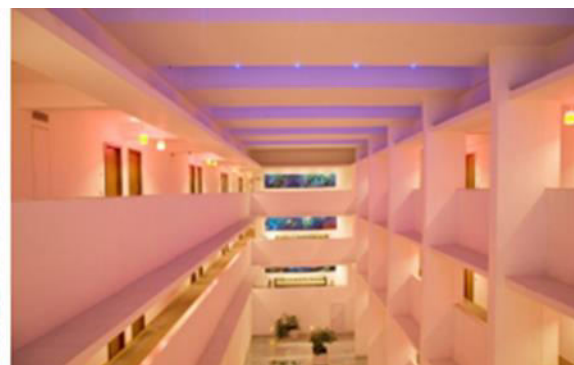


## The Park Hotels Presents India Design Talks



This September saw the inaugural London Design Biennale at Somerset House bringing installations, artworks and design proposals from 37 countries and territories to the heart of the capital. Ms. Priya Paul, Chairperson of The Park Hotels, is an avid art collector, design enthusiast and pioneer of luxury travel in India, and was delighted to represent India at a design discussion exploring the Biennale's theme for 2016: Utopia in Design.

Supported by a panel of some of the most respected figures in Indian design, Ms. Priya Paul was joined by **Mr. Sunil Khilnani** - Professor and Director of King's College London India Institute, **Ms. Rajshree Pathy** - Founder of India Design Forum, **Mr. James Soane** - London-based Indophile designer who founded award-winning design studio Project Orange and **Ms. Alice Cicolini** - world renowned jewellery designer, whose work is inspired by the Silk Route. During the discussion, the panel explored culture, heritage and the future of design in the subcontinent while also explaining exactly what utopia means to them.

### SUNIL KHILNANI – THE ROOT AND PURPOSES OF DESIGN IN INDIA

Opening up the discussion of Utopia by Design, Sunil Khilnani communicated the contradictions in a modern utopia that focuses so heavily on the future and yet still attempts to balance with heritage, tradition and nostalgia.

Delving into India's history, his talk drew upon his best-selling book, *Incarnations*, which tells the history of India through the lives of 50 individuals from all realms of human creativity. Khilnani outlined **three distinct impulses running throughout Indian thought and history**: the first is the interest in the **design of the universe**, from the Sanskrit grammarian Panini through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. Then there are **those who have critiqued social hierarchy**, such as Basava, Jyotirao Phule and Thantha Periyar. The third strand runs through **arts, literature and film** in modern India, and includes creative women like Amrita Sher-Gil and MS Subbulakshmi.

Perhaps the **most remarkable social designer of all was Mahatma Gandhi**. Often portrayed as a spiritual paragon, his ashrams, communal farms, experimental living and political marches are all indicative of a stylish innovator,

a brilliant creator and a genius when it came to design and branding. **Hotels** His ethos consistently looked to the future, to a modern and tolerant utopia, while also celebrating his religion, culture, his Indian roots and the importance of cherishing tradition.

It was this dichotomy of past and present, beauty and imperfections, and modernity against tradition that set the tone for India's discussion at the inaugural London Design Biennale.

## **INDIAN DESIGN PANEL ON UTOPIA BY DESIGN – WHERE EAST MEETS WEST**

Ms. Priya Paul is often heralded as one of the frontrunners of Indian design in both the art world and the travel industry. Closely working with both world renowned architects and designers, The Park Hotels have a reputation for running some of the most contemporary, design led, and striking properties in the country.

However, despite pushing the boundaries of contemporary architecture, Priya Paul's passion in the creation of her hotels will forever lie in the **juxtaposition between Indian culture and tradition against the most innovative techniques and trends in the design world.**

While The Park Hotels collaborate with globally respected design teams, Ms. Paul's own version of design utopia has its roots in combining these experts with the craftsmen and artisans whose trade has not been learnt through formal education, but instead have been passed down through generations of familial tradition.

The Park Hotels has boutique properties everywhere from India's most glittering cosmopolitan cities and business districts to tropical havens and remote national parks. While a futuristic element cloaks the palm fringed The Park Calangute, Goa, The Park Hotel in technology-focused Hyderabad takes inspiration from ancient Indian palaces. **It is the blend of old and new, east meets west, tradition fused with trends, and local communities working alongside universal brands.**

**Inspired by the architecture and the patterns of the Silk Road, Alice Ciccolini** was yet another fascinating panellist taking part in the discussion on Utopia in Design. A Research Associate at Central St Martins and former Director Arts & Culture for the British Council in India, her work has been exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum and Somerset House in London and has been drawn from the ancient network of trade routes, which connects the East and the West.

With her interest in the historical and cultural importance of the Silk Road to India's development and her experience working with Jaipur designers, Alice touched upon the skills and the talents of the local craftsmen in India and the idea of ancient techniques and traditional designs becoming lost at the hands of technology and Western influences. A common theme of the evening, this concern to preserve heritage and culture was echoed in Priya Paul's own approach to her design led hotels.

**Project Orange, is a multi award winning architect and interior Hotels studio** founded by Cambridge graduates. Throughout the panel discussion, Co-Founder James Soane highlighted the idea that travellers want experiences, discoveries and the exotic. Design has become a trusted medium in heightening exploration and offering escape, and in a world that is becoming increasingly clinical it's the quirks and the imperfections that truly make an adventure.

So where does the future lie with The Park Hotels and design? Recently turning attention to a mid-market range of properties, their ethos of fusing contemporary design with Indian tradition to produce unique and beautiful hotels is no longer an experience afforded to the very affluent. As far away as possible from the idea of a mundane and sterile, 'bed factory', inclusion is at the heart of Priya Paul's inspiration with her **Zone by the Park properties** - contemporary and stylish without scrimping on the colourful exoticism that makes India so unique and experiential.

## **CHAKRAVIEW: INDIA'S MYTHOLOGICAL STORIES ARE A FOUNDATION FOR UTOPIA**

IDF's showcase 'CHAKRAVIEW' poignantly portrays the multiple utopias that India emulates. Weaving together ancient myth and modern design innovations, this installation captures a sense of the country's past and current definitions of design and presents to the viewer a unique blend that the social, political and religious climate of India has always been characteristic of.

Rajshree Pathy, founder of IDF, states that 'mythological stories are a foundation for utopia because they represent how ancient communities tried to reach a perfect ideal'. "Like the seven chakras, our visions of utopia are simultaneously spiritual and progressive", says Pathy. In a stunning collaboration with scenographer Sumant Jayakrishnan, 'CHAKRAVIEW', that includes fabrics made by Aadyam, the weaver's initiative of the Aditya Birla Group, brings together a multitude of facets that capture India's design landscape ranging from celebrating India's unique cultural heritage, capturing the sustainability of rural crafts and innovation and extending to the creation of Indian consumer products that can be marketed both locally and internationally.

## **About London Design Biennale**

The inaugural London Design Biennale is at Somerset House from 7 to 27 September 2016, bringing installations, artworks and design proposals from 37 countries and territories to the heart of the capital. The exhibits address the Biennale's 2016 theme, 'Utopia by Design', and explore questions and ideas about sustainability, migration, pollution, cities, social equality and much more. The Biennale will occupy the entirety of Somerset House, including the famous Edmond J. Safra Fountain Court. Situated on the banks of the River Thames in the heart of London, the former royal palace is a world famous cultural centre and is one of London's most visited attractions with more than 3.2 million visitors in 2015.

## **About The Park Hotels**

The Park Hotels, pioneers of luxury boutique hotels in India are present in the major cities & leisure destinations. Situated in prime locations, they house some

of India's most inventive restaurants, liveliest bars & nightclubs, **Hotels** award winning spas and health clubs. The state-of-the-art business aids, edgy art & stylish spaces, all make them a natural choice for the corporate & leisure traveller. The Park is present in Bangalore\*, Chennai\*, Hyderabad\*, Kolkata\*, Navi Mumbai, New Delhi\* and Visakhapatnam. The Park Collection is intimate, personalised, and tailored to transmit an inimitable guest experience. The Park Collection consists of The Park Calangute\* (Goa). The Park will soon open in Pune and Jaipur.

\*A member of Design Hotels™

[www.theparkhotels.com](http://www.theparkhotels.com)

### **About Sunil Khilnani**

Sunil Khilnani is currently Avantha Professor and Director of the India Institute at King's College London. His publications include the acclaimed and influential *The Idea of India* and most recently, *Incarnations: A History of India in 50 Lives*, produced also as a radio and podcast version with the BBC.

### **About India Design Forum**

Established in 2012, IDF was created by Rajshree Pathy as a platform to explore and educate others about the power of design. IDF has had a long-standing partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and the Government of India. Created as a platform to bridge together rural and urban definitions of design, IDF's vision is to see a modern day collaboration between India's traditional heritage and contemporary products through applications of technology and innovation. It is the most prominent and leading forum of its kind in the country, bringing together all the disciplines that are related to design including Architecture, Urban Development, Industrial & Product design and technology.

### **About Project Orange**

Project Orange is an award winning RIBA Chartered Architect and Interior Design Studio with a broad and original portfolio of work in the UK and overseas. Set up by Christopher Ash and James Soane, the practice excels in those projects that seek a seamless marriage of architecture and interior design, be they homes, hotels or offices.