



**3<sup>rd</sup> UniSA Nelson Mandela Lecture  
and Adelaide Festival Centre's OzAsia Festival Keynote Address**

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**Is it Necessary to Love Your Neighbours?  
Living with Radical Diversities and the Right to be Oneself**

**Dr Ashis Nandy, Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, India**  
*Prominent International Sociologist and Political Scientist*

**Tuesday 21 September 2010**  
**Her Majesty's Theatre, 58 Grote Street, Adelaide**

**Mr Hieu Van Le**

Good evening and welcome to the OzAsia Festival Keynote Address, a joint function between the Hawke Centre at the University of South Australia and the Adelaide Festival Centre. My name is Hieu Van Le, I'm the patron of the OzAsia Festival and it is great honour for me to welcome you all here this evening, what promises to be a wonderfully and thought-provokingly lecture.

Can I first of all acknowledge the Chancellor of the Uni SA, Dr Ian Gould, the Vice Chancellor and President of Uni SA, Professor Peter Høj, Mr Douglas Gautier, CEO Adelaide Festival Centre, the hats and representatives of State, our department, government departments, Head of School and Dean of Universities in South Australia, my predecessor, Dr Basil Hetzel, AC, former Lieutenant Governor of South Australia and also Patron of the Hawke Centre. Mr Elliott Johnston, Patron of the Reconciliation SA. Members of the Adelaide City Council, all the distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I would also like to acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of the Kurna people and we respect their spiritual relationship with the country. As a Patron of OzAsia Festival it is a great pleasure to welcome you to this event. When I arrived here in this country 33 years ago, as one of many thousand Vietnamese boat people, I held certain perception about what Australia was like. I thought that Australia was overwhelmingly Anglo Celtic and European society, and as a refugee who tried to rebuild my life in a new land and a top priority at that time was to get settled, work very hard and gradually realise my dreams for a brighter future. I thought along the way I might have to give up all of my cultural heritage and assimilate into the society. It soon become apparent to me, however, that my new home was much much more culturally diverse than I had imagined. I was and still am amazed how culturally rich the Australian society is. I realise that this country has been settled by merits of migrants and refugees from all corners of the world, for all of its history, and I realise that the cultural influence of these waves of migrants and refugees on Australia was tangible and growing and that the influx of the Vietnamese added just another dimension to this culturally diverse society. As the 1970s gave way to the 80's, and the 80's to the 90's, our country became more closely engaged with Asia in an economic and political sense. All this of course has been accompanied by a great blooming in the cultural relationship as well, a trend that has brought us outstanding events at the OzAsia Festival. The festival is getting better every year I

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believe, and its scope is becoming broader and deeper as it becomes widely known and triggers significant interests, not only in South Australia and Australia but also in Asia as well. We are being spoiled with a terrific range of artistic performances from across Australia and Asia, and we are welcoming to Adelaide many highly respected and original thinkers, such as the man, the main speaker who we'll be hearing tonight. For their overall influence and leadership on OzAsia Festival I want to thank Dr Gautier, the CEO and Artistic Director of Adelaide Festival Centre and Jacinta Thompson, the Director of the OzAsia Festival. I would like also to acknowledge the partners who have worked together to present this lecture, Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Hoy, Professor Paul Fairall and Ms Elizabeth Ho representing the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre.

Ladies and gentlemen it's been an honour to welcome you to this evening address, I thank you for your attendance and I hope to see you at other OzAsia Festival events in the coming weeks, including tomorrow night, a moon lantern festival down at the Elder Park. To formally introduce this evening's distinguished speaker, I would like now to welcome to the lectern, someone whose upbringing and professional career reflects merit of cultural heritage. Born in Kenya, he studied and worked in many countries including Canada, USA, England and Australia. His main interests includes African studies, social and cultural theory, post-colonial theory, processive diaspora, exalt and migration. In 2008 he was appointed the UNESCO Chair in Transnational Diaspora and Reconciliation Studies. Currently, he is the Pro Vice Chancellor and Vice President of the Division of Education, Arts and Social Science at the Uni SA. Ladies and gentlemen please welcome Professor Pal Alhuwalia, thank you.

#### **Professor Pal Alhuwalia**

Thank you Hieu. Let me begin also by extending my welcome to everybody on behalf of the University of South Australia and in particular the Hawke, the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre and our Law School, which have been instrumental in putting this program together. I think it's a, it's fitting that the lecture is called the Nelson Mandela Lecture given the speaker tonight is a person who I have great pleasure and honour in introducing Ashis Nandy, who fundamentally believes I think in the values and in the, embodies the spirit of what Mandela has sought to do, in fact, one of the pleasures of having Ashis here has been about our talking about him meeting Mandela a few years ago and how inspiring that was for him personally, but I want to be very brief to say that we're in for a real treat tonight. I have heard Ashis Nandy speak many times now in the last few weeks and it's not surprising that he's been labelled as India's most arresting thinker, I think he is a, in India he will be considered a national treasure and of course, if you were watching the screen earlier he is listed as one of the top 100 public intellectuals in the world today. I'm sure you've read a lot about him in the publicity but I could just add a couple of things – one, Ashis's work is absolutely path breaking and for people in cultural and political and post-colonial theory particularly, it's absolutely mandatory reading, cos he has forged such a path for those of us who grapple with the post-colonial condition, but it's also the everyday which is so important to his work, and the idea that it's not just theorising it at one level, but it's really capturing the essence of the everyday and the way in which people work through that problematic. So without further ado, I introduce Professor Ashis Nandy, our speaker for the Nelson Mandela Lecture tonight.

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#### **Dr Ashis Nandy**

Thank you for having me here. I am immensely grateful for this honour and the very gracious introduction given by Professor Pal Ahluwalia and I thank the Oz Festival as well as the University of South Australia that they have invited me here and given me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I hope you can fathom my Bengali accent, I will try to be, speak as slowly as I can, that is what I have been advised to do.

I begin with three snippets from a large study we did on genocide that accompanied the birth of India and Pakistan 60 years ago, we are doing a very large study over the last decade and we have had collaboration from Pakistani and Bangladeshi scholars too.

The first one involves the interview with an elderly woman by a Pakistani scholar, a friend of mine. The interviewer asked this elderly lady if the Hindu caste system, with its ornate ideas of purity and pollution did not distance the South Asian Muslims from the Hindus. The woman said no, and went on with her narrative. The interviewer wanted to be doubly sure and after awhile asked the same question again, and the lady said 'Why are you asking this question to me again? Why should caste rules on purity and pollution offend us? A Hindu does not eat with most Hindus in any case, what to speak of Muslims'.

My second snippet is a story of a refugee from East Pakistan running away to India and before fleeing, one of his Muslim friends invited him to come to his village home for one last time. There he met his friend's father, who in turn was a friend of this Hindu refugee's father, and it was a palatial house and he went in, welcoming his son's friend. He said to him that 'You have two options, I know your caste customs, so I shall either provide you with a Hindu cook to cook your food or I shall supply you with ingredients, rice, fish and pulses and you can cook yourself'. He chose the second option, but he did not actually cook. He and his Muslim friend, convinced the Muslim friend's mother to cook for them and they were having a nice time but accidentally, the Muslim boy's father chanced upon them one day when they were all eating together and he was furious. He was angry with his wife for cooking for them, he was angry with the two friends and he said, he was absolutely, almost speechless in anger. He said ultimately that 'what will I say to your father?', the Hindu boy's father had died, the one who were the friend of the Muslim boy's father. He said 'What will I tell your father when I meet him and he asks me about you, that I have ruined your caste? I have helped you lose your caste?' He was so perturbed that he ultimately went to a Muslim *pir* to make an offering as an expiation for the sin that his son and wife had committed.

Now, as opposed to this, there is the story of others who do feel that Hindu concepts of touchability and untouchability, purity and pollution was one of the main factors behind the division of British India. Amongst them are well known scholars, but at the moment I am bypassing the world of scholarship, I am going to tell you about one particular family which was a victim of Partition, a Sikh family and tell you their version of the same thing.

This is a story of Veer Bahadur Singh, one of the best-known victims of partition violence. His family, once, facing Muslim mobs and fearing that they won't be able to protect the honour of the women, killed their women. Veer Bahadur's father, in a Gurudwara, beheaded 22 persons including 20 women and 2 elderly men,

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who also volunteered be killed because they said they wouldn't be able to fight, and 20 women he slaughtered one by one, he began with his own daughters, and Veer Bahadur's story of that episode, 'the heroic acts of the Sikh resisting dishonour when facing defeat by Muslim mobs' has become a kind of a saga, which he now recites ritually every year on Sikh religious festivals in a Gurudwara in Delhi. He is very well known in Delhi because of that.

Now, Veer Bahadur believes that his family's observance of caste taboos and not eating with the Muslims was a shameful act, though he was very proud of his father and the sacrifices his family had made, but he was very clear that that particular practice of untouchability and belief in impurity of the Muslims was an evil act, and he says so in no uncertain terms though otherwise he's a bit of a Muslim baiter. Indeed, Veer Bahadur subsequently in his bitterness has joined the Hindu Nationalist Party, BJP, he's a local functionary of the party and also led a small band of six in the demolition of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya.

Now, I would propose and thus my first proposition today, that here is a choice to you. While Veer Bahadur Singh represents something with which scholars have often agreed and there are books which trace the origins of Pakistan in the caste taboos of Hindus, and there are these two snippets of other cases where the Muslims themselves accept what to us would look something enormously humiliating and hierarchical. But I propose that they are also trying to say something to us. They are telling us something about a possible form of cosmopolitanism which can stand enormous asymmetries and even the strange or esoteric cultures of other communities, because these are not seen as humiliating but as peculiarities of these communities, and they had occasionally evolved everyday strategies through which they could cope with that, so I bring in a fourth snippet from another interview.

There was this woman who remembers her pre-Partition days, a Hindu woman, who remembers her pre-Partition days with enormous fondness and one might call, as many have indeed called them, romanticism and nostalgia, and she tells how much she misses her Muslim neighbours even today, 60 years after they went, in Jaipur where she lives. And she told that she once faced a similar problem about caste taboos, because she lived in a Muslim majority neighbourhood and her family would beat her up every time she admitted that she had eaten at Muslim households, but unfortunately she loved the food the Muslims cooked more than the food that was cooked in her place. So one day, she told a friend's mother her problem and she, the mother, said 'that's not a problem, have you learnt any Hindu prayer?' and she said yes, she knew a Hindu prayer. Then she said 'there is no problem, today I teach you a Kalma, a Muslim prayer and next time when you come to our place on the way you say that Kalma to become a Muslim, then you can eat anything you like at our place and while going back you can recite your Hindu prayer and become a Hindu again. And you don't have to tell it to your parents'.

I propose that this also has something to tell us and I will gradually move towards what they are trying to tell you in a different way. I however should conclude this part of the story, by also referring to the fact that Urvashi Butalia, a writer who has written on Veer Bahadur Singh, also mentions how Veer Bahadur Singh accompanied her and a Japanese journalist, 50 years after the genocide to his ancestral village in Pakistan, and she describes, Butalia describes how, describes in moving detail in fact, how Veer Bahadur Singh met his

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former neighbours and how he fulfilled his lifelong wish to drink water from his village well and share a meal with his childhood friends and neighbours.

Those who disagree with Veer Bahadur Singh's politics or his glorification of the sacrifice of the women in his family would nevertheless find it convenient to agree with his social vision, and maybe they are right. But that is certainly not the testimony of a majority of victims of partition violence and my feeling is this, that the scholars who have written on partition violence, would have gained something if they had listened to what the others, the first two cases were trying to say more seriously, because my feeling is this that in this they also are trying to convey something. Please note that I am not passing any comment or judgement on the practice of these social customs, that doesn't mean that I have no opinion about them, but for the moment I am suspended with judgement to bring to attention the fact that societies which meet, which live with the radical pluralism, that is to live not with only diversities but diversities which are radically divergent, diversities which almost seem dangerous, diversities that does not conform to your and my ideas of what is proper diversity and what is improper diversity, they have different kinds of mechanisms to pursue this model and they have different ways of constituting a Cosmopolis where such diversities can be accommodated.

I will come back to this issue again but I will, for the moment, I will point out that one fundamental principle of this kind of tolerance of radical diversity, is that that tolerance does not depend on reciprocity and exchange in the sense that some concessions are made to your eccentricities and therefore you make some concessions to ours, not that, but a certain kind of relaxed, non-ideological tolerance. Tolerance that does not call itself tolerance paradoxically, but which nonetheless is embedded in the rhythm of everyday life and is not backed up by ideological reasoning or ideological fervour. It's the kind of tolerance where those who are objects of that tolerance and those who are the ones who show the tolerance do not feel obligated to each other for showing that tolerance and yet it is built into their lifestyle in such a way that it almost can be called an unheroic form of tolerance, and my suspicion is this, that it is that unheroic tolerance that can go to the extent, that I have described to you. Years ago Dipesh Chakrabarty, a well known scholar, took up the memories of some of the victims of partition and she noticed, he noticed rather, that there was enormous degree of sense of loss and memories of villages where everything seemed to be perfect, including the relationship amongst communities. I will later come to this part of the story but one noticeable feature of these memories was this: that many of the people who held this kind of memories were well known leftist intellectuals and filmmakers who on the slightest opportunity were eager to talk of class relations, social economic discriminations in pre-Partition in South Asian societies. But when it came to the memories of this genocide, they would transcend somehow their ideological fervour unwittingly and perhaps unknowingly, to directly claim that the relationship between Hindus and Muslims were perfect. They were not perfect, everybody knows that, I am sure they also knew that, but I think it is not only a comment on what was but it is also a subtle, inarticulate critique of what is. The past is invoked so that you can critique the present. The past is invoked to set up a standard which can be mythical but is a standard nonetheless. A vital part of this subjectivities that shaped such invocation of the past, and includes, it includes the right to disapprove and dislike others. This is a strange proposition because the Enlightenment vision has taught us that we must one by one, shed our prejudices, stereotypes, negative imageries of other communities. We must sanitise ourselves to become proper citizens of a modern state. We must not dislike other cultures and their artefacts. I am suggesting to you that, and this is my second

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proposition, that such a sanitised, such a sanitised tough definition of tolerance is not necessary because the same tolerance can come in another way, where it does not become a struggle at every point for an individual to hide his real feelings and for the society to do so, because ultimately that also leads to a very sanitised version of tolerance of diversity in the sense that you do not really tolerate radical diversity, you tolerate tamed, housebroken, defanged forms of diversity. Diversity which you think is compatible with contemporary demands of statecraft, contemporary concepts of global common sense, as shared by the global middle class and diversity which cannot and need not, which will not threaten your ideas of a secularising society.

One result is this, that today we cannot even say we dislike cultural artefacts that are not that central to that culture itself, for which there are critiques within the same culture, I was giving the example a few days ago that now it is impossible to say for a non-Englishman what Somerset Maugham once said about English cuisine, that you can eat well in England if you have your breakfast three times a day. But that will be seen as terribly, terribly intolerant and very crude and uncivilised. It is difficult nowadays to find people who will criticise Bombay commercial films, though a lot of Indians hate them. It is difficult to even say that Thai or Sri Lankan food is too spicy, even though steam comes out of your ears, you have to claim that they are very nice and you are not used to so much of spice perhaps and that it's your fault and not the fault of the food. As a result, gradually the kinds of tolerance we work with has boiled down to a cultural style or cosmopolitan style, if you like, where cultures in the long run survive only in five forms – as cuisine, as something that you can put on the stage, dance, theatre, cinema, culture that you can teach in the departments of Anthropology in a university and cultures you can put in a reservation where you can take your children once in a few years to see how other cultures live, and I think this in a sense is what we are driving cultures towards. This is our concept, this is the mainstream concept of cosmopolitanism and this is the cosmopolitanism to which we are getting increasingly accustomed. This is the kind of defanged culture with which we would like to work and to display our tolerance.

I will tell the story of a study many years ago I did of the city of Kochi (Cochin) in the southwest corner of India. Kochi is an ancient city, 3000 years old, there are mentions of it in Roman texts. Pliny once mentioned that Roman wealth is being wasted on a useless commodity like Kochi black pepper and Alaric the Goth once lifted the siege of Rome when he was supplied with adequate number of bushes of Kochi's black pepper, so it's a very old city. The earlier records of the city are more or less lost, India doesn't really live in history, it has lived outside history most of the time. But 600 years of recorded history is available on Kochi, and in these 600 years there has been no record of any ethnic or religious strife in Kochi, though it has had all the ingredients for such a conflict. It has had always at least 15 major communities, very diverse communities including two Jewish communities, and I thought I would go to Kochi and do, not the history of Kochi, but a psychological profile of the kind clinical psychologists do, of the city, a psychological biography of the city so to speak, not a biography, a psychological, if you like clinical report, on the city. And I started interviewing people in Kochi. At the beginning, the answers were all predictable and of the kind which will gladden our hearts. Why is there no ethnic or religious violence in Kochi? Oh because we are all progressives here. Kochi has been part of the state of Kerala and it is alternatively ruled by a coalition of parties which is led by the Communist Party of India, or a coalition led by Indian National Congress which is a social democratic party, at least it claims to be so, and between the two there is no presence of any religious nationalist parties or ethno-nationalist elements, so we

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are all living in peace. Why is there no violence in Kochi? Oh because we are all secular here and progressives. Why there is no violence in Kochi? Because we're all educated here, Kochi has a literacy rate of 100% and so has the state of Kerala. We are not like the north Indians, one or two of them said. So I said have I understood that part of the story, let me go back to your life, I want to have your life story, where you spent your childhood, your parents, your schooling, your school friends and so on and so forth because I always interview a person over weeks to get a life history of the person. And as I explored their life history, I gradually found out that in Kochi nobody liked anybody else. Kochi's tolerance was, alas, based on mutual dislike. Every community I found, they don't mention it but has its own limited edition history, if you want to call it history, quasi mythic accounts, quasi mythic accounts of the past community, which shows how that community is better than the rest and how other communities are either inferior or had conspired against them and sometimes also helped them.

There are two Jewish communities in Kochi, one is there for the last 2000 years and one has been there for the last 500 years after the fall of Moorish Spain they came to Kochi via Ottoman Empire. They don't like each other either, the ones who had come earlier feel that they are the original ones and the ones who have come later feel that because they have come later they have better access to the ritual part of Judaism and neither community of Jews allows their children to marry from the other community, though their number has been dwindling dramatically in recent years because many of them are migrating to Israel. Now once I got this, but I also in the process of this interview, I would find there were at least two other processes at work in the city. First, though they did not like the others or considered the others inferior, they couldn't imagine the world without the others. They had to, to define themselves they had to invoke the others. Their life was given meaning by the presence of others in the landscape, including those they didn't like particularly, and I found that this was somewhat similar to what you find in many Indian epics. In Indian epics, probably in all epics, the gods and the demons, the godly and ungodly, together make the story – the story is incomplete without the demons, and I call it an epic culture, where those who are your enemies are also necessary for you, as a crucial presence in your life and somebody without whom you are incomplete yourself.

Secondly, I found that the others are not only outside but also within them. So the others exist not only as others but as possibilities and temptations within you. It is a bit like this woman who liked to eat the Muslim food in her friend's place because that food tasted sweeter, I have given a very trivial example but it had a larger meaning in that kind of context that others are, exist in your world not only as distant neighbours but as a kind of possibility within you, where they are constantly interacting with you, and as also temptations to which you might succumb, and I suspect that these two processes had something to do with Kochi's version of ethnic and religious tolerance, and I propose to you, this is my third proposition, that that form of cosmopolitanism, that Cosmopolis, might have something to say to us, might have something to say to us.

Later on, after I had done this study, I found out that there were other instances of this in other kind of contexts. The largest number of Jews during World War II was saved by an organisation called Zagota in Poland. The founder head of Zagota was a Polish woman and I found out that that Polish woman was an anti-Semite. She disliked the Jews but did not like them being killed either, so she was the one who was the most successful, in European theatre, in being able to save the Jews.

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I can give you other instances of that kind and my belief is this, that the kind of cosmopolitanism I am talking of, a cosmopolitanism that allows you to interact with others without necessarily proclaiming unalloyed brotherly love or fraternal sentiments, is perhaps in some ways not as flawed, as retrogressive, as it might seem to us. It is a bit like marriage, you can define a good marriage by saying that a good marriage is one where there is no quarrel at all, but you can define a good marriage also by saying that a good marriage is one which can take a lot of quarrels and not get destroyed. It is two ways of looking at the same issue, and I feel that perhaps the second kind of definition has something to tell us too. This other cosmopolitanism has a number of facets and I will here have time to mention perhaps only two of them.

First, in this cosmopolitanism, history is not taken as either a discipline or a form of knowledge which has a monopoly right on the construction of the past. There is a past outside history too, that past lives on myths, legends, epics, shared public memories, transported over generations, grandparents' tales and so on. Past is plural, not only the future but past too is plural, it is not closed up and that gives you a different kind of play because as Bruno Latour would say, we can enter history only through our pasts and an open past is absolutely vital to this kind of Cosmopolis, do not forget that both the Cynic civilisation and the Indic civilisation have always, they have always located their utopias in the past, unlike in contemporary Europe and the modern societies in general, where utopias cannot be located in the past, they can be located only in the future. At one time it wasn't so, Garden of Eden also was an utopia, but since Sir Thomas Moore, the nature of utopias have changed, we have different kinds of utopias we work with, but the result of closing up the past through history and absolutely baptising it to some extent also means that the options for the futures are increasingly closed, and that, if I may, in the context of what I have already said, would suggest, that also limits the range of your tolerance.

It is at one time, it was perhaps not impolite in many societies to say that you do not like Vietnamese boat people. You do not like Governor Van Le's looks or skin colour. These have become very impolite things to say now. You could have said that you didn't like his Vietnamese food habits, you can no longer say that, but you can still say that Vietnamese and we are brothers, but what Vietnam is today we were yesterday, and if Vietnam behaves well, reads the textbooks on development and progress we have produced, tomorrow Vietnam will be like us. In that sense I suspect that you have closed the options of Vietnam in the future and perhaps also in the present because the Vietnamese are only living in their present. You have lived through this present and transcended it. You have become something better, so you know their present better than they can ever do and of course you know their future also better than they will ever do, because they are only going to enter the future in the future, whereas you are living out their future today and I would in conclusion say that this also is a way of hijacking diversities in the future and in the present.

Secondly, in the second instance, in the kind of Cosmopolis I want to invoke out of the past of some, many societies, diverse societies all over the world, radically diverse societies, I would also say that there is some kind of a fluidity between the sacred and the secular. The 'this worldly' and 'other worldly'. These are the communities where the sacred gets telescoped into the secular and the secular gets telescoped into the sacred. The gods are imperfect, the demons are imperfect too and in any case there are so many of them that

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you can not really talk of dissenting points of view because everybody has a different kind of God, that is the normal part of the story. India is supposed to have 330 million god and goddesses and even the most devout Hindu and the greatest Hindu theologians will not be able to provide you with a list of all the 330 million. It is a notional concept, which is actually a way of saying that they are too diverse for you to know. And Shintoism has 8 million gods and goddesses, so it may not be a close second, but even I doubt whether Shintoists in Japan will ever be able to enumerate them. And this is the reason that many a times you will see a different kind of tolerance in these societies. In China, a huge majority of the Chinese are Confucians. A huge majority of them are also Taoists and a huge majority of them are Buddhists. This is unimaginable in any civilised society. In Japan, the figures I know, 95%, more than 95% are Shintos, more than 85% are Buddhists. It will be very difficult to mobilise a Shinto-Buddhist conflict there, and I suspect that this is not an accident, that it is this concept of religion which stretched from Japan to the western borders of Africa and probably up to central Asia. In India, we had a colonial census and we, all the percentages of religious communities add up to a neat 100%. But when a study of communities was done in '92, '93 by Indian Anthropological Society it was found that 15% of Indians could be classified under more than one religion. There are 36 communities in India still which can be classified under three religions. There are communities which are simultaneously Hindu and Muslims. There are Muslim communities which stress their origin to the Mahabharatic clans and perform the Mahabharata rituals. There are Brahmin scholars, Hussaini Brahmin, the name itself would sound very strange to many Indians too and this lead to a different kind of society, a different concept of ethnic boundaries, different concepts of religious boundaries and somewhere I believe in this kind of a world there is perhaps options, there are options, which we have not explored in our concept of Cosmopolis. Perhaps, I am saying perhaps, we might be able to broaden and deepen our concept of democracy by acknowledging them.

The person in whose name this lecture has been instituted was a person who was crucially involved, along with Desmond Tutu, with an experiment called – everybody knows about it – Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It's an ambitious, imaginative project and today, in retrospect, many criticisms of it too are available, but at least one thing it did, it prioritised the testimony of witnesses over the forensics of culpability. A testimony opens up the future by establishing a dialogue not only between those outside your auditory range, but it opens up a dialogue between the dominant and the subordinate, between the oppressor and the oppressed, within a single ethical frame. A trial which may be necessary in many circumstances, I am not underestimating its importance, but a trial can only establish guilt and while bringing the oppressed within the frame, within an ethical frame that recognises the humanity of the oppressed, pushes the oppressor out of the frame of humanity. It absolutises the difference between the two. Despite being aware of the many criticisms of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I also believe that it challenges our standardised concepts of the victims and perpetrators, the killers and the killed, the heard and the unheard, and what Dostoevsky called the anthropologists and the subjects of anthropology. I consider that a major challenge to our public ethics. I thank you for your patience and your kindness.

#### **Ms Elizabeth Ho**

Before I offer a vote of thanks to Dr Nandy, I would just like to acknowledge the importance of the OzAsia Festival in our community and I think in terms of the Mandela Lecture, the role of the Mandela Lecture is to examine truth and reconciliation in human affairs. The purpose of the OzAsia Festival is to help us understand

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### ***3<sup>rd</sup> UniSA Nelson Mandela Lecture and Adelaide Festival Centre's OzAsia Festival Keynote Address***

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the connections between Asia and Australia, Asia in the larger sense, the importance of our place within the region and the importance of Asian thinking and ideas and its impact upon us as human beings. So I begin by saying that as a way of thanking Ashis, as a way of saying thank you Ashis for bringing us a great knowledge of your own society and of the world, and of speaking to us about truth, about helping us to see life and human relationships in their complexities, rather than via a simple Western formula, and I think tonight we have understood that Ashis is both a storyteller and an analyst. He is someone who likes to speak to the people, not to read about them but to speak directly to them and to understand what motivates and drives human nature, and he then puts that in a context for us which encourages us to think about futures that are full of respect, perhaps rather than love and a sanitised notion of intercultural relations. So I have learnt a lot from being able to meet with him over the last month, it's been a great pleasure to have him and Uma here at the University of South Australia. I know that Paul Fairall in our School of Law, those who have organised the OzAsia Festival and the Hawke Centre at the University of South Australia, have been waiting with great interest to hear this lecture and I believe that we should be very grateful for what we've heard, so thank you very much.

We will have a transcript of the lecture available, initially in audio form but later in written form on the Hawke Centre website at the University of South Australia. So for those who have not been able to come tonight, or if you would like to go through the very interesting thought processes that we've heard tonight and to go through those more closely, you will have that opportunity, but I ask you now to join with me again as I give a gift on behalf of all of us to Dr Nandy for a truly superb Mandela Lecture, thank you.

#### **For further information on the UniSA Nelson Mandela Lecture**

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