

SAARC FOLKLORE, POETRY AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL ACADEMIC SEMINAR AND FOLK PERFORMANCES

September 30, October 1, 2, and 3, Agra, India

Chandigarh had been the venue of the SAARC Folklore and Heritage Festival in 2010. In the year 2011 it was decided to hold this Festival, which has now become our regular Annual Event for the last five years, at a new venue.

The SAARC Folklore, and Heritage Festival 2011 was held in Agra on September 30th, October 1st and 2nd.

3rd October was reserved for sight-seeing.

The entire city of Agra was involved in the celebration of folklore, Tribal Traditions, Folk and Tribal Artists and Ethnic Performances.

The Academic Seminar was held at the Banquet Hall of The Grand Hotel, and Performances were held at six venues simultaneously, all over the city. All Folklore is a celebration of life, of being, of oneness with nature and earth and of being a homogeneous part of the whole, that is the universe.

The Agra Administration supported us in this endeavour and helped us by allowing us to put up huge hoardings and posters, free of cost. Many colleges and schools came forward with requests to hold performances of the visiting folk troupes and artistes of the SAARC countries. Their effort was to get as many performances from this prestigious event as possible for their students and for their parents.

Thus the entire population of the city was informed and had the opportunity to witness the event and audience turned up in large number to watch the artistes from the eight countries come together in a great cultural bonanza.

Hectic work began at the Headquarters of the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature, at Siri Fort Institutional Area, for this SAARC Folklore and Heritage Festival more than five months before the event. Everyone worked almost round the clock to write hundreds of letter, sort out scholars and performing groups, from all the 8 SAARC Countries, see to other arrangements and locales in Agra, where the finale of all this labour, the Folklore Festival was to be held.

Besides the performing groups, scholars from the eight SAARC countries participated in the Academic Seminar that took place in the first half of the day. In this session serious deliberations and analysis were carried out for the preservation, revival and revitalization of the folklore and ethnic traditions.

His Excellency Dr. B. P. Singh, Governor of Sikkim was scheduled to Inaugurate the Event at Grand Hotel, the Venue of Academic Seminar on the 30th of September.

However he was not able to come because of the earthquake that occurred a few days before the event.

The Festival was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka.

30th September, 2011

THE INAUGURAL

His Excellency Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, in his Inaugural Speech lauded the efforts of Ajeet Cour who is a pioneer and an unmatched crusader for the cause of SAARC unity and cooperation in the field of culture. As a soldier for peace and solidarity she has tirelessly continued to labour and



H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, presenting his Keynote Address.

toil for an atmosphere of friendship and harmony through Track Two Initiatives. Thanks to her efforts and zeal, FOSWAL was born and recognized as a SAARC APEX BODY with Chapters in all the SAARC countries.

“I am a diplomat and I am not an expert on the subject, so I had to prepare myself. I have a written text which I will read. I believe this is an Inauguration as well as my Keynote Address. After that, you would not have to bear with me. I will do both together – Inauguration and Keynote Address at the same time.

I was delighted when Madam Ajeet Cour invited me to participate in this Festival, since I have a fascination for Folklore and Traditional Knowledge. However, it is with much reluctance that I accepted her invitation to deliver which is described as the Keynote Address. I still believe that I had that assignment. All of whom you know Madam Ajeet Cour, would realize how difficult it is to say 'no' to her, and I had no choice.

“Representing as it were, the tribe of Babus of South Asia, I am not the best person to speak on a subject such as folklore and heritage to the distinguished and knowledgeable audience present here on this issue. Therefore, I will confine myself to words to a few thoughts on the subject, especially the value of folklore and heritage for the very survival of humankind, and leave the theoretical aspects and debates in the field to the learned academics at this Festival to dwell upon at length. Madam Ajeet Cour has been very kind to me by not defining a specific area to speak, and this gives me an opportunity to express my thoughts freely.

“Let me thank, first of all, Madam Ajeet Cour for organizing this Fourth SAARC Folklore and Heritage Festival.”



H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India, Inaugurating the Academic Seminar of the SAARC FOLKLORE AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL, in Agra, on September 30, 2011.



Mr. Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh, floating flower petals in the water, Noor Zaheer, Coordinator FOSWAL looks on.



Mr. Vimal Rubasinghe, Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of Sri Lanka, floating flower petals in the water, Ajeet Cour share the happy moments.



Prof. Abhi Subedi from Nepal, floating flower petals in the water,
Noor Zaheer share the happy moments.



Mr. Sonam Kinga, eminent poet from Bhutan,
floating flower petals in the water.



Ms. Arifa Omarloor, eminent scholar from Afghanistan,
floating flower petals in the water.

FOSWAL was launched in 1987 as a result of the tireless efforts of Ajeet Cour and is the first and only non-governmental organization in the South Asian region, doing this commendable job.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my childhood days belong to an era very different from that of today's children. It was an era long before the advent of television, the internet, social networking sites, and video games. We only had radio, but even small transistor radio was a luxury that few could afford. Some of you from India would recall the broadcasts of Radio Ceylon of that era.”

“That was an era when children would gather around to listen the tales from their grandparents as there was no television to bombard young minds towards numerous distractions. The stories that were narrated then to us by our elders were a mixture of fun and purpose. Our grandparents and the elders had the insight to inspire us and warn us as well through folklore. The world of our ancestors that seemed simple due to lack of modern day gizmos but never short of wisdom, a quality which today seems to be on the wane or one dimensional despite modern achievements in science and technology.”

He further added that “In these times of conflict and terror and instability in the region, FOSWAL keeps highlighting common concerns, through culture and literature, through theatre and films, through visual and performing arts.”

In her usual eloquent style Ajeet Cour welcomed the participants and said that “Since we are here to start on a note of fragrance, and which is a better media for fragrance than the flower petals !”

She said that we are going to miss Excellency Mr. B.P. Singh, the Governor of Sikkim, and a close friend, who had to Inaugurate the Festival. We all know him. He is a luminary in his own right.

Unfortunately, due to the earthquake he is unable to be with us physically. He has to personally oversee the relief work. Emotionally we have him here. So, I count him in the fragrance of the inaugural moment.



Ajeet Cour delivering her Welcome Speech.

Ajeet Cour, an eminent writer with more than twenty five books to her credit, passionate crusader for human rights, social and cultural activist, herself introduced the SAARC Folklore and Heritage Festival, and spoke about the “journey of spelling out the importance of connectivity through

culture and arts. In fact, all the earthquakes and Tsunamis are protests by the Earth and the Ocean against the environmental mess that we are



On the dais from left : Prof. Ashish Nandy, eminent scholar; Mr. Vimal Rubasinghe, Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of Sri Lanka; Mr. Kamal Chowdhury, eminent poet and scholar from Bangladesh; Mr. Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh in India; Ms. Arifa Omarloor, eminent scholar from Afghanistan.

creating in this universe. Then Mahasweta Devi who is like an elder sister to me, and was the Director of the Festival, got very high blood pressure. From the hospital she called me and said 'Ajeet, my darling, please apologize to everybody on my behalf. So, I am apologizing on behalf of the greatest writer of India, Mahasweta Devi.'

"First of all, let me welcome all of you, the great folklore scholars and poets from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, all of you, the precious members of the family of Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature. Talking of Folklore, I believe, that if we draw a line from Arefa Omarloor's Afghanistan to Sonam Kinga's Bhutan and to Abhi Subedi's Nepal, and another from Kashmir to Excellency Kariyawasam's Sri Lanka and, Ibrahim Waheed's Maldives, one finds that there is no break in communication between any two points because they have a strong bond of cultural connectivity. If there is something that unites humanity at the deepest level of culture, it is folklore. Our folklore reflects the same traditions and histories, the same memories and indigenous knowledge systems. In our folk tales and folk songs, gods come to earth to interact with human beings, birds and animals speak and tell tales of ancient wisdom. In no other civilization of the world this happens that birds and animals talk that human language and they interact with human.

SAARC is probably the only region in the world where we celebrate love and marriages, pregnancies and child births and even deaths with songs. This is the only region in the world where we sing and express our deep anguish sitting with the dead body of one of our dear ones in the house. We have songs for the changing seasons, for harvest, for monsoons.

We sing songs and tell tales of the world of nature and all the wonders of life around. We the people of the SAARC region, have been the original environmentalists since Indus Valley Civilization.

This journey that has brought FOSWAL to its present status of a major platform for peace, friendship and solidarity has been both long and arduous. Some paths had to be trudged alone while there came

unexpected support and guidance in other roads. But the will to continue was always there.

In her Welcome Speech Ajeet Cour narrated her own struggles to build a non-political zone which would become a meeting ground where all kinds of ideas could converge and new concepts and definitions evolve. She highlighted the ardent need of the hour for writers, intellectuals and artistes to put their heads together and build a strategy to counter the concerted war that has been launched on all humanity. This is the war of unchecked globalization, communal terrorism, increasing

fundamentalism and a uni-polar world.

During the Inauguration Ceremony, two very important books were released. One of the books was of poetry 'Building Bridges' by a young poet Ayesha Zee Khan from Pakistan and the other was a short novel 'Wings' by another very young fiction writer Amiya Chowdhary of Bangladesh.

"It has been the effort of FOSWAL, to invite eminent scholars from all disciplines to join us in our effort to project Literature, Arts, music, painting



Ms. Ayesha Zee Khan, eminent poet and scholar from Pakistan receiving the SAARC YOUNG POET LITERARY AWARD. H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India, releases her book, Ajeet Cour and Mr. Manmohan Singh Mitwa, share the happy moments.

as an important support of life on this planet. It has been our good fortune that all of the scholars like Dr. Ashis Nandy from India, Prof. Abhi Subedi of Nepal, Dr. Sonam Kinga of Bhutan, Khaleid Javed Jan from Pakistan, Arefa Omarloor from Afghanistan and Dr. Manzurul Islam of Bangladesh have understood and sympathized with our cause



Ajeet Cour release the book of Mr. Amiya, young poet from Bangladesh, Prof. Manzoorul Islam, share the happy moments.



Prof. Ashish Nandy delivering his speech.

and extended their helping hands in the form of their presence at all our Festivals and Conferences."

Ashis Nandy: "We are aware that the two basic units of community living are the cities and the towns. Cities we have known. But we have developed a different kind of city now in this part of the world, under the colonial influence –

a city which is a negation, total negation of the village. It is no longer a city in dialogue with villages. It is a city which defines itself as non-village. Likewise, our concept of folk, our concept of tradition has been changing. We love folklores; we love folk knowledge as long as it is available on presidium stages, as long they are available in museums, as long as we can buy as artifacts in galleries or as long as they come in a modernized version again as some kind of a performative in sequent occasions. My feeling is that conferences on folklores, heritage, traditions, culture will increase over the years as we modernize and become more and more full-fledged states. And the careers of this folklores, cultures, traditions, particularly written cultures, the millions of them will gradually become an extinct species.

I do agree with that great Sri Lankan scholar Ananda Kumaraswamy who believed that there is no unbridgeable gap between the classical and the folk, the canonical and the non-canonical because there is always a dialogue and continuity between them and neither is complete without the other. But over the last 300 years, as modern nation states have expanded and consolidated themselves, they have always preferred the classical. When they talk of heritage, they do not mean all of heritage. They mean that classical. When they talk of the folk, they mean something museum which you can put in the museum which you can put on some floor. They are not thinking of something which is under same status and they will say continuity with the classical and canonical. The



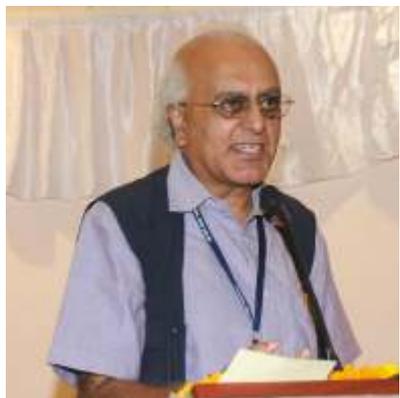
Mr. Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh, presenting his views in the Inaugural Session.

reason for this is this that modern state over the last 300 years has come to value uniformity and homogenization that makes a culture more manageable, that makes the culture manageable politically.”

Dy. High Commissioner of Bangladesh, **Janab Mahbub Hassan Saleh** had also been kind enough to be present for the Opening of the Festival. In his speech he questioned whether we really have a South Asian or SAARC identity! Why is this identity not the dominant identity of all South Asians. He said that we should try and conc
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ate on the commonalities, the similarities, the healthy element of commonalities and similarities that can bind us, that can unite us. The strength of folk culture and heritage of South Asia he said has the inherent strength to bind us, to unite us all.

Prof. Abhi Subedi of Nepal in his speech said that Nepal is a very diverse country with about 70 different ethnic groups having different



Prof. Abhi Subedi, eminent scholar from Nepal, delivering his Speech.

cultures. He said there was a new awakening of the consciousness of the ethnic groups in Nepal in the last 15 years, and a very strong revival in the interests in different folk, indigenous traditions. So, the people themselves became conscious of their traditions. This has created a very interesting debate in Nepal, the folk tradition. There is lot of soul searching going on in Nepal about what is tradition, what is folklore?

Dr. Sonam Kinga from Bhutan, said in his speech Let me begin with a narration – Nam gusha thalle lanchi, Nam gusha thalle lamle, le to kingi thilli jimadi, shukusu gange dasaru, Gautam to sab, Hila Naya Thalame, Jamkabe hue dono mein. Now in English – The sleeping night, oh, rising dawn, when the dawn drawn to the night, I have to take a cleansing bath. When I took a cleansing bath, the dirt of my outer body was washed by away but what about the dirt of my inner being!v The meaning of losse is the ornament of speech and it is one among the many things of Bhutan's oral tradition. I would like to thank Madam Ajeet Cour for the kind invitation to be able to share with this distinguished participants here. Now oral literature such as the Losse constitutes and continues to be an important aspect of Bhutan's literary tradition and identity. Why is that so? For hundreds of years, Bhutan's literature was mainly Buddhist literature.

Bhutanese began to write for the first time in English on non-Buddhist themes, only in the 1990s, about 15-20 years ago and rather than write fictions or poetry or drama or novels, this first group of Bhutanese writers chose to record document and translate oral literature. So, we had folk stories being published; we have proverbs and sayings being documented; we have Losses being recorded and translated. And the few lines that I read in the beginning to you, distinguished participants,



Prof. Manzoorul Islam, eminent scholar from Bangladesh, presenting his Paper.



Mr. Sonam Kinga, eminent scholar and poet from Bhutan, presenting his Paper.

come from an 18th century autobiographical poem that I recorded, documented and translated in 1997. It is a story about a young person who was married, had a son and a wife of course but who was forced to join the Monastery because the Buddhist state has required him to do so. His Losse became an account of expressing his grievance against the diktat of the State.

Dr. Manzoorul Islam: “Folklore in Bangladesh continues to be relevant, I am going straight to your point, for its utopianism, for its

energy and its sense of community. In its mutated form, that is, urban folk, it is revitalizing our cinema, our music, our painting and even architecture. I will not go into examples.

“In terms of SAARC connectivity, we may make collective efforts to preserve and document folklore in the region which are facing extinction. But more importantly we should once again preserve and promote the careers of folklore. We may also explore the manifestations of urban folkism in each country, as it attempts to redeem us from our blind adherence to Euro-centric modernism and our failure to address our own cultural and historical needs. While we try to replicate impossible models, impossible modern models of the West in a range of vital engagements in education, jurisprudence, even in forms of Governments. The result has been a total mess that we have made ourselves of neither belonging here nor there. That is the problem with us.”

Dr. Khalid Javed Jan, from Pakistan, said, “The cultures of Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are all marked by the influence of these great values, most importantly Pakistan and India. We can say that the common cultures of the area can be identified by the two basic characteristics, one is religious tolerance and the second is high ethical values, that is, Sufism.”

“On the other hand, while the deserts of Arabia and the Middle East have also been home to many of the world's most influential religions, these remained in conflict among themselves and were highly intolerant of the existence of the other. In this respect, the sub-continent holds the unique honour of not only being the birthplace of some of the great religions of the world such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, but the inhabitants of this land also welcomed religions such as Christianity and Islam which were not born on this soil. Through the blending of these varied traditions the unique civilization of the subcontinent emerged, which can be called the 'Ganga-Jamni Civilization”.

Arefa Omarloor from Afghanistan, said “Old and young women come together and sing songs and clap with the music of tambourine. Whenever one pays attention to any of songs, sung by these women, he will find out that each of Afghan girl is a loyal follower of Pashto folkloric literature. Many believe that women make the largest part of folkloric Pashto literary and that is why Pashto folkloric literature is richer than current Pashto literary. Although Pashto folklore needs more research, some classification has been done that has mainly divided the existing folklore in three broad divisions. In the first there are story based narratives like dataan, landay, saroki, then secondly the idiom and proverb based stories which are traditional, verbal, folk stories, and lastly the type of stories which exist in songs like da bibi dasty nari, landakai, silsale, etc.

SESSION II

The sacred and the Secular in Folklore

The Second Session that was chaired by **Dr. Ashis Nandy**, was opened by the Chairman's remarks who said “Every major political theory or social or anthropological theory has claimed that it has decoded myth, legends, epics – the very basis of folklore. And every political ideology after claiming that has gone on as if they are unsure of their own claim.

Mythology, legends, epics, grandparents' tales, shared public memory transmitted over generations, the whole paraphernalia brought folklore and heritage in this part of the world. Some theorists claim that it is actually hidden or coded message on political economy. Once you have decoded it, you have decoded the basic principles of a historical class struggle. But when it comes to meet the legends, I would have thought that should have given them enough confidence to say all right we know what it means, so let it alone. It does not matter if you talk in the language of myth because we know how to decode it. “

In her deeply researched paper **Ms. Yashodhara Misra** said “Hon. Chairperson, respected Ajeet ji and Hon. Participants, mine is a written research paper and I will try to cut it short. The name is Raja Festivities – Play, Performance and Gender.

The Festival undertaken in this paper is however, one of the its kinds, not merely because it is meant predominantly for women in the patriarchal society, this festival is in the very structure of its observance makes life focuses from the celebrations part of life and it evenly empowers women in a very subtle way by mock reversal of gender assignment. But for a very short time, it almost playfully reverses the gender roles inside families and inside the village just for three days.

In this period, the women are given total freedom from domestic chores because it is believed; it is taken from the animistic practices of tribal people. There is no difference between the personal life and nature. They do not even stay inside homes. Normally they are to be seen in the courtyards swinging and decking up, saaj shringar bolte hai. Young women are encouraged to spend all the time in various types of games, abstaining from any kind of household work as that would hurt Mother Earth whom they symbolize as potential mothers. Both women and young girls are encouraged to dress up in festive clothes, and so on. Women becomes the centre of their world. It is for the men to provide all the thing not only for the household. For three days, the household is run by me, who even take on the responsibility for the fun and the games of women.

This morning, **Sonam Kinga** mentioned the Losse and I think I will begin with that. It was very interesting. Those of you who are here it is about a woman who bathed her body with water and she says, I can bathe the dirt off my body but I cannot bathe the pain from my heart.

Niaz Zaman, from Bangladesh, said, “My talk is about the Bangla Baromasi, songs of celebrations and stories interwoven in them. The Baromasi is common, I think, all over India but unfortunately from Bangladesh I was not able to get Baromasi from other parts of India. So, I have to concentrate on the Baromasi from my own land. We were talking in the morning how we are losing the tradition, how we are losing the heritage, how the practitioner of the folk will be extinct. I think, Prof. Ashis Nandy, in Bangladesh, that tradition is alive and kicking. In our calendar, the Dhaka University brings out a very small little diary. That diary follows three calendars – the Gregorian calendar, the Islamic Hizari calendar and the Bangla calendar. So, though for all intents and purposes, we in the cities follow the Gregorian calendar for work, if we are Muslims, we follow the Hizari calendar for our festivals. We follow the



Ajeet Cour with Mahishini Colonne, Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India, and H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India.



Delegates from 8 SAARC countries.



In the audience from left : H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India; Mr. Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh in India; Mr. Sonam Kinga, eminent scholar and poet from Bhutan, Mr. Vimal Rubasinghe, Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of Sri Lanka; Ms. Ajeet Cour.



In the Audience from left : Ms. Ajeet Cour, Mr. Vimal Rubasinghe, Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of Sri Lanka, Mr. R.K. Sharma, Attache SAARC, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.



Arpana Caur with Mr. Manmohan Singh Mitwa.



On the dais from left : H.E. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India, Prof. Ashish Nandy, Mr. Vimal Rubasinghe, Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of Sri Lanka.

Bangla calendar for everything else. Where does the Baromasi come from? The Baromasi, 12 months. First of all, all Baromasis are not 12 months, they can be Dush Masi. There can be eight months, there can be six months, there can be four months. But the general term used is Baromasi. All Baromasis are not songs of separation. Many of them are agricultural. When should what be planted? Many of them are for health reasons which month should you eat what? And of course, there are the Virah Baromasi or the Bicche Baromasis, Baromasis of separation, not necessarily sung by a woman, not necessarily in a woman's voice. It can be in a man's voice; it can be in a woman's voice; it can be a narrative. Many of the Baromasis are part of what we call Gitika, narrative of the poem, ballet. Some of them are stand-alone ones. I tried to do a lot of research and while I was looking for wherefrom the Baromasi came from, I went to the Indian epic. I went to the Ramayan. In Ramayan, I thought, was a place where we begin the sorrow separation when rhyme translation and Ram in rhymed verse appeals to the tree, appeals to the bird, appeals to the deer asking them if they had seen Sita. It is very interesting. He researched to what we say Kadam, he also refers to the Bael. Now the Kadamba flower and the Bael fruit do not appear at the same time, in the same season. Interestingly, it was Bengali woman poet Chandravati who gives Sita a Baromasi describing her sojourn in the forest. The 14 years of exile are collapsed in Sita's Baromasi to one year. A poet's nature is not just similar in India or in Bengal. It is similar all over the world. For example the song of Solomon which is like the story of Radha and Krishna also brings in a lot of nature imagery. If we look at Shakespeare's Sonnet, he misses his friend and he says, "From thee I have been absent in the spring when proud pied April rest in all his trim." And there are other English poems which bring in the month or the season. But what I have not seen in the limited amount of time I had, is this close connection and I am going to focus on. For my research I went through a number of Shakur's paintings. There are portraits of Mahuwa and there are portraits of Nauder Chand as well as Mahuwa. There is a Baromasi inside each and every one of these portraits.

SESSION III

POETRY SESSION

The poetry session was Chaired by Dr. Kamal Chowdhary, Secretary Education, Govt. of Bangladesh who in his speech said "Poetry is emerging to be a shared gift and a means of exchange. There has never been a civilization without it. Poems are like music and you can carry that anywhere across the world and even to the Moon without being burdened. Even when you are in grief, poetry helps us to overcome agony. As you know, during the British period, a number of leaders and activists of India who stood against the colonial rule, at that time, were sent to Andaman Islands as prisoners and many of them died there. And one of the prisoners, wrote in his memoirs that when he lost all hope and thought that he would not be able to be a free man ever, he recited Tagore's poem Ekhon anto bando karo na pakha which means : it is not the end, do not fold your wings yet. And this poem, this line gave him hope. There was Nazim Hikmat, one of the famous poets of Turkey. He

wrote a poem, that is, named On Living, in which he writes “However and whatever we are, we must lead as if we will never die.”

Other poets to read out their poetry were :

Pratap Dixit	India
Trimohan Taral	India
Kamal Ashique of Agra	India
Vinita Agarwal	India
Khalid Javed Jan	Pakistan
Ayesha Zee Khan	Pakistan
Rubana Haq	Bangladesh

Performances :

Been Jogi Sapera	India
Kabeer Vani	India
Kaluarachchi Group	Srilanka
Malangs [Whirling Darvesh]	Pakistan
Bhil Dancers	India
Kuddus Bayoti Troupe	Bangladesh

October 10, 2011

SESSION IV

Folklore and the Popular Culture

His Excellency, **Shiv Shankar Mukerjee** chaired this session. In his opening remarks he said “ I presume that the theme for the session, implies about folklore and how it is under threat from today's popular culture, with pop-culture as it is called being the villain of the peace. But obviously, it is not as simple as all that and I hope at this session, with the erudition



Mr. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, delivering his speech.

and the knowledge that our panelists have, that we will be able to make some sense of it. I, for one, am glad to be in the role of the moderator rather than one of the expositors because of sheer complexity of the subject that we are trying to tackle.

We celebrate our ethos and our culture, our very being through folklore, for it defines us as a human being, as societies and leaps over the boundaries of modern nation States. It is our childhood, our dolls, our games, our nursery rhymes, it is our legends, our local and societal icons, our proverbs, our myths and our mythology, our family tales, our music and our dance, our festivals, our costumes and our customs, our very way of life. We may not, as individuals, be aware of its totality but it shapes us nevertheless in indefinable ways, perhaps without us, even being very conscious of it.

What distinguishes our own folklore in South Asia is the incredible diversity of our heritage as well as the evolution that has come about because this region is home to the most ancient, unbroken civilizations in



Mr. Shivshankar Mukherjee, former Ambassador of India in Nepal, Light the Inaugural lamp : the ceremonial Inauguration of the Performances of FOURTH SAARC FOLKLORE AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL, on the evening of 30th September, 2011, Ajeet Cour, Mr. Manoj Kumar, Mr. Mahbub Hassan Saleh, Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh in India, share the happy moments.



Bhai Surinder Singh Jodhpuri singing Kabir Vani with his companions.



Prof. Kaluarachchi Ariyaratne's folk performance group presenting their Performance.



The 'WHIRLING DARVESHS', called the MALANGS, who dance in divine ecstasy in Shah Hussain's 'mazaar' in Pakistan. They captured the hearts of the people.



In the audience from left : Mr. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, former Ambassador of India in Nepal, Ms. Ajeet Cour, Dr. Khalid Javed Jan from Pakistan, Mr. Manoj Kumar, Mr. Harvinder Singh.



Bhil Tribal group presenting their performance.



Been Jogi Saperas from Haryana.



Quddus Boyati group from Bangladesh.



Bhil performers conducting the ritual on which Dr. Bhagwandas Patel is presenting his Paper.

the history of humankind. We are home to every religion. We speak such a multiplicity of languages and dialects that beg us the image – Khanjar e bhay – the Tower of Babel. And these are, most of them, languages that are among the most sophisticated and nuanced in the world, reflected in prose and drama and verse that underline the splendour of our cultural heritage. But our folklore is not just these aspects of the so-called high or classical culture steeped in scholarship and knowledge. It is layer upon layer of all aspects of all of us and our ancestors, our toys and our games and our jokes and our proverbs, our food and art loads, our festivals and our customs, our social and religious rituals and all this enriched and rescued from a sterile cohesiveness but the fascinating local variations on similar beams. We are truly a kaleidoscope of folklore tradition, rich in history and heritage, fascinating in beauty and absolutely awe-inspiring in its diversity. And yet all this with an underlying unity that makes us, specially the young, instinctively understand the ethos of the other. I am told that the oral tradition which characterizes the essence of the folklore in virtually every society is at its richest in our region with its almost endless stretch of ballets and folk songs and stories and epics.

Popular culture and commercialization specially starting in the middle of the last century and continuing today are symbiotic. According to this point of view, they feed on each other, the God Mammon dictates quantity over quality, money over everything or to put it in the Indian context, Lakshmi in the ascendant of Saraswati. Hence if you subscribe to this point of view, you could blame the ascendancy at least at the level of the masses of popular culture to the increasing marginalization of classical culture and true folk culture by an all-pervasive, amorphous, trivial and titillating culture which reaches down to the lowest common denominator to feed the combined appetite of the masses who form the majority.

Next is the role of mass media, which of course, plays the most crucial role. Media too is a commodity for sale and must realize profits. So, gossip about celebrities and film stars and pictures replaced serious news and films and films in television too more and more move away from high quality content to fodder for the masses. Am I exaggerating? Is this simply an exercise in patronizing by the upper classes, a crippled aristocracy that monopolized what they defined as culture, defeated by the rise of the masses they looked down upon? Can we defend popular culture because it is in truth popular and strikes a cord with people across class and creed boundaries and appeals more universally to all of us? Are the songs of Bollywood less worthy than the classical genre because they are loved and hummed and sung by everyone rich and poor, men and women, brought together by a culture that is inclusive rather than elitist?

Dr. Praneeth Abeyesundera of Sri Lanka, in his very indepth paper said “All the traditional, pest controlling mechanisms have been transmitted through generations. Even though many of those methods are now enjoying the threat of extinction still some remember and continue to practice. Most of these traditional, pest controlling mechanism are related to superstitious beliefs of the community. Their common sense knowledge about nature has given them some impetus to cling into these traditional practices, even though they are unaware of the scientific

nature behind these practices.

Ashutosh Bhardwaj in his paper title: The Death of a Narrative said “We first look at the changing nature of tribal identities. In a recent visit to a naxal affected area in search of a report, I met a person who came across as a police informer. He took me to the local police station, had me meet police man gather news and file my report. As I spent a long evening with him, moved around the area, his another identity was revealed. He was also a naxal informer. As informer, by the very nature of his task, will have links with both sides. But his affiliations are clear. He and his heart are true only to one side. His soul is certain about his primary bond. He penetrates deep inside a camp by winning over its confidence and passes on its secret information to the other. But here was a person who sour by both sides, who carried secrets of both camps, would oblige them by leaking A secret to B and vice versa without ever revealing his true identity. He mastered the art of double crossing. His left hand indulged in acts the right one never got the wind of, as he secured favours from and betrayed both sides. He was actually a no one's man. He was no exception. Many tribals in the region, I met were living a double life. Why are they doing so? Are they greedy, desiring to steal grains from both sides? No. They know that they walk on the razor's edge by trying to be the friend and informer of both camps, they actually become their enemy. If and when their true identity is revealed, not one but two sets of bullets would dot their bodies. Why do they take this treacherous path then? A lane, these innocent tribals were totally unaware of till a decade ago when insurgencies surfaced in their pristine and primitive forests. Bastar the region of Chattisgarh where this conflict is largely placed, today presents a treacherous case where locals can survive only behind the smoke screen of a shadow identity. Caught in the vortex of insurgency in which both police and naxals after them to obtain information and a slight hitch can cause their lives, the only way left for them is to play sides double cross them. The survival of many persons hence become contingent on how skillfully they play this game of treachery and keep hope on both sides. Do they play this game willingly? No. it is the fear of death that pushes them to commit treachery repeatedly.

I say that we are on the verge of mere disappearance of an entire race, not through displacement, migration but the sheer metamorphosis of their identities and tales. No longer will we have elderly men who are the Atlas and Encyclopedia of the region, who can name a tree by its smell, a bird by its sound and an animal by its pugmarks. Instead, we will have a generation equipped to differentiate between the bullets of AK 47 and a light machine gun, which at least I cannot tell so far.

Presenting a paper on the oral epic of Bharat, **Prof C.M. Bandhu** of Nepal said “Bharat is a kind of folk narrative, which is narrated in Western Nepal and also in Kumaun, India. For Bharat, in Nepal there are other words as well like Bhada. Bharat is a short form of Mahabharat in which there are narratives of mainly heroic epics having some kind of struggle and wars and fighting in them. In Nepal, there are about 80 Bharat narratives, discovered by many scholars who work in the area of folklore and this Bharat has been classified in three different categories. One is mythological, another is historical or legendary and the third one

is social. But it is very interesting that some of the legendary or historical Bharat has now become mythological.

Sacrifice: Killing Beings Creating Gods was the title of the paper presented by Noor Zaheer of India. An expert of the North Western Himalayas she said “ A fundamental component of celebration of life as we see it manifested in various forms amongst almost all the social groupings and communities, all over the SAARC region is sacrifice. Called bali or kurbani in its most usual nomenclature it has through the passage of time and ritualistic journey been given a larger than life perspective.

Recording these stories I made a separate section of the stories of the village deities. This is a fast vanishing tribe because Aryanization is claiming these gods as Avatars of Vishnu and slowly their own specific characteristics, stories and feats are getting buried focus my paper on the North Western Himalayas. I have lived and worked here for the last 12 years.

I talk about a ritual that has grown into a kind of theatre form – Kahe ka. This ritual which has a human sacrifice as its main component, this ritual takes place every four years and it is performed both in Kulu and in Kinnor.

Participant from Pakistan, **Ms Ayesha Zee Khan's** paper was titled Folklore Heritage and Identity in SAARC Region and How to Safeguard it. She said “SAARC is a unique blend of eight countries of the sub-continent that have been blessed with a rich vibrant culture, traditions and identity. Their borders may define them as a separate country of the region today, but the region remains the same and the fact of the matter is that each country is linked somehow or the other with the umbilical bond of the mother country, India. We may have been divided by the changes that occurred in the history but our folklore stories, tales, traditions, cultures, cuisines, values and rituals remain the same today as when we started. It is known to everyone that as modern times emerge, countries develop and modernize accepting new ways to technology advancement, science, arts etc. Our region has this capability of new ideas synchronising with the old, the ancestral roots of this area are still practiced hand in hand with the change in society. Language being the foundation of any society throughout the region, it plays a part of backbone to culture and preservation of folklore.”

SESSION V

Politics of Preservation and Revival

The session began with a presentation on the Taj Mahal by the well known archeologist **Dr. K.K. Mohammed**. Ajeet Cour herself introduced him saying “I am introducing KK because he is my son. And nobody else knows better about a son than his mother.”

K.K. Mohammed himself began by a question “Should I speak on Taj? This is the land of Taj Mahal. But how many of us know that the real name of Taj is not Taj Mahal? As per the official documents, the name of Taj is Makbara-e-Munnavara, that means illuminated tomb. And who was the architect of Taj Mahal? It was Ustad Ahmad Lahori, a man from Lahore but he was originally from Shiraz.



Bhopungs from Rajasthan, presenting their performance.



Folk Dancers from Sri Lanka



Algoza singers from Punjab.



The greatest Baul Singer Parbati Baul, presenting her performance.



Audience enjoying 'Peacock Dance' from Nepal.



Ms. Ajeetha Srivastava from Uttar Pradesh, presenting a folk song.

So, Taj Mahal as we all know, is a poem in stone, it is a dream in marble; it is a tear drop on the cheek of time.”

Dr. K. K. Mohammed then went on to elaborate the history, upkeep and the preservation of the Taj Mahal to bring it back to its earlier glory.



On the dais from left : Mr. Manmohan Singh Mitwa, eminent poet; Ms. Ayesha Zee Khan from Pakistan; Mr. K.K. Mohammad, eminent Archaeologist; Prof. C.M. Bandhu, eminent scholar from Nepal; Praneeth Abheysundera, eminent scholar from Sri Lanka; Ms. Noor Zaheer, Coordinator FOSWAL.

In her short, precise but extremely well researched paper Ms. Rubana Huq of Bangladesh made some very important points. She said “Very quickly I am going to tell a story about a man who has basically transformed the oral to the visual and is still continuing. The title of my paper is Identity Lines of Passion and Folk. Each one of us owns only one single piece of cloth which is called our identity. Some of us often try and stitch our borrowed pieces together to eventually figure the big puzzle piece or the whole truth out. And in the process, we often fail. When the pieces do not match we decide to go our own ways, look into our own directions and continue to look towards our own selves. The only version of our own truth and our only being is our own identity. This identity of ours need not necessarily be either politically saturated or aligned to post modernism or essentialism. But very often it is aligned to our own space of the forgotten or the silent. This space is what constitutes our own core and our heart. Very often the core heals and crosses the boundaries of wounded attachment.”

SESSION IV

Folklore : Exploring, using and abusing it

Thanking the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature, **Dr. Bhagwan Das Patel** of India, presented a paper on the Bhil Tribal Rituals of Gujarat. In his paper he elaborated the role of tribal beliefs in creating gender equality. For an example he cited the interpretation of Ramayan, where Sita is projected as a self respecting, independent woman.

Presenting a paper on the Popular Folk Poetry of Punjab, **Shri Harvinder Singh** of India focused on the folklore in the earlier time which is related and generated by the ancient agrarian societies. He quoted



On the dais from left : Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Ms. Jackie Kabir from Bangladesh, Prof. Jayasena Kotegoda from Sri Lanka, Prof. Abhi Subedi from Nepal, Mr. Harvinder Singh, Ms. Toda Nida Sapai from Afghanistan, Dr. Bhagwandas Patel.

many poems, folk poems to substantiate the point of view. It was more a descriptive paper and the kind of themes and subjects that have been touched upon in the folk poetry were mainly highlighted in the paper.

Most of the SAARC countries including India have one common characteristic that these had been predominantly agrarian society for a very long time. Agrarian societies are in a very close interaction with the nature while producing or processing the production. Nature and poetry to a great extent are inter related. Nature enhances people's creativity and inspire them to celebrate it in the songs they sing. These songs embody their hopes, fears, dreams and aspirations. In traditional agriculture, most of the activities are performed collectively. This kind of collectivity and closeness to nature create favourable conditions and constructive environment for community singing. Such poetry composed and sung by common masses is generally known as folk poetry.

Prof. Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi of Sri Lanka in his paper explored the influence of Indian literature on Sri Lankan religions focusing mainly on the two texts Skandapurana and Silapatigaram. Nariyal kali patti is the story of how Prince Kanda was born from a bowl of fragrant sandalwood with a wife of Kotieshwara had used to apply on her body. Soon after his birth it is said that he attained maturity and joined his mother to bath in the pond. Upon witnessing this sight, Kotieshwara assumed that his wife was being unfaithful to him and he threw a sword at them, killing the son. When Uma realizes that the son has been killed, she comes out of the water and tells her husband unless he returns her son to alive, she will take her own life. Immediately, God Ishwara realizes his mistake and goes to jungle in search of an elephant. When he finds one, he cut its head and places it on the headless body of the prince. According to Kanda Kumar Charita, from then onwards, the Prince who is referred to God Gana has the head of an elephant. The legend states that a coconut plant first emerged from the place where the Prince's head landed when his neck was severed from his body, gradually it turned into a coconut tree and the following is a description of how from the head, roots, had penetrated into the soil and trunk of the tree appeared

subsequently leaves the sprouted then to coconut tree had been created. In the other ritual takes place, it has been a tradition to sing these verses about the origin of coconut tree. The story also states that the coconut has three marks at the centre so as to symbolize God Ishwara's three eyes.

Prof. Abhi Subedi of Nepal as the Chairperson gave his address which also included his own paper. In his short presentation he said

"Many years ago when I visited the old cultural place named Bhaktpur, in Nepal with a poet and we were greeted by a guard at a gate, before crossing into the important courtyard Bhaktapur complex. He said that I see many people dancing at night. I have seen time and again a young woman getting married inside, crying and reluctantly leaving the land. I tell this story but nobody believes me, he said. That remained in my mind for a long time until the same experience came back to me in Scotland where I was a student and became a very great lover of the castles in the Northern Island. In one of the old stone castles one guard exactly said the same story at the gate. He said, many people come here and dance, they perform, they drink and they love and they disappear. I narrate this story to many people but nobody believes me. He was repeating exactly the same story. That occurred to me that this is the character, the intangible culture, the intangibility of the culture between what happens and what you imagine. And that imagination is a dimension that always compels you to go and make experiment and relive with that experience. That is what I did and then I wrote this play which was performed in Delhi, Dhaka, Behrampur, Kathmandu and also in Europe.

Session VI

POETRY

The poetry session was anchored by **Mithilesh Shrivastava**.

The participating poets were:

Humaira Rahat	Pakistan
Manzurul Islam	Bangladesh
Kamal Chowdhary	Bangladesh.
Rajendra Upadhyaya	India
Umesh Chandra Verma	India
Mahesh Bhargava	India
Buddhinath Misra	India
Paul Kaur	India
Shashi Tiwari	India
Mithilesh Shrivastava	India
Manmohan Singh Mitwa	India
Som Thakur	India

Performances :

Algoza	India
Parvati Baul	India
Peacock Dance	Nepal
Vidyapathi Group	Sri Lanka
Ajeetha Shrivastava	India
Bhopung	India

October 2, 2011

SESSION VII:

Folklore, Myth and Superstition

Chair : Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam

Dr. Mahendra K. Mishra of India read an extremely vibrant paper on the manner in which many folklore and folk rituals have over the centuries



Mr. R.K. Sharma, Attache SAARC, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, describing the importance of the Folklore and Heritage Festival.

On the dais from left : Mr. Manmohan Singh Mitwa, Ms. Garima Sharma, Prof. Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi, Sri Lanka; Ms. Jackie Kabir, Bangladesh; Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka; Dr. Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay, Kolkata; Mr. Aziz Asouda and Ms. Tooba Nida Sapai, Afghanistan; Ms. Humaira Rahat, Ms. Nayyara Rahman from Pakistan.

turned into throttling superstitions that have been suffocating the communities practicing it. He said “Long back Karl Marx made one significant comment analyzing the society's importance but it is much more important to change it. I believe that. Our researchers on folk and tribal literature is important but in changing the socio-economic life of the poor tribal people, it is no less important. The theoretician and the activists should complement each other, the twin must meet.

Manmohan Singh Mitwa then introduced the Head of the Desk which deals with the SAARC Literature and FOSWAL in particular, Mr. Rajesh Sharma accompanied by his wife, had especially come down from Delhi to participate in the SAARC Festival of Heritage and Folklore. They attended the cultural bonanza of the evening programme of October 1st and on October 2nd very kindly agreed to participate in the Academic Seminar.

In his address **Rajesh Sharma** said “Respected Ajeet Cour ji, Mitwa ji and all the artistes and intellectuals, gathered here, I thank you all for coming to participate in the SAARC Heritage and Folklore Festival and have made it richer by your intellectual and artistic inputs. On behalf of the Government of India, I express my heartfelt gratitude to you all and extend a warm welcome. I also hope that Ajeet Cour ji who is like a mother to me and to many of you, would continue to organize similar

programmes and that the External Affairs Ministry of the Govt. of India would continue to extend its support to FOSWAL. I have not been much in contact with the world of letters and so I would not take a lot of your time. I should not be standing between you and the very learned papers that the delegates would be presenting. Please continue with the intellectual discourses.”

Humaira Rahat of Pakistan, in her academically rich paper in Urdu said “ Language is humanity’s most important social activity. And because literature too comes into being through the formation and arrangement of words, that is why basically literature too is an activity for social peace and harmony.”

Focussing on the Pashto Folk Music **Tooba Nida Sapai** of Afghanistan said “ I want to talk about Landai or Tapey, which is really a famous and poetry form in Pashto literature specially in Pashto folkloric literature and I would like to start my speech by one Landai or Tapey in Pashto which says:

*Asman chez suddai, shatas na dei,
Aah mein do dard hai, far aasmaan or lagwina.*

In English it would translate as, “The sky which is seems red, is not so because it is sunset, it is the feeling of my heart which burns the sky.”

There are no Landai in any other language except in Pashto and it is too important for us. Time and date of the creation of Landai are not clear. However, we can say that this category of poems are existing from very long time in Pashto folkloric literature. Even some of them have thousand years history. The examples we have, we will clearly describe the tableau of words of Pashtoon against colonialism and others.”

Ms. Jackie Kabir of Bangladesh read out a paper on folk music of Bengal that finds echoes in several other parts of South Asia. Opening her Paper she said “My paper is on Meligate, which means traditional songs by the rural women in Bangladesh.

There is a versatile range of music Bhavaya, Bhatiali, Jari and Shayri. There are also Murshidi and Marfity songs which are usually prayer offerings to God. Legendary singers like Lalon Fakir from Kustia, Hasan Raja from Sunamganj and Shah Abdul Karim have many many disciples who carry on singing their songs to keep them alive. There are many female singers also who carry the legacy of the Baul out of sheer passion. As what they earn monetarily is almost negligible.

The subject matter of Meli geet is usually very very simple. The daily chore carried out by the women, their anguish and their joy even they express in a very simple and clear manner. If they are judged by the yardstick of musical diction, then they would be considered as plain songs devoid of any ornamentation. So, the characteristics of the songs are (a) they are very simple in tune and lyrics. It talks about simple matters like pain and sorrows of being a woman. Secondly, the presentations of the songs are very simple. The singers do not have to practise too much or use many musical instruments, though in some areas now they are introducing use of musical instrument. Even though the songs are not ornamental, they are unique and unpretentious. Thirdly, the songs vary according to the local areas, that means, they

develop locally in different parts of Bangladesh. So, they are composed locally. Fourthly, the subject matter of the songs also evolves. They change with time and environment. Fifthly, the songs celebrate women's relationship with other family members. Like all other folk songs, it is almost always very difficult to trace the composer of the songs. The singers pass on the songs verbally generation after generation. So, the credit of Meli geet goes to the collective women folk of the rural Bangladesh rather than any particular person."

"The Placement of Women in Folk and Urban Theatre in Pakistan, a Comparison" was the topic of the paper by Nayyara Rahman of Pakistan. She said "Theatre is an evolving form of creative expression. It allows the audience and the actor to transcend together through a shared audio visual experience. It is an effective medium of socio-economic change, asking questions and giving answers no other platform may be able to do. None of this is true, at least not for a sizeable proportion of Pakistan's theatre community. My paper today is less scientific conclusion on the state of women in Pakistani theatre today and more of a commentary on their position in urban and rural folk theatre.

The central problem like most other problems of Pakistan is not of resources but their distribution. To ensure that theatre does what theatre is supposed to do is to ensure that the theatre does what theatre is supposed to do to protect folk line heritage in Pakistan. It is time to give a long suffering tradition its due.

The last paper of the session was by **Mohd Aziz Asauda** of Afghanistan, on "Folklore of Dari, the second language of Afghanistan". He said "Different genres like stories, songs, poems and traditional proverbial, values, beliefs about the work system, musicians, magicians and other specialists are found here. Dari language has enjoyed more than thousand years of existence. Different books like Sanakayora, Amira Shalon, Mazboon Numa, Abu Muslim Numa, and tens of other titles are there."

In his Chairman's remarks **Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam** of Sri Lanka, also included his own paper on "Indian and Sri Lankan Folklore – Cultural Connectivity in the SAARC Region."

He began his presentation by saying "Mitwa ji has combined two sessions into one. Therefore, without making any violations in the human rights, I also think that I can perform the duties of two officers, one as the Chairperson and the other one is of the speaker.

My topic is actually the first book in Sinhala was written during the 10th century AD. It was influenced by the Sanskrit scholar named Dandi Alankaram. By this time, Sri Lankan listeners were unable to understand the original text written in Pali in full and a literature came to the rescue.

The nucleus of these poems were taken from the original text and the folk artists expanded them orally. Uttar Ramayana is also taken seriously by the folk poets. In the rituals associated with the Goddess of Patni through the foregoing I hope to have provided some background for the manner in which not only the ancient local oral tradition but also its developed versions, affinity to the Indian classical text.

The Academic Seminar of two session was directly followed by a poetry

session in which the following poets participated:

Suresh Salil	India
Rubana Haq	Bangladesh
Leeladhar Mandloi	India
Shehpar Rasool	India
Siraj Ajmali	India
Prof. Abhi Subedi	Nepal
Buddhinarain Misra	India
Vinita Aggarwal	India
Khaled Javed Jan	Pakistan
Ayesha Zee Khan	Pakistan
Kamal Choudhary	Bangladesh
Paul Kaur	India
Pankaj Singh	India
Umesh Verma	India
Manmohan Singh Mitwa	India

The following Performance Groups participated in the evening cultural show:

Bhutani Folk Dancers	Bhutan
Kalbelia	India
Langa Manganiar	India
Meena Sahu	India
Malangs [Whirling Darvesh]	Pakistan
Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi Group	Sri Lanka
Salam Loghari Group	Afghanistan

The main venue for Folk Dance and Music Performances was St. Peter's College. Every evening for three days, different folk artistes regaled the audience with ethnic, authentic performances.

Besides the formal, regular performances, shows were held in the day time in six different schools and colleges. This was to make it possible for students to be exposed to the variety and purity of so many folk arts from all the SAARC countries. Five performances each day were also held in



Kalbelias dancing their vigorous celebration of life.



Folk Dances from Sri Lanka.



Meena Sahu presenting her famous 'Pandvani'.



Folk Dancers from Bhutan.



Intoxicated 'Malangs'dancing.



Langa Manganiyar's from Rajasthan.



Hall packed with Audience.



Folk Performance from Afghanistan : Ancient Musical Instruments-played with great love and devotion.



Ajeet Cour presenting letter of Appreciation to the leader of the Performance group from Afghanistan.



Prof. Abhi Subedi presenting letter of Appreciation to the leader of Bhopung Performance Group from Rajasthan.



The greatest Baul Singer Parbati Baul, presenting her performance.



Ajeet Cour, President FOSWAL, being honoured by the leader of the Malangs group, with the holy 'chaadar' from Shah Hussain's 'mazaar'.



Ajeet Cour presenting letter of Appreciation to the leader of the Quddus Boyati Group.



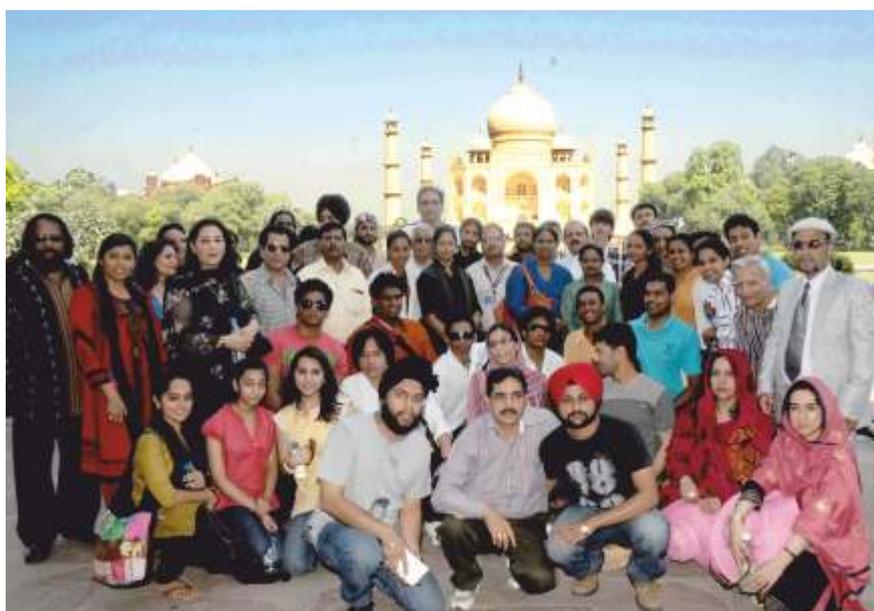
Father John Ferrera presenting letter of Appreciation to the leader of Performance Group Mr. Ravibandhu Vidyapathy from Sri Lanka.



Father John Ferrera presenting letter of Appreciation to the leader of Performance Group from Bhutan.



Ajeet Cour, President FOSWAL, being honoured by the leader of the Malangs group, with the holy 'chaadar' from Shah Hussain's 'mazaar'.



Delegates from 8 SAARC countries at Taj.



Prof. Ashish Nandy
India



Prof. Manzoorul Islam
Bangladesh



Dr. Abhi Subedi
Nepal



Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra
India



Ms. Arifa Omarloor
Afghanistan



Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam
Sri Lanka



Dr. Rubana Huq
Bangladesh



Prof. Jayasena Kotegama
Sri Lanka



Dr. C.M. Bandhu
Nepal



Mr. Suresh Salil
India



Dr. K.K. Mohammad
India



Ms. Jackie Kabir
Bangladesh



Mr. Ahmed Ali Shafaq
Afghanistan



Ms. Nayyara Rahman
Pakistan



Mr. Azeez Asouda
Afghanistan



Mr. Shiv Shankar Mukherjee
India



Dr. Wimal Rubasinghe
Sri Lanka



Dr. Kamal Chowdhury
Bangladesh



Ms. Tooba Nida Sapai
Afghanistan



Mr. R.K. Sharma
India



Prof. Ariyaratne Kaluarachchi
Sri Lanka



Mr. Siraj Ajmali
India



Dr. Yashodhara Mishra
India



Dr. Praneeth Abeysondera
Sri Lanka



Dr. Ram Kumar Mukhopadhyay
India



Ms. Noor Zaheer
India



Mr. Shahpar Rasool
India



Mr. Harvinder Singh
India



Ms. Humera Rahat
Pakistan



Mr. Omair Manzar
India



Dr. Sonam Kinga
Bhutan



Ms. Ayesha Zee Khan
Pakistan



Dr. Bhagwan Das Patel
India



Dr. Budhinath Mishra
India



Mr. Ashutosh Bhardwaj
India



Prof. Niaz Zaman
Bangladesh



Mr. Rajendra Upadhyay
India



Dr. Khalid Javed Jan
Pakistan



Mr. Umesh Varma
India



Mr. Mithilesh Shrivastava
India



Ms. Paul Kaur
India



Ms. Shashi Tiwari
India



Mr. Pradeep Dixit
India



Ms. Vinita Agarwal
India



Mr. Somdutt
India

मोहब्बत से सिमटती हैं दूरियां..

दूरियां तो हैं, पर मोहब्बत से सिमटती हैं। यह वाक्य ही है जो हमें याद दिलाता है कि दूरियां तो हैं, पर मोहब्बत से सिमटती हैं। यह वाक्य ही है जो हमें याद दिलाता है कि दूरियां तो हैं, पर मोहब्बत से सिमटती हैं।



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महानगर

सर्क हस्तक्षेप: अलग-अलग भाषाओं के बाद भी कला और संस्कृति में नहीं दिखी सीमाओं का अंतर

महानगर में कला और संस्कृति के अंतर का अध्ययन करने के लिए एक विशेष कार्यक्रम आयोजित किया गया। इस कार्यक्रम में अलग-अलग भाषाओं के कलाकारों ने अपनी कलाओं का प्रदर्शन किया।

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विरासत में मिली संस्कृति का संरक्षण जरूरी



श्री राम के जन्म के अवसर पर सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम का आयोजन



विरासत में मिली संस्कृति का संरक्षण जरूरी है, सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन



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आगरा: सांस्कृतिक और लोक साहित्य के अभाव में, विरासत में मिली संस्कृति का संरक्षण जरूरी है, सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रमों का आयोजन...

सांस्कृतिक उत्सव
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पद्म राम की उदरता काविले तारीफ़: जगदेव

आगरा: पद्म राम की उदरता काविले तारीफ़: जगदेव...



SAARC folklore festival starts Friday



Agra, September 29: Writers, theatre artists and cultural troupes from South Asian nations will gather here for the four-day SAARC folklore and heritage festival that starts in the Taj city Friday.

It has been organised by the Foundation of

SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) in collaboration with the external affairs ministry.

The main workshops, including academic seminars and poetry recital, will be held at hotel Grand, while folk performances will be held at St. Peter's College auditorium, local media coordinator for the foundation Vivek Jain said Wednesday.

While India will have the largest contingent of performers with 10 teams, Pakistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal will send one team each. Sri Lanka will be sending two groups. These nations together make up the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) regional grouping.

Ajeet Caur, noted Punjabi and Hindi writer, is the FOSWAL president.