

SOUTH ASIAN FESTIVAL OF SUFISM AND BUDHISM

FEBRUARY 22, 23, 24, 2019

Sahitya Akademi and Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL), organized a three day South Asian Festival of Sufism and Budhism from 22 February to 24 February 2019.

INAUGURAL SESSION



Registration of Delegates

The Festival began with the registration of the delegates from all South Asian countries before the Inauguration.

The first day saw an assemblage of some very great scholars in the Inaugural Session. Dr. Anand Kumar, Director of the Festival, FOSWAL, conducted the proceedings.



Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, in his welcome speech, mentioned how India has been the cradle of both Buddhism and Sufism, two great ways of living that give peace the foremost place. He said that at least some perceive Sufism and Buddhism as traditions which oppose

each other, which is not factual, as both brought peace to millions of minds. Both Sufism and Buddhism are affirmative



On the dais from Left : Dr. Anand Kumar, Dr. K.S. Rao, Secretary, Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, Ajeet Cour, President FOSWAL, Dr. Madhav Kaushik, Vice President, Sahitya Akademi, Prof. Ashis Nandy, Prof. K.T.S. Sarao, Prof. Muchkund Dubey

and are concerned with overcoming misery. While Buddhism strives to root out desire to overcome misery, Sufism fine-tunes desire to yearning for the divine, and reach spiritual ecstasy.

Ms Ajeet Cour, President FOSWAL, honoured all the dignitaries on stage with Kashmiri Pashmina shawls. She began her Inaugural Address, paying tributes to the recently



Ms. Ajeet Cour presenting her Inaugural Address.



Dr. K.S. Rao, Secretary Sahitya Akademi honouring the Chief Guest Prof. Muchkund Dubey with traditional *Gamchha*



Mr. R.K. Sethi, Manager Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature honouring Prof. K.T.S. Sarao with a Kashmiri Pashmina Shawl.



Dr. K.S. Rao, Secretary Sahitya Akademi honouring Prof. Akhtarul Wasey with traditional *Gamchha*



Mr. R.K. Sethi, Manager Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature honouring Prof. Akhtarul Wasey with a Kashmiri Pashmina Shawl.



Dr. K.S. Rao, Secretary Sahitya Akademi honouring Prof. K.T.S. Sarao with traditional *Gamcha*



Dr. R.K. Sethi, Manager Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature honouring Mr. Ajmal Alimzai, Cultural Councillor, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, New Delhi with a Kashmiri Pashmina Shawl.



Mr. R.K. Sethi, Manager Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature honouring Prof. Ashis Nandy with a Kashmiri Pashmina Shawl.



The Audience.



From left : Dr. Anupam Roshi (Nepal), Mr. R.K. Sethi, Mr. Praveen Mahajan, Ms. Ajeet Cour, Mr. Mohammad Mansoor Nassimy (Afghanistan), Dr. S.M. Faridur Rahman (Bangladesh), Ms. Arpana Caur, Mr. Ahmad Farid Sultani (Afghanistan), Dr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal)

departed Professor Namwar Singh, eminent literary critic and thinker and Fellow of Sahitya Akademi, who was also the Vice-President of FOSWAL.

Ms. Cour asserted that the Festival is about fastening the heart and mind with love and mutual respect. Only through love can we reach the heights of self-evolution and enlightenment, she said. This is the 'Love with the Creator of this Universe, and with the Universe He has created, and with all the living beings which are ordained to share the bounties of this universe: the planet earth and millions of planets in eternal rotation in infinite void, without any accidents; the days merging into nights, and nights giving way to glorious, sun-drenched days, in an eternal cycle of merging and re-emerging, like the cycle of Death and Life. And all the living species sharing this planet in an eternal harmony, where even tiny ants and bees and butterflies have their special roles to play, along with giant majestic mountains, trees and all the green vegetation, roaring oceans.' Both Buddhism and Sufism, she said, stand against terrorism and violence, and instead, try to create an ideal state of mind which is infused with love. Buddhism and Sufism 'create a voice for secularism and composite culture becoming the ideology of connectivity, tolerance, love, compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Prof. Muchkund Dubey, President, Council for Social



Development, and former Foreign Secretary of India, the Chief Guest of the event, presented a detailed account of how spiritual traditions are the most special and precious in establishing humaneness. He said the principles of equality and respect are inherent in both Buddhism and Sufism.

Buddhism lays great emphasis on the supremacy of reason. He denied belief in 'faith.' He told his disciples not to believe what the wise men of yore said, or what the scriptures say, not even what he himself taught, and rely on their own reason and first and experience. The Buddha does not either acknowledge the existence of God, or deny it; his concern was mainly humans, and their ethical behaviour, to

ensure end of misery. Both these faiths have given women the access and say in matters of divinity, and contributed vastly to the betterment of humanity. He finally urged everyone to respect to all creatures and accept everything with equanimity. Prof. Dubey pointed to the fact that the concept of Advaita as advanced in the Bhagavadgita, is the ultimate statement of equality of all beings.

Mr Madhav Kaushik, Vice President, Sahitya Akademi, who was presiding over the inaugural session, started his Presidential Address saying that the Buddha arrived on the scene at a time when the Vedic religion had degenerated to include all the evil practices in the world including human sacrifice and animal sacrifice, and countered all of them, and



purified the religious and spiritual space of those times. This is why Sir Edwin Arnold called him “The Light of Asia.” Buddhism and Sufism both stand for humaneness. Great figures of Sufism like Amir Khusro, Baba Bulleh Shah, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, strove to find God within man. If the Buddha was “The Light of Asia,” then, Sufism is “The Might of Asia,” he declared.



Professor Ashis Nandy, eminent Indian social psychologist, social theorist and critic, delineated the characteristics of a civilization—the dark sides and dark times it goes through, the changes it sees over time, and the corrective measures and elements it comes up with. India, he said, is going through a dark time,

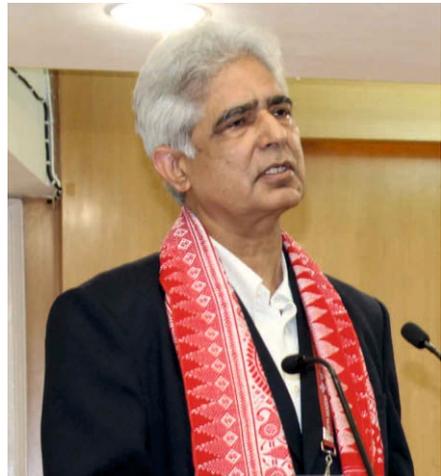
but we should not lose faith because, as history has taught us, to lose faith in our civilization is to lose faith in human futures. He said that both Buddhism and Sufism, though they preach love and compassion, grew as movements of protest when the civilizations needed corrective elements, and

through protest they were able to rid the society of its evils.



Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, noted Islamic scholar, said that India has been the focal point of Sufism as most of the Sufi culture developed and grew in its soil. He went on to say that Sufism encompasses piety, cleanliness, love and purity, and explained the important eight elements, as described by Junaid Baghdadi, that make a Sufi.

Prof. KTS Sarao, eminent scholar on Buddhism, presented a very interesting account of how Buddhism can be applied to the present society. The Budha, he said, brought all the heavens into the Sansara, thus bringing gods and goddesses within the purview of the retribution of Karma. Today's world is profit-oriented, if seen through the Buddhist perspective. Hence, like in old times, we should start sensitizing the young minds who can still be molded, and teach them better values that can make them wise, rather than trying to sensitize the adults. Any wise person, he asserted, would understand that the happiness of the world



lies in the happiness of humanity, in the minimization of profits and maximization of happiness.



Dr. Anand Kumar, former Professor of AIIMS, New Delhi, and a poet, pointed out in his Keynote Address that Sufism is pre-Islamic, thus associating it with any religion would be restricting it to a set doctrine. He quoted

the legend of the first Sufi, Kwaja Khizr, whom Allah is supposed to have designated as the counselor of Moosa Nabi(Moses). He encouraged everyone not to be entrapped by religion, but be selfless and compassionate regardless of one's faith.

Mr Ajmal Alimzai, Cultural Councillor, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, New Delhi, made a Special Address where he cited the similarities of Buddhism and Sufism. While there is Nirvana in Buddhism, there's Fanaa in Sufism. He condemned the warped ideologies of terrorists in Afghanistan that have ruined the beautiful place. He appreciated the initiatives taken by Sahitya Akademi and FOSWAL and said that such events strengthen the ties between faiths and nations.



SESSION I

The first session of poetry reading was chaired by Ms.



Mr. Ahmad Javed (Afghanistan) presenting his poems. On the dais from left :
Dr. Chador Wangmo (Bhutan), Mr. Al Mamun Mahbub Alam (Bangladesh),
Dr. A.J. Thomas (India)

Chador Wangmo from Bhutan, and the participants who presented their poems were Mr Ahmad Javed (Afghanistan), Mr Mamun Mahbub Alam (Bangladesh) and Dr. A.J. Thomas (India).

The Paper presentation of the First Session was Chaired by



Dr. Aziz Hajini (India) presenting his Paper.
On the dais from left : Dr. Gul Agha Ahmadi (Afghanistan),
Prof. Samantha Ilangakoon (Sri Lanka)

Dr. Aziz Hajini (India). He spoke about the great spiritual tradition of Kashmir, the part of the country he came from, and mentioned the legend of how Rishi Kashyap recovered Kashmir from a deluge, and so the region got his name. He also described the legendary kashmiri poetess Lal Ded or Lalleshwari, as a Shaivite and Sufi at the same time.

Samantha Ilangakoon from Sri Lanka spoke on “Universality on the Concept of Love with Reference to Sufism and Buddhism.” He said when we say love, we mostly mean romantic life in literature. But it is important that one loves oneself enough, so as to avoid committing suicide. The concept of celebrating the other in Sufism is unique. We cannot live without the other. In Buddhism, which is all about ethical living in consonance with the others, the question of 'rights' does not arise. On the contrary, one has only duties. Rights are automatically taken care of when one fulfills one's own duties. We all have love, to ensure equality among all. Only that we do not expand it sufficiently.

Gul Agha Ahmadi from Afghanistan making a very interesting presentation on the two main spiritual streams of Afghanistan—Buddhism and Sufism. Buddhism has had its early development in Aghanistan, as the Bamiyan Buddha statues bear witness. Sufism's greatest star, Maulana Jalaluddin Balki(Jalaluddin Rumi, who was born and brought up in Balk, in Afghanistan), Rahman Baba and others. The Sufis of Afghanistan follow the song and dance tradition. Sufis are very peaceful and ethical people; they are close to Allah. Whosoever has his/her heart close to God will be firm and confident of mind.

SESSION II

Session two of Poetry Readings was presided by poet Bishma Prasad Upreti (Nepal). Kushal Dutta (India),



Dr. Bishma Prasad Upreti (Nepal) presenting his marvellous poems.
On the dais from left : Mr. Kushal Dutta (India), Mr. Saleh Mujahid (Bangladesh)
Ms. Suharshani Dharmaratne (Sri Lanka), Mr. Rajendra Parajuli (Nepal).

Rajendra Parajuli (Nepal), Suharshani Dharmaratne (Sri Lanka) and Saleh Mujahid (Bangladesh) read their poems.

The Paper Readings of Session two was Chaired by Alim-Ur-Rahman Khan of Bangladesh.

Hettige Nihal Anurasiri (Sri Lanka) and the Chairman presented their papers. Hettige Anurasiri explained how the Indian narratives like the Jatakas and the Dhammapad, set off the Sri Lankan narrative traditions. Sri Lanka followed India's Buddhist tradition, until the colonial powers separated us. After Independence, we are coming together once again. He then read out a story in which he deals with the theme of love.



Mr. Hettige Nihal Anurasiri (Sri Lanka) presenting his Paper.
Dr. Alim-ur-Rahman (Bangladesh) is on the dais.

Alim-Ur-Rahman Khan stated that Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam. Sufism is a bridge between the human and the divine. A scholar defined Sufism as a science through which one can know how to travel to the Divine. He then went on to describe the similarities between the yama-niyama sequence in Patanjali Yogasutras and the Sufi prescriptions of external and internal purity.

The other Paper Readings of Session two was chaired by Ashraf Abdul Raheem (Maldives). Kongala Liyanage Ayesh



Mr. Ashraf Abdul Raheem (Maldives) presenting his Paper.
On the dais : Mr. Kongala Liyanage Ayesh Dishan (Sri Lanka),
and Ms. Nahida Ashrafi (Bangladesh)

Dishan (Sri Lanka) and Nahida Ashrafi (Bangladesh) presented their papers. Mr. Kongala said how imperative it was to have a peaceful environment. Without peace there is no meaning for any freedom. As his country was plunged into long years of civil strife, he knew the value of peace, he said. The Buddha would insist if he were here today, to uphold peace of mind as first and foremost. The Buddhist way does not see any difference between various religions. Race and religion are two sides of the same coin. Millennia before the European Enlightenment, the Buddha had asserted the importance of egalitarianism and socialism. There are many meditation techniques in Buddhism. All of them tend towards love—hatred has no place here. Nahida Ashrafi presented a paper on Sufism as reflected in a novel titled, Sweet Blasphemy. The Chairperson recited an Urdu poet as a closing gesture.

The First day of the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism ended with the soul-stirring, mystic : MUSICA

MEDICINA by Vishesh Kalimero and Rahul Jigyasu. A tribal meditative experience bringing together sounds from monasteries, temples and forests. All the delegates enjoyed this vibrant performance.





Mr. Thameera Manju from Sri Lanka presenting his new book to Ms. Ajeet Cour



Delegates from Sri Lanka.



Delegates from Bhutan

FEBRUARY 23, 2019

SESSION III

The Third Session of South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism was devoted to Poetry Readings in which Indike



Ms. Indra Kumari Vishwa (Bhutan) presenting her poems.
On the dais from left : Mr. Indike Nuwan Thotawaththa (Sri Lanka),
Nur Quamrun Nahar, Dr. Ashraf Jewel and Russel Rahen (Bangladesh).

Nuwan Thotawaththa (from Sri Lanka), Nur Quamrun Nahar (Bangladesh), Indra Kumari Vishwa (Bhutan) and Russel Rahen (Bangladesh) presented their poems. The session was chaired by Mr. Ashraf Jewel from Bangladesh. Besides chairing the session, he also presented some of his own poems.

The next part of the Third Session was scheduled for Paper



Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh (Nepal), presenting his Paper. On the dais :
Rev. Dampahala Rahula Thero (Sri Lanka) and Ms. Abdul Haq Lareena (Sri Lanka)

Presentations. It was Chaired by Sri Ram Dayal Rakesh (from Nepal) who was also conferred with Sahitya Akademi's Premchand Fellowship in 2013. While referring to the subject and quoting from Nehru, he said – culture widens the mental horizons of people. He talked about the influence and inspiration of Sufism. The whole Bhakti andolan was a by-product of Sufism. Love is the fountainhead of Sufism and material wealth doesn't matter; peace, love, brotherhood, harmony are the essential elements of Sufism. They are means of salvation, nirvana and moksha.

Ms. Abdul Haq Lareena (from Sri Lanka) presented her paper on the poems based on Sufism and Budhism. She said Sufism and Budhism are lights of love filled with compassion and peace. She raised certain questions relating to women's journey from ancient times to the present day. The next speaker was Rev. Dampahala Rahula Thero (from Sri Lanka). He said that it is our duty to spread humanism which must be protected with all possible means. Sufism is neither philosophy, nor religion; it enlightens us about love which is essential for all. He mentioned about the teaching of Buddha and their relevance. Truth is one, you can't hide truth and sun for a long time, they are bound to enlighten human beings.

The Other Paper Reading Presentation of Session three had three speakers to present their papers. It was chaired by Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda from Bangladesh. Dr. Anand Kumar in his paper, gave a detailed account of Padmavat, the famous epic. Another speaker, Ms. Kala Ramesh said Buddha talked of shunyata – the infinite. Oneness, merging



On the dais from left : Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh),
Dr. Anand Kumar and Dr. Kala Ramesh from India

into one pulsating loneliness. She suggested one should be very sparing in using words in writing Haiku, an eight word poem. It will give you a whole world of imagination. She correlated nothingness to Haiku. The next speaker, Mohd. Nurul Huda (from Bangladesh) presented a long poem on Sufism and divine unity. He said that Sufism and Buddhism are the two ways of getting out of sufferings and attaining salvation.

SESSION IV

The Fourth Session was chaired by Riyaz Punjabi. Speaking on Sufism, he said that it provides hope in darkness. India is not just to be seen in the context of geography but as an entire continent. India is a land of culture, traditions, Vedas, Upanishads and is a messenger of peace and brotherhood. Let us not forget that the Buddha travelled from one corner to another corner of northern and central India and preached about human salvation. Cautioning about the mad race of human beings to acquire material resources, he said it is our duty to be alert. We have to dig out deep to know what spirituality is. Happiness is an essence of spirituality. When you merge with the universe, you merge with humanity which relays the message of love and affection.

The speaker in this session was Abu Ishahoque Hossain (from Bangladesh) who presented an illuminating paper on the Bauls. He tried to trace the origins of Buddhism. The next speaker was Ahmed Khaliq Mominzada (from Afghanistan). He spoke on the crux of Sufism. Sufism exists in every human being. It leads us to peace of mind, we express our inner world to outside. Love makes us like water which has



From left : Prof. Riyaz Punjabi (India), Mr. Ahmed Khaliq Mominzada (Afghanistan),
Mr. Abu Ishahoque Hossain (Bangladesh)

no colour but reflects every colour. He concluded saying that Sufism means ignoring all the negativity. We enter the ocean where there is no discrimination and we find our creator.

SESSION V

The post-lunch Fifth Session had two inner sessions of poetry reading. The first was chaired by Deo Prakash



Mr. Deo Prakash Choudhary (India) presenting his poems ,
On the dais, from left : Mr. Muhib Ur Rahman (Afghanistan),
Kavita Mukesh (India), and Tenzin Tsundue (Tibetan Refugee).

Choudhary (India). Mahesh Paudyal (Nepal), Muhib Ur Rahman (Afghanistan), Kavita Mukesh (India), and Tenzin Tsundue (Tibetan Refugee), read their poems.

In the next inner session of poetry reading, Dr. M. Afsar Rahbeen (Afghanistan) presided, while Anupam Roshi (Nepal), Varsha Das (India), and the chairman himself



Mr. Afsar Rahbeen (Afghanistan) presenting his poems ,
On the dais, from left : Prof. Muhammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh),
Dr. Varsha Das (India), Dr. Anupam Roshi (Nepal).

presented their poems.

In the paper presentation part of the Fifth Session, S. M. Faridur Rahman (Bangladesh) showed a short film on a Baul singer in Bangladesh, and how he and his colleagues contributed to Sufism in that country. Next speaker was

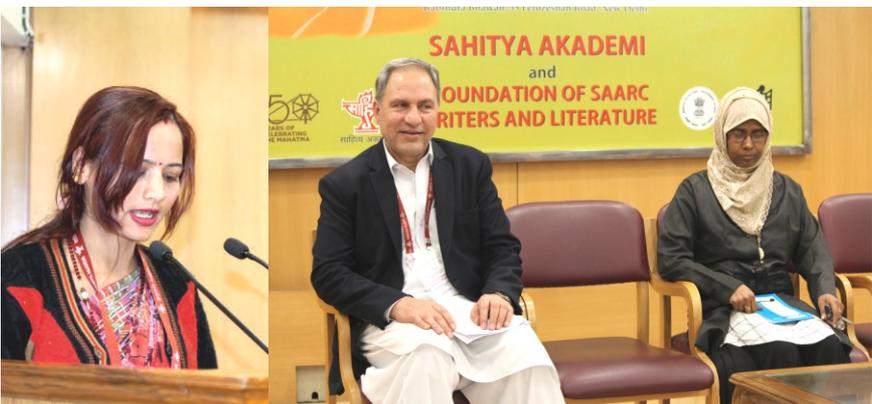


From left : Shaikh Shahbaz Riad and Mr. S.M. Faridur Rahman from Bangladesh presenting their Papers.

Shaikh Shahbaz Riad, an education professional, made a power-point presentation explaining how Sufism was made use of in the school curriculum between Class III and Class X.

SESSION VI

The Sixth Session began with poetry reading. Gul Agha Ahmadi (Afghanistan) chaired the session. Poets Sindhu Rijal (Nepal) and Lareena Abdul Haq (Sri Lanka) recited their poems. Ms. Lareena sang beautiful Tamil lyrics.



Ms. Sidhu Rijal (Nepal) presenting her poems.
On the dais : Mr. Gul Agha Ahmadi (Afghanistan) and Ms. A.H. Lareen (Sri Lanka)

The second part of the session also was poetry reading, and Rinzin Rinzin (Bhutan) was chairperson. Poets Ram Dayal Rakesh (Nepal), Gulshan Jhumur (Bangladesh), Shreedhar



Dr. Rinzin Rinzin (Bhutan) presenting his poems. On the dais from left : Ms. Gulshan Jhumur (Bangladesh), Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh (Nepal), Ms. Mehtaz Nur (Bangladesh)

Gautam (Nepal), Mehtaz Nur (Bangladesh), read their poems.

The last part of the Sixth Session was a mixed one with poets reading their poems, and academicians making paper presentations. The session was presided over by Prof. Niaz Zaman, former Professor English, Dhaka University. Professor H.S. Shivaprakash, presented his poems on Sufism and Buddhism, followed by the paper presentation of Gunathilaka Siriwardhana Charith Priyadarshana (Sri Lanka). His topic was “Budhist Perspective on Society,”. Why do we need religion, he asked. There are many kinds of arguments in favour and against religion. Religion is practiced at the individual level. One does not normally have



Dr. Niaz Zaman (Bangladesh) presenting her poems. On the dais from left : Dr. H.S. Shivaprakash (India), Gunathilaka Siriwardhana Charith Priyadarshana (Sri Lanka), Dr. A.J. Thomas (India)

an understanding of the other's religion. Buddhism is a philosophy as well as a religion. The teachings of the Buddha, are in the form of principles readily applicable to society. Religions are all manmade and may have defects and lacunae inherent in them. The Buddha was not a Buddhist, Jesus Christ was not a Christian and the Holy Prophet Muhammad was not a Muslim. Dr. A.J.Thomas and Mr. Tenzin Tsundue were invited a second time to read their poems, which they did. Tenzin sang a beautiful song, like a prelude to a Tibetan opera.

Concluding the session, Prof. Niaz Zaman made a presentation on Sufi and Baul influences in Kazi Nazrul Islam's poetry. She said though Tagore was influenced by Baul songs, Kazi imagined himself to be a Baul, and his poetry was permeated by Baul influence.

The Festival will continue for tomorrow, 24th February, being its last day.

The day ended with a Cultural Programme in which famous film director Meera Dewan showed her film on Baba Farid, the 12th Century Sufi poet from Punjab.





The audience.

FEBRUARY 24, 2019

SESSION VII

The third and the last day of the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism, started with the Seventh Session.

The first part was a poetry reading session with Ms Kala



Ms. Kala Ramesh presenting her poems. On the dais from left : Mr. Eak Prasad Duwadi (Nepal), Ms. Nahida Ashrafi (Bangladesh)

Ramesh, representing India, in the chair. She read a few Haikus and a Tanka which reminded the audience of how unity creates a resonance that keeps poetry pulsating. Ms Nahida Ashrafi from Bangladesh read a few English translations of her poems, such as “Eraser” and “All Sparkling Dawns of Earth are Celebrated for You.” Mr Eak Prasad Duwadi also read his poems in this session.

The next part of this session was another poetry reading



Dr. Lutfa Hannum Salima Begum presenting her poems. On the dais from left : Mr. Balbir Madhopuri (India), Mr. Abu Ishahoque Hossain (Bangladesh), Dr. Binod Khaitan (India)

which was chaired by Ms Lufta Hannum Salima Begum from India who read two poems—“The Autobiography of a Chair” and “You Are There,” a poem on Mirabai. Dr. Binod Khaitan read some very interesting poems, including one on Van Gogh. A few poems were also presented by Mr Balbir Madhopuri (India) and Abu Ishahoque Hossain (Bangladesh).

Papers were presented as part of this session, by Mr Abdur Razzaque Khan (Bangladesh) and Mr Mohammad Mansoor Nasimi (Afghanistan).

Mr Mohammad Mansoor Nasimi chaired this session and spoke in detail on Sufism and the characteristics of a true



Mr. Muhammad Mansoor Nassimy (Afghanistan), Mr. Abdur Razzaque Khan (Bangladesh)
Ms. Deepali Boarh presenting their Papers.

Sufi. Mr Abdur Razzaque Khan spoke on the importance of love in spiritual communication. He urged all to be selfless as selfish desires are an indication of the emptiness of the soul.

Ms Geetali Borah from India read a chapter from her novel on Lord Buddha's wife.

SESSION VIII

The Eighth Session started with poetry readings by Prof. Muchkund Dubey (India), Mr Saleh Mujahid (Bangladesh), Rajendra Parajuli (Nepal), Dr. A. J. Thomas (India), Mr Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh) and Mr Kaushal Dutta (India).

Mr Saleh Mujahid said he believed that true Sufis do not discard any religion or faith as they consider everything a learning lesson. Mr Kaushal Dutta read a poem on anti-terrorism, Mr R. Parajuli's poem was titled “Had I Been with You.” Dr. A.J. Thomas presented his reflections on “Mystic Poetry” and Mr Mohammad Nurul Huda read out a powerful



Dr. Ashraf Jewel from Bangladesh presenting his poems.
 On the dais from left : Mr Saleh Mujahid (Bangladesh), Mr Kaushal Dutta (India),
 Prof. Muchkund Dubey (India), Dr. Rajendra Parajuli (Nepal), Dr. A. J. Thomas (India),
 Mr Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh).

poem on the witch Sycorax, the mother of Ariel in The Tempest. At the end of the session, Prof. Muchkund Dubey read out some of his Hindi translations of Fakir Lalon Shah's poems.

In the next part of the Eight Session, several well-known scholars—Prof. Niaz Zaman from Bangladesh, Dr. Anand Kumar, Prof. Riyaz Punjabi and Ms Asha Relanpala from Sri



Prof. Niaz Zaman from Bangladesh presenting her Paper.
 On the dais from left : Dr. Anand Kumar and Prof. Riyaz Punjabi (India)
 and Ms Asha Relanpala (Sri Lanka).

Lanka—assembled to share their views on Buddhism and Sufism. Prof. Riyaz especially talked on how Guru Nanak went from village to village looking for and collecting Baba Sheikh Farid's poetry, and how his efforts resulted including Farid's poetry in the Guru Granth Sahib.

SESSION IX

The first part of the Ninth Session was devoted to poetry readings. The Chairperson was Ms Kavita Singhal (India) and poems were read by Mr Yasawardanage Nimal



On the dais from left : Ms Kavita Singhal (India),
Mr Yasawardanage Nimal Jayaratne (Sri Lanka),
Mr. Uttam Bahadur Limbu (Nepal).

Jayaratne (Sri Lanka), Uttam Bahadur Limbu (Nepal) and Mr Mithilesh Shrivastava (India), and Kavita Singhal.

Papers were presented in the next part of the Ninth Session by Mr S. M. Faridul Rahman on behalf of Ms Shaila Rahman Tithi (Bangladesh) and by the Chairperson Mr Ahmad Farid Sultani (Afghanistan). Ms Shaila's paper concentrated on Buddhism and its contribution to peace building in the SAARC



Mr S. M. Faridul Rahman (Bangladesh) presenting his Paper.
On the dais from left : Mr Ahmad Farid Sultani and
Mr. Shamsul Haq Hairan from Afghanistan.

countries. Mr. Sultani's paper was on the biography of a Sufi poet of Afghanistan. Mr. Shamsul Haq Hairan presented a heart-wrenching picture of Afghan children and their dream to live, through his poem.

SESSION X

The Tenth Session began with the poetry reading chaired by Dr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal) who also read his poems. Mr Subhash Neerav (India) presented his poems in Hindi.



Dr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal) presenting his poems.
On the dais from left : Rev. Dampahala Rahula Thero (Sri Lanka), Mr. R. S. Arora (India),
Dr Ashraf Jewel (Bangladesh), Dr. Bhisma Upreti (Nepal)
and Mr Subhash Neerav (India)

Rev. Dhampahala Rahula Thero (Sri Lanka) began saying that he is not a poet, yet he wrote down certain lines. They were mostly aphorism-like. Dr. Bhisma Upreti (Nepal) presented his poem in English. Mr R. S. Arora (India) presented his poems in Urdu. Dr Ashraf Jewel (Bangladesh) also presented his poems.

The second part of this session, chaired by Dr. Abul Momen



Dr. Abul Momen (Bangladesh) and Mr. Tajendra Luthra (India).

(Bangladesh) was devoted to paper presentations. Dr. Momen's paper dwelt on love, humility and compassion, and how the points of dissent among countries can be erased with the application of these qualities. The other paper presenter was Mr Tajendra Luthra (India). As a positive psychology practitioner, he spoke on meditations and how meditations borrowed from India have helped countries of the west flourish. He was of the view that India has lagged behind because we have not followed our own contemplative practices and meditations that we lent to other countries.

The last part comprised poetry readings and was chaired by Dr. Tarannum Riyaz (India) who read some of her poems in English in her unique style. She also recited some of her trademark Urdu ghazals. Mr Manpreet Singh (India)



On the dais from left : Mr. Manpreet Singh, Ms. Tarannum Riyaz and Ms. Meenu Minocha

presented some of his ghazals, and Mr. D. M. Nadun Yasitha Dasanayaka (Sri Lanka) and Ms Meenu Minocha (India) read out a few of their poems.

SESSION XI

VALEDICTORY SESSION

In the Valedictory Function, the vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Anand Kumar and Ms Ajeet Cour. Dr. Kumar began his valedictory speech remarking how each morning brings man to think of the darkness ahead, but asserted that he is an optimist, who believes in human evolution. Man is the only being who can interfere in his own evolution. This is

done by meditation and transcendence, transforming or evolving the self into higher states. Yoga brings out the deepest self within us and helps perfect it. He further quoted the sloka in the Rig Veda which says that there is only one truth, which many people see in many ways. Those who say that they are the custodians of truth, pave way for strife. The Upanishads also mention about all parts making up one whole; all rivers reach the ocean and merge with it. Likewise, humanity joins together as one stream.

Ms Ajeet Cour thanked everyone and every country for attending and participating in the Festival, and sought everybody's cooperation in building peace in the world. She declared that there would be another literary festival organized by FOSWAL in October this year, and if Pakistan is able to join, then it would be called a SAARC Festival, if not it will be a South Asian Festival of Literature. She invited all to participate in that Festival as well.

Representatives from the participating South Asian countries—Mr. Hettige Nihal Anurasiri from Sri Lanka, Dr Rinzin Rinzin from Bhutan, Mr Shamsulhaq Hairan from Afghanistan, Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda and Dr. Alim-ur-Rahman from Bangladesh, Dr. Keshab Sigdel from Nepal, spoke a few words representing their literatures.

Dr. Anand Kumar called upon Dr. A.J. Thomas from India to speak a few words on behalf of Sahitya Akademi. He thanked the participants for their active cooperation and



Dr. Alim-ur-Rahman (Bangladesh) presenting his views in the Valedictory Session.
On the dais from left : Mr. Hettige Nihal Anurasiri (Sri Lanka),
Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh),
Dr Rinzin Rinzin (Bhutan), Dr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal),
Mr Shamsulhaq Hairan (Afghanistan) and Dr. A.J. Thomas (India)



A group photograph of participating delegates.

FOSWAL for organizing such an event in collaboration with the Akademi.

Finally, Dr. Ashraf Jewel read the Resolution of the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism, which promotes peace, harmony, humanity and mutual understanding, and has been endorsed by the South Asian countries.

As the last item of the Festival, the film **Ramleela of Kheriya**, directed by Prof. Molly Kaushal, was screened. The film was significant because it shows how Muslim actors play the roles of Ram and Sita and other religions.



SOME LETTERS OF APPRECIATION :

My dear Ajeetji,

Many thanks for your kind words. I am intellectually and morally committed to the idea of South Asia and SAARC is important to me. And I try never to say 'no' to you. That is why two or three times, after saying no to you, I have managed to wiggle out of my prior commitments, I have re-appeared at your events.

My warmest best wishes and regards,

Ashis

Prof. Ashis Nandy (India)

•

Dear Ms. Caur,

Thank you very much for having invited me at the festival and for the care and attention shown to me during my stay in Delhi. I hope I have not let you down or shaken your confidence in me.

I think there is a lot more possibilities in these gatherings. If you ask me I shall send you my thoughts on that subject but certainly the final decision should be with you.

Please do extend my thanks to your daughter and to Mr. Sethi, who took care of our immediate needs so well.

I hope to keep up my correspondence with you; meanwhile please accept my warmest regards.

Allim

Dr. Alim-Ur-Rahman (Bangladesh)

•

Dear Maa ji,

We have reached safely back home and already missing our FOSWAL family back in Delhi. Thank you so much for your love and blessings. I truly have a huge extended family that transcends the borders and it has been made possible by your this blessed endeavor.

Thank you for yet another fruitful three days (for us) but I know it takes many months of effort for you and your team.

Thank you for everything but most of all the warm hug you always give us, dear Maa. You are special.

I bow to you,

Deepest respect,

Chador W

Dr. Chador Wangmo (Bhutan)

•

Dear Ma,

Good afternoon. Hope everything is going well. I am fine. I went to cardiologist and checked my heart and it seem fine. But ETT advised. I will go through it.

I would like to take the opportunity to give special thanks to you for your endless love to me. And ofcourse convey my love to Arpana didi, She is as motherly as like you.

Thanks to dear Mr Sethi and Praveen, They are real friends and had taken care of me.

I would like to thank Dr. Anand Kumar for his love and affection to me.

It was really a wonderful experience for me to work for Mum Ajeet Caur ji and FOSWAL.

This time the whole program was fantastic and more organised.

Hope we will meet again. Please Mum take care of your health and pray for me and my family.

Regards,

Your Son

Ashraf Jewel

Dr. Ashraf Jewel (Bangladesh)

•

Dear Maaji and all my Brothers and Sisters at FOSWAL,
Congratulations for the success of yet another awesome Literary Festival!

Bringing together reputed writers, poets and academics from seven different countries to unite for a common cause demands more than just funds and management of logistics -it demands loyalty, dedication and a lot of self-sacrifice marinated with unconditional love. Maa Ajeet Caur is the epitome of such a perfect combination. Thank you for

everything, Maaji! May you live a long and happy life!

Thank you, Didi Arpana Caur for taking such good care of the Mother of South Asia and traveling Maaji's most illustrious journey in literature together. I am always happy to see Maaji healthy and happy. South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism was definitely such a time.

And on behalf of the Bhutanese delegates, our deepest gratitude to the FOSWAL team!

With deepest respects, love and prayers for your happiness!

A Son and a Brother,

Rinzin Rinzin

Dr. Rinzin Rinzin

Chief Country (Bhutan) Coordinator for FOSWAL

•

Dearest Ajeet ji and Arpana,

I don't have words to thank you enough for screening my film twice. And the beautiful Saree that you have gifted me. Always my Santas! Screening was followed by short but good discussion. I really wish Ajeetji that one of these days I will see it together with you. My heartfelt gratitude and lots and lots of love to both of you.

Very warmly,

Molly

Dr. Molly Kaushal (India)

•

Respected Ajeet jee,

Admittedly, our return journey was much delayed, particularly in Kolkata, which is why we had hard times. But our stay in New Delhi and interactions in all the sessions of the festival were rewarding and interesting. I told in my concluding remarks that this year's collaboration with Shatiya Academy was immensely significant and it should continue in the days to come. Participants from Bangladesh should be more selective and any person intending to attend should be referred to Bangladesh forum (say, Selina, Rubana, me, Ashraf etc) so that we may present qualitative participation, not quantitative only. This time the Delhi FOSWAL team worked excellent. I am grateful for the favor you always show to me. However, as before I again propose to hold the Sufi Festival in the first week or last week of March (2-3-4 March

or 28-29-30 March) instead of February when we are all occupied with our month-long book-fair in Bangladesh.

Best regards,

Huda

Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh)

•

Dear Ajeet jee,

Congratulations on a remarkable gathering of scholars, writers and poets. It was a wonderful experience to hear the inaugural speakers as well as some of the other paper readers.

Some of the poetry was beautiful, some moving, specially that of the Tibetan poet.

Thank you for inviting me. And thank you for the beautiful gift of a sari.

Please thank Aparna for being there and for her support.

With respect and warm wishes for your good health.

Niaz

Dr. Niaz Zaman (Bangladesh)

•

Respected Mai,

Sat Sri Akal,

I am overwhelmed by your very encouraging and kind words.

As far as the success of the SAARC Meet on Sufiism and Budhism is concerned, your midas touch and magnetic personality is solely responsible for that. This is not something new as until now whatever programme , organised by you, has always been unique and of great success.

Please take care of your health, as you are very precious for all of us. May Allah bless you with long life and good health.

Convey my affectionate regards to Arpana.

With my best wishes to all your associates and respectful regards to you.

I am always at your disposal and whenever you will call me,

I shall be with you.

Yours sincerely,

Akhtarul Wasey

Prof. Akhtarul Wasey

President, Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

•

Respected Madam Ajeet Cour ji,

Please allow me to extend my heartiest thanks for your kind words which i took as your blessings.

May I congratulate for the successful International event of SAARC Countries.

With Regards,

Madhav Kaushik

Dr. Madhav Kaushik

Vice President

Sahitya Akademi, Delhi

•

Dear Didi,

I am writing to express my gratitude for inviting me to such a wonderful gathering of writers and thinkers from the region. I also thank you for the opportunity to work in the Festival's resolution drafting committee.

Please convey my sincere regards to Arpana didi who has always been so loving.

I also appreciate the efforts of Setthy ji and Praveen ji who were so helpful in supporting us during the conference.

I believe that the festival was an extraordinary success. The key note speeches during the inauguration session were very illuminating. So were other regular sessions.

Sincerely,

Keshab

Dr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal)

•

Dear Madam,

I first express my honor and gratitude on behalf of Sri Lanka to the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature

organization, and especially to the great literature veteran, Madam Ajeet Caur for successfully completing the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism. I also state that without Honorable Madam Ajeet Cour, this type of festival cannot be conducted successfully with the participation of all countries in South Asia.

South Asian festival of Sufism and Buddhism is not only a function that develops the human relationship in the South Asian countries, it is a center that combines veterans and entrants to the literature sector and also the artistic sector. It is also a university that exchanges creativity and new inventions. This event provided tremendous opportunities for new thinking in creativity and observes people with humanity. Especially, in addition to the presentation of lectures, poem creations, etc. there is also the traditional music program called 'Musica Medicina' presented by Vishesh Kalimero and his friend Rahul Jigyasu; the film 'Baba Farid; Poet of the Soul' by Madam Meera Dewan; the films 'Ramleela of Kheriya' by Dr. Molly Kausha brought immense contentment to our minds. I also state that those creations have brought great encouragement for us for our own creations.

South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism is a very important festival for me personally. That is because I was able to publish my fifth publication 'Regeemayaka Ridum' at this festival. I always appreciate the kindness of Madam Ajeet Caur who devotedly accepted my publication with love. I expect that in the next year too, this festival will be held in a very successful manner. I also assure that I will provide all my personal contributions for its success.

Finally, I express my gratitude to honorable Madam Ajeet Caur for her affection for us as a mother.

I also express my gratitude on behalf of Sri Lanka to Dr. Anand Kumar, Director of the Festival, those in the FOSWAL Organization - R K Sethi, Praveen Mahajan, Manpreet Singh and his loving wife, who were committed to the success of this Festival.

Thank you,

Thameera Manju

Mr. Thameera Manju (Sri Lanka)

•

Dear FOSWAL,

I would like to thank Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) for giving me the opportunity to participate in the prestigious south Asian Sufism and Buddhism Festival in February 2019. The three days I spent in Delhi were unforgettable days in my life. I am very pleased with your hospitality and a very special thanks to Madam Ajeet Courjee for her untiring efforts as always and her great team for their hard work. I will be waiting for the next opportunity to meet you and will be happy to be part of such a wonderful event again in near future.

With best regards,

Ahmad Farid Sultani

Mr. Ahmad Farid Sultani (Afghanistan)

•

Dear Ajeetji,

Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to be a part of this most amazing festival.

It takes great dedication and sincerity to organize events of this nature. It also takes a dynamic personality like yours to be able to do this. I feel truly blessed to have been a part of this great event. It was wonderful listening to all the great scholars and poets from the South Asian countries. I cherish each moment spent in the company of all the beautiful people who attended. There was so much learning and positive energy all around. I feel enriched.

I wish to congratulate you, Arpanaji and the entire team of FOSWAL for the great success of this event. Also my thank you to Sahitya Akademi. May you continue to hold many more such events.

Wishing you good health and happiness. I can feel your powerful positive energy in each warm hug of yours.

I will endeavour to help in whatever way I can.

With warm regards and love.

Kavita

Ms. Kavita Singhal (India)

•

Dear Ma'am

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to be a part of your wonderful programme!

It was a super experience and I really enjoyed myself. Everything was very well organized and synchronized.

Truly obliged,

Thanking you

Regards,

Meenu

Ms. Meenu Minocha (India)

•

Dear Madam Ajeet Cour ji ,

It was nice meeting you on the Literary Festival for Sufism and Buddhism. I am grateful for your kind support. Hope to get your blessings in future also.

Regards.

Saleh Mujahid

Mr. Saleh Mujahid (Bangladesh)

•

My dear respected madam Ajeet Cour,

It was so wonderful to meet you and participate such a marvelous gathering I have ever participated in. Please accept my sincere gratitude from bottom of my heart for giving me such an unique, great opportunity and experience in my life. Thank you so much.

Once again I would love to thank you for your great hospitality and the grand opportunity. May Almighty bless you for a healthy, peaceful and energetic long life.

Also, once I settle down my urgent duties in my university, I will surely email you the soft copy of my full paper as you requested me as soon as possible.

With love and regards,

Yours sincerely,

Lareena

Ms. A.H. Lareena (Sri Lanka)

•

Dear Arpana ji,

It is amazing how Ajeet ji and you manage to organize such important, much-needed literary festivals which are non-commercial yet are a gathering of highly regarded writers and poets from the neighbouring countries. Indeed a great tradition you have established.

My best wishes for all such future endeavors.

Warm regards

Mona

Ms. Mona Mehta

Times of India

•

Thanks madam for your great hospitality and kindness. Your function is very helpful for us and we appreciate your work very well, we will meet again with a great literary festival.

thanks again

Nadun Yasitha Dasanayaka

Mr. Nadun Yasitha Dasanayaka (Sri Lanka)

•

Dear Mother Ajeet Cour,

First of all let me thank you very much for invited me to the 56th SAARC festival on Sufism and Buddhism which was held on 22-24 February 2019 in New Delhi. It was my pleasure to have a chance to participate the festival, meet you mother, your hard working team and our colleagues in South Asian countries. Also, during the festival, I had chance to present my presentation on Sufism in Afghanistan with my poems to the participants. Also it was a good chance for me to share my information and experiences with other scholars, writers and poets of the South Asian countries and learn from them.

I have written an article in our national language Pashto about this important festival published through our media. Please have a PDF copy of this article.

Regards

Gul Agha Ahamdi

Mr. Gul Agha Ahamdi (Afghanistan)

Dear Ajeet Cour jee

Salam and good evening

I am very much delighted for being a participant of such a noble conference of spiritually developed personalities. I am very and thankful to you for inviting me. May Almighty keeps all of you happy and with sound health. Hoping to see you all in future.

Sheikh Shahbaz Riad

Dr. Sheikh Shahbaz Riad (Bangladesh)

•

Respected Ajeet Cour jee,

I consider myself fortunate and feel overwhelmed enjoying your love and affection. You are so sagacious and a real Mother-courage (Brecht), I fear this indulgent gesture, which is natural to you, may not be proved to have shown to the deserving person. However, hope to remain associated with the noble cause that you have initiated and carrying on at this age - I have great admiration and respect to the very core philosophy of your all efforts, only that I am too occupied with institutional responsibilities here in Chittagong and Bangladesh.

With my reverential gratitude.

Abul Momen

Dr. Abul Momen (Bangladesh)

•

Respected Madam,

Accept my deepest apology for I could not reply your email earlier. That was again a great memory and thanks for your hospitality; Afghans have great memories and we are not going to forget those memories. Looking forward to hear from you and ready to serve.

Regards,

Nassimy

Mr. Mohammad Mansoor Nassimy (Afghanistan)

South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism

22-24 February 2019

Sahitya Akademi Hall, New Delhi

Organized by:

Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL)

and Sahitya Akademi, New Delh

Resolution

The delegates of the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism held on 22-24 February 2019 in New Delhi are deeply concerned with various forms of conflicts, contradictions and confusions created by the divide among human kinds in today's world.

We express our unflinching commitment to promoting peace, harmony and mutual understanding among people of all faiths, nationalities and ideologies in South Asia and beyond through teachings of great saints and savants of the region, particularly those from Sufism and Buddhism.

We also express our gratitude to Padma shree Ajeet Cour, the president of Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) and Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, for their laudable efforts in bringing creative writers and thinkers from around the South Asian region to push forward our vision towards a shared humanity.

Resolution Drafting Committee

Mr. Muchkund Dubey (India)

Prof. Anand Kumar (India) 

Prof. Mohammad Nurul Huda (Bangladesh) 

Mr. Abul Momen (Bangladesh) 

Mr. Keshab Sigdel (Nepal) 

Mr. Rinzin Rinzin (Bhutan) 

Dr. Ashraf Jewel (Bangladesh) 

Mr Mohammad Mansoor Nasimi (Afganistan) 

Mr. Anurasiri Hettige (Srilanka) 

Inaugural Address by Ajeet Cour

I welcome our Chief Guest Prof. Muchkund Dubey, the President of the Council For Social Development. Has been our Foreign Secretary and our Representative to the U.N. and UNESCO. Is a widely respected scholar.

I welcome the President of this Session Dr. Madhav Kaushik, an eminent Hindi writer, and the Vice President of Sahitya Akademi. He has more than 30 books to his credit.

I welcome Dr. K. Sreenivasarao, the intellectual Secretary of Sahitya Akademi who has been associated with several literature related projects.

I welcome Dr. Anand Kumar who is the Director of this Festival of Sufism and Budhism. He will be introducing all the luminaries to you during the three days of the Festival. He has three poetry books to his credit and a volume of short stories.

I welcome Prof. Ashis Nandy who is one of the most profound scholars in the world. For more than 35 years he has worked on two important areas of social existence : human potentialities and human destructiveness.

I welcome Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, the President of Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur. He has been actively associated with Sufi Chishti Shrine of Ajmer for 10 years. Has been conferred the Padma Shri Award.

I welcome Prof. Karam Tej Singh Sarao who occupies the Chair of Budhist Studies in Delhi University. A profound scholar of Budhism, he has lectured on Budhism in several universities around the globe.

I welcome Dr. Ajmal Alimzai, the learned Cultural Counsellor of the Embassy of Afghanistan in India.

Welcome ! All of you ! My friends from across the borders.

I am very grateful to Sahitya Akademi for collaborating with us to jointly make this Festival possible.

32 years ago I launched upon a journey to bring together the hearts and minds of this turbulent SAARC region.

The driving force behind this endeavour was LOVE.

Love for the people living in the neighbouring SAARC countries!

In 32 years, our organization FOUNDATION OF SAARC WRITERS AND LITERATURE, which has been given the unique honour of SAARC APEX BODY, has organized 55

Conferences and Festivals and Academic Seminars for deep deliberations about what binds us emotionally and civilisationally and culturally : our literature, our music, our folklore, our beliefs, our myths and legends, our sensitivities and deep mystic beliefs, our poetry and our melodies, the evolution of our ancient knowledge systems, and our deep devotion to the infinite balance in the universe, through our Conferences and Festivals on Literature, Poetry, Sufism and Buddhism, Environment, Peace and Reconciliation, plight of our Women and of the Subaltern backward communities, Terrorism, and Healing History.

The current South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism is our 56th mega event.

Our Foundation has chosen to hold this Festival of Sufism and Buddhism because Sufism and Buddhism are the reconciliation of all opposites: the outer and the inner, the material and the spiritual, the here and the hereafter, the human and the divine.

The Festival is not about religion or religious poetry. It is about fastening together the hearts, the minds and the conscience of the people, through love, compassion and mutual respect. It is a Meet that would endeavour to re-discover the spirit of Tasawwuf and Mysticism.

The menace of terrorism, religious fanaticism and communal violence have only added to an already dark situation all over the world. Terrorism perpetrated in the name of religion is the death of human values.

Everything in Sufi and Buddhist ideology stands opposed to terrorism.

Both Buddhism and Sufism are committed to the ideology of anti-terror, anti-wars, anti-enmity, and are committed to peace and reconciliation and forgiveness.

Through Sufism and Buddhism, we re-discover and re-interpret Orientalism and become conscious about the necessity of creating democratic and secular spaces.

Sufism and Buddhism are the mystic poetry of love and friendship, respecting the otherness of the others. They convey the message of pluralistic dialogue, trans-cultural understanding of the myriad ways man has found to reach that inner core of peace which resides within !

The beauty of Sufism, for us in Asia and Middle East in particular, lies in the fact that we can trace in it the centuries-

old philosophy of Advaita, and the two thousand five hundred years old philosophy of Buddhism, and the beautiful merging of Bhakti Movement and Sufism since the twelfth century.

Sufism is a great philosophy of deep, infinite feelings, but it is not a religion. One can be a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Christian, Jew, yet be a Sufi too, because Sufism is an exalted state of mind where love and peace resound like a soft melody, echoing and re-echoing in the depth of one's soul, creating a new ideological state of mind overflowing with love !

It is only through love that we can reach the heights of self-evolvement and enlightenment. Love with the Creator of this Universe, and with the Universe He has created, and with all the living beings which are ordained to share the bounties of this universe: the planet earth and millions of planets in eternal rotation in infinite void, without any accidents ; the days merging into nights, and nights giving way to glorious, sun-drenched days, in an eternal cycle of merging and re-emerging, like the cycle of Death and Life. And all the living species sharing this planet in an eternal harmony, where even tiny ants and bees and butterflies have their special roles to play, along with giant majestic mountains, trees and all the green vegetation, roaring oceans.

That is the only way to unravel the great mystery of Life, and the greatest mystery of that Masterly Magician who created it all, and is keeping all of it in a delicate balance !

Sufism and Buddhism create a voice for secularism and composite culture becoming the ideology of connectivity, tolerance, love, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

During the three days, there will be enlightened Papers and exalting Poetry. In the evenings there will be Sufi and Buddhist Music by Vishesh Kalimero and a Film on Baba Farid by Meera Dewan and another film on a beautiful secular tradition in our villages by Dr. Molly Kaushal.

I am sure all of you will enjoy the Festival and go back home happy and fulfilled.

Thank you for coming here and sharing with us what we have to offer in all humility.

Thank you !

Report Edited by : Dr. A.J. Thomas



Arpana Caur with Mr. Balbir Madhopuri.



Attentive audience.



The audience.



In the audience : Ms. Ajeet Cour, Ms. Arpana Caur, Ms. Anu Arora



FOSWAL staff with eminent delegates.



In the audience : Dr. Anand Kumar and Ms. Kavita Singhal

'Strengthen Sufi tradition in Kashmir'

Former VC, University of Kashmir, and social scientist, Professor RIVAS PUNJABI is president, International Centre for Peace Studies and founding editor, 'Journal Of Peace Studies'. He spoke with MONA MEHTA at the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism, held by the Foundation Of SAARC Writers and Literature, and Sahitya Akademi in Delhi



How to defuse escalation of Indo-Pak tension following the terrorist attack in Pulwama, Kashmir, when 40 Indian soldiers died?

In Kashmir, attempts are being made to dismantle the structures of spirituality, spiritualism and spiritual traditions which have been there for centuries. I see these latest developments of violence in Kashmir as an attempt to impose disruption and move the state away from its inherent, inclusive culture. At the same time, there are forces outside the state, which are trying to strengthen this negative trend and tendencies. We should all stand up together and resist these disturbing forces.

We have to tell our young people now that India is a vast country, where

different faiths, people, languages and different religions coexist in harmony and thrive. There may be a few aberrations here and there, but that is not the real India. So I would say that hundreds and thousands of years-old traditions — especially of the last 700-800 years, which are alive in the teachings of saints like Lal Dedi and Sheikh ul-ahm Nund Rishi, and others — need to be strengthened.

Do you see any kind of solution in sight to the Kashmir imbroglio?

Solution lies in isolating these elements. And secondly to make people realise that this is not something that is their grain. And I can tell you that, common people there generally believe in the traditions of inclusiveness, but they feel threatened, to

day. We have to remove fear from their hearts and minds so that they can assert themselves.

People of the mainland must sympathise with the people in Kashmir and tell them, 'we stand with you in this hour of crisis'. Embrace them. And it is our duty to tell the younger generation about the virtues of this country about the great traditions of hundreds and thousands of Sufi masters such as Mehmood Ghazni, Nizamuddin Auliya, and Baba Farid. Ours is such a strong, eclectic tradition.

What has made us forget our tradition of inclusiveness?

Basically, this started with Afghanistan, when there were forces who wanted to duplicate in Kashmir

what they did in Afghanistan, but as we can see, nothing has been achieved in Afghanistan except death, devastation and destruction. Not only in Afghanistan, but also in other places in West Asia. Also, we need to tell people that we have strong institutions in the country, a strong judiciary, and human rights institutions which can address the fears of the people.

In the last week or so since the attack, we have seen the Supreme Court stepping in to protect the rights of Kashmiris. It is not a free fire for all kind of situations. Yes, it is indeed worrying. **What is the mood of the people in Kashmir?**

We need to restore people's faith in democracy there, in Kashmir Valley.

And the answer to the crux of this problem lies in a verse by Sheikh ul-ahm Nund Rishi: 'O God, give me the same spiritual state as you grant to Lal Dedi' (Lal Dedi). It is amazing to see a 16th-century Sufi Muslim master aspiring for a status of a Shaivite Hindu woman saint.

In Kashmir, we have had such a strong spiritual tradition, that there was no difference between a Hindu saint and a Muslim Sufi. Sometimes, reports in the media can be very superficial. There are thousands of people from the rest of the country who are doing business with people in Kashmir, working there. Go and stay with the people of Kashmir and you will know that they don't believe in whatever is happening around them. It



DAL LAKE, SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR

अमर उजाला 17 फरवरी 2019
sunday मगोरजग 02

फ्रेंच कवि-आलोचक ईव बोनफुआ ने कहा है, 'सृजनात्मक कर्म लिखने में नहीं, वह हर चीज को नाम देने में और होने के रहस्य को सुनने में है।' लगभग 85 वर्ष की उम्र में पंजाबी की मराहाट्ट साहित्यकार और हिंदी में समान रूप से लोकप्रिय अजीत कौर 'होने के उसी रहस्य' को कर रही हैं साझा-

जिंदगी ने सवाल बहुत किए हैं



सुरक्षित लेखिका अजीत कौर

जीवन में ऐसे कई घटनाएँ होती हैं, जिससे आप थकाए नहीं निकल पाते। आपको उन घटनाओं का अर्थ तब तक तो समझना पड़ता है और सबसे अच्छा तरीका है कि आप उनके बारे में बात करें और अपने भीतर जमा हुए खार को बाहर निकालें। पहले 'खानखोदा' (1983) फिर 'कूड़ा कबाड़ा' (1997) के जरिए मैंने खार कोहरा की। मेरी दो भागों की ये आत्मकथा हाल ही में 'सोवियत योद्धा' के नाम से अंजोने में भी आई है। मेरी आत्मकथा क्या है, दर्द का एक संस्कार। एक की कद्र की धूल। नस्लहीनता का पुष्पित। जघनारों के स्वर। दुआओं का मौन। समाज का तैलाव और हर हाल में चक्कर बैठ नहीं जाने की निद्रा।

इस निद्रा में कई किस्में आईं। कई पुरुस्कार भी आए। पद्मश्री, साहित्य अकादेमी, विरोधवादी साहित्यकार अवार्ड और भी कई। लेकिन जिंदगी पुरुस्कार से अलग होती है, राती थी। जिंदगी में हर एक अलंकार दिल में बहाने रह और खड़ा खड़ा जाता है। आपको इसे किसी तरह हटाना होता है। मुझे नहीं पता कि मैंने आत्मकथा क्यों लिखी है। मैंने शुरूआत में दो में से एक खंड में कहा कि: मुझे नहीं पता कि मैंने इस किस्से (एक प्रकार का पाँच) के बीच क्यों खोए, क्योंकि केजिट की तरह विचारों ने मुझे खोए घुसाया। अंततः उनके बाँटों के साथ, संवेदन में अपने अंदर के दर्द को हिलाने नहीं सकी, इतनीया मुझे इन्हें बाहर निकालना पड़ा।

मुझे एक मुझे प्यार है, मैं 16 वर्ष की थी। मैं अपने प्रेमीपर के साथ प्यार में पढ़ रही और उन्होंने सोचा मैं एक बच्ची थी। मैं वह खलिया कलक घातारी थी कि मैं अब बच्ची नहीं रह गई थी और मेरे अंदर कुछ पाकवर्तनी थी। उस समय अलग-अलग कॉलेजों के बीच दो रातें अलग-अलग प्रतियोगिता में मैंने हारना लिया। वहाँ लोग आरंभ करवाते और कारवाणी को रूढ़ रहे थे और मैं अपने प्रेमीपर के सामने अपनी लिखी साहित्य कला घातारी थी। इसलिए मैंने एक ककड़ी लिखी उसे पढ़ा। और उसके बाद एक जानी-पहचानी पत्रिका के प्रकाशक ने मुझे भी आवाज मुझे एक पन्नी भेजी, जिस पर लिखा था, "क्या मुझे ककड़ी की हस्तलिखित मिल सकती है?" और उस पत्रों से अज्ञान ने मुझे प्रेरित किया और मैंने एक ककड़ पत्रक लिखा। मेरे लिखने के हर समय के सपना में मैंने कोई चीज बना कर रखी है, जो वह साहित्य है। साहित्य लोगों के दिलों की एक पुष्प सकता है। साहित्य ही एक सकारात्मक संस्कार है, जो लोगों के दिल को छू सकता



हाल ही में मेरी आत्मकथा अंजोने में मजदूर होकर 'सोवियत योद्धा' नाम से अंजोने तो कुछ लोगों का समाज था, 'आपके उधमकास और आत्मकथा की सामग्री एक समान लगती है?' तो मैं सिर्फ इतना कह सकती हूँ कि जीवन में जो घटनाएँ घटती हैं, उन्हीं को लिखती हूँ मैं।

सकारण की कोई दृष्टिकोण नहीं। मैं साहित्य में इतने ही सकारण के सपना में रहती हूँ। मैंने अपना कलापानी को पढ़ा है और उन्हीं का उलट देना पसंद करते हैं, किन्तु वे ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोगों तक पहुँचा सकें।

है और उनकी संवेदनशीलता को बचा सकता है। इस प्रकार समाज में सकारात्मक नस्लियाँ प्रारण किया जा सकता है। और फिर वह भारतीय साहित्य की बात नहीं है। मैंने अपना बाबाएँ इरान, हेराले जैसा जैसे लेखकों के कार्यों का पंजाबी भाषा में अनुवाद किया है। वहाँ कि साहित्य को लेकर भी पढ़ी बात है। हालाँकि वह आत्मकथा है कि जिंदगी रचनाकारों के अनुवाद होने के लिए फिर से, लेकिन अनुवाद के दौरान साहित्य को भीतर उतरता रहा। वह भी है कि अनुवाद करने एक बड़ा जो कठिन काम होता है, क्योंकि इरान में आपको पूरा लेखक के ब्रह्म तक पहुँचना होता है और अपनी भाषा में पूरी चीज को बदलना और खोखला रचना होता है। मेरे लिखने से अनुवाद किसी भीतर की टीमावक रचना है। लेकिन इस अनुवाद में मुझे बहुत संकलन 'डी है' पढ़ाई को समझने की ताकत मिलती है। और पहिले को समझती है। वैसे में अपनी लेखनी में ऐसे ही कुछ भी नहीं पढ़ती। जीवन में जो घटनाएँ घटती हैं, उन्हीं को लिखती हूँ। मैंने अपनी कुछ लोगों के अनुवाद हैं, जो मेरे बहुत पहिले थे। यह शुरू हुआ जब मैंने अपनी सबसे छोटी बेटों को को दिया। वह बहुत ही दुखदायक घटना थी, जिसने मुझे तोड़ दिया। मैं इस घटना को अपने लेखन के माध्यम से कानून घातारी थी। उस समय अनुवाद जीवन 'सामर्थ्य' नाम की एक किताबें बना रही थी। उन्होंने कहा, 'इस स्तर समझे लेखी रहती हूँ, मुझे इसे लिखती बची नहीं और मैं इसे 'सामर्थ्य' में प्रकाशित करवाती।' और इस प्रकार यह सच मुझ हुआ। इससे कुछ कुछ कमकोर हुआ और लेखन एक तरह से इस दुख को कानूनो करने का ज़रिया बन गया।

तो साहित्य वा शब्दों की वे ताकत है, जिसे मैंने अनुभव किया था। लेकिन आज आज अपने अंतर-प्राण को देखते हैं, जो अज्ञानों साहित्य के लिए कोई अर्थ ही नहीं दिखती। हिंदी वा अंजोने में जो कुछ देना है भी, 'सोवियत साहित्य' में जो देर-दूर तक नहीं है। किन्तु प्यार है, ये किताबें खरीदते नहीं और जो खलिया घातारी है, उनके प्यार नहीं हैं। सकारण साहित्य को खरीदना चाहती। साहित्य को लेकर मैं साहित्य में इतने ही सकारण के सपना में रहती हूँ। मैंने अपना कलापानी को पढ़ा है और उन्हीं का उलट देना पसंद करते हैं, किन्तु वे ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोगों तक पहुँचा सकें।

दैनिक जागरण

सब्रंगा

साहित्य के...

नई दिल्ली, बृहस्पतिवार, 28 फरवरी, 2019

साउथ एशियन फेस्टिवल

सात राष्ट्रों के साहित्यकार एक मंच पर



फाउंडेशन ऑफ साउथ एशियन एंड लिटरेचर एशियन में शिरकात करते विभिन्न देशों के साहित्यकार

कि सी भी समाज को उन्नति के पथ पर अग्रसर करने तथा उसे मजबूती प्रदान करने में साहित्य सदैव अविस्मरणीय भूमिका निभाता रहा है। तीन दिवसीय 'साउथ एशियन फेस्टिवल ऑफ साउथ एंड बुद्धि' में भी ऐसा ही कुछ देखने को मिला, जहाँ फाउंडेशन ऑफ साउथ एंड लिटरेचर (फोस्वाल) ने समाज निर्माण में अहम भूमिका निभाई। साहित्य अकादमी में शुरुआत से विचार तक चले कार्यक्रम में सात देशों के साहित्यकारों ने अपनी रचनाओं से शांति और सौहार्द का संदेश दिया।

कार्यक्रम अपने मूल उद्देश्य 'साहित्य के जरिए शांति की तलाश' के इर्द-गिर्द घूमती रही।

अकादमी के उपाध्यक्ष माधव कौशिक ने जहाँ प्रख्यात लेखक एडविन अर्नल्ड को उद्धृत करते हुए महात्मा बुद्ध के दर्शन का कलाओं और जन-जीवन पर व्यापक प्रभाव का वर्णन किया, वहीं पूर्व विदेश सचिव प्रो. मुचकुंद दुबे सांस्कृतिक और बुद्धि का अंतरिक सूक्ष्मता को व्याख्या करते नजर आए। फोस्वाल की अध्यक्ष अजीत कौर, शिक्षाविद आशीष नंदी, दार्शनिक अखिलेश वासे, अफगानिस्तान दूतावास के सांस्कृतिक समन्वयक अजमल अलीमजई और आनंद कुमार सरीखे वक्ताओं ने एक आवाज में हिंसा और आतंकवाद के खिलाफ संघर्ष करने, सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान को आगे बढ़ाने और रचनात्मकता को प्रोत्साहन देने पर सहमति जताते दिखे।

सीधे दिल तक पहुंचती है साहित्य की बातें : अजीत कौर

'दिल्ली सिर्फ इसलिये ही विशेष नहीं है कि यह देश की राजधानी है, बल्कि यहाँ से निकलने वाली हर आवाज सीधे लोगों के दिल तक पहुंचती है। यहाँ आयोजन का मतलब दर्शक दीर्घा में आपको हर बोली-भाषा और प्रांत के लोग मिल जाते हैं। दिल्ली वाली के दिल में साहित्य के लिए खास जगह है और इस पर मुहर लगाती है हर छोटे-बड़े आयोजनों में साहित्य प्रेमियों से भरा सभागार।' यह कहना है साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार व पद्मश्री सम्मान से सम्मानित साहित्यकार अजीत कौर का।

भारत के पड़ोसी देशों के बीच सांस्कृतिक जुड़ाव को मजबूती देने के लिए आयोजित हालिया सम्मेलन की सफलता को लेकर अजीत कहती हैं कि ऐसे दौर में जहाँ दक्षिण एशिया का लगभग हर देश हिंसा और अस्थिरता के दौर से गुजर रहा है, एक-दूसरे को समझने की जरूरत और बढ़ जाती है। 85 वर्षीय लेखिका सितंबर 1987 में अकादमी से चंद्र कदम की दूरी पर स्थित कमानी सभागार में फोस्वाल द्वारा आयोजित एक कार्यक्रम को याद



करती है। 'विभाजन के बाद भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच सांस्कृतिक रिश्ता भी नहीं के बराबर रह गया था। दोनों मुल्क के लोग एक ऐसे आयोजन का इंतजार कर रहे थे, जहाँ एक मंच पर गंगा-जमुनी तहजीब देखने को मिले। मैंने जिम्मा अपने सर ले लिया और पाकिस्तान से शाहर अहमद फराज, कहानीकार और उपन्यासकार बंजारा हुसैन जैसे बड़े लेखक को मंच तक ले आई। दशकों से दिल्ली को करीब से देख रही अजीत कौर इस बात पर सहमती जताती हैं कि साहित्यिक गतिविधियों की गढ़ रही दिल्ली में अब भी माहौल और उत्साह ठीका ही देखने को मिल जाता है। आधुनिकता की अधी दौड़ के बावजूद दिल्ली साहित्य और संस्कृति को नहीं भूती है।

-हंस राज



पड़ोसियों के साथ सूफिज्म और बुद्ध को याद करते हुए



'साउथ एशियन फेस्टिवल ऑफ सूफिज्म एंड बुद्धिज्म' में उपस्थित संस्कृतिकर्मी

जब हम एक पड़ोसी देश की हरकतों से गुस्से में हैं, ठीक उसी वक्त 'साउथ एशियन फेस्टिवल ऑफ सूफिज्म एंड बुद्धिज्म' में हमारे कई दूसरे पड़ोसी देशों के कवि, साहित्यकार और संस्कृतिकर्मी आए और हमें आश्चर्य कि आस-पास के दूसरे पड़ोसी देशों में जो कुछ भी रचा और लिखा जा रहा है, उनमें दुआएं भी हैं, उनमें प्रार्थना जैसी सादगी है और प्रेम जैसी विकलता भी है। पड़ोसी देशों के उन रचनाकारों ने, जो फेस्टिवल में भाग लेने के लिए अफगानिस्तान, बांग्लादेश, भूटान, नेपाल, मालदीव और श्रीलंका से आए थे, भारत के कुछ कलाकारों और संस्कृतिकर्मियों से मिलते-जुलते हुए इस बात



खुला आकाश

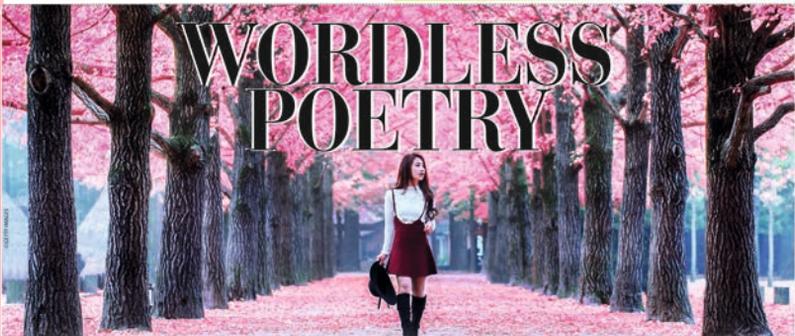
"दो देशों के कलाकार, रचनाकार आपस में मिलें, बात करें, तो अविश्वास के बादल तो वैसे ही छंट जाते हैं और जो सांस्कृतिक रिश्ता बनता है, वह लंबी दूरी तय करता है।"

करते रहना चाहिए, चाहे वह मोहल्ले के दो घरों में रहने वाले लोग हों या फिर दो पड़ोसी मुल्क हों-"दो देशों के कलाकार, रचनाकार आपस में मिलें, बात करें तो बहुत सारे संदेह और अविश्वास के बादल तो वैसे ही छंट जाते हैं और जो सांस्कृतिक रिश्ता बनता है, वह लंबी दूरी तय करता है।

फाउंडेशन को स्थापित करते हुए हमारा एक बड़ा लक्ष्य सांस्कृतिक रिश्ता ही रहा है। सूफिज्म और बुद्ध हमारी जरूरत हैं।

फाउंडेशन और साहित्य अकादेमी के सहयोग से आयोजित तीन दिवसीय 'साउथ एशियन फेस्टिवल ऑफ सूफिज्म एंड बुद्धिज्म' की शुरुआत साहित्य अकादेमी के सभागार में शुक्रवार को हुई। पहले दिन के कार्यक्रम में फेस्टिवल के निदेशक डॉ. आनंद कुमार, साहित्य अकादेमी के सचिव श्रीनिवास राव, अकादेमी के उपाध्यक्ष माधव कौशिक, 'कार्डिसल फॉर सोशल डेवलपमेंट' के अध्यक्ष प्रोफेसर मुचकुंद दुबे, मशहूर समाजशास्त्री आशीष नंदी और भारत में अफगानिस्तान के कल्चरल कार्डिसल अजमल अलीमाजी ने अपनी बात रखी। दूसरे देशों से आए और अपने देश के कवियों ने कविताएं पढ़ीं। दूसरे दिन के कार्यक्रम में कविताओं और चर्चाओं के अलावा मीरा दीवान की फिल्म 'बाबा फरीद-पोएट ऑफ द सोल' ने लोगों का ध्यान आकर्षित किया। फेस्टिवल का आज अंतिम दिन है।

- देव प्रकाश चौधरी



The Japanese poetry format of haiku and its spirit has a lot in common with Indic philosophy, says poet KALA RAMESH TO RANENI A SINGH at the South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism held in Delhi recently

The words are said and gone; but the images linger on for a long time, just like the few blobs of chocolate that melt in your mouth, leaving a rich aftertaste. That is the power of haiku, the traditional Japanese three-line poem, which focuses on images from nature. This form of poetry emphasises simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression.



And it's this uniqueness that converted Kala Ramesh, a trained Indian classical — both Carnatic and Hindustani — singer into a dedicated fan of haiku. Since her first brush with haiku 14 years ago, Kala has organised several haiku salons, festivals, across the country. She has even formed a group called INhaiku to provide a platform for budding Indian haiku poets to promote and enjoy the intricacies of the Japanese short form of poetry and related genres like haibun, which is prose/narrative, combining prose and haiku, haiga, which incorporates painting and photography, and tanka, which is a five-line lyrical poem, traditionally written in a single, unbroken line.

On her tryst with haiku, Kala says, "I came upon haiku accidentally through an Indian poetry online site. I was so fascinated by the simplicity of haiku's structure that I started penning verses. I would even send my compositions to editors of haiku journals, but they would promptly reject my verses saying that they had no connection with nature. Traditionally, haiku is nature-inspired, but mine were based on music, a subject I knew so well. I was told that my poetry was long-winded. They kept saying, 'throw out what is not necessary.' To me it sounded like, 'oh, yes' — this is not, this is not. It advised me to keep editing till only the essence is left. Then one day, I discovered that this essence tells me much more than a whole treatise or a story. I discovered the haiku spirit."

Kala says her training in music spurred her understanding of this poetic genre. "Like other Japanese art forms — karate, judo, bomsai and Ikebana, which take years to understand, haiku is less complicated. You have to learn it, perfect it and then internalise it to bring it on effectively just like the long hours of practice, practice, we do for music. It has its rules and conventions but it can be done. In fact, haiku's complication is in its simplicity."

Kala sees a close link between Indian classical music and haiku. "Just like Indian classical music, and the Buddhism, which are heavily based on seasons, in haiku also seasonal references are important. So, in a sense haiku connects to our roots. If the presentation of a rag in the canon on which a singer works, the ever-changing season is the vast canvas on which the haiku, haiku poet, works. Life is a series of events and every moment that passes by cannot be recreated or experienced again. Haiku captures such 'ah' or 'ouch' moments effectively."

Quoting dancer Rukmini Devi Arundale, Kala says, "She once said that *abhinaya* should be very subtle; otherwise, it will become drama. Leaving things unsaid — which leads us to what the Japanese call *ma* (pronounced 'maah'), the void between and around things, unarticulated, the silence — brings the distilled essence to the surface."

There is another interesting correlation between haiku and Indian culture. Haiku has taught Kala to be sensitive and receptive. "Haiku is not made up. It is not invented, it is discovered. To discover means that all your five senses must be active. Invention means I can keep making up things, without even being aware of the mosquito bite and the discomfort thereof. The minute the mosquito bites me, I become sensitive and receptive."

Haiku is not a shriek, a howl, a sigh, or a yawn; rather, it is the deep breath of life

Kala says that the Indian concept of *panchabhuta*, five elements, are embedded in haiku and her latest anthology titled, *Beyond The Horizon Beyond*, are arranged according to the five elements. "In haiku, the five elements are correlated to the five senses. *Akasha* is the *Aan* sound and if I go deeper, I can hear it, then comes *aps, ar* — I can hear it as well as feel it as it pushes my sweat; *agni*, fire has a *hiss*, form, in the shape of flame — you can hear it, feel it and see it in different forms; then comes *jala*, water — you can taste it, besides hearing, feeling and seeing it. *Prithvi* adds the fifth sense, that of smell, but it encapsulates all the five senses to experience its essence — hear the bird singing, feel the wind blowing, smell the soil and flowers, see the colours and taste the beauty of apples and oranges."

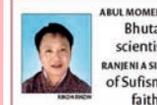
While she elucidates on the embedded philosophy of haiku, Kala dives into another surprise by revealing that she hasn't been to Japan yet. "I would love to visit the country one day. Till now, I will take inspiration from my internal connection."

The festival was jointly organised by Sahitya Akademi and the Foundation of SARC Writers and Learners

Stop acting so small. You are the universe in ecstatic motion
—Jalaluddin Rumi

THE SPEAKING TREE

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ABUL MOMEN, poet-essayist from Bangladesh, and Bhutanese writer-poet and agricultural scientist, RINZEN RINZEN, in conversation with RANENI A SINGH, at the recent South Asian Festival of Sufism and Buddhism, New Delhi, on how faiths can help promote world peace



'When politics sines charm'

In times of rising fundamentalism, can Sufism and Buddhism help bring about unity?
■ Abul Momen: Religion thoughts and practices absorb local flavour wherever they go. When Arabian Islam came to Bangladesh — which is an agrarian country with bountiful greenery — it took a different hue. In Bangladesh, the agrarian community reveres nature. Rivers and trees are seen as living entities — a sort of pantheism, which is against codified orthodox Islamic tradition. Sufism spread in Bangladesh because it allows you to go outside the codified *Sharia*, where you can be more liberal, more humane and open to accepting other beliefs. So Sufism made people in Bangladesh and they developed their own style of *Maqam*.

poet Chandidas said, "Shehar apur musah shoto sahar apur nah — Above all is humanity, none else," it is the human being that is most important in Bengal's spiritual ideology. In this matter, we hope that people will soon realise that if we see the orthodox line too much, it will give way to militancy, which will ultimately lead to destruction.



The problem arose when in the 1970s, the local people went to *Assam* for employment, where they were exposed to Arabian Islamic practices. They brought back the strict *Sharia* code, established *madrasas* in their own land and started preaching *Sharia* Islam, saying that the practices that the local Bangladeshis were following were against the tenets of Islam. Slowly, the fundamentalists became stronger and started asserting themselves. Powerful orthodox Islamians are challenging the traditional, rational, liberal and humane Islam that brought Muslim India as practised. So our society is going through transformation. There is a tangle going on between liberal Islam and conservative Islam.

Rinzen Rinzen: Any religion must be tolerant. If a religion or dharma is being followed by people who do not expect others' faith, then obviously there will be trouble. Buddhism is a very tolerant religion. It will never hurt or offend itself, never tried to propagate or convert to others. In fact, Buddhism was never a religion. The Buddha never said it was a religion; he himself was born a Hindu. Buddhism is a way of life of *dharma*. It teaches you how to lead your life.

bringing a bad name to the religion and for the spiritual masters, by becoming nationalists. When politics was, *Dharma* gets sidelined. Buddhism picked up during the Buddha's time, because the prevailing caste politics drove people to opt for a Buddhist way of life as the Buddha preached equality. But over time, "Lamas" took root — where the Buddha's teachings were interpreted with a narrow vision — and Buddhism almost vanished from India, whereas it flourished in Tibet.

In the 21st century context, Buddhism becomes even more relevant. Economies are struggling to figure out if growth should be solely based on GNP or should it include GNIH (gross national happiness). Economic growth, after a while, becomes stagnant. So you have slowdown and financial crisis. At that time, happiness and contentment is what counts. Well-being has to be taken seriously. We, in Bhutan, are trying to balance economic growth with well-being of the people.

ing of the people. Globally, if we pursue a sustainable way of being, by considering the well-being of the planet as a whole, the human race will progress.

Since Buddhism is a way of life, it is easy to include the happiness quotient. All that Buddhism propagates is taking care of oneself, taking care of the family, taking care of the community, being tolerant and compassionate, sharing and caring so that well-being of the people can be taken care of. We also have the concept of *Amita*, where other lives have to be respected. You cannot kill anything that has life.

As a writer, how can you contribute to promoting Buddhism? *Sufi* and *Southern* Buddhism. I don't want to talk strictly in terms of religion and faith, but as a rational thinker, I would like to propagate humanistic concepts like tolerance, empathy and friendship. We have to stop awareness that it is because of man-made borders that we are not moving forward; instead, we are moving backward as a human race. We are not progressing globally. Let's figure out if growth should be solely based on GNP or should it include GNIH (gross national happiness). Economic growth, after a while, becomes stagnant. So you have slowdown and financial crisis. At that time, happiness and contentment is what counts. Well-being has to be taken seriously. We, in Bhutan, are trying to balance economic growth with well-being of the people.

all work with unity; it is possible to narrow down the differences.

■ Momen: At Jawaharlal Nehru said, India has more diversity; it is possible. We can take it to a larger platform and try and bring the change. At the moment, the differences are widening. People are becoming liberal and intolerant. As the world in us is coming out, maybe soon, we may see better times. Scientist Martin Rees said in 1995 that the 21st century is the final century for humane. Since ancient times, we have seen that we have men who manipulate the differences between people and nations. This is happening because of people's greed for economic and political power. Politicians think that they have to target some group to promote in power. There will always be casualties of war. It is the moral responsibility of writers and users voices to promote peace and compassion. Differences are good, but we must look at the beauty of diversity and use it to enhance well-being and happiness of human society.

■ Momen: We have to nurture basic human values which are common to all — peace, love, compassion — and these have to be brought out. We are living in a competitive world, where there is too much pressure to excel. This is suppressing our humaneness, so we are becoming insensitive to others' feelings. We need to balance competition and cooperation, especially in our education systems, so that we produce better humans.

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