor scene showing men making a wooden carriage wheel.

Other photographs were taken by the intrepid French traveller/writer/artist Louis-Théophile Marie Rousselet (1845-1929). Rousselet travelled in the subcontinent from 1864-68, recording his experiences in a diary, and making detailed maps and sketches. In 1868 he began working with the publishers Goupil & Cie on a visual project composed of 160 photographic plates, some of which are reproduced in this exhibition.

A pedagogical kit for French language teachers from all schools and universities teaching the language is available to help teachers guide their students through the exhibition and exploration of the medium of photography.

The *Trip to France* exhibition, commencing on Friday at 6 pm at Alliance Française d'Ahmedabad, will showcase photographs clicked by Parmanand Dalwadi during his visit to France in the 1970s. He visited France during the heyday of disco and boogie. This was a time when men sported long hair and mustaches and women oozed La Mode – life was good. Even the French protesters who were discontent displayed their emotions publicly while donning stylish bell-bottoms, frayed jeans, midi skirts, and other fashionable apparel! Prof. Dalwadi captured the vibrant atmosphere in that country with his Nikon F. In his photographs shines the influence of Mr. Henri Cartier-Bresson; the world-renowned photojournalist whom Parmanand Dalwadi accompanied during the former's journey to Northern India in 1965. Prof. Dalwadi will be present at the inauguration of the exhibition in Ahmedabad.

*S. Thala* is a dance performance inspired by Marguerite Duras' novel – *L'Amour*. The novel tells the story of a man who arrives at the seaside town of S. Thala to abandon his present. Yet there he is reintroduced to his past after meeting a woman to whom he had been engaged twenty years ago as a young man. The woman walks with and is kept watch over by another man. The dance performance captures the interplay between the three through a poetic dance. *S. Thala*, performed by Annette Leday who has studied Kathakali and western dance, accurately captures the essence of the novel *L'Amour* by marrying contemporary dance and Indian gestures.. Audience members who've never read *L'Amour* will come away from the performance feeling that they know Duras intimately. The performance will commence on Friday at 8:30 pm at the Natarani Amphitheatre.

Speaking about the two exhibitions and the dance performance, **Mr. Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet, Consul General of France in Bombay** said, "*The two exhibitions at Ahmedabad are a visual treat. Each is a potpourri of visuals and perspectives from two or more cultures. The synthesis of these events under the aegis of a single festival means that audiences get to experience something unique and previously unseen. We believe that both these exhibitions can help open visitors' eyes to another world - one that combines dream-like imagery with a sharp and often humorous tone. Each exhibition can serve as the launching pad of stimulating and fun discussions between groups of friends or family members - whatever be their interests or profession. Similarly, S. Thala, is a delight to the senses. The dance evokes feelings of*

*timelessness interspersed with slight trepidation. It perfectly captures the essence of Marguerite Duras' book, which means weeks after having watched S. Thala, audiences will still reminisce the visuals from this breathtaking performance."*

*"Ahmedabad's relationship with art dates to well before Indian independence. And since independence, the city's landscape has been influenced by artists like Ravishankar Raval, Kanubhai Desai, Somalal Shah, Dashrat Patel, Piraji Sagara, Rasiklal Parikh, and MF Husain. Anecdotes about public spaces that served as meeting spots for artists in Ahmedabad are abound. In addition, the city has a centuries old relationship with artisans and artists who thrived under royal patronage. **Convergence** and **A Trip to France** remain true to the artistic spirit that has shaped so much in Ahmedabad. These exhibits will showcase extraordinary pictures which have stories that are as rich and varied as the artistic tapestry of Ahmedabad. Visitors to these exhibits will see in the images something they have never seen before, yet their eyes, will be quick to recognize that what they see is fully congruous with the rich artistic heritage of Ahmedabad and India. Also, S. Thala's delicate, purposeful dance will give audiences a unique take on life and love."* said **Gaël de Kerguenec, Director, Alliance Française d'Ahmedabad.**



**For further information on the program, please visit**

<https://www.ifindia.in/bonjour-india>

<https://www.ifindia.in/event/s-thala/>

<https://www.ifindia.in/event/travel-to-france/>

<https://www.ifindia.in/event/convergence-photography-exhibition/>

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## About Bonjour India:

France and India enjoy a substantive partnership at the core of which lie its people-to-people relations, nurtured for decades through collaborations and exchanges. One of its manifestations is the regular rendezvous between our two countries, Bonjour India. This artistic, cultural, educational and social initiative is an Indo-French moment put together by the French cooperation network in India mainly comprising of the Embassy of France and its cultural service, Institut Français en Inde, the Alliance Française network and the Consulates of France.

Bonjour India was launched in 2009, travelling across India to offer a series of events around ideas, science and art. In 2013, the second edition of BI encouraged Indo-French collaboration and co-productions, attracting a considerable audience within the span of 3 months. Scaling up, BI 2017 – 2018 served as a



platform for the incubation of dreams, ideas and projects bringing together the best talent between the two countries. The fourth edition of Bonjour India 2022 will set a new precedent - making this rendezvous with literature, art and culture between the two countries - an annual affair. People at the forefront of their fields will share their inspiring journeys as they change society through their innovation and creativity and help us reconnect with each other post the pandemic.

For further information please visit <https://www.ifindia.in/bonjour-india/>

### **The National Institute of Design creates the Bonjour India logo**

Celebrating the Indo-French diplomatic relations, the logo of Bonjour India has been designed by National Institute of Design, retaining the essence of the festival that is central to fostering human exchanges between the two countries through arts, culture, science and education. The color story symbolically represents the two nations, with the use of, red and blue in the letter form B, and saffron and green in the O's and R. Together, the visual language of Bonjour India 2022 summarises the ethos of the festival that looks forward to bringing together moments of joy, cheer, sharing, being in the open, and connecting with people.

### **The Organisers:**

Overall, Bonjour India will cover 19 cities across the country, showcasing Indo-French expertise and collaboration in innovation, education, research, science and technology, arts and culture. This artistic, cultural, educational and social initiative is an Indo-French moment put together by the French cooperation network in India mainly comprising of the Embassy of France and its cultural service, the French Institute in India, the Alliance Française network and, the Consulates of France in collaboration with Indian Council for Cultural Relations, with support from various public and private partners.



## Institut Français

The **Institut français** is a public institution responsible for French cultural actions abroad. Its initiatives cover various artistic fields, intellectual exchanges, cultural and social innovation, and linguistic cooperation. Throughout the world, it promotes the French language, as well as the mobility of artworks, artists and ideas, and thus works to foster cultural understanding. The Institut français, under the aegis of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, actively contributes to France's soft diplomacy. Its projects and programs take local contexts into account and can be successfully implemented thanks to the vast network of the French Embassies' cultural services, as well as the many Instituts français and Alliances Françaises present across five continents.

**The French Institute in India (Institut Français en Inde - IFI)** is the educational, scientific and cultural department of the Embassy of France in India. It facilitates academic and scientific exchanges between higher institutes of learning and research, enables student mobility, and promotes the French language, and artistic and cultural partnerships. Cooperation between India and France takes place through a number of sectors: Arts & Culture, Books, Ideas, French Language & Education, the Study in France programme, Academic Partnerships, Science Technology, as well as Innovation and Multimedia. [www.ifindia.in](http://www.ifindia.in)

## About Alliance Française of Ahmedabad

The Alliance Française of Ahmedabad was created in 1981 by a group of eminent local personalities; among them, Ms. Mrinalini Sarabhai, Mr. B V. Doshi (2018 Pritzker Prize for Architecture) and Ms. Devi Mangaldas. Its first branch in Baroda dates from 2003 and the second in Surat dates from 2019. AFA organizes more than 80 international cultural events locally and in collaboration with renowned institutions (IIM-A, NID, CEPT, Ahmedabad University, Darpana, etc.). It is the only French media library and the first French book center in Gujarat. It counts among its prestigious former members and alumni, the Prime Minister of India Mr. Modi. With 3000 students every year AF Ahmedabad is one the biggest French learning Institutes in India. <https://ahmedabad.afindia.org>

## BNP Paribas India: Presenting Partner

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## About the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts (curatorial partner on Convergence exhibition)

Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi's relentless patronage of the arts since 1960's eventually led to the establishment of the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts (AFA), a Registered Charitable Trust based in New Delhi, India in 2006. Over the years, the Alkazi Foundation has been committed to making this vast collection available to the academic community and the general public, by acting as a centre for the research and study of photography and theatre by disseminating this knowledge through a series of scholarly publications, exhibitions, seminars, conferences, workshops and archive visits.

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BONJOUR India 2022

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India



**DALWADI**  
AN INDIAN LENS ON FRANCE

ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE D'AHMEDABAD

**PHOTO EXHIBITION**  
**A TRIP TO FRANCE**  
**25 MARCH - 6 APRIL**

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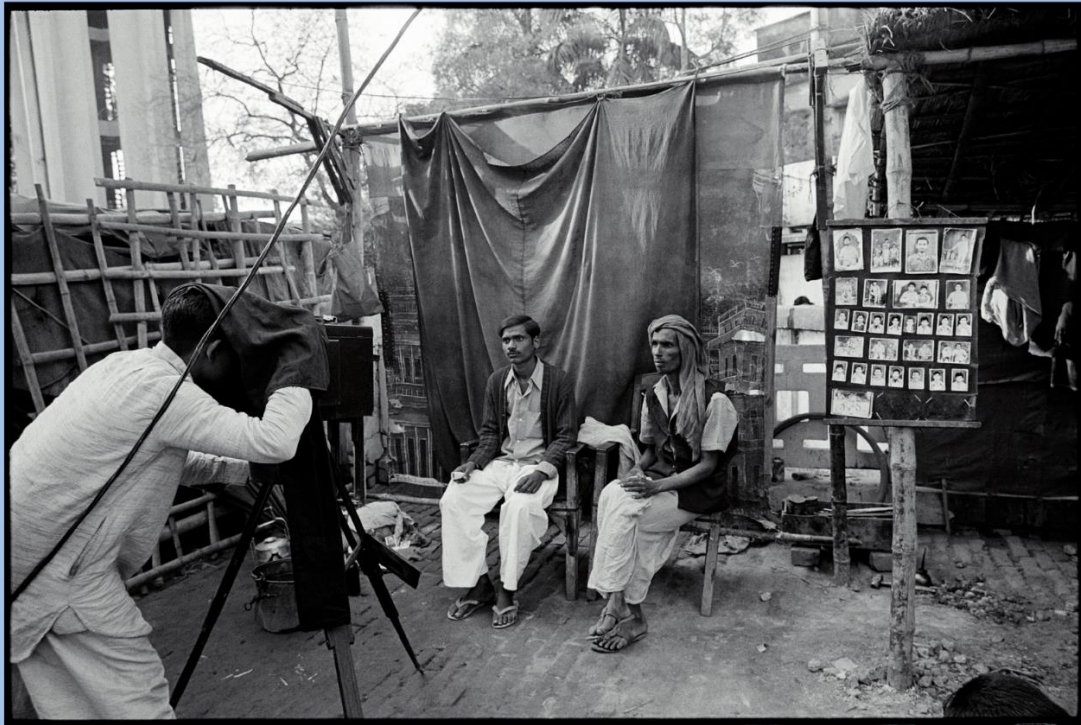
[www.ifindia.in](http://www.ifindia.in)

In collaboration with



The Alkazi Foundation  
for the Arts

A PANORAMA *of* PHOTOGRAPHY'S *French* CONNECTIONS IN *India*



Board from 'Self-Portrait Collection' by Anand Mahajan, 1990s. Photo by Anand Mahajan.

# CONVERGENCE

AMDAVAD NI GUFA, AHMEDABAD

Curated by  
RAHAAB ALLANA

MARCH 24–APRIL 02, 4PM–8PM TUESDAY  
–SUNDAY

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25 MARCH | 8:30 PM  
NATARANI AMPHITHEATRE  
AHMEDABAD



**S.THALA**  
**AN INDIAN SUITE**  
BY ANNETTE LEDAY/KELI COMPANY

**MOMENT OF POETRY**  
**MARRYING DANCE**  
**FRENCH LITERATURE**  
**& INDIAN GESTURES**



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# BONJOUR India 2022



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