Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation

Stranger in a Strange World: Visiting the Divine Kingdom of Nek Chand Saini

Trudy Clutterbok
Psychoanalyst in private practice; Counsellor with Relationships Australia, MELBOURNE, Australia

Learning Goal:
Gain an understanding of the work of Nek Chand. Develop an appreciation of how engaging with art and literature can enhance work in the clinic.

Abstract Text:
Stranger in a Strange World: Visiting the Divine Kingdom of Nek Chand Saini
For the past three or four years I have participated in a clinical research seminar called "My Barbaric Yawp" – the name of which comes from a poem by Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself.* In this psychoanalytic seminar we work with the voice and what impels it, and we consider various forms of inscription of this urgent voice – in art, literature and in our clinical work or artistic practices. My paper discusses how, in clinical work with those who experience a sense of estrangement, taking the stance of the stranger oneself can enable inscriptions which, though they might be somewhat unintelligible, can nonetheless be well-received. I take the life and work of Indian artist Nek Chand Saini to be instructive in this respect. Following the partition of India in 1947, his Hindu family was forced to flee their village because it fell within the borders of Muslim Pakistan. By 1955 he had settled in Chandigarh, the site of Le Corbusier's ideal city. Impelled by a sense of inexorable necessity, Chand began building an alternative city in a nearby forest. He used discarded material from his day job as an inspector of roads. He named his city "the divine Kingdom of Sakrana". In 2018, I visited Chand's so-called rock gardens in Chandigarh, and also now in the Southern state of Kerala. In my paper, which arises from my work in the "Yawp" seminar, I draw on Chand's story, but also on my own experience of visiting his divine kingdom.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**