

## **Tune in for an engaging discussion on cultural & digital diplomacy and soft power and their impact and value in the times of a global crisis**

*“Cultural diplomacy creates an additional space which softens the sharp edges of foreign policy.” – Dr. Suresh Goel, Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)*

### **For Immediate Release**

Culture can be the glue that binds civil societies, and in this respect, the importance of cultural diplomacy in the modern world cannot be understated. It has become a key aspect of the state's diplomatic practices in order to strengthen their own soft power. Understanding and interacting with the culture of other nations is essential for international cooperation. With these concepts of culture, globalization and international relations becoming increasingly interdependent, mastering all three develops a country's soft power and fosters successful collaboration, cooperation and commerce in today's increasingly interlinked world.

Furthermore, as the world collectively faces an unprecedented crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the concepts of cultural diplomacy and international cooperation have become more pertinent and relevant than ever before.

**Avid Learning** presents **Cultural and Digital Diplomacy During a Global Crisis**, a panel discussion that examines the potential and impact of cultural diplomacy and the arts in responding to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, while spotlighting some interesting diplomatic entities, initiatives and programs that have made a significant impact in this context.

*Director of Public Affairs, U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai* **Ben East**, *Former Diplomat and Distinguished Fellow, ORF* **Navdeep Singh Suri** and *Volunteer iSpirt, Executive Board Member MOSIP and co-founder NICE* **Sanjay Anandaram** will be in conversation with *Executive Director and Co-Founder, Gateway House* **Manjeet Kripalani**.

*Please read on for more details:*

Our panel – consisting of diplomats and relevant experts – will elaborate on the concept of cultural diplomacy, examine its importance in encouraging international cooperation to respond to the ongoing pandemic and probe its evolution in the digital realm. They will highlight successful initiatives and best practices in this context and also discuss the future of cultural diplomacy moving forwards.

Join our panel of experts to find out more about the current state and future trajectory of cultural diplomacy and its role in fostering a more collective, cohesive, collaborative and cooperative response to a global crisis.

**When:** Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

**RSVP:** [www.avidlearning.in](http://www.avidlearning.in)

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Director of Public Affairs, U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai	Former Diplomat and Distinguished Fellow, ORF	Volunteer ISpirt, Executive Board Member MOSIP and co-founder NICE	Co-Founder and Executive Director, Gateway House
<b>Ben East</b>	<b>Navdeep Singh Suri</b>	<b>Sanjay Anandaram</b>	<b>Manjeet Kripalani</b>

Moderator: Manjeet Kripalani

DATE: **THURSDAY, 25 MARCH '21**  
TIME: **6:00 PM - 7:30 PM**  
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## About the Speakers

**Ben East** serves as Director of Public Affairs at the U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai. His team promotes mutual understanding between the people of Western India and the people of the United States through media, exchange, and cultural programs, including events at Mumbai's Dosti House and Ahmedabad's American Corner. Ben has filled diplomatic roles in Washington DC, Mexico, Ghana, Nicaragua, and Saudi Arabia over the last two decades. Before joining the State Department, Ben served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi and taught British and American literature in Brooklyn, New York, and Asuncion, Paraguay. His novels Patchworks and Two Pumps for the Body Man explore America's gun culture and U.S. efforts to address terrorism. He is joined in Mumbai by his wife and two sons.

**Navdeep Suri** is Distinguished Fellow and Director, Centre for New Economic Diplomacy at the Observer Research Foundation. He has recently completed a distinguished 36-year career in the Indian Foreign Service, having served in India's diplomatic missions in Cairo, Damascus, Washington, Dar es Salaam and London and as India's Consul General in Johannesburg. He has also headed the West Africa and Public Diplomacy departments at the Ministry of External Affairs. He was India's High Commissioner to Australia and Ambassador to Egypt and UAE. In a rare gesture, the President of UAE conferred on him the Order of Zayed II, the country's second-highest civilian award. His innovative use of social media in public diplomacy in 2010 also received extensive recognition and two prestigious awards. Navdeep has learnt Arabic and French, has a Masters degree in Economics and has written on India's Africa policy, on Public Diplomacy and on the IT outsourcing industry. His English translations of his grandfather Nanak Singh's classic Punjabi novels have been published by Penguin as 'The Watchmaker' and by Harper Collins as 'A Life Incomplete' and 'Khooni Vaisakhi'.

**Sanjay Anandaram** has over 30 years of experience in India and overseas as an entrepreneur, investor, executive, board member, teacher and mentor. As a passionate believer in entrepreneurship and technology for effecting societal change he is involved with several funds, public and private organizations and academic institutions in furtherance of this belief. He has written and lectured extensively on these topics over the years in various publications and blogs. Sanjay is currently a volunteer global ambassador with iSPIRT (ispirt.in), Executive Board member of MOSIP (mosip.io) an open-source ID platform for countries and co-founder of NICE (niceorg.in) a Section 8 company that works to enable Brand India by creating an ecosystem for Indian cultural entrepreneurship.

**Manjeet Kripalani** is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations, and acts as the executive director of the institution. Prior to the founding of Gateway House, Kripalani was India Bureau chief of Businessweek magazine from 1996 to 2009. During her extensive career in journalism (Businessweek, Worth and Forbes magazines, New York), she has won several awards, including the Gerald Loeb Award, the George Polk Award, Overseas Press Club and Daniel Pearl Awards. Kripalani was the 2006-07 Edward R. Murrow Press Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, which inspired her to found Gateway House. Her political career spans being the deputy press secretary to Steve Forbes during his first run in 1995-96 as Republican candidate for U.S. President in New Jersey, to being press secretary for the Lok Sabha campaign for independent candidate Meera Sanyal in 2008 and 2014 in Mumbai. Kripalani holds two bachelor's degrees from Bombay University (Bachelor of Law, Bachelor of Arts in English and History) and a master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University, New York. She is currently a member of the Center for American Progress' U.S.-India Task Force, as well as being a member of the Asian advisory board of the International Centre for Journalists and the Overseas Press Club, and sits on the executive board of Gateway House, the Indian Liberal Group and Emancipation, all of which are non-profit organizations.

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