

# Prosecutor, Politician And Poet

At The Indo-American Arts Council's Third Annual Literary Festival



United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York Preet Bharara, during 'A Conversation With Seema Mody,' a CNBC reporter, at the closing session of the 3-day Indo-American Arts Council's third annual Literary Festival Oct. 9, at NYU's Kimmel Center. The question-answer session followed a talk on the topic - 'Is Corruption Endemic to Politics?' Photo below, member of Indian Parliament and author Shashi Tharoor, left, at a panel discussion on "India Today, India Tomorrow" along with Suketu Mehta, author of the acclaimed book, 'Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found' and New York Times award-winning author Shomini Sengupta, Oct. 7 at NYU School of Journalism at Cooper Square.

## BY A STAFF WRITER

**P**reet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, dismissed a suggestion last week that Indian culture may be condoning corruption, or promoting the idea of shortcuts to achieve success.

Bharara was speaking Oct. 9, at the closing session of the three-day Indo-American Arts Council's third annual Literary Festival. The Festival features works by authors whose heritage lies in the Indian subcontinent, as well as those who have written about a subject connected to any aspect of that part of the world. Veteran and emerging authors get to showcase their work, and speakers also include publishers and literary agents.

On the opening day Oct. 7, India's Member of Parliament and former United Nations Undersecretary for Communications and Public Information, and renowned author Shashi Tharoor, spoke on a panel entitled "India Today, India Tomorrow" held at New York University School of Journalism. He was joined by

New York Times award-winning author Shomini Sen Gupta in conversation with author Suketu Mehta, author of the acclaimed book, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. They tackled questions such as where India stands today in relation to where it should be, and what are the reasons driving it in a particular direction.

At Bharara's talk held in NYU's Kimmel Center, entitled "Is Corruption Endemic to Politics?" the 'Sheriff of Wall Street,' who has prosecuted several high profile New York City politicians, as well as several Indian-Americans in high places for white-collar crimes, was questioned by Seema Mody, a global markets reporter for CNBC, and members of the

audience. Among the questions asked was whether Indian culture condones corruption.

"I do not think so," Bharara responded. "I am part of Indian culture. I am from Ferozepur (in Punjab). I think (the question should be) if one has been raised with the proper education and right values, whether Indian or American. I do not think this has

something to do with the Indian culture," Bharara emphasized.

Bharara touched on a host of issues during the 50-minute conversation, including allegations in the Indian media that his office targeted only high-profile Indian-Americans when he prosecuted people like Rajat Gupta, Anil Kumar and others for insider trading, or people like former Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade.

"I think that is a stupid remark or suggestion," Bharara retorted. "We never targeted anyone based on the person's ethnicity. I don't walk into my office and say 'bring me the head of an Indian,'" Bharara said as the house burst into laughter.

He gave the audience some sense of how the prosecutor's office works - as a place where professional prosecutors conduct their investigations and follow the money trail to where it takes them, before deciding to prosecute the suspects, according to the law.

He indicated that some people suffer from a sense of hubris when they have money and power, which leads them to commit crimes, believe they were immune from prosecution.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

