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# SAARC Culture

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*Volume 3, 2012*

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Colombo**

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*SAARC Culture* is an annual research journal of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo. It seeks to provide a platform to the academics, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders of various dimensions of culture of the South Asian region (including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to present their research findings and to debate on issues of mutual and common interests.

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## From the Editor's Desk

Inheritance of a nation that is embedded in its culture requires clinical treatment so that it may be passed on to the future generations. In an age where technology and trade have clouded the subtleties of culture, the propagation, exposition as well as preservation of our traditional and emerging cultures acquires the utmost importance. A fundamental step towards this goal is establishing a dialogue amongst the inheritors of the diverse cultures and making them aware of the solemn responsibility they are entrusted with towards securing their culture for the successive generations.

The *SAARC Culture* is one of the many endeavors undertaken by the SAARC Cultural Centre to provide a platform for academics, practitioners, and policy makers to present their thoughts, researches, and writings on culture and allied areas. We are happy to note that ascending the summit of popularity, this journal has now reached its third year.

The first two issues of the journal were thematic in nature and dealt with: ‘Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region’ (Vol. 1: 2010), and ‘Diminishing Cultures in the SAARC Region’ (Vol. 2: 2011). This volume, on the other hand, is non-thematic and includes eleven articles on a variety of subjects, viz.: cultural identity, traditions, folk dances, archaeology, and art of South Asia. In this issue, we have also introduced a new feature – *The Debate* – where we will be presenting viewpoints of different experts on an identified theme. The contributions in this volume of the *SAARC Culture* reflect different hues of the diversity of the South Asian region that might be unknown to many in the world and perhaps in the region itself.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed in bringing out this journal. We are particularly thankful to all the contributors who have shared their expertise and knowledge through their papers included in this volume. We hope that this volume will be welcomed by the readers. At the same time, for the subsequent issues of this annual journal we also look forward to the valuable contributions and input from other potential contributors.

**G.L.W. Samarasinghe,**  
General Editor, *SAARC Culture* & Director,  
SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo.

# Glimpses of Cultural Evolution

*Dilip K Chakrabarty*

## Abstract

*Culture is the legacy of human past. Millions of years ago and within nanosecond of big bang of ape's achievement of his erect gait on two feet and hands to hold something for use as and when necessary, fertilized the civilization that created embryo of culture. Geographical features incubated the embryo and turned fetus into inseparable offspring of huts and hamlets irrespective of their spatial distribution. Man's everyday interaction with nature and natural resources for his livelihood enhanced his knowledge about the character and complexities of the material world. With the strength of hands and power of brain he discovered natural wealth and invented means of production to extract best of material world that suited his diversified economic and social needs. Man's labour and means of production together with material world set-forth evolution of culture and civilization too. Thus Culture is not independent of society, discoveries, inventions and geographical features.*

*This paper is an endeavour to delve into the past to ascertain our ancestors' struggle for better food, clothes, shelter, tools and the rest for progress, prosperity and posterity. Their struggle paved the way for evolution of culture in particular and civilization in general.*

Particles scattered within nanosecond of big bang and Higgs boson was lost in the mist of particles viz. atoms, protons, electrons, neutrons etc. beyond recognition. But it made the man so high and universe so large which was beyond human imagination. Priests' sermons and religious explanations created

cloud to clout scientific thought regarding creation of earth and universe. Astronomers who dared to reject priests' sermons and religious explanations were either murdered like Zeordarno Brunoe (ancient Greece) or blinded like Copernicus or were taken as captive and chained in jail and to die like Galleo Galay. Similarly evolution of culture commenced within nanosecond of big bang of man's achievement of his erect gait on two feet and hands to hold something for use as and when necessary. But the mist of priests' sermons and religious explanations regarding appearance of man covered facts and factors of evolution of culture and civilization. Protesters believing in materialism - philosophy of Lokayata or Charvakas were humiliated or burnt to death till Darwin, Morgan and Gordon Childe firmly placed Evolution of Species, Ancient Society – from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization and Man Makes Himself/What Happened In History. These gems of mankind established that materials, tools, technology and weapons together with man's intellect, intelligence and knowledge thrust evolution of culture thus civilization. They, the gems and genius of mankind established, evolution is there in the field where ploughman plough his land where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is braking stones, evolution is with them in sun and shower, (Tagore 2010: 19 - Verse 11) in winter and summer, evolution is there with blacksmith and tool makers. As materials, tools, technology and weapons are the most basic ingredients of human life and society they have deeply spread their roots in human life and society and have become factors for evolution of culture and civilization. Tools, technology and weapons of modern era have stamped the society with their sweeping victory and have accelerated the velocity of cultural evolution.

In view of this no king, neither an emperor, nor any despot or dictator has ever been able to set forth evolution of culture and civilization. Man, shining day by day, the net of his beams of extrasensory perception pouring on the wide and lofty mountains of material, his beams of knowledge as ruddy as the flushed cheeks of a tipsy woman passionately rubbed culture's lofty chin. Lusty kiss of profound insights turned men intrepid to build civilization and develop culture with fine sketches in the caves of Lascaux (France), Altamira (Spain) and Bhimbhetka (India), hanging garden in Babylon, gigantic Pyramids, incredible Harappa and Maya civilization, amazing Petra city (Jordan) and wonderful Great Wall.

Billions of years were nothing to the history, but the moment the ape achieved his erect gait was a revolution in the history of mankind. Man-like creatures about four to five hundred thousand years ago while dispersing across the earth his feet developed to bear the burden of carrying the body and turned into a delicate instrument. In the mean time his hands became strong and fingers flexible for deliberate and sophisticated use. He definitely underwent learning for some hundred thousand years to rightly hold something to use as tools to collect his edibles. He also learnt to grip something to use as weapons for his protection from fierce animals. Learning sharpened his intellect and intelligence, enhanced power of perception and accelerated his acquiring skills of selecting pebbles and flakes of stone for making tools and weapons necessary to serve his purpose. Man is the only primate on earth who successfully made and copied tools and weapons acquired and assimilated profound insights about nature's complex and necessary mechanisms. During this process he grasped skills for schematic and pragmatic utilization of natural wealth which attributed him to acquire necessary materials for his livelihood.

His adaptation to a particular environment was secured by his extracorporeal equipment of tools, clothes, shelter and the rest. During his journey in Paleolithic age from green pasture to arid desert to cold clad valley he faced different flora and fauna and adopted, replaced, discarded tools, technology and implements necessary for his survival; but developed two of his physiological equipments – hands and brain. Fusion of all these led him to cultivation. According to Lewis Morgan, “Upon their skill in this direction, the whole question of human supremacy on the earth depended. Mankind are the only beings who may be said to have gained an [almost] absolute control over the production of food...”. It is, accordingly, probable that “the great epochs of human progress have been identified, more or less directly, with the enlargement of the sources of subsistence” (quoted in Engles 1948: 39). Cultivation converted man as a deliberate producer of food after acquiring a range of skills, many of them quite subtle and complex. Cultivation while converting man from food collector to food producer encouraged nomads to build huts and hamlets for permanent living. Cultivation resulted to change in thinking process and mindset that thrust man to procure and produce tools better than he had. This stupendous achievement abolished culture of food collector and cave dwelling and settled wayfarers in huts and hamlets and thus paved the way for culture and civilization to grow in more and more diversified way. Synergy of diversified growth set forth economy which influenced culture as economy is embedded in culture.

Culture is the legacy of the human past, and the “People have inherited everything of culture from the primeval forces which shaped the surface of the earth millions of years before man existed” (Basham 2007: 4).

Evolution of culture can be traced back to the appearance of *Homo erectus* during 1.8 – 1.5 million years ago when they were barely able to walk on their two feet. Unsafe *Homo erectus* afraid of death gradually learnt to grab something to protect him from the claws and beasts of prey. It was the incipient culture of struggle for existence. The next remarkable phase of cultural evolution started approximately 1,15,000 years ago with the appearance of *Homo sapiens* (modern man). At this stage, fragments of human efforts and skills together with the acquired power of creation man converted selected stones and pebbles into tools primarily required for collecting sufficient better edibles. In the mean time man acquired ability to ponder for planned action to collect food more easily and safely. He felt necessity to find shelter in safe place. His labour together with the power of speech, hearing and senses developed brain and widened man's horizon at every new advance. Modern humans approximately 100 to 40 thousand years ago had their havens in caves. They were using pebble and ashulian tools and weapons for hunting and collection of edibles to have a meal for the day. Living in this uncertain and endangered environment, having no training in line drawing why and how about 25 to 30 thousand years ago they were enthused to draw sketches of men and animals in action so accurately and emotionally without sharp brush and tools but with a piece of stone and charcoal! Cave drawings so far discovered bearing resemblance to Delphic character and were probably started as hunters' magical rites. As surely as a pictured bison was conjured up on the cave wall by the master's skillful strokes, so surely would a real bison emerge for his associates to kill and eat. They reflect minute and deliberate observation of real models.' (Childe 1946: 36)

Man's endeavour beyond endurance to do his best to stamp his rights on nature through his labour of millions of years

expedited growth of his braincase from 800 cc (Homo erectus) to 2000 cc (Homo sapiens i.e. modern man). Growth of brain facilitated his better thinking process resulted in great inventions and discoveries. Inventions and discoveries locked in a passionate embrace with labour led his successful journey from ape to man and to reach the era of computer technology. This successful journey has proved his ability to set the Thames on fire. Unwearied toil and undaunted efforts of man set forth evolution of culture and civilization as well. His endeavour for existence emboldened him to devour material world that accelerated his development to believe in atheism. Thus it is established that nature is the source and human brain is the fountainhead of culture and civilization.

### **Materials, Tools, Technology and Culture**

Homo sapiens (modern man) during the course of his acclimatization to nature learnt the methods of studying characteristics of the materials required for creation of right tools and weapons necessary for right purpose. While pondering over the process to produce right stone tools and weapons schematically Homo sapiens unconsciously stepped into the arena of science and technology though he did not acquire the power to speak at that time. His learning laced with experience expedited production of different tools for different purpose. Famous historian R.S. Sharma (2011: 51) encapsulates, ‘Modern man originally made diverse stone tools for different functions, but it is not clear whether he was anatomically equipped to speak’.

Culture is basically human knowledge gained from nature and natural events besides human perception developed from use of tools and technology deployed to seize control of natural

wealth. Thus grasping of natural wealth through struggle, pain, toil and efforts made man to feel necessity of better tools first, techniques and technology thereafter. This urge pursued man to procure necessary tools and technology having edge over others from outside of his territory which paved the way of contacts with other cultures and civilizations even beyond horizon. These contacts were necessary for man's survival. Contacts accelerated change in the society as there is no contact without change. Change is necessary to evolve some more efficient form for progress and prosperity; on the contrary, path will be broadened for decay by atrophy.

Culture is eternal, unbeatable and uncountable. It has the character of unpredictable flow through the chasm, curves and cleavages of the society. Geographical barriers and spatial distribution of human habitation beyond gorges, mountain passes, in oasis and in isolated islands definitely created obstacles for other culture and civilization to ingress and influence society; but could not stop its infiltration through tools, technology, weapons and implements besides other commodities that created an adorable admixture of cultural molecules and phenomena which first created ripples in the society and made waves thereafter. These waves gained momentum and thrust existing culture in waves that accelerated velocity of culture's vertical and horizontal transformation.

### **Inventions, Discoveries and Cultural Evolution**

Culture reflects real life and realm of human civilization. Culture is the result of actions and reactions of man with material world, inventions, discoveries and the events of the society. Culture, therefore, means the accumulated knowledge of mankind throughout the ages... which all collectively have yielded what we call culture.' (Sinha 1963: 13).

History is silent and historians have never loudly said about discovery of fire by Homo-erectus besides history's ignorance about the place and period of this great discovery that affected human life in all respect. Scholars have, however, been able to establish control of fire by early human and its effect. Control of fire and its accompanying light brought an important change in early human's life and behavior. It was a turning point of cultural evolution and civilization too. Controlled fire allowed humans to proliferate by cooking food that led to intake of improved nutrition by cooked proteins and by finding warmth and protection. Fire also allowed expansion of human activities into the colder hours of the night (or colder climates in general), and provided protection from predators and insects. "Evidence for the controlled use of fire by Homo erectus beginning some 400,000 years ago has wide scholarly support." (Wikipedia 1)

Stone tools, weapons and hatchets facilitated innovation of cultivation. This was a turning point for civilization. Innovation of cultivation was the first revolution in human history and a great leap forward for mankind. This innovation converted man as a deliberate producer of food after acquiring of a range of skills, many of them quite subtle and complex. "Mankind are the only beings who may be said to have gained an absolute control over the production of food" (Morgan quoted in Engles 1948: 39). Man entered into a new phase of culture and civilization. Fervent for crops forced man to build huts and hamlets. It was a period of transition from savagery to barbarism – a new culture. Permanent living incubated advanced techniques and technologies that hatched technical talents of extraordinary versatility and gems of genius.

In the mean time society had undergone a change that led to storing or hoarding of food to cope with famine and future

uncertainty and to comply with the increased demand for food. Man required better tools and technology for his new advancement and enlargement of the sources of subsistence. –The great epochs of human progress have been identified, more or less, directly with the enlargement of the sources of subsistence.” (Morgon quoted in Engles 1948: 39). The introduction of plough and plough technology transformed mode of agriculture that facilitated production of surplus which changed system of production hence production relation and became profit for the priestly class. Thus means of production and production of surplus for the benefit of society germinated the embryo of priests which became the inseparable offspring of civilization. This offspring changed relation in the society and culture too.

Salt is one of the oldest food stuff that man discovered and consumed. It changed the taste of food and fruits and quickly turned as an essential item for everybody every day across the world. It affected food culture and culture of the society. Salt became the part of salary for Roman soldiers. Salt merchants used salt trading to squeeze valuable wealth of ignorant societies. Ancient Saharan city Jenne-Jeno (250 BCE) and people of Trans-Saharan region used to buy salt in exchange of gold. Fascinated by this fantastic profit merchants frantically searched for sources of salt nearer than Jericho (salt trading center in 8000 BCE) to save their cost and cough. Pliny writes, “There are ... mountains of natural salt, such as Ormenious in India (now in Pakistan) where it is like blocks of stone from a quarry ever replaces itself bring better revenue to the kings than those from gold and silver” (Plini in Chakraborty 2001: 30). Soon successful in accessing salt deposits at mountains, lakes and seas nearer than Jericho they utilised the resource for trading. Merchants ascertained routes to reach remote villages

beyond ridges, ravines and passes with necessities of daily life, salt was a definite item to trade with villages deep in mountain' (Rizvi 2001: x).

It is worth to note that gold was probably first mined in Transylvanian Alps in 4000 BCE and following effects were observed:

1. This metal was introduced to Sumer civilization probably during 3000 BCE to create a wide range of jewellery and thereafter to other civilizations which definitely facilitated their culture to become magnificent;
2. Gold from Nubia region in 1500 BCE made Egypt wealthy;
3. It was recognised as standard medium of exchange for international trade in 1500 BCE;
4. Shekel', a coin of 11.3 grams gold was introduced during 1500 BCE; and,
5. The metal was to play an active role in setting economy of the countries;

Thus 2500 years were required for gold to establish its necessity for prosperity of society, magnificent culture, development of business, growth of economy and illuminating status of the country.

Boat builders approximately during 3200 BCE started importing timber to Egypt from Lebanon to build wooden boats instead of boats of papyrus reeds that changed:

1. Engineers' perception and intellectual pursuit for an unique design; and,
2. Craftsmen's thought process and mindset that affected:
  - a. tools, technology and implements (to match with the purpose);

- b. communication and transport system (made it cost effective);
- c. carrying capacity of vessels (increased);
- d. widened maritime trade;
- e. safety and security of the country's coast line;
- f. strategy and tactics of naval warfare; and,
- g. daily life of Egyptian society thus culture of Egypt

It is amazing to note that the above commodities introduced in Egypt, Sumer<sup>1</sup> and Harappa approximately 5000 years ago changed the course of civilization in general and culture in particular.

While searching for evolution of culture different components surface that lead to ponder about the inventions, discoveries, events of daily life and livelihood besides materials used to live not only influence culture; but also facilitate change of it. Sumer invented wheel and wheeled cart that made them successful to establish trade network to connect Mesopotamia with the rest of the civilizations across Euro-Asian landmass besides acceleration in transfusion of Mesopotemian culture in other countries and other country's culture in Mesopotemia. Wheels boosted Harappan traders to spread their tentacles across Central Asia and middle-east. Thus wheels paved the way for efflorescence of Pan-Asian culture with the qualities and ingredients of the four main cradles of civilization.

Invention of wheels and wheeled cart pulled by men or animals emboldened traders to add to the volume of their merchandise and enabled them to reach destination more easily

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<sup>1</sup> Sumer was a civilization and historical region in southern Mesopotamia, modern Iraq during the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. For details see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumer> Last accessed on 29.05.2011.

with less waste of time on tedious walking and transportation on pony's back. The invention enthused craftsmen and traders to venture for manufacturing of new products irrespective of its weights and volumes. It boosted selling of the products in remote villages deep in forests or mountains and valleys besides in cities and towns beyond horizon. This increase of trade initiated invention and discoveries. Voluminous production to meet increased demands craftsmen's tools, technologies, implements etc. had to undergo a change which were sometimes subtle and sublime too. Exploration of ideas, planned action for accumulation of implements, production and marketing besides utilization of human resources definitely affected and changed daily life, culture, work culture, means of production and production relation of the place and people who initiated innovation of the new products because innovations and discoveries are not independent of society and society cannot ignore influence of innovations and discoveries. The new commodities also affected culture and work culture of the place and people who started using the new articles because culture is the style or manner of spending moments and imbibing knowledge embedded in articles and implements that people use in daily life. Invention of modern technology has stamped its victory on society and has been transforming the course of evolution of civilization in general and culture and work culture in particular.

### **Culture of Superstition**

Culture of superstition was more similar to magic than religion. Hunger did not motivate Neanderthals' cannibalism. It was magic than superstition forced man to eat one another. A lone Neanderthal skull was found in the centre of the floor of the inner chamber of a cave, Grotta Guattari, in Monte Circeo near

Rome. It was surrounded by small boulders arranged to form an oval. A.C. Blanc carefully observed and concluded, '.....the adult Neanderthal had been slaughtered, his skull detached, the brain extracted and eaten and the empty case then ceremonially deposited in the cave' (quoted by Childe 1949: 10-11) This establishes Neanderthals' belief in magical superstition.

One will be mesmerized with thoughtful mimesis of drawings of our ancestors 40 to 50 thousand years ago when hunting with branches of trees and blunt stone hatchets or weapons was a must for meat to have a meal for the day. It is surprising and matter of credence to note that these hunters and food collectors had devoured actions and reactions of men and animals that he indelibly imprinted on the cave walls and ceilings. They acquired skills to use some kinds of tools and technology to express their profound insights of joy, fears, feelings and ardent desire through line drawings so accurately and passionately as depicted on the cave walls and ceilings of Altamira<sup>2</sup>(Spain, 25-30 thousand years ago), Lascaux<sup>3</sup> (France,

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<sup>2</sup> Altamira is a cave in Spain famous for its Upper Paleolithic cave paintings featuring drawings and polychrome rock paintings of wild mammals and human hands.

For details see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave\\_of\\_Altamira](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_of_Altamira). Last accessed on 29 June 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The hall of bulls in Lascaux, Dordogne, France, is one of the best known cave paintings from about 15,000o 10,000 BCE. If there is meaning to the paintings, it remains unknown. The caves were not in an inhabited area, so they may have been used for seasonal rituals. The animals are accompanied by signs which suggest a possible magic use. Arrow-like symbols in Lascaux are sometimes interpreted as calendar or almanac use. But the evidence remains inconclusive.

For details see: [www.mimenta.com/.../VA07/CavePaintingLascaux.jpg](http://www.mimenta.com/.../VA07/CavePaintingLascaux.jpg). Last accessed on 10 May 2011.

25-30 thousand years ago), Bhimbhetka<sup>4</sup> (India, 15-20 thousand years ago) and recently discovered 9,000 year-old rock paintings in five rock shelters near Dharul village on the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh border (India), about a kilometer away from Satpura range. These rock-paintings consist of decorative drawings, outline, spray and geometric style drawings<sup>5</sup>. Central object of the artists was men and animals who definitely did not pose for the artists. It was artists who perceived and assimilated their body language – actions and reactions and expressed the same in line drawing at one stroke. Can Altamira and Lascaux be designated as the labour room of Filippo Brunelleschi, Leonardo de Vinci, Michael Angelo and Picasso and Bhimbhetka be called as the birth place of sculptors of Sanchi (273-236 BCE), Khandagiri (2<sup>nd</sup>/ 1<sup>st</sup> BCE) and sculptors and painters of Ajanta (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and Ellora (4<sup>th</sup>/ 5<sup>th</sup>CE)?

This is paradigm of the past of human endeavour to imprint his will, imagination and creativity through cave drawings and

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<sup>4</sup> Bhimbetka of Madhya Pradesh, India is a natural art gallery and an archaeological treasure. For miles together, the footsteps of the prehistoric man can be easily discerned upon the sands of time, since the caves here house rock paintings, created by man from as early as about 15,000 years ago in vivid and panoramic detail.

The rock paintings have numerous layers belonging to various epochs of time, ranging from the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic Age to the protohistoric, early historic and medieval periods. The most ancient scenes here believed to be commonly belonging to the Mesolithic Age. These magnificent paintings can be seen even on the ceiling of the rock shelters located at daunting heights.

Source: [www.asi.nic.in/asi\\_monu\\_whs\\_rockart\\_bhimbetka](http://www.asi.nic.in/asi_monu_whs_rockart_bhimbetka) Last accessed on 10 May 2011.

<sup>5</sup> The Times of India (English daily), Kolkata edn., 20 September 2011, p. 14.

rock paintings besides his stupendous effort to stamp his imagination on the cave's ceilings created with blunt tools and primitive implements.

Most pre-historians have confirmed that the cave drawings and paintings are situated far away from the habitations of the artists. Cave drawings and paintings so far discovered having similarity to Delphic nature and distinctively hunters' magical rites.

Onions, having good food value and medicinal qualities, are in use for millennia for different purposes. Traces of onion remains have been found along with fig dating back to 5000 BCE.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped it, believing its spherical shape and concentric rings symbolized eternal life. Onions were even used in Egyptian burials, as evidenced by onion traces being found in the eye sockets of Ramesses IV. In India some sects do not eat onions as they believe them to be an aphrodisiac. Various schools of Buddhism also advise against eating onions. (Wikipedia 2)

Culture of superstition introduced practice of pre-nuptial defloration in the society. Pre-nuptial intercourse did not lead to marriage and pre-nuptial lovers were not supposed to marry. There are:

...numerous instances in which girls are artificially deprived of their virginity, without the intercourse of any man; with pre-nuptial defloration by strangers; with temporary prostitution of a religious character, and with sexual intercourse as a puberty rite. In medieval Europe, too, the bride had coitus with someone other than her husband, in the form of *jus*

*primae noctis*, the right of the lord to the bride of one of his subjects.<sup>6</sup>

No kind of marriage be it Gandharva, Raksasa or Paisaca Kautilya prohibited this practice, provided it pleased all those were concerned.

### **Culture and Religion**

Culture is material based. Materials have the ability to penetrate deep into the huts and hamlets and influence thoughts, mind set, economic and social needs. Under this circumstances rise of new religions in Asia implies some social and economic needs that older doctrines could not satisfy and new doctrines continued to grow so long it was eminently fitted to the rapidly evolving society for which material was the important factor. Thus religion is the off spring of materials and nursling of doctrines.

The Ubaid culture, approximately during 5,300 - 4,700 BCE, extended from the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian Gulf, branching out further west to Ugarit and the Mediterranean Sea. They probably established the first towns

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<sup>6</sup> Malinowsky has drawn attention to some societies where the wife is obliged to submit to other men at very beginning of marriage:

–Such customs express the superstitious awe with which sexual intercourse, and above all defloration, is regarded by primitive peoples. As such they should be considered side by side with the numerous instances in which girls are artificially deprived of their virginity, without the intercourse of any man; with pre-nuptial defloration by strangers; with temporary prostitution of a religious character, and with sexual intercourse as a puberty rite”.

Excerpts from: Singh, Sarva Daman, *Polyandry in Ancient India*, (Delhi 1978), pp. 13 - 14

and temples around 5,000 BCE. The temples became the administrative centre and the priest as its head became the chief administrator of the area. Their study helped people to acquire knowledge about agriculture, disease, seasons and its effects and causes of natural phenomenon that they disseminated as sermons. They lived on food, drinks and clothes received as donation from the people of their domain. On latter days they became powerful and donation to temples and priests turned as levy. Surplus production of the peasants and artisans and part of traders' wealth used to be taken away by the priests in the name of god, rites and rituals and used for their luxury which corrupted them. Their absolute power when corrupted them absolutely people tried to come out of their clutches.

Man during his visit to distant lands by and by learnt different types of cultivation and culture, domestication of animals and its use, faced disease, seasons and its effects, different environments, natural phenomenon and tried to learn the reasons to save themselves in future, understood that rain, river, tides and waves, rising and setting of sun, moon and stars are natural and earth's surface is not flat as said by the priests. All these facts, news and views, their observations, knowledge and experience they obviously exchanged with people of different countries and culture they came across in markets and while travelling from one place to another. This accelerated their learning of reasons and made them conscious and enlightened. On returning home they definitely shared their observations, knowledge and experience with friends, relatives and neighbours. Hence the material world set the pace for Charvak Philosophy (approximately two thousand years older than Rig Veda) to understand that material world is the last word in human life. This had adverse effect on priests and temple authorities. Priests' exploitation became part of culture and

society probably from 3500 BCE till the birth of Zoroaster (628 BCE, Iran), Goutam Buddha (600 BCE, India), Confucious (551 BCE, China) and Socrates (469 BCE, Athens, Greece).

It is interesting to note that during the abovementioned period people across Euro-Asian landmass, east and north Africa witnessed inclusion of new metals, various tools, technologies and implements having better edge, spices and food stuff in daily life. Cities and towns learnt to ponder over the things happenings around them, acquired expanded mental vision and were in the midst of an intellectual ferment because of union of different knowledge and cultural intercourse between different regions that led people to doubt age old illogical rites and rituals oriented religions. Traders also during this period could not accept wastage of their resources in the name of religion or religious rites and rituals. This situation facilitated birth of new cultures, philosophies, doctrines, religions in the cities and towns across the Eurasian landmass, east and Mediterranean Africa.

Traders accepted the new religion since the new doctrines had complied with their needs and with the patronage of traders the religious doctrinaires traversed the trade routes to spread new doctrines, religious thoughts and ideas that facilitated domination of new religions. Traders had glorious role in proving materialism is the last word for human survival. Traders from the period of Jericho (8,000 BCE) have supplied food, tools, technology and implements to Catal Huyuk (7,000 BCE), Mehargar (6,500 BCE), Mundigok (6000 BCE), Harappa (3,000 BCE), Babylon (2,300 BCE) and they are still continuing supply of necessary articles for survival of human beings. The articles had accelerated change of economic behaviour, culture and paved the way for new doctrines to come that is still continuing.

Buddhism rose in India as the ideology of the trading class. Artisans and craftsmen joined afterwards. Buddhism in India spread along the established trade routes of the country. Even outside India Buddhism spread largely along its foreign trade routes since traders endeavoured for it; e.g. highest Buddha idol at the then famous trade centre – Bamiyan (Afganisthan) which was on the crossing of trade routes between East, West and from South to Central Asia and longest idol near Dushambae (Tadjikstan), a trade centre. We also learn about the role of Buddhism in economic development of China. D.D. Kosambi (1993: 96) observes: –The powerful and indispensable role of Buddhists monastries in the economic development of China, especially of hinterland during fifth and sixth centuries CE., has only recently been realized.”

Doctrines, religions and missionaries have always played an important role in transmutation and evolution of culture. Asoka sent his missionaries to Egypt and to Greek lands developed cultural relation between India and these countries.

And mutual cultural interchange was the direct result. Asoka’s Buddhist missions, and visit of Indian philosophers to Western Asia and Greece, brought Indian ideas of philosophy and asceticism to the Greeks. Practices of Brahmanical and Buddhist asceticism came to the Hebrew and other Semitic world as well (Chatterji 1968: 22).

Islamic rulers within approximately 400 years of inception of Islam religion established their rules from Gangetic plain to the border of Spain via Mecca and other Arabian countries along the ancient trade routes. Delhi sultanate around tenth century CE made Islam as the state religion which they forced upon local people of northern India. –Various sections of the Hindu

population adopted the new religion... since only Moslems were able to hold prominent posts” (Antonova et al 1979: 224). Islam spread in large areas and in some areas Islamic population grew up to constitute the majority of population. The then ~~Bengal~~ Bengal for example, where after the decline of Buddhism large groups of former Buddhists were converted to the new faith.”(Ibid.) It is worth to note that Islamic scholars and poets received sultans’ patronage. Arabic scripts and language besides Islamic culture and architecture penetrated India as pillion rider of the invaders.

World in twenty-first century has witnessed unimaginable development of science, technology and human success in space which magnificently demonstrate man’s intellect, intelligence and efficiency that strongly establish atheism. In spite of this hooligans destroyed 500 years old Babri Mosque in India, Talibans destroyed the 2000 year old statue of Buddha at Bamyán of Afganistan in the name of Islam. Fundamentalists of Islam destroyed 500 years old seven tombs out of 333 within two days at Timbuktu, Mali on 1 July 2012 and on subsequent days uttering destruction is a divine order.‘ Qaida-linked faction Ansar Dine’s spokesman said:

It is our Prophet who said that each time that someone builds something on top of a grave, it needs to be pulled back to the ground. We need to do this so that future generation don’t get confused, and start venerating the saints as if they are god. (Times Global, The Times of India, Kolkata edn., 3 July 2012, p. 10.)

### **Cultural Evolution in Ancient Indian Sub-Continent**

People in Mehargarh (in Baluchistan of Pakistan) prior to seventh millennium BCE were living in pastoral culture. Mehargarh during 6,500 BCE domesticated plants and animals.

In Afganistan domestication of wheat, barley, sheep and goat appears to have begun early, say after 8,000 BCE... before 4,000 BCE, the third period of habitation at Mehrgarh yields stray pieces of copper and copper-stained crucibles indicating some casting of native copper.(Ratnagar 2006: 125, 127).

Chagai in Baluchistan of Pakistan, a hot and arid desert has deposit of copper ore. Mehrgarh people definitely had some arrangement for copper ore procurement. Hence history of science and technology in Indian sub-continent began with prehistoric human activity at Mehrgarh and continues through the Indus Valley Civilization to early states and empires. Archaeological excavations thus establish that Mehrgarh around 6,500 BCE germinated the embryo of Harappan culture and civilization. By 5500 BCE a number of sites similar to Mehrgarh had appeared, forming the basis of later Chalcolithic culture. The inhabitants of Mehrgarh maintained trading relations with Near East and Central Asia. This pasture witnessed maximum ingress of herd and herdsman specially, in winter months. —It was relationship between mobile herders and settled cultivators that provided the maximum scope for the development of new social institutions” (Ratnagar 2006: 127) and definitely new culture as appears from excavation of semi precious stones like turquoise and lapis-lazuli besides a piece of cloth which definitely had impact on their culture or it was an urge of developed cultural desire. It is interesting to note that turquoise came to Mehrgarh from far off Kyzyl Kum beyond Oxus or from northeastern Iran approximately in 6500 BCE. Treading a long way lapis-lazuli reached Mehrgarh from Badakshan of Afganistan as established by the scholars. It is assumed that these semi precious stones were probably brought by some herdsman for exchange. This intention of exchange

may be termed as the initial phase of overland trade and germination of traders. Herdsman's efforts lead to the following findings which are note worthy:

1. Herdsman probably exchanged these semi precious stones for food and shelter. Hence the seeds of trade were sowed;
2. Using these stones by and by became fashion for Mehergarh people, particularly for women;
3. Wearing of these stones became the part of culture; and,
4. These semi precious stones wonderfully made significant impact that thrust evolution of Mehergarh culture.

It is an event of pride and matter of interest that prehistoric Mehergarh in seventh or sixth millennium BCE prudently imprinted its credit not only to create embryo of trade in Indian sub-continent; but also impeccably implanted another phase of evolution.

Hut construction technique developed in the early period at Mehergarh with the advent of agriculture. Bricks were shaped in definite form. House and grain stores were built. Mehergarh was in labour for some thousands years for birth of terracotta technology and early sculptors as established from excavation of terracotta figurines of women with tapered legs, elaborate hairstyle and exaggerated breasts. It proves development of terracotta technology in Mehergarh. It will not be irrelevant to say that Mehergarh ushered the ways and means for burnt bricks that led building of palaces and fortresses of early empires.

Irrigation was innovated at the initial phase of Indus Valley settlement around 4500 BCE which led to planned settlements and making use of burnt brick made drainage and sewerage.

Sophisticated irrigation and water storage systems were developed by the Indus Valley Civilization, including artificial reservoirs at Girnar dated to 3000 BCE and an early canal irrigation system from 2600 BCE. Cotton was cultivated in the region around 5th millennium BCE to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. Manufacturing of cotton cloth started probably in 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE.

The Bronze Age in the Indian sub-continent began around 3300 BCE with the early Indus Valley Civilization which embraced Afghanistan also. Harappans developed new techniques in metallurgy and handicraft (bead, carnelian products, seal carving), ‘The main drains having burnt brick covers, cultivation of cotton, manufacturing of cotton cloth, working of copper, bronze and copper alloy are examples of technology standardized through several centuries’ (Winten 2007: 142).

Harappa had established trade relation with the towns and cities of ‘four cradles of civilization’. Harappan traders reached North-east Africa and the ports of southern Arabia with their merchandise. They brought tin, copper, gold, silver etc. to produce new articles by their own artisans and crafts men and to sale in other countries. Their products reached Central Asia and Middle East. Cultural evolution of India in prehistoric period reached its zenith during Harappa civilization (3,500 BCE–1,700 BCE). Standardization of weights, measures, city and technology besides numerals and commercial arithmetic are illustrative examples of cultural evolution of Harappa civilization.

The Vedic period lasted from about 1,500 to 500 BCE and was probably associated with Ochre Coloured Pottery culture. Early Vedic society was largely pastoral groups. Agriculture

based culture was developed after Rigveda. Aryan society was socially organized around the four *varnas*, or social classes.

The formation and the growth of the cast system are attributed to notions of purity and impurity. Several crafts, especially connected with leather did not bear any stigma of impurity in early Vedic times. It happened when first two higher *varnas* kept themselves at a safe distance from primary producers mainly artisans and agricultural labours (Sharma 2011: 7).

Later Vedic period witnessed appearance of republics like Vaishali and establishment of kingdoms called *mahajanapadas*, replacing tribal society. Upanishads were probably composed in this period of the Mahajanapadas (from about 600 to 400 BCE). It had a substantial effect on Indian philosophy and culture and was contemporary with the development of Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddha's teachings and Jainism had doctrines were preached in Prakrit which facilitated acceptance amongst the masses. While the geographic impact of Jainism was limited to India, Buddhist nuns and monks eventually spread the teachings of Buddha to Central Asia, East Asia, Tibet, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

Taxila in western Punjab (now in Pakistan) became an important trade centre long before 700 BCE because of its geographical position. It was on the cross roads from east to west and from south to north to Afganistan and to Central Asia. Taxila, probably in 700 BCE had been established as one of the world famous centers for education and thereafter the city turned to be an early center of learning for Buddhists and Hindus.

People of Afganistan and north-west India (now north-west Pakistan) witnessed trade routes from Pushkalavati (now

Peshwar, Pakistan) or Taxila to Bamian to Central Asia, to Mazar-e-Sherif were not only routes for commodity exchange, they were the routes for exchange of ideas, thought and doctrines and also witnessed intercourse of cultures of Iran, Harappa, Greeks, Bactrian, Parthians, Scythians, Sassanids, Buddhist and Jain which gave birth to a new culture.

The Persian and Greek invasions had important impact on Indian culture and civilization. Persians political systems influenced future forms of governance of the sub-continent including the administration of the Mauryan dynasty. In addition, the region of Gandhara, or present-day eastern Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan, became a melting pot of Indian, Persian, Central Asian, and Greek cultures and gave rise to a hybrid culture, Buddhism, which lasted until the fifth century CE and influenced the artistic development of Mahayana Buddhism.

The Maurya Empire (322 - 185 BCE) was the first Empire in India which was a geographically extensive and powerful political and military Empire in ancient India. The first Maurya emperor Chandragupta's minister Kautilya wrote *Arthashastra*, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, war, culture and religion produced in Asia. The *Arthashastra* and the Edicts of third Maurya emperor Ashoka depict culture and religion of Mauryan times which are still not obsolete.

Apart from Maurya Empire the period between 230 BCE and 405 CE was a time of notable cultural development. Satavahana dynasty of South India had remarkable contribution. Kharavela, the king of Kalinga propagated Jainism in the Indian sub-continent. It developed maritime trade with Sri Lanka, Burma and south-east Asia. Colonists from Kalinga settled in

Sri Lanka, Burma, Maldives and the Malay Archipelag. The Kushanas migrated from Central Asia into northwestern India in the middle of the 1st century CE and founded an empire that eventually paved the way for cultural exchange and spread of Buddhism in Tajikistan and Central Asia.

Kushanas built a great international empire. Their great ruler Kanishka made important contribution to cultural development of India during the first centry CE. He was a great patron of Buddhism and is remembered in Chinese Buddhist text. India developed trade and cultural relation with Egypt. –Egyptian traders visited India in great numbers. These merchants brought wealth to India, and also many new ideas” (Basham 1983: 3-7).

Most Jaina texts on mathematical topics were composed after the sixth century BCE. Jaina mathematicians (400 BCE - 200 CE) lay in their freeing Indian mathematics from its religious and ritualistic constraints. Jaina mathematicians were apparently also the first to use the word *shunya* to refer to English word zero as a number. The decimal numeral system was invented in India during this period. Important contributions were made by scholars like Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, and Bhaskara II. The peace and prosperity created under leadership of Guptas enabled the pursuit of scientific and artistic endeavors in India.

During Gupta period new forms of Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side. Schools of sculpture and painting arose. –The learned men of India perfected the system of mathematics and astronomy. India’s greatest gift to the world was development of early forms of algebra and trigonometry. Kalidasa, Aryabhata, Varamihir, Vatsyayana are synonym of Gupta era.” (Basham 1983: 3-7).

Nalanda University is considered one of the first great universities in recorded history which flourished and became famous during fifth to twelfth century CE. It was the first residential international university had 10,000 students and 2,000 teachers. This institution attracted pupils from all over the world. Hieun Tsang, the renowned Chinese traveller of the seventh century studied in this university. His travelogue described his deep respect for the teachers and high praise for the students. It was a great prestige to have studied at Nalanda. It was a famous center of Buddhist learning and research in the world during fifth to twelfth century.

### **Materials and Culture**

Culture is easy to describe; but difficult to define. Man appeared as the result of actions and reactions of the material world. Material world shaped both culture and civilization. Religious ideology and practices, myths and rituals owe their origin in material and social environment which they subserve and perpetuate. In view of this any change of material or character of it affects civilization and culture of the society. Changed materials or new article(s) first appear in cities and towns, create market there and stable own position in market place. New article(s) first thrust culture of the people and place to change. The myths, stories and gimmicks about the new product(s) of the unknown countries reach even the remote huts and hamlets and urge for the new articles takes shape. Traders comply with villagers' urge by taking new products to the remote doorsteps along with culture of the unknown manufacturing countries as pillion rider.

For Karl Marx that determining reality (for culture) was the mode of production; for Emile Durkheim it was society; for Sigmund Freud it was the

unconscious; and for many in anthropology, following the lead of Boas, it has been culture itself (Monaghan and Just 2000: 44).

With all due respect to the above opinions of the great scholars and genius of mankind I opine that culture is profound insight man acquired through processes and practices which started with his first appearance as *Homo erectus* millions of years ago. Advancement of culture requires exchange of ideas, knowledge, thoughts, doctrines, observations, growing intercourse, regular exchange of consumables and commodities. Any effort to measure culture by any absolute standard or exclusive method will be fallacious and malicious too. Such endeavour will be malevolent for human race which will damage human resources, prosperity and posterity. For easy understanding of this point may I request the reader to ponder over ethnic tension and tribal violence in India, China, Africa and Arabian world besides the problems of forest dwellers – tribes which have been erupting for a considerable period of time.

Medicine from herbs was learnt by Ayurvedacharyas basically from forest dwellers. Ayurvedic medicine of ancient India attracted Greeks. Galen and Aristotle tried to grasp a work on diagnosis originally in Sanskrit. Arabs translated it for their own use.

Metal is the most valuable factor for rapid cultural evolution and growth of civilization. Metal ushered the ways and means for accumulation of wealth. China in sixth century CE was suffering from metal shortage. Chinese emperor issued decrees to prohibit use of metal for images in the Buddhist temples and monasteries. King Harsha of Kashmir (not Emperor Harsha) during his reign (1089-1101 CE) systematically melted down all metal images in his kingdom except four. The work

was completed under supervision of ‘minister for uprooting gods’ (*devotpatana-nayaka*).

Each image was publicly defiled by leprous beggars who voided urine and excrement upon it before dragging it through the streets to the foundry. The said king Harsha was a man of culture, excellent litterateur, connoisseur of drama, music and ballet (Kosambi 1983: 186-7)

He had high honour for brahamin priests and Buddhist monks. At their appeal the king spared four metal idols.

Archaeologists found copper tools and weapons along with stone implements. Copper was too soft to use for any hard work. Long distance trade brought tin before 3000 BCE and made possible to produce alloy of copper – bronze, a harder metal. As this alloy was rare it remained in the possession of few who controlled metal ores. It means emergence of warriors – formation of a new class and culture. Iron was discovered probably during 1500 to 1200 BCE. Iron Age in northwestern India began around 1000 BCE. Iron made agriculture much easier and more elaborate. Availability of food became wider. The metal facilitated building of towns and cities with magnificent palaces and castles. All these together changed culture and civilization too. But production of quality iron was closely guarded monopoly of the Hittites (now Turkey). This metal of quality was not easily available in Egypt. But Egypt had enormous stock of gold brought from newly annexed Nubia’s gold mines. Scarcity of iron definitely affected Egyptian civilization’s development and evolution of Egypt’s culture which obviously affected mankind.

Pharaoh Tutankhamen was buried in a solid gold coffin... but with an iron amulet bound below his

skull. Though England had entered the iron age long before Julius Caesar's invasion of the island in 54 B.C. many Saxons of King Harold's Army were armed with stone axes at the battle of Hastings in CE 1066 (Kosambi 1983: 29-30)

Considering metal as an essential item for emperor's treasury all mines were under the control of the state during Mauriyan's rule. Kautilya said, "Treasury is based upon mining and army upon treasury. The person has army and treasury can conquer the whole wide earth." (Kosambi 1983: 29-30). Hence metals establish its power to control civilization in general and culture in particular.

Culture is not determined by the products people use; but by the tools and implements used to produce the articles. The recent excavation of 'Ashulian Tools' at Attirampakkam on Kortallya river valley, (60 km west of Chennai, India) definitely depict developed human culture and civilization of 'Ashulian People'<sup>7</sup> and establish their living and livelihood at Attirampakkam on Kortallya river valley a million or a million and half years ago.

Culture is fascinating. It is fascinating because it sparks human desire and sparkle for consumables. It illuminates passion for fashionable commodities. It is fascinating since culture gleams people's moral standards and glitters country's social, political and economic stability. Culture manifests

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<sup>7</sup> 'Ashulian' means a chapter of old stone-age existed approximately a million or a million and half years ago. Man during that period used to make stone tools and weapons with sharp ends on both sides. These tools are called 'Ashulian Tools' and men who were using these tools should be named as 'Ashulian Men'. See Guha Pathik, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, (Bengali daily), Kolkata edn., 25 March 2011, p. 5.

strength, courage and magnificent wealth of the society and civilization too. It, thereby, exhibits propensity of prosperity. It illuminates society's economic fervour and depicts people's economic enthusiasm. Culture indicates passion which propels to fervent desire of consumerism that thrust for invention and discovery of new articles as inventions and discoveries besides inventors and discoverers are not independent of social context and social environment.

Peoples' preparatory endeavours irrespective of countries and regions contributed for new conception of the material world. The Italian Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution in Britain, heralded a transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age.<sup>8</sup> Thus these developments expedited social and cultural evolution not only of Europe; but also of the human race.

Ardent human desire in tandem with unsatisfied intellectual hunger of the society for unique civilization fertilized eggs of renaissance in Italy. Birth of Brunelleschi (1377-1446), Leonardo da Vinci (1453-1519), Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378-1455), Michel Angelo (1475-1564) and other great intelligentsia besides glittering skills in Italy during fourteenth - fifteenth

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<sup>8</sup> -Italian Renaissance or the subsequent Industrial Revolution in Britain, we mean a transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age which manifested first in certain regions and later spread into other countries which were prepared for it. The Renaissance which ushered expansive and progressive forces, implied a new conception of the material world. The revival of learning, the application of printing for the diffusion of knowledge and the geographical discoveries opened out new possibilities for the people, who had found strength in their own abilities after shaking off the crippling shackles of ecclesiastical and feudal despotism". Excerpts from M.S. Thacker, 'Technological Progress and Culture', in Bepin Behari 1963: 21.

centuries rendered efflorescence of renaissance. Their engineering drawings, making of tools and machines, unique paintings and sculptures are unique manifestation of polytechnic genius, brilliant scientist, talented engineers and peerless artists besides progress and prosperity of the civilization in general and culture in particular.

Leonardoda Vinci was the first to regard machines not as an indivisible whole, but as an assemblage of distinct parts. The same method he applied to the study of human body whose organs he found as highly sophisticated mechanical devices (Paolo 1996: 5 - 11).

Clued-up about organs of man and machines Leonardo's observations, analysis and findings have been established as infallible and enshrined to become theory for studying anatomy of man and machines. —Leonardo thus discovered in the planet, as in man, a ceaseless internal circulation of waters ascending via distillation process from the ocean depths to mountain tops, from which they flow back down to the sea” (Paolo 1996: 19). Leonardo continually refers to the body-Earth analogy, endowing the planet with a vegetative life. He said, —Its flesh is the soil; its bones are the rocks that support the Earth; its blood is underground water streams.” (Paolo 1996: 187 - 236). Renaissance engineers of Italy during fourteenth - fifteenth centuries can be highlighted as examples of introducing revolutionary process of change of culture and civilization in general. Renaissance engineers from Brunelleschi to Leonardo-de-Vinci via Lorenzo Ghiberti \_produced a full scale revolution in the culture and practice of machines‘ that resulted in \_the design of the work for which Brunelleschi is rightly most famous, the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore (1420)‘, (Paolo 1996: 187 - 236), a perfect example of Italy's magnificent

architecture and symbol of her classic culture of fifteenth century.

It is interesting to note that material world sprouted the embryo of consumerism which developed itself into a foetus and became inseparable off-spring of civilization.

Consumerism provoked undaunted desire of the kings and emperors to win the source of resources, trade centers and routes by using military power and shut the gates of mercy on mankind; and killing the gems and genius of civilization as happened to Archimedes (212 BCE) by Roman soldiers and sometimes under the guise of saving religion with arms and weapons that destroyed or denuded and emasculated civilizations one after another; but could not destroy culture because it is material based and its root is deep in heart and deeply rooted in huts and hamlets. Its glaring example is Egypt. Her Culture survived though Roman soldiers, British army and other imperialist forces raped the civilization, looted her rich treasure and seized Egypt's cultural resources of immense value. Therefore, no conqueror or dynasty nor a monarchy or imperialist interlopers or a leader or despot could destroy culture of a country or community irrespective of their mighty power of swords and guns. On the contrary their reign of terror to desist and defunct cultural practices accelerated its propensity to propel and spread its wings that facilitated dilatation across Euro-Asian landmass and North Africa. Probably this boosted co-existence of varieties of cultures and facilitated transformation into a composite culture in the Indian sub-continent, the 'Fertile Crescent' and four main cradles of civilization' in spite of varieties of cultural curves and cleavages in the society. Hence culture has never been dilapidated despite mighty efforts of imperialist looters and lumpens. Thus culture

is rudimentary to assimilate knowledge about civilization in general and society in particular. It facilitates analysis of cause and effect of progress and prosperity of mankind and civilization too. Therefore, culture is of paramount importance and paradigm of past and present as well as indicates destiny of human civilization besides its role as parameter for prosperity and posterity.

Change of materials or its character for multiple usages besides introduction of new tools, implements, techniques and technology that enabled man to produce new commodities for congenial use which slowly and steadily transform traditional culture. Bronislaw Malinowski encapsulates:

Cultural is the integral whole consisting of implements and consumers' goods, of constitutional charters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs. Whether we consider a very simple or primitive culture or an extremely complex and developed one, we are confronted by a vast apparatus, partly material, partly human, and partly spiritual, by which man is able to cope with the concrete, specific problems that him (quoted in Monaghan and Just 2000: 39).

The new necessary crafts, tools, technology, implements and materials brought from the countries beyond horizon or from the unknown places by intrepid traders and explorers through economic exchange developed affinity with unknown civilizations and people's daily life. By degrees, this affinity between civilizations led to cultural intercourse with far-off and unknown lands, because new necessary materials brought from the unknown civilization of the land beyond horizon carried culture of the manufacturing country as pillion rider irrespective

of quality, quantity and intrinsic value that accelerated efflorescence of culture. Therefore, culture is synergy and synapse between countries that composed symphony for the great orchestra of mankind – civilization. The facts and the course of events stated above reveal that no civilization can claim its tools, technology, implements and culture as indigenous.

### **Events and Culture**

Geological turns and twists created geographical features favourable for germination of life from actions and reactions of material world. Material world influences the human consciousness which is itself a material process and therefore, mind is simply an aspect of matter, being a function of the brain. (Dhangare 1993: 108). This material process thrust man to propel civilization to find new ways and means for his livelihood which affected his culture. It is assumed that a million or a million and half years ago towards the end of Tertiary period intelligent anthropoid apes appeared in tropical region who were gregarious. Several million of years have no greater significance in the history of civilization than the glorious moment when anthropoid took one second to stand on two feet. They made their hands free by erect gait. Evolution of culture commenced soon man learned to ponder for planned utilization of his tools and weapons to collect edibles and to acclimatize him in any climate be it at arid deserts, green pastures or mountain valleys. This mastery over nature began with the development of hands that has been highly perfected by hundreds of thousands of years of labour which made the first flint fashioned into a knife. His labour together with the power of speech, hearing and senses developed brain and widened man's horizon at every new advance (Engles 1934). This

enabled man in impressing the stamp of his will to live upon the earth and to fetch best of nature to serve his purpose. This human endeavour has always accelerated evolution of culture.

It is surprising and matter of credence to note that the cavemen acquired skills to use some kinds of tools and technology to draw sketches on the cave walls and ceilings of Altamira(Spain), Lascaux(France) and Bhimbhetka(India).

Sometimes culture of defeated people is pounced and seized by the victors to dent and destroy destiny of the nation and to turn them obscure as happened in Nubia. Egyptian kings annexed Nubia because of enormous gold deposit.

Nubia – the land of gold was a land of Hamitic peoples from the third millennium BCE annexed by Egypt. During 1505-1484 BCE Egyptians kings started vast and a great programme of temple building in Nubia which showed cultural and religious assimilation of the Nubians to the Egyptians (Chatterji 1968: 2).

Changes introduced by the vainglorious Egyptian kings as victors were gradually assimilated into everyday life of defeated Nubians. This process changed the society in general and culture in particular of the Nubians.

Social, political and economic activities affect human mind and society. The events and activities change the course of history and cultural evolution as it happens after every foreign invasion that history witnesses from Aryan invasion in Harappa to British invasion in India. History finds war with Kalinga in 261 BCE was political and economic necessity for Mauriyan Empire. Kalinga war is important because no war in the annals of the human history has changed the heart of the victor from

one of wanton cruelty to that of an exemplary piety as this one. –No war has ended with so successful a mission of the peace for the entire war-torn humanity as the war of Kalinga.” (Wikipedia3). The battle initiated by the emperor Ashoka to fulfill his political and economic ambition cost about 100,000 Kalinga civilians and more than 100,000 of Ashoka's own warriors were among those slain. The war turned him as Dharmashoka. But the fact remains that Ashoka neither returned Kalinga to its previous rulers nor gave freedom to its people rather it had to bear the yoke of Mayuryan Empire. Considering all these history of cruelty glorify shock of the emperor that turned him great Dharmashoka. He became the famous pious symbol of peace and non-violence. His untiring and scrupulous efforts to spread the policy of non-violence, religious co-existence and principles of Buddhism changed social, political, economic, religious and cultural activities and environment of vast Mauriyan Empire and of the Euro-Asian landmass.

No human being has ever tolerated cultural vandalism. Army of Magadhan emperor Mahapada Nanda approximately in 400 BCE looted and vandalised Kalinga and tried to denude and emasculate their religion – Jainism. Venom of vengeance was felt when the strong supporter of Jainism Kharavela (193 BCE - 170 BCE) of Cedi dynasty attacked Magadha and brought back Tirthankar's idol with its crown and endowment and the jewels plundered by king Nanda from the Kalinga royal palace, along with the treasures of Anga and Magadha(Wikipedia4).

History encapsulates, Spanish invasion in Mexico during fifteenth and sixteenth centuries deeply damaged America's oldest civilization grew with the growth of Yucuita since 1350 BCE. –After their conquest by the Spanish, the Mixtec (Mexicans) suffered a catastrophic demographic collapse... and

the abuse they suffered at the hands of colonialists.” (Monaghan and Just 2000: 9). In this respect it will not be irrelevant to mention effect of two world wars in twentieth century within a span of twenty-five years that accelerated the velocity of cultural transmutation of the world in general and war-torn countries in particular.

It will not be irrelevant to mention that man with his skill and power of brain broke the barrier of gravitation in 1957 with placing Sputnik in the space orbit and impressed his footprint in the outer space which opened the new horizon, enlarged his ability to use the ample scope that he conquered threshold acceleration of change of culture around the world. On 12 April 1961 at the experimental stage of man’s endeavour to conquer space former USSR’s Yuri Gagarin, the son of earth first in space stamped his footprints in the history of conquering space and became the icon of young man’s adventurous culture. Stamping the footprints on moon in December 1969 great astronaut Neil Armstrong of USA created not only a new record; but also a history of man’s victorious journey to planets. Genius of mankind thus clutched space and space science reached its zenith.

It is often found that poor families in developing countries spend good amount of money for weddings, dowries, christenings and funerals to save prestige of the family. This culture ultimately lead the family to debt trap hence poverty trap. Culture of spending on things other than food is not always under social pressure. It is the basic human need to have a pleasant life. Today television and cell phone signals reach all most all remote villages and charges are cheap by global standard. People buy cell phones, televisions, DVD players for entertainment and talking to some dear ones when their families do not have enough to eat. (Banerji and Esther 2011: 35-7).

Materials and events (social, political, economic etc.) are, therefore, very essential parts of culture besides economic exchange since economy is embedded in culture and culture is remarkable syncretism and great symphony of inventions, discoveries, events of daily life and materials used to live.

### **Trade and Culture**

Trade complied with the necessities of human life – food, clothing, shelter and tools first and instruments, implements and technology thereafter. Tracing the routes through which manufactured articles, technical know-how, new ideas, doctrines and culture were exchanged over the millenniums is one of the fascinating aspects of the history of trade, culture and civilization too. Geographical barriers and spatial distribution of civilizations could not stop traders to reach the huts and hamlets beyond gorges and passes or in the isolated islands. Geographical scope of history of trade is, therefore, as broad as its historical coverage is deep and the role of trade in developing society's culture is deeply rooted in the history of civilization.

Inventions of wheels and wheeled cart facilitated change in character of trade and culture of traders across euro-asian landmass. Trade became wide and traders reached doorsteps of human settlements with varieties and large quantities of commodities required for daily life. Hence trade paved the way for creating trade centers and formation of cities and towns. Famous historian R. S. Sharma (2011: 16) encapsulates, –Trade and towns played an important part in the distribution of the social surplus.” D.N. Jha, the renowned historian, recognized importance of trade in the formation of cities, territorial states and growing popularity of Buddhism and Jainism (1977: 80-82). Traders by and by transformed as merchants, started grabbing of

new huts and hamlets to transform them as his sole-selling market. Thus competition among the traders started which led them to venture for strong protection of their own sole-selling domain. It is worth to note that new and developed tools, technology, implements etc. made a beeline for sublime change in the mode of production from individual to group. In the mean time administration understood importance of organized production and safety of workers. Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* (shaped during 321-295 BCE) directed area of work, duty hours, payment of wages according to skill, safety and security of the workers / craftsmen etc.

Though Nabataeans before 600 BCE were treated as scorned and scoffed people developed themselves through trade, built their own trade routes and watering systems in the Arabian deserts. They linked Arabia, the Hagarites, Mesopotamia and Edom and established small colonies in tent communities on the outskirts of many of the major centres of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the Levant. They gained control of the ancient city of Damascus in 85 BCE. They controlled the Silk Road through Syrian Desert and Damascus and the maritime trade routes with India and Sri Lanka thus land and sea routes from the east. They established a world-class capital city, Petra. Thus trade changed Nabataeans' culture of nomads.

Domestication of camel approximately around 3500 BCE provided Bedouins, the traders of the Arabian deserts with a means of transport and sustenance. It is thought that as the Bedouins moved into central Arabia around 2500 BCE they took with them the prototype of the modern Arabian horse. Paintings on the cliff walls at Tassili-n-Ajjer establish use of horse drawn chariots in 1500 BCE. About 3500 years ago the horse brought tremendous changes in the east, including the valley of the Nile

and beyond, changing human history and the face of the world. The Prophet Mohammed's praise coupled with the Koran's instruction spurred the breeding of the Arabian horse and its trading across Eurasian land mass fetched good profit.

The trade started by Eudoxus of Cyzicus in 130 BCE kept increasing, and according to Strabo, by the time of Augustus, up to 120 ships set sail every year from Myos Hormos on the Red Sea to India. So much gold was used for this trade, and apparently recycled by the Kushans for their own coinage, that Pliny the elder complained about the drain of Roman gold to India.

India, China and the Arabian Peninsula take one hundred million sesterces from our empire per annum at a conservative estimate: that is what our luxuries and women cost us. For what percentage of these imports is intended for sacrifices to the gods or the spirits of the dead? (Pliny in Chakraborty 2001).

The maritime (but not the overland) trade routes, harbours, and trade items are described in detail in the first century CE *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*.

Merchandise soon replace the old or change its form provokes people to procure them even if it is beyond their financial power. But rat race for latest article(s) never stops the growing intensity of consumerism. This happened every time at every place in the past soon new commodity appeared in the society. Interestingly it is happening today also.

During early seventies of last century, the Marketing Manager of a Battery Company failed to induce people of hamlets, deep in mountain forest to purchase torch lights and use of batteries. He dropped full of batteries and switched-on

twenty-five torches in each village at late mid-night with the help of helicopter. Next day amazing villagers rushed to the nearby towns to know how to use and to purchase batteries first and torches afterwards. The process paved the way for change of culture.

Soon traders created market for aluminium utensils during 1945-65 and thereafter for stainless steel during 1965 - 80 quickly affected ‘kitchen culture’ of both rural and urban areas. Cooking gas cylinders soon introduced in market during seventies of last century it affected culture of the kitchen in particular and family in general.

Introduction of ‘terry-cotton’ dress materials during end-fifties and mid- sixties of last century intensively changed ‘dress culture’ of people even living in remote huts and hamlets or in isolated islands or deep in mountains beyond ravines, ridges, gorges and passes.

It will not be irrelevant to mention introduction of ‘Dalda’ (a cooking medium which afterwards became a brand name in India) in Indian market during 1950-52 vigorously affected food culture of urban people first and rural people thereafter.

Introduction of Fast food have been vigorously changing ‘Tiffin’ culture of urban people.

Roof-over-head responsibility, tension for more earning, status or standard of living are creating libido crisis in the lives of many a married couple. It isn’t stress that’s getting in the way of an active sex life. It’s the 24x7 dependence on gadgets and gizmos’. A husband one-and-a-half-years into marriage laments, ‘when you have to worry about who’s going to put the clothes in the machine and who’s going to clear the table, believe me, sex can and does often wait.’ (Dutt 2011: 1)

The above facts establish that materials are primary for growth of culture and civilization. They are necessary for man to survive and to lead a safe and secured comfortable life. Merchandise usher ways to evaluate commodities first and thereafter tools, technology and implements used for manufacturing the said article. The new articles provoke analysis to assess thought process, mind set and culture of the people and place that originated the new product and of course of the people and place of consumption.

Abundant consumer goods are satisfying people's passionate desire for comfort and entertainment. They are encouraging growth of consumerism which is accelerating velocity of evolution of culture. 'Evolution of culture' may in today's world be termed as 'evolution of culture' since new consumable articles being launched almost every other day that accelerate change of culture in quick succession. Being new culture of Equal Monthly Installment scheme introduced by the retailers and propaganda provoke people to consume commodities even if it is fragile and beyond their financial power. Targeting individuals advertisements cater products' power of comforts and entertainments for personal life and provoke to ignore parents and other members of the family except wife and child. Advertisers are quite aware of the expenses a man can bear. Purchase, if includes family members, will increase financial burden which a man will not be able to bear. Hence in twenty-first century culture of consumerism has seduced people to ignore others in the family except wife and child. People are becoming selfish and interested for their own self. This culture will definitely increase sale of new consumer goods irrespective of its real necessity in daily life; but may lead to shear off relation with wife, once a sweetheart and to ignore children. The advertisements' target and authenticity may be

questioned; but facts remain that the products launched in the market influence people in general and young generation in particular across the world. Observation and objective analysis of influence of these advertisements and materials in daily life will pave the way for thinking of development and evolution of the society and culture too.

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# **Cultural Identities and Regional Cooperation in South Asia: ‘Consciousness and Construction’**

*Syed Mohd. Amir*

## **Abstract**

*South Asia has a strong cultural identity which can further contribute to the overall wellbeing of the people of the SAARC Nations. Rich in cultural heritage and having different identities this region reflects an atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation among South Asian countries in this age of globalization. It is felt that a strong sense of cultural identity can also provide answers to some of the current problems that one encounters in day to day life. The conscious efforts of the South Asian countries in this direction will prove significant in the future and will be an important catalyst in maintaining dynamic regional cultural identities with trust on each other as an important ingredient.*

*This paper attempts to visualize the nurturing and consolidation of democratic institutions and processes in South Asia. It also highlights the notion of „Cultural Identity and Cooperation” in the context of the process of nation and state building in the region. In the ultimate analysis, it argues that the responsibility for initiating and implementing the multitude of structural reforms that are necessary to institutionalize democracy must be taken by South Asians themselves.*

The singular thing about India was that you could only speak of it in the plural ... This pluralism emerged from the very nature of the country; it was inevitable by India’s geography and reaffirmed by its history.

(Tharoor 1997: 8)

## I

Partition/ Independence - 15 August 1947- was the moment of the establishment of the two new nation states of India and Pakistan. But it was also- and here the date becomes less clear-cut- the moment of the congealing of new identities’, relations, histories, or of their being thrown into question once again. According to Rashid Rao:

The irony of history is that the last battle of our war of independence in 1947 was not fought by the foreign rulers, but between the two major religious communities living in the subcontinent. In the river of blood which flowed the twilight days of the British Empire in India, not a drop of foreign masters’ blood could be discerned [sic]; it was purely South Asian. The British left with all their prestige and goodwill and their colonial legacy intact (Rao 1996: 11).

An elemental force had burst its confines (on the stroke of midnight on 14 August 1947) and swept like a flood across the land. Would it also wash away the cobwebs, the inertia and deadness of centuries? Would it create overnight a brave new country in which everything would be perfect? Anything seemed possible. Next morning, on 15 August 1947, the sun rose in the eastern sky to reveal the same squalor, the staggering poverty and hunger, the deep inequalities as the day before. Myriad of flowers, yellow and orange marigolds and pink rose petals, lay scattered on the ground, stale, scentless, trampled. The municipal sweepers came and swept away the street, and the blossoms mingled in the dust (Nair 1961: xx). Winston Churchill said that India was not a nation, just an abstraction.’ John Kenneth Galbraith, more affectionately and more memorably, described it as functioning anarchy.’ In my view,

both of them under-estimated the strength of the India-idea.<sup>6</sup> It may be the most innovative national philosophy to have emerged in the post-colonial period. It deserves to be celebrated- because it is an idea that has enemies, within India as well as outside her frontiers, and to celebrate it is to defend it against its foes (Rushdie 1997)

Few years ago the SAARC Human Resource Development Centre, in Islamabad described South Asia as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most malnourished, the least gender-sensitive- indeed, the most deprived region in the world<sup>6</sup>. (Quoted in *The Economic Times* (US), (Editorial), 22 May 1999). Is the case still the same?

The Indian subcontinent forms an inverted triangle extending from the snow-bound Himalayan ranges of Asia toward the equator. Known also as South Asia, the area includes the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan; artistically, the Tibetan highlands also form part of the region. Stretching some 1,800 miles from north to south, and almost the same distance from west to east, the area is home to an ancient and diverse group of cultures.

The South Asian culture is a mixed bowl of a number of different influencing societies, nationalities, ethnic traditions and cultural heritages. The sub-continent is a pot pourrie from the Western-centric perspective and is commonly divided into natural geographic and cultural regions. The region comprises North Asia, South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, South West Asia, South East Asia and the Caucasus. Interestingly, and adding to the enigma of the region, Asia is not a distinct continent, geographically. It is distinctly home to commonalities in culture and there has been little or no unity within the natural framework.

South Asian culture comprises its art, cuisine, music, literature, philosophy, religions and the complex relationship between the common, traditional cultures. Home to Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism and Christianity, South Asian culture is rich and varied. The nations of South Asia share an ethnic background and most of the territorial divisions have come up only in the recent past. These similar cultures were basically separated due to varying religious compositions. The culture springs from the rich early Indus Valley Civilization that saw the influx and mix of the Aryan and Dravidian races. The populace component of South Asia eventually mingled to form a unique common culture.

The major exodus from the northwest, near the borders of Afghanistan, saw a major influence on the religions of the sub continent, with the arrival of Islam. Though, in the traditional South Asian culture most divisions were based on religion, the commonalities are seen in common interests in sports, shared history, geographical conditions, occupations, lifestyles, food and dress. The temples and places of worship are architectural marvels and completely rebuilt, in the same style, every few years. The common material used in the building includes wood, thatch and stone.

The South Asian culture includes commonalities in celebrations and festivals. Dance is common to all the culture components as a form of announcing harvest, spring and the onset of winter. The people of South Asian culture dance to the beat of a drum, even as they sing and dance. In South Asia, dance is an integral part of the culture, with slight variations in style. There are courtly dances, dances of celebration and dance dramas. The stories handed down the ages also have a lot of similarity. They all talk of a terrible flood or years spent to

control a deluge and help received from the heavens to fix the broken sky'!

The South Asian culture is also home to a number of magical animals and plants, like the extolled nekomatas or felines with two tails and magical powers, the Balinese child-eating rangdas, the pishachas or haunters of the cremation grounds etc. Story-telling and folklores are common to the cultures of the region and South Asia has given the world a collection of fables. South Asia displays great linguistic diversity, the components being a number of language families and isolates and regional dialects. Most of the South Asian countries have more than one language natively spoken.

South Asian philosophical traditions cover a large spectrum of thoughts and writings. They include antithesis like on one hand propagating non-material pursuits, whereas on the other preach the enjoyment of material world. The region is home to the universally accepted and applied Gandhian principles of non-violence and peaceful resistance. Interestingly, majority of people in the world who practice a religious faith, practice one originally from South Asia. The region celebrates a variety of festivals, which are also traditional holidays in many regions.

In South Asia, rice is the staple food. The region is not only a major consumer but the world's granary of rice. The use of exotic spices that grow on the land and extensive consumption of fish along the coastlines is another common feature. Years of colonization and interactions with other cultures and nations, the cuisine has also inherited flavors that are distinctly Latin and American. These are incorporated within the people's local blends.

## II

At fifty or rather sixty, the crisis of the sovereign Republic of India cannot be purely biological. No mid-life crisis this, for sixty years in the life of a nation, is an occasion to worry about the cellular stability of nationhood. And India this morning shows no signs of ‘the state withering away’. Rather, the Republic is seemingly confident, not irredeemably subordinated to tradition, and it is not looking back with nostalgia. The popular will still continues to drive the national destiny. No singular man’s paranoia or fantasy has succeeded in repudiating that will. Democracy, with all its chaos and anarchy, has not only successfully survived. It has thrived beyond the limits of an average Indian’s expectation (Editorial, ‘Indian Republic and Democratic Strength’, *The Indian Express* (New Delhi edn.), 26 January, 2000).

Why have the experiences of India and Pakistan been so different since their independence? Various explanations already exist. Although Ayesha Jalal’s emphasis on the structural and ideational features of colonialism in the postcolonial era is valid, her attempt to obfuscate the dichotomy between democracy in India and military governments in Pakistan and Bangladesh does not carry conviction. Similarly, her attempt to discover the common strand of authoritarianism in the political experiences of India and Pakistan reveals her insensitivity to the important achievements of Indian democracy (Jalal 1998: 249-50). Ayesha Jalal describes India as a ‘formal democracy’ resting on the well-worn ‘authoritarian stumps’ of the colonial state and accuses the Indian Government of being too centralized, while attributing success of its ‘formal democracy’ to the original strength of the Congress and the political skills of its leaders. I tend to disagree with this point of view to a certain extent. In my

opinion the fact that the Indian Government kept the Colonial setup's unitary system intact was quite necessary because there was a need for a strong federal unit to keep all the periphery states and ethnic minorities from breaking away, which was quite likely especially when the sub continent had just gone through partition (Jalal 1997: 135-6).

The subaltern historians argue that Indian democracy was not the outcome of a national popular revolution but a passive one carried out by the Gandhian-led Congress that enabled the bourgeoisie to institute its hegemony over the subaltern groups, but without a formal confrontation with them. Most other writers ascribe Indian democracy to a developed political culture, viable institutions, dedicated elites, unique organizational skills on the part of the Indians, a traditions of compromise and accommodation, the success of the Congress in having institutionalized itself in states and society and the British role, in having bequeathed tutelary democracy to India. Conversely the break down of democracy in Pakistan is attributed to a back ward political culture, unseasoned corrupt leader, ethnic and group frictions, weak institutions debilitated by further stresses arising from the exigencies of nation building in a new states, the incompatibility of Islam and democracy and the contradictions between the Islamic notions of the community and recently in instituted idea of electoral politics (Sheikh 1989: 67).

In order to save mankind we have to learn to live together in concord in spite of traditional differences of religion, civilization, nationality, class and race. In order to live together in concord successfully, we have to know each other's past, since human life, like the rest of the phenomenal universe, can be observed by human minds only as it presents itself to them on

the move through time... For our now urgent common purpose of self-preservation, it will not be enough to explore our common underlying human nature. The psychologist's work needs to be supplemented by the archaeologist's, the historian's, the anthropologist's and the sociologist's. We must learn to recognize, and as far as possible, to understand, the different cultural configurations in which our common human nature has expressed itself in the different religions, civilizations, and nationalities into which human culture has come to be articulated in the course of history... We shall, however, have to do more than just understand each other's cultural heritage, and more even than appreciate them. We shall have to value them and love them as being parts of mankind's common treasure and therefore being ours too, as truly as the heirlooms that we ourselves shall be contributing to the common stock (Toynbee 1934: 56).

These words of wisdom penned by the British historian Arnold Toynbee deserve serious reflection in the present scenario.

### III

Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.

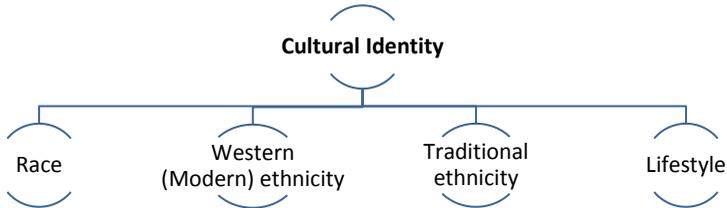
- Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

So far as the Identities' are concerned, Identities are made of images, be they of the self, the other' , or the world' in which the self must relate to the other. Often enough, these images exaggerate, filter, distort and falsify reality; the self constructs itself by imagining inner harmony, unity and even homogeneity much greater that actually exist; the other looms large as a figure

monolithic and often menacing, drawn in shades contrasting one's own, and the world appears more black and white, and more rough-edged, than it actually is (Chopra et al 1999: 251). An identity is a feeling of belonging, belonging to the same collectivity whether family, village, regional (in the infra-national sense), national or supranational. These collectivities fit one inside the others; the same is true of identities. Consciousness, on the other hand, is something else. This notion is political and designates the general feeling that a collectivity has of the necessity of having a political project. A group can have a strong identity without having a common 'political' consciousness. This is what happened, though different nations made different choices. Consciousness here presupposes a moment or moments of awareness of a necessity; 'Gradually, by a series of successive awarenesses, the people thus become a nation'. Similarly, we propose the following hypothesis; Asian Consciousness, different from Asian Identity, is a series of awareness of the political necessity of building Asia, i.e. passing from the 'idea' to the act. It is not enough to feel Asian, to be Asian in order to feel the necessity to make 'Asia Strong Cooperative' in broad perspective. The conditions for the establishment and maintenance of cultural identity or ethnicity are closely tied to the way in which personal identity is constituted. If 'Cultural Identity' is the generic concept, referring to the attribution of set of qualities to a given population, we can say that cultural identity that is experienced as carried by the individual, in the blood, so to say, is what is commonly known as ethnicity. It is not practiced but inherent, not achieved but ascribed. In the strongest sense this is expressed in the concept of race, or biological descent, learned by each and every individual and distinctive precisely at the level of individual behavior. The latter is the most general

Western notion of ethnicity. The weakest form of such attribution is referred to in terms of ‘lifestyle’, or way of life, which may or may not have a basis in tradition.

### Variations on Cultural Identity:



Traditional ethnicity is a very different kind of cultural identity. It is based on membership defined by the practice of certain activities including those related to descent. Ethnic affiliation can be easily changed or complemented by geographic mobility or by change in reference. Where a member of a group changes residence he is adopted or adopts the local ancestors and gods and becomes a practicing member of the new community. Cultural identity is something that individuals have and that is the basis of a certain kind of social identity, but such identity is never the content of the social institutions of society (Friedman 1994: 27-30)

Culture is understood here as a matrix of meanings that plays a constitutive part in generating and preserving a collective identity. Everything a collective constructs in order to generate and preserve the collective identity and is then established by actors in a communicative situation as its context can be assigned to the realm of culture. Identity is the result of a self-referential attribution of meaning, i.e., the self-image –that arises from the combination of the coherence of the defining features (–identity” in the narrower sense) and difference as demarcation vis-à-vis others (–alterity”).” (Shweder and Good

2005: 63-75). Culture is always intertwined with meaning, as Max Weber already pointed out: “From the human standpoint, culture is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of occurrences in the world that has been imbued with sense and meaning.” (Turner 1992: 55) By restricting the concept of culture to the realm of identity and meaning, our understanding of culture can be described as a middle-range conception. It is thus distinct from sociological concepts of culture (culture as a set of standards, values and norms and their symbolizations) and from broader ethnological concepts of culture (culture as the epitome of human life-styles). The advantage of a concept of culture pegged to identity lies in its practicability: It focuses on precisely that section of reality that is of interest in the current discourse, namely identities. Political conflict as communication is always embedded in a structural context which forms the framework for communication and standardizes it, as it makes certain themes and the use of certain media at certain times by certain actors more probable than conceivable alternatives. First and foremost, it is the socio-cultural (sub-)context that is important for a focus on cultural conflicts. We can distinguish here between the social (political, economic, and demographic structures) and the cultural context (i.e. culture). As communication, any political conflict refers to its context. Cultural conflicts stand out for a particularity: Cultural conflicts do not simply refer to the cultural context; in cultural conflicts the cultural context itself becomes the object of conflict. The especially contentious nature of cultural conflicts stems from the fact that they do not primarily hinge on a clearly definable, interest-based (and thus essentially negotiable) objects. Rather, the actors perceive or assert a fundamental difference with regard to the framework in which the communication takes place. There is thus not only a contrast in interests, but Actor A

discerns or thinks s/he discerns that Actor B's thoughts, feelings and actions are shaped by a fundamentally different (culturally and identity-related) context. In conventional, non-cultural conflicts, confrontational communication addresses a conflict issue that is expressed in explicit demands as a clearly delineated interest based conflict item. Cultural conflicts, by contrast, revolve around identity, not interests. The conflict issue is determined not by what the actors want or say they want, but by what they are or believe they are. Even if non-cultural conflict items almost always play an additional role, communication in a cultural conflict center on one or several not explicitly formulated identity-related themes (conflict fields). One of the most objective and excellent examples of a multidisciplinary study of Muslim communities with special reference to South Asia is by Mushirul Hasan (1998).

#### IV

Regional Cooperation however, has to succeed in the region, if South Asia wants to integrate itself into a globalize world. As Gawher Rizvi sums up aptly: "Cooperation is no longer an option but a necessity thrust upon the countries of South Asia as a result of the global changes." (1993: 89)

According to Raimo Vayryen (1997: 5), the term „Region“ can be defined as:

...spatial concept which is defined by a combination of geographical proximity, density of interactions, shared institutional frameworks, and common cultural identities ... Regions are not so much measurable building blocs of the international order as spatially defined cultural, economic, and political constructions whose nature and functions are transformed over time....

Accepting this definition, the region of South Asia can be characterized as one with the longest history and as coherent political, economic and even administrative unity (Khosla 1999: 9). All the countries belonging to this region and erstwhile parts of the Indian subcontinent are geographically compact (Chaube 1993: 1). South Asia also constitutes a coherent environmental region with a conjoint ecological cycle and a common river, ocean and mountain system (Das 1998: 2). The region indeed enjoys an extremely rich common historical tradition and legacy as well as cultural and socio-economic commonalities. Following Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizivi (1986), Hewitt Vernon, argues that the best way to characterize the region is by accepting it as a ‘security complex’, which he defines as: —...a subsystem of the international community of states that for reasons of geography, history and culture are intimately related to each other” (1997: 5). The interactions of domestic and international state systems, according to them, are best brought out by this reference.

Thus, greater regional cooperation has assumed greater relevance and significance for the countries in South Asia in the post-Cold War period. The progress towards that goal has, however, been halting and often faltering. India, given her greater geo-strategic presence in the region must, initiate the policy of constructive regional engagement at a greater pace. Given the changing nature of global politics as well as economics, it has also become quite imperative for other South Asian countries to get involved in the process and initiate reciprocal policy initiatives. The decade of the 2000s has witnessed some signs of such positive development. The process, however, requires further momentum through as well as multilateral initiatives. In the words of one scholar:

In the era of economic liberalization and all its entails, cooperation between small groups - whether between states at the regional and sub- regional levels or between communities at the local or the grassroots level - could be one of the major measures to safeguard the interests of the peoples of Asia against global market forces. Apart from strengthening the bargaining power that united action inevitably brings, such cooperation, if directed, could lead to, among other things, rational and sustainable use of natural and infrastructure resources, easing of tension and strife levels, economic benefits, empowerment that can mitigate to a large extent social and gender imbalances (Chowdhury 1998: 1)

India has exerted some degree of influence on democracy in developing countries because its pre-independence leadership had a strong commitment to democratic values. During the Cold War, India did not have ‘much value’ for democracy as an organizing principle of international affairs as India found itself ranged against the Western democracies on key issues. It attached more weight to the anti-Western criterion than the internal democratic credentials of its Eastern and Third World friends” (Raja Mohan 1999). The Indian Government has not hesitated either to support democratic movements or occasionally use military force beyond its borders [e.g. East Pakistan] to defend what it considered to be universal values’ (Raja Mohan 2007: 113). In recent years, it has emphasized the relevance of a pluralistic, liberal, multicultural and multilingual India as ‘a model of democratic practice’ to the world.

India has been able to achieve economic development and poverty reduction while remaining a liberal, secular, multi-religious democracy, thereby offering an alternative to the

Chinese model of ‘development-without-democracy’. India can use its influence to support democracy more actively in other countries. However, it has not developed a policy of democracy promotion in its foreign policy. It has only been willing to promote democracy ‘passively or as part of a larger group’ and has been reluctant to assume a leadership role (Dormandy 2007a: 125). India does not believe in either the ‘export’ of ideology or the ‘imposition’ of democracy or democratic values on any country. Being a firm believer in sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, India does not advocate either ‘diplomatic activism’ in internal affairs, India does not advocate either ‘diplomatic activism’ or ‘any form of political interventionism’ to strengthen democracy in the world.

As we know that India is one of the ten founding members of the Community of Democracies, launched in 1999 as ‘an international coalition of the democratic countries to foster cooperation for the protection and consolidation of democracy’ (MEA 2002). India went along cautiously with the US initiative but was ‘not prepared to invest significant political or diplomatic energies into it’ (Dormandy 2007a: 113 and 2007b). In a significant departure from its traditional focus on North-South issues, India for the first time supported the notion of promoting democracy at the UN when it supported the United Nations Democracy Fund in September 2005. India is the second largest contributor to the Fund after the USA. In its quest for energy sources in Africa and Latin America, India, unlike China, does not pursue this policy to the detriment of democracy or human rights, (Dormandy 2007a: 125) although commitment to such norms may at some point conflict with national interests of energy security.

For India, democracy building also signifies that the structures of global governance, including the G-8, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Security Council, be made more representative and legitimate. To most stakeholders in India, Europe is clearly overrepresented but is in no hurry to reduce its overrepresentation.

India shares its rich experience, institutional capabilities and training infrastructure with nations that share its values and beliefs and which request its assistance and expertise in the areas of electoral management and administration, electoral law and electoral reform. The Election Commission of India has also provided experts and observers for elections to other countries in cooperation with the United Nations and the Commonwealth secretariat (ECI 2008). For example, in 2004, the Election Commission of India signed a MoU to assist the UN Electoral Assistance Division and offered help to fledgling democracies with personnel and expertise to build and administer institutions that can function as election observers.

India, for example, is one of the top donors to Afghanistan, providing development aid of over USD1 billion. This includes democracy assistance, inter alia, for the construction of the new Afghan Parliament building, training of parliamentary officials, support for the elections to the Constitutional *Loya Jirga*, and so on (MEA 2002). India provides the developing world with ‘a model of a democracy’ which zealously protects its Democratic processes through its own means’.

## V

South Asia has emerged as a regional entity in the international political system with the creation of SAARC but it failed to strengthen regional cohesiveness. Regional cooperation in South

Asia cannot be said to have evolved into a complete bloc in terms of ‘regionalism and economic integration’ due mainly to the prevalence of conflict over the desire of peace and stability. Given the historical legacy and contemporary reality of endemic conflicts and mistrust in the region, the fact that the formal cooperation process in the region has survived recurrent setbacks is testimony of resilience of the organization. The antagonistic nature of relations with large sets outstanding issues, low levels of intra-SAARC trade and joint economic ventures, inadequate information and infrastructure facilities; independent and largely uncoordinated economic policies pursued by each country in the subcontinent and increasing ‘militarization’ and ‘religionisation’ of the region are all indicators of lack of ‘region-ness’ and herald a bleak future for any type of sustainable economic integration.

Notwithstanding, whatever the impetus, any new approach to strengthen relations should be administered by common economic goals and objectives in order to harness existing resources in the region for the mutual benefits of one billion people of the region. Lessons from other parts of the world (such as neighboring Southeast Asia and the European Union) prove the fact that regional organizations have thrived mainly on cooperation in trade and economic relations. The emergence of several trading blocks and economic groupings all over the world clearly indicates that economic survival and prosperity of any nation in this increasingly competitive post-Cold War era crucially depend on their ability to successfully integrate with other economies. It must also be remembered that without any integrated economy none of the South Asian countries can ever hope to become significant global players. The realization of durable peace and the future of economic integration through SAARC lie on the ability and interest of South Asian leaders to

resolve domestic as well as long-standing differences. But how soon and to what extent they are going to achieve success remains unclear, and that can only be judged through action rather than pure rhetoric of politicians promoting regional cooperation. Any realistic assessment of the prospects for the growth of economic integration depends on as how individual country address existing contentious issues and their commitment in promoting regional cooperation given the extensive heterogeneity of state formation an economic dynamics in South Asia. Complementarities in economic structure are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the development of economic relations among countries. The South Asian experience has demonstrated that political factors can cause long-lasting breakdown of establishment of economic links. Moreover, if peace is to be achieved through integration or vice-versa a new paradigm of forward looking process needs to be employed by the South Asian nations wherein they can discuss contentious issues such as Kashmir; border problems; distribution of natural resources with freely and fairly.

Despite religious and cultural heterogeneity there is no problem at the public level in South Asia – whether one comes from India or Pakistan, Hindu or Muslim they can hug each other without any problem. The centre of the problem lies with politics of the nation states and its agencies. Therefore it can be argued that unless these problems are not ironed out even the supposed economic integration in South Asia will not bring the peace and the process itself will remain at crossroad. The dilemma with South Asian states is that they aren't ready for full scaled economic integration for the fear of either is being swamped up into Indian economy due to its hegemonic behavior or losing their sovereignty to some extent. They are also literally not ready to solve long standing political conflicts due mainly

their desire to maintain supremacy one over another. At this outset, the concept that full-scale economic integration will lead peace and hence ‘peace dividend’ thereof is far from reality at least in the present setting in the case of South Asia (Singh 1993: 56-62)

In fact, India, with seventy-two per cent of the territorial area in South Asia, seventy-seven per cent of its population and nearly seventy-eight per cent of the region’s natural resources, (Hewitt 1997: 19), apart from having the largest industrial base, economy and the fourth largest Territorial Army in the world, simply dominates the region. South Asia in fact, it has been argued, is one of the world’s most complex regions with multi-ethnic societies, characterized by striking internal divisions along linguistic, regional, communal and sectarian lines, but externally linked to one another across national boundaries. Yet, multiculturalism or pluralism as a guiding principle of governance is hardly adopted into the popular political culture of the region with India being probable exception to a large extent. Furthering regional cooperation, however, would require as a prerequisite substantial improvement in regional relations through resolution of political and strategic differences. Increasing articulation of such sentiments at the official, as well as, academic level in India’s neighboring countries would indicate that there is a requirement of Indian initiatives in improving bilateral relation. It has been argued that integration can be reaped only if states of the region are able to reconcile their political differences on the table (Hewitt 1997: 19; Anoop 2000: 123).

Within South Asia, it has also become necessary for regional policy makers to give due recognition to pluralism, as the dominant feature of the region. According to one analyst,

—The attempt to construct nation-states on the basis of exclusionary narratives of the past and univocal visions for the future has reached as impasse...” (Shankaran 1999: xvii). He further continues to assert that there is a, ~~need~~ to conceive of South Asia as a space marked by highly decentralized nation-states.... and a pluralist sense of national identity” (Ibid.). Greater acceptance of such regional reality by South Asian policy makers could go a long way in resolving vexed issues and also reduce regional tensions in order to create a better political and strategic atmosphere in the region for developing the regional constructive cooperative agenda.

It is a matter of great concern that South Asia is in the grip of multifaceted crises extenuated by the poor quality of governance and its inability to grapple with the challenges of population explosion, poverty, deprivation, social exclusion, rapid urbanization, and environmental degradation caused by the forces of development. The symptoms of this multifaceted crisis are seen in the rise of political and social violence, militarization of society, pervasive political graft and corruption, youth alienation and indeed, the undoing of democracy itself with the peaceful overthrow of an elected government by the military establishment for mal-governance. With a population of 1.3 billion or around twenty-two per cent of the world population, the challenge to governance in South Asia is immense. The task ahead is made more complex by the regional diversity borne out of its multi-racial., multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural composition. Furthermore, around 550 million or about forty-five per cent of the world’s poor people are to be found in South Asia and have yet to fully enjoy the fruits of democracy and development. The poor are either out of the mainstream of development as chronically marginalizes people or face hardships on account of anti-poor policies, priorities and

institutions. The lack of democratic participation and its relation to poverty in South Asia can be seen in terms of ineffective political parties, local governments, national parliaments, civil society and civil service. In addition, the lack of dynamic and visionary political, bureaucratic and business leadership also serve to retard the extent of democratic participation in South Asia, strengthening the involvement of provincial councils in energy. The prevailing conditions of political and economic insecurity and the need to address them in a collective manner are compelling reasons to forge a strong South Asian community capable of facing locally and regionally.

## VI

We build too many walls, and not enough bridges.

- Sir Isaac Newton

Is the generalization made by Newton true in the South Asian context? The nations of South Asia are more alike than they look different. Cultures and languages spill across national borders, most of which were created in the colonial era. The turbulent past sixty years of South Asia have cost the region dearly. The prospects of a region, which could have been a leading geo-political entity in a multi-polar world, were dampened. Therefore, it is high time for new solutions and right directions are sought, especially with the half of the youth of the region. It is they who can effectively make an impact with their contributions, thus leading to the formation of peaceful democratic South Asia.

So far as the positive meaning of ‘Peaceful Coexistence’ is concerned, namely reaching ethical levels of dialogue and agreement on the foundations of living together and conciliation and recognizing pluralism, has all been taught by every religion.

Al-Odah categorically supports Cultural Co-existence with Non-Muslims in the essay:

Peaceful Coexistence is a kind of cooperation and mutual recognition concerning cultural and human interests and exchange of experience, which help mankind to develop the world and spread those values that are universally recognized as good. All of this is a kind of opening the gates of universal brotherhood. It does not mean propagation of the views of the other, or the acceptance of its legitimacy in a religious way but rather the acceptance of coexistence in a secular way for the purpose of opening up dialogue on both religious and secular matters. (Al-Odah 2009)

The Holy Bible says, “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God” (St. Matthew, 5: 9).

India is an interesting example of how a third world country without having the credentials, which the successful democracies of the first world possess, managed to institutionalize a viable form of democracy. In the last decade much criticism has been targeted at India for being centralized and that its much touted ‘democratic federalism’ has been corrupted to a great extent. The recent policy of the nationalist and ethnically based parties ‘to manipulate’ communal divisions among linguistic minorities is not appreciated at all either but the fact that democracy depends upon more than just the practices of political parties is overlooked. As it has been argued in this essay, the success of the Indian democratic system is a result of the whole institutional framework around the political sphere which has evolved over the years and how ethnically diverse forces have shaped that process. India's democracy now has an institutional framework which is quite

expansive in its approach and its multi-tiered – national parliament and government, state (province) parliaments and governments, each with its panoply of institutions, down to the municipal and village-council levels are perfectly suitable for such a vast and diverse country. In this regards, Sumantra Bose says that:

The conflicts in Indian society and politics are legion, but the system has a capacity to diffuse (and eventually, defuse) most conflicts by multiplying the arenas of contestation to lower levels of government, which simultaneously act as arenas of brokerage.

(from a lecture, delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on 9 November 2000)

This means that by producing power brokers at all levels which tend to reduce the transaction costs of conflict resolution the Indian political system has evolved a framework both at the provincial and the local government levels in which there is greater scope for resolving social tensions without any serious damage to the democratic system in the subcontinent.

In conclusion, one can only argue that there is no universally accepted definition of democracy and countries who have been practicing democracy for more than two hundred years continue to debate various interpretations of key democratic precepts. Recognizing that the practice of democracy around the world is culturally and contextually embedded, it is important to highlight several essential features that help distinguish democratic societies from those that are not. At its foundation, democratic society is one where the people are able to exercise civic and political rights and elect government officials to represent their interests in local and national/

international political structures. A democratic system of government can take many forms and is fundamentally based on the principles of participation, representation, rule of law, protection of citizens' freedoms and liberties, limitations on the government's power in the private and public spheres, free and fair elections and an independent and transparent judiciary system.

Isabella Jean and Jessica Berns (2007: 1-2) write that in multi-ethnic and diverse societies, democracy offers strong prospects for managing social and political conflicts. During the last decade, there has been a new and important emphasis in scholarly and policy realms on conflict and coexistence sensitive approaches to democracy-building and promotion of good governance. There is growing agreement that multi-stakeholder dialogue and consensus-building is essential in such efforts as constitutional and electoral system design, security sector reform, transitional justice initiatives, natural resource management, and national dialogues on minority and language laws. These efforts, when pursued in a participatory and inclusive manner, are as important as the content of the political treaties and normative documents that result from them. In societies that have endured long-lasting divisions, as well as in consolidated democracies, the sustainability of conflict-prevention efforts and intercommoned coexistence relies on democratic practice informed by principles of inclusion, participation, and respect independent judiciary system, equality legislation, and the recognition of both collective rights of minorities for diversity. Democracy enables greater societal reconciliation to take place via many routes, including increased civic engagement, rule of law, and the individual rights of citizens. Although democracy-building in war-torn societies is often correlated with peace and reconciliation processes, neither

non-violent management of societal conflicts nor intercommunal coexistence can be achieved by simply ‘launching’ democracy.

It is idealistic to assume that democracy-building is in itself a conflict-free process and that democracy as an end goal is effortlessly realized, or provides the panacea to a post-conflict society. Many contemporary societies, but particularly those emerging from war, struggle with how to manage deep-rooted societal divisions. Such democratic ‘essentials’ as elections, constitutional and security-sector reforms, and political-party formation can intensify and exacerbate identity-based divisions. Democracy can facilitate the development of multiple and complementary political identities, and yet it can also polarize them when it comes to political inclinations at the ballot box. Moreover, the political agendas and mandates of the leaders driving these processes have a tremendous impact on their conflict-inducing potential.

The close and contiguous geographies India shares with our seven neighbors who together with us make up the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation or SAARC, compel increasing acknowledgement and recognition of the common destiny we share when it comes to issues such as food security, health, poverty alleviation, climate change, disaster management, women’s empowerment, and economic development. Today, with sustained high economic growth rates over the past decade, India is in a better position to offer a significant stake to our neighbors in our own prosperity and growth. We have made unilateral gestures and extended economic concessions such as the facility of duty free access to Indian market for imports from Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. We have put forward proposals multilaterally within the framework of the SAARC where we have assumed asymmetric responsibilities.

## VII

The People, and the People alone, are the motive force in the making of world history‘.

– Mao Zedong

The study of a very descriptive report on the state of democracy in South Asia which covers the five important South Asian countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – brings out the following key messages:

1. While there is widespread support for the idea of democracy in South Asia, there is less commitment towards or satisfaction with the institution form of representative democracy.
2. While South Asian democracy provides greater room for the struggle towards equality, dignity and human security of all citizens, there is less emphasis on rules and institutions to guard against majoritarian excesses.
3. Constitutions may well offer equality of political citizenship, but fall well short of delivering the promise of democracy that most people aspire to.
4. An elaborate set of institutions to provide for formal autonomy appears to exist but in practice they suffer from erosion of real autonomy and low levels of public trust.
5. While all the countries have mechanism for recognizing and accommodating regional and social diversity, the mantra of the homogeneous nation-state and growing majoritarian practices undermines the co-existence of diversity and democracy.

6. Political parties are a firm part of South Asia's political consciousness and generate a high degree of popular participation and identification. But their inability to function in a democratic and transparent manner or offer meaningful choices to voters has resulted in a low level of trust.
7. The experiences of South Asia show that democracy can be built in societies that have not attained rates of economic growth. It also demonstrates that democracies can evade addressing the issues of poverty, destitution and inequality even when the poor constitute a majority.
8. The cultures, practices and institutions of democracy have transformed the people of South Asia from subjects to citizens and bearers of rights and dignity. This gives rise to expectations that most governments in the region have failed to meet (CSDS 2008).

It is true that South Asia is a region where democracy preceded nation and state-building. It, therefore, does not conform to the European ideal, making the challenges of democratization more difficult. In South Asia, late inertia rather than overt hostility to political reforms is the main constraint to democratization' (Burnell 2003: 227).

The EU has preferred a lbottom-up' approach that essentially concentrates on civil society and NGOs, which have been the main channels and recipients of aid from the European Commission. The enthusiasm for the role of civil society derives chiefly from it being perceived as key to the implosion of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and to the subsequent transition to democracy there. In the literature

on democracy promotion, this approach has been subject to two main criticisms: first, it tends to narrowly identify civil society with NGOs, especially the Western-advocacy type of NGO, and to de-emphasize the role of institutions. Second, it enables the EU to ‘avoid tackling controversial issues’ with partner countries while maintaining the profile of an international actor keen on supporting human rights and democracy (Balfour 2006: 118-9). Proponents of democracy promotion have tended to regard civil society as the motor of regime change and the foundation for the consolidation of democracy. But the lever of civil society has long been ‘overvalued’ and the difficulties of exerting influence on social processes have been underestimated (Dauderstaedt and Lerch 2005: 170-1). Some South Asian scholars even question whether civil society ‘can be politically manufactured in the ways that appear to be implicit in some of the writing on democratization and explicit in the work of multinational agencies engaged in development’. Doubts are expressed that while civil society may be ‘a necessary condition of democracy, it is not by itself sufficient’ and that while developing a civil society is crucial, it is no panacea for democratization.

Furthermore, the ‘underlying theory’ of Western democratic consolidation seems to be that economic growth will help consolidate democracy while greater democracy will provide the institutional underpinnings of sustained growth. However, India feels that there is ‘no correlation, much less causation, between democracy and development’ since many democracies perform well in developmental terms as do non-democratic societies. Democracy should not be viewed as ‘a means to an end, namely development, but as an end in itself’ because it empowers people and unleashes individual creativity.

A key challenge, according to some South Asian analysts, is that modern democracy and democratic institutions have been transplanted to South Asia and have not evolved through the political, economic and cultural processes that combined to give birth to democracy in developed countries – which over time were able to create an active civil society, and the value systems and the rules of the game that discipline the contest for power. South Asia has ‘taken over the institutions and the systems without the processes, the value systems and the culture in which they had evolved’. The Western liberal democratic paradigm has been inadequate in dealing with the complexity of the multitude of religio-cultural and ethnic identities and immense linguistic and cultural diversity in the region.

The nurturing and consolidation of democratic institutions and processes in South Asia will essentially be done by domestic actors. In the ultimate analysis, the responsibility for initiating and implementing the multitude of structural, economic, social and political reforms necessary to institutionalize democracy must be taken by South Asians themselves. External players can only play a supportive role and their capacities to bring about fundamental change are necessarily limited. The coming to power of elected governments in a number of South Asian countries in 2008 is the beginning, not the end, of the process of consolidating and sustaining fragile democracies in the region.

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# **Yak Cham: The Traditional Cultural Expression of the Merak Community**

*Gengop Karchung*

## **Abstract**

*The unique nomadic community of Merak not only captures even the fellow Bhutanese lots but the uncommon custom, tradition, and culture provide a special interest and standing to the community. Accessibility to there is limited only on foot from a nearest motorable road heads stretching for two days. Surprisingly, the village was exposed to tourists only towards the end of 2010, breaking its age-old isolation, making it one of the endangered indigenous social groups in the country. Besides, displaying various other cultural interests, the traditional cultural expression such as „Yak Cham (dance)“ is greatly threatened by the heightening progress of modernisation and globalisation entering the soil of Merak. The threat is not only a potential contender to this endangered cultural expression but to other cultural heritage of the community and the nation as well. However, the research carried out based, primarily on oral traditions of the community and other few secondary sources, will not only help to facilitate in preserving the endangered intangible cultural heritage but will be strengthened for posterity.*

## **Merak Community: Background**

Merak community is a far-flung community in eastern Bhutan bordering with Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Merak village is geographically located at an elevation of 11,565 feet (3,525 m) above sea level falling on the latitude of 27°18' 07" North and longitude of 91°51' 28" East in Trashigang district, Bhutan.

It encompasses an area of 867.7 square kilometres mostly pasturelands. Merak *Gewog* (Block) has 231 households with a total population of 1,957. From the written and oral sources, in accordance to the divination given by *Khamsang Ama Jomo* (*Khams sangs ama jomo*), female local deity of Merak to Lama Jarepa (*Bla ma bya res pa*) in a trance, people have escorted the Lama from Tshona (*mTsho sna*) in Tibet (China) and inhabited the places of Merak and Sakteng. For their livelihood the Meraks depend exclusively on rearing and herding of highland animals especially yak and its hybrids. Hence, their culture and tradition are mostly associated with the nomad culture. Even during one of the festivals called *Wang* (*dBang*), yak *cham* featuring cultural practices of Merak community is exhibited annually to the public. Due to its geographical location and age-old settlement in seclusion, the community is richly enveloped with unique culture and traditions. Hence, the community is a living example of Bhutan's rich cultural heritage. However, at the onset of modern amenities lately into the community, it is a great concern for the heritage lovers and committed practitioners of the cultural heritage.

### **Annual Festivals of the Meraks**

Yak *cham* is performed in one of the two annual festivals of Merak Community. The festivals are *Choekor* (*Chos bskor*) festival and *Wang* festival. *Choekor* is a circumambulation of two villages of Merak and Gengo by carrying religious texts by ladies. It is a one-day festival but prior to the *Choekor*, at least ten days of Buddhist text recitation called *Mang Kurum* (*dMangs sku rim*) is held. During this festival, dance called *Arpha* is performed in the honour of the King Gesar of Ling kingdom. It is held annually towards the end of the Fifth Month of Tibetan Lunar Calendar.

*Wang* festival is held one month later towards the end of the Sixth Month of Tibetan Lunar Calendar. *Wang* is a two-day festival held one day in Merak and other day in Gengo. *Wang* means empowerment. Preceding the *wang*, sixteen days of *Nyung Ney* (*sMyug gnas*) is observed both in Merak *Gonpa* (monastery) and Gengo *lhakhang* (temple) separately but in Gengo *lhakhang* the programme begins one day later, so that people can attend functions of both the villages. *Nyung ney* is a ritual practice where fasting and silence is observed on alternate days according to the rules of *Dulwa* ('*Dul ba*), Vinaya. On the day of the completion of *nyung ney* observation, *Jin-seg* (*sByin sreg*), Burnt Offering is held. *Wang* or blessing is empowered on the last day of the *nyung ney*. *Bum-wang* (*Bum dbang*) is empowered early in the morning and *Throm-wang* (*Khrom dbang*) is empowered in the evening. *Throm-wang* is also known as *Tshe-wang* (*Tshe dbang*) as it is an empowerment of long life. During *Throm-wang* various pieces of snacks of Feast Offerings are distributed to the public including *Bui-tor* ('*Bul gtor*), a big ritual cake and *Tshe-ri* (*Tshe ril*), marble-sized long life cake.

*Yak cham* is performed in between the *Bum-wang* and *Throm-wang* and also after the *Throm-wang* until dusk.

### **Origin of Yak Cham**

The term *Yak Cham* is originally from the local language of Merak Community but the same term is used in all parts of Bhutan. Thus, even in this paper, term *yak cham* will be used. *Yak cham* means the *dance of yak*.

The *yak cham* unlike any other Bhutanese religious mask dances; it is very unique and this is so even in its origin. The exact source of origin is yet to be found out, there are two

promising sources: replication of legendary tale of Thoepa Gali and; paying due respect to yak in the form of dance, as yak is the main source of economic activities of the highlanders. Yet both the reasons are suitable as the yak *cham* depicts almost all the activities of nomads while the mask dancers represent the legendary icons of Thoepa Gali. Therefore, the yak *cham* was exhibited to the general public to replicate the life of Thoepa Gali besides incorporating other cultural activities of nomads or Merak community, to preserve, protect, and promote the nomadic culture by giving due respect to yak. The songs in various episodes of yak *cham* praise and provide succinct description of life of nomads.

But who and when did the yak *cham* was performed is very vague. No one knows about it and no written record has it. Similarly, although it is very difficult to trace back when was the first yak *cham* performed in the history of Merak community; some believe that it was performed in the place called Tengchen in the vicinity of Mount Pema Gosum [or Pema Kogsum] when people of Merak and Sakteng migrated from Tshona (Tibet) to these villages. The mount Pema Gosum is the pastureland of Sakteng located at one day trek from Merak towards the east. It is believed that while performing that first yak *cham*, the dancers sung a song which described the yak citing the examples of that geographical site. Besides this, very little is known about the origin of yak *cham*. The content of the song in local language along with English translation is provided below:

*Nga yi yak poi go la ma thong na//*  
*Ri bo Pema Gosum thong jung lay aou//*

*Nga yi yak poi mig la ma thong na//*  
*Tshomo Yumtsho Ngommo thong jung lay aou//*

*Nga yi yak poi ze la ma thong na//  
Lam mo Dzalam Karmo thong jung lay aou//*

If you have not seen the head of my yak,  
Look at the mount Pema Gosum.

If you have not seen the eye of my yak,  
Look at the clear blue lake of Yumtsho Ngonmo.

If you have not seen the crest of my yak,  
Look at trail amid craggy hill of Dzalam Karmo.

However, most people believe that it had been concocted based on the legendary tale of Thoepa Gali who is believed to have discovered yak. Moreover, yak was the main source of economic activities of the people of highlands particularly that of Merak community. Hence, in order to represent and signify how important the yak is in the lives of highlanders, the yak *cham* must have come into existence. So, people believe that Thoepa Gali is the likely engineer of the yak *cham*.

### **Brief Account of Thoepa Gali**

Thoepa Gali was believed to be from Oenza (*dBen rdza*) in Kongpo, Tibet (China). He was ill-treated by his family members and was forced to relinquish his family estate and properties when his parents endowed their properties to his two elder brothers. He became very apprehensive about the decision but build up his guts to approach his family members one by one to request and claim his share of property inheritance. But he was bequeathed with non-functional items such as an old fissured hat, a frayed-collar raincoat, a lasso without a loop, and a pair of worn out traditional [leather] boots by his father Nyagpo Zhidar, mother Sholma Samkyi, and two brothers – Gawa Samdrub and Habo Dargye, respectively.

Pondering at these items, all his hopes were shattered and his future looked very bleak. So he left behind his parents and their estates, and set forth his undefined journey crossing plains and mountains. He came on the apex of a mount Silma offering him a panoramic view which cleared all his vexations. He then found out a beautiful lake at the foot of a great snow clad mountain which had driven him to inspect the location. When he approached the spectacular site and was relishing on its splendour, he spotted a white bird flying into sky from the lake. When he inspected the spot, he found three different coloured eggs. He picked the white egg, polished and then ruptured it. A celestial yak appeared but God Indra (*Lha Jajin*) declared his possession over the yak. He then ruptured the spotted egg and a spotted female yak emerged when Mountain Deity Kebu Lungtsan proclaimed that yak. Thoepa Gali then mindfully ruptured the black egg to establish ownership over the new creature. No wonder, a black female yak emerged out of it. In order to get hold of the yak, he tried to defile the yak, as Bhutanese believe that anything that is pure and sacred becomes powerless if it is defiled. So, he flung his dilapidated boots over the head of the yak, tossed the fissured hat, and also hurled the raincoat to defile it. When Thoepa Gali succeeded to defile and when nobody came forward to declare its ownership, he then lowered the lasso from his back to snag the yak to be domesticated. This is how people of Merak believe that yaks came into existence.

The female yak gave birth to a male yak when he was not been able to domesticate the female yak. After the birth, he tried to obtain milk from the yak with various techniques. As a result, Thoepa Gali had to become a yak herder after succeeding in milking the wild beast. Therefore, he raised and grazed his yaks on alpine meadows and great paddocks depending on seasons.

He also used yak hair tent to house himself along with his yaks, besides he had to raise a nomad mastiff dog to guard his yaks. In short, Thoepa Gali mastered the practice of nomadic life and became so successful. As a result, the forsaken Thoepa Gali was placated by his parents and other family members, assessing over his prosperity. However, in the end, Thoepa Gali was believed to have attained enlightenment. This is how the yak was discovered and domesticated. Hence, for their livelihood people depended exclusively on yak husbandry.

### **Yak and its Significance in the Lives of Highlanders**

The yak is a bovine animal of *Poephagus grunniens* or *Bos grunniens* species. In Dzongkha, Bhutanese language, male yak is called *Yak* (*gYag*) and *Bji* ("*Byi*") for female.

Yak has a strong and well-developed body conformation that is rectangular about the size of ordinary cattle. It has long hair especially on the flanks as well as a long and thick bushy tail. Most of the yaks have horns with wide bases spreading outward and upward. Black is the dominant body colour; the rest are spotted, white and brown are also widely seen.

Yaks are herbivore and are usually found at elevations between 2,000 and 6,000 metres above sea level. Therefore, yaks thrive in conditions of extreme harshness and deprivation while providing a livelihood for people. Yak gives food, shelter and clothing to the pastoralists. It gives clothing from hat to boots while it can produce household items from tent to blankets. Therefore, yak is everything for them. Yak gives three varieties of hairs which are used as raw materials for production of various household items such as for clothing, shelter, and other nitty-gritty and sophisticated items. While its beef is considered very delicious and superlative meat and its hides

serve for vast varieties of purposes ranging from foodstuffs to mats and mattresses to leather bags. Male yaks serve as bull besides it is used for pack animals while the female ones reproduces young ones and milk is harvested to produce other dairy products. Hence, yak is very important and it plays very significant role in highlanders' livelihood. As a result, its culture and tradition remained unaffected until now since they did not have to depend much on others except for salt.

### **Yak Cham in Other Places**

From the few yak *chams* I have witnessed; Tawang, Sakteng, and Merak have same origin with similar number of performers and have similar kind of dress code for the mask dancers. But the yak *cham* performed in Namkha *lhakhang* in Tang, Bumthang is in honour of the local deity *Terdag* Rinchen Gonyak. The dance does not have any specific episodes but just dances right after the dance of protective deities Yeshe Gonpo and Palden Lhamo. Apart from this, it is also clear that the yak dances are also held in yak herding regions of Tibet:

Throughout yak-raising regions, yak dances are held by herders, which signify typically the vital role that yak play in the cultural and spiritual values of the pastoral society (Ning 2003: 348).

### **Distinctness of Yak Cham**

Most dances in Bhutan are either manifestation of great masters or dharma tutelary deities trying to confront the evil forces that are believed to be barricading towards the spread of Buddhism or performed to appease deities. It is also performed to demonstrate life after death in the forms of mask dances to educate sentient beings. But yak *cham*, unlike any other dances,

is performed in honour of the yaks who give them food, shelter and clothing. It is a symbol of humble respect and thanks dedicated to the yaks by the pastoralists.

Mask dances in Bhutan wear different colour scarves tied on a rope which is fastened at the waist but some mask dances wear long silk robes called *Phoi-ka* (*Phod ka*). These are the common costumes in almost all the mask dances. Besides, some wear nothing or very small pieces just to cover the genital areas, in the case of *Terchams* (Naked dances or mind treasure dances). But in the case of yak *cham*, the costumes worn are the ordinary dress worn by village people of that community. Therefore, the mask dance strongly depicts the costumes worn by people of Merak community.

Since most of the Bhutanese mask dances are closely associated with religion, prayer recitation and rituals are held simultaneously inside the *lhakhang* or *Gonpa* headed by lama. But since the yak *cham* provides a long cultural history of nomads, the religious ceremony or prayer recitation for the yak *cham* is not practised. The unique and salient feature of yak *cham* is the narration of origin of yak and other associated practices of highlanders in the form of romantic songs. Therefore, the yak *cham* carries more of cultural values rather than spiritual one, narrating the cultural history of nomads or Merak community in songs and dances.

### **Essence of Yak Cham**

Performance of yak *cham* is not exclusively a spiritual and religious programme. It is a narration of evolution of yak and its domestication, besides unfolding the practices of nomads succinctly. Therefore, the yak dance presents a vivid cultural history of highlanders of Merak and Sakteng. But again, the

mask dance depicts the legendary icons of Thoepa Gali and his family members. Since, Thoepa Gali is revered as a god of livestock or wealth, spiritual part comes into play. Few older generations who had heard the legendary tale of Thoepa Gali become so emotional and spiritual when seeing the yak *cham*. They pray for further blessings in multiplying the yaks and other domestic animals, and also seek sound health of people and animals; besides, seeking universal and country's peace and prosperity at large. So, people send their humble thanks and respect to Thoepa Gali for giving them opportunity to live by rearing yaks and other domestic animals.

The yak *cham* performance brings people of all walks of life together right from the towns as well as from very far think forests. Some people travel more than a day or two from their pastureland to witness the yak *cham* because this is one of the two festivals that offers a platform for social interaction.

### **Performers of Yak Cham**

In yak *cham* the exact number of performers required is ten – five mask dancers, two persons inside the yak body case, one each to beat a drum and a cymbal, and one person as a custodian of the yak *cham* performance. The representation and responsibilities of the mask dancers are as follows:

*Nagzi (gNag rdzi)* is a yak herder and he represents Thoepa Gali as recounted in the above legend. He is the main character in the yak *cham*. Since he was believed to be the god of livestock/wealth, he leads the yak and the yak performs its dances in accordance to his directives and steps. He sings quite a lot of songs that are dedicated to the Thoepa Gali, yak and other associated elements of the yak and nomadic life. Thoepa Gali is the youngest of the three brothers.

*Apa (A-pa)* is father and he represents the Nyagpo Zhidar, father of Thoepa Gali.

*Mlengchung Au* is literally Elder Black Brother. The term *Mlengchung* is the language of Mon/Dagpa/Brami whereas *Au* is in Mesak language (language of Merak and Sakteng). If it is translated into Mesak language or in Dzongkha, it is *Nagchung (Nag chung)*. He represents eldest brother Habo Dargye amongst Thoepa Gali's siblings.

*Mlengchung Nou* is Younger Black Brother. He represents younger brother Gawa Samdrub.

*Kugpa (lKug pa)* is a clown in the mask dance of yak *cham*. However, although he has no association with the legend of the Thoepa Gali, he represents cowboy who helps *Nagzi* in the yak *cham*. The person who helps the *Nagzi* is known as *Nag-ro*. His main character in the yak *cham* is to help drive the yak to desired direction of the *Nagzi*. Besides, he also has got his share of performance in the yak *cham* proceeding called *Kugpai Tor-gya*.

Yak – Apart from these five main actors, two strong persons are needed to enter inside the yak case. These two men should perform smooth and beautiful movement of head and tail of the yak since they are handling head and tail inside the yak's body case. They should wag according to the sounds of drum and cymbal as well as follow the *Nagzi*. On the back of the yak, female deity representing Palden Lhamo is saddled but since the old yak case is substituted by a new one, the female deity remains on the old body case and they no longer use it on the new body case as it is unfit to saddle on the back.

*Nga Dagpa* – In order to set the performing arts on their toes, a drummer with a drumstick is essential in yak *cham*. The drummer is known as *Nga Dagpa* (*rNga bdag pa*) or *Nga Dungmi* (*rNga brdung mi*). The drummer should master all the steps and episodes of the yak *cham* before he assumes the post. So, usually a veteran *Champa* (dancer) or *Cham Nyer* assumes the post of drummer. The drummer will be supported by a man to handle percussion instrument of cymbal. He strikes the cymbal along with the sounds of drum which is much easier as it has to faithfully follow the drummer. These equipments are the only requisite to yak *cham* performances besides their usual costumes. The small drum is called *Cham-pai Nga*, *Ngar-yug* for drumstick, and *Bub-chi* for a pair of small cymbal.

*Cham Nyer* – Finally, a veteran dancer who knows the ins and outs of the yak *cham* is needed as a custodian of the dance called *Cham Nyer* ("*Cham gnyer*"). He oversees and manages whole affairs of the dance including its steps, episodes and timings. He also has the authority to end the mask dance as and when necessary as he is the owner of the yak *cham* equipments. These belongings are owned by a private individual and the yak *cham* is presented to the public during annual festival of *wang* but now the yak *cham* is also performed during the visit of high ranking officials as well as to the tourists when and wherever it is required. Except during the latter occasions, it has seen dearth of participants during the former event. That is because participants yearn and anticipate a good return from tourists and high ranking officials while it is not the case during the annual festival. Therefore, it is a high time to build up a sense of communal belonging to the community to promote community vitality through this priceless performing art rather than thirsting for material accumulations.

## Costumes of Yak Cham

Costumes of the yak *cham* such as masks are not very old. The masks including the head of the yak were carved out of wood in 1990 by late *Zoba (bZo bo)* Lama from Gengo village. He was born in 1957 corresponding to the Fire Rooster Year. The other garments used for the *cham* belong to private individuals and hence, these are not old rather it is very new as tradition binds people to use new attires for festival and other social functions. The details of dressing involved in each performer are listed below.

Yak body is made from black yak hair which is woven into pieces of cloths called *Liu (Sle'u)*. These pieces of cloth are then tied on bamboo frame that is woven into half-cylindrical frame similar to the shape of yak's body but the body frame is much bigger than the normal yaks. In the centre the female deity representing Palden Lhamo (Mahakali) is saddled. From the two ends, yak head handled with one metre long post is placed and an original yak tail is fitted on the other end. The yak head was carved out from wood like that of the other masks for the yak *cham*. The yak head is black in colour similar to real yak head but it has got the carving of sun over the half moon right in the middle of the forehead. The yak body is then lifted up from the ground by the two strong men with their heads who are handling head and tail of the yak *cham*. They then move and dance like yak following the drum beats.

*Nagzi* is the main actor in the yak *cham*. So, he is dressed differently from all other dancers. He wears *Pui-choba*, one of the male dresses of Merak community made from black yak hairs. He then wears *Kang-go* resembling short trouser which is in white colour. The *Kang-go* is connected with *Pi-shub*, a

leather stocking, and then a pair of *Pu-lham*, woollen boot with leather soles is fitted to the legs. But now *Pi-shub* and *Pu-lham* is substituted by nylon pants and rubber boots. *Kubtan* (seating mat) is suspended from the waist tied from the belt at the middle of the back. He is adorned with a small knife bearing silver hilt and scabbard which is inserted between the *Chuba* pouches supported by belt on the belly. The salient feature that the *Nagzi* possesses is *Besko* which is tied on his right hip. It denotes that he is *Nagzi*, the yak herder. *Besko* is a leather pouch to hold salt and grain flours to feed yaks. Besides these attires the dancer wears a yellow mask. The yellow colour signifies that he is the Thoepa Gali who is a manifestation of Zambha Lha, the God of Livestock/ Wealth.

*Apa* is denoted by claret wizened mask symbolising old age. He wears *Ba-todung*, a woollen jacket worn by women except during the yak *cham*. It is to distinguish *Nagzi*, the Thoepa Gali from rest of the group as well as the jacket is light and small fit for dancing. He is decorated by silver and gold ornaments such as *Dugu* (bangle), *Tshe-kap* (ring), *Gaw* (amulet) and *Roga* (amulet). Although *Gaw* will be tied on the waist with other decorations, *Roga* of various shapes and sizes will be adorned from neck till waist. From the waist till toe, the garment is as same as the *Nagzi*. The unique ornament he also wears is a ring-like *Thekor* on the thumb of right hand.

*Mlengchung Au* dresses as same as *Champa* (dancer) *Apa*. The only difference is that it wears a black mask. Although there is a slight difference in the shape of the masks of two black brothers, it is difficult to distinguish between the two – who is elder and who is younger. The mask bearing more and longer wrinkle lines is elder and the lesser is considered as younger brother.

*Mlengchung Nou* wears similar dress to his elder brother with a black mask. The lesser wrinkle on the mask is the younger brother.

*Kugpa* wears unusually different dress from the rest of the *champas*. Since he is a clown and literally the meaning of *Kugpa* is a foolish person, even his dress indicates that dancer is an abnormal man. He dresses similar wearing *ba-todung* and other garments except *kubtan*. He may or may not wear *kang-go* as dress code is not important for him. But he wears a piece of square shaped ragged cloth which has a hole to fit in his head. The two triangular shaped edges reach and cover his two shoulders while two other edges of the square reach his waist on the both sides of his body. Additionally he wears *Thig-ri* made up of yak hair like a rope having mix-coloured tips (similar to *Ge-da*, leg fastening rope) which is suspended from waist till knees or lower round his lower body. Additionally, he wears long rosary. His dark red mask filled with wrinkles has an ugly and humorous appearance. His teeth are grown sparsely while he has got a tail of red panda to denote the hair of the clown. He also holds a bamboo stick to goad yak representing himself as *Nag-ro*.

The significant feature of the masks except clown is that, it has earrings or ear-hangings to denote that people of Merak wear earrings irrespective of age and gender. Ear-hanging is made up of pink and golden threads where coral or turquoise is appended on end of those threads. It is then suspended from the earlobe with a help of strong string and tanned piece of leather.

Unique and beautiful costumes of the mask dancers in accordance to the traditional system are vital to keep the originality of the yak *cham*. Moreover, the dress code illustrates the unique costume of Merak community. So, preserving the

dress code for yak *cham* will inadvertently help in protecting the costumes of the community. But due to availability of global products at cheaper rate with varied choices of shape, size, and durability, the original garments of leg and foot wears are completely disappeared, degrading the tradition of costume wearing in the yak *cham* as well as in the Merak community.

### **Proceeding and Episodes of Yak Cham**

Since yak *cham* and its equipments belong to a private individual, it is housed in his own residence when the mask dance is not performed. The owner of the masks and yak *cham* equipments is *Meme* Lek Khandu from Merak village. His house is located at the lower part of clustered village of Merak. During the festival time, two episodes – *Poi-rab* and *Choi-pa* – are performed in his house and the third one, *Zheng-rab*, is performed outside his house. When the yak *cham* proceeds to the main function ground in the *Gonpa* courtyard at Merak or *lhakhang* vicinity at Gengo, *Gyang-lu* (*rGyang glu*), a distance-song, is sung at by the *champas*. On reaching the *lhakhang* or *gonpa*, the yak is received by the hosts or patrons of the *nyung ney* with a white scarf. Then various episodes of yak *cham* are performed until dusk.

As far as veteran *champa* heard and learned, there are only eighteen episodes in the yak *cham*. Although the mask dancers do not know the exact order of the episodes, they say there is no systematic and systemic order except few episodes in the beginning. The following are the episodes of a day long programme of the yak *cham*.

1. *Poi-rab* (*sPos rab*) is a description for incense offering.
2. *Choi-pa* (*mChod pa*) is offerings made to various deities in the form of dances and songs.

3. *Zheng-rab* (*bZheng rab*) is a song beseeching yak to wake-up while *champas* were dressed in the costumes and were ready to leave the *Cham nyer*'s residence to the main function ground.
4. *Gyang-lu* (*rGyang glu*) is a distance song sung by *champas* while they proceed to the main function ground which is a signal for the *nyung ney* patrons for their reception at the *lhakhang* or *gonpa*.
5. *Nga-chi Dru-chi*
6. *Tra-shi Chom-bey*
7. *Tshang-rab* (*Tshang rab*) is a purification dance where incense is burnt and water is sprinkled as a symbol of purifying from contaminations.
8. *Pho-drang Toe-pa* (*Pho brang bstod pa*) is a song in praise of the castle.
9. *Ja-cham dang Go-ngai Chalen* (*Bya "dham dang sgo nga"i phyag len*) is the dance of bird and handling of eggs as mentioned in the Thoepa Gali's legend.
10. *Ni-mai Dron-jam* (*Nyi ma'i dron "jam*) is a dance that signify how the sun shines and the people bask in it.
11. *Shawai Par-tse* (*Sha bai spar rtsal*) is an episode of dance that shows aptitude of stag's movements.
12. *Dombai Shing-tsa* (*Dom pa"i shing rtsal*) is a similar dance that indicates the skills of bear in climbing trees.
13. *Nya-mai kyo kyo* (*Nya mo'i kyog kyog*) is a step that presents the swimming skills of fish.

14. *Aei dang Meme Cham* (*Ae''i dang meme''i ''dham*) is a dance of old man and woman.
15. *Kugpai Tor-gya* (*lKug pa''i gtor rgyag*) is humorous dance solely performed by *Kugpa* with ritual cakes.
16. *Koi Tsa-lug* (*Kod btsal lugs*) is an episode of dance to depict ways of searching *Koe*, female offspring of *Dzomo* when crossbred with *Goleng* (local *Bos Taurus*). *Dzomo* is a female offspring of female yak and *Goleng*.
17. *Goipai Shogdro* (*rGod po''ishog sgro*) is a dance on how vulture flies high into the sky.
18. *Trashi Zhelzom* (*bKra shis zhal ''dzomᄁ*) is an episode of dance on dispersing and meeting from four directions – *chog zhi ling zhi*.
19. *Dra-cham* (*dgra ''cham*) is not included under the episodes of yak *cham* but since this dance is also very interesting as well as holds great meaning, the dance is appended in the episode's list. This dance is performed at last when it is dusk and demonstrates a war with various evil forces. In the end, the yak gains the victory over all forces and the yak *cham* comes to an end with this war dance.

Each episode shows unique meaning and significance but there are other steps and dances that are not reflected above. *Nagzi* dancing and demonstrating ways of whetting knife and then depicting in an action on how to slash branches of trees as forage for domestic animals and so many other activities are not listed above. In short, the one day programme exhibits almost all the activities of pastoralist to the public. But regrettably today the dance has reduced to few episodes. On 16 and 17 August

2012, only ten out of eighteen episodes were performed leaving aside other unlisted dances and episodes in the yak *cham*. The romantic songs sung during each episode will be published only in Dzongkha version of this research paper.

Although the masks remained same as it was in early 1990s, other costumes and ways of dancing has been dishearteningly diluted and diminished over the years. From the information obtained from the mask dancers and others, it is likely that in very near future, the prospect of yak *cham* as a mechanism to narrate the cultural history of Merak community is very bleak and slim. Until recently the yak *cham* served the purpose that was handed down for generations. If such cases are not addressed when it is so young, the sustainability of its culture is at stake with passing years. However, this dereliction and failures are attributed firstly to modernisation. With the introduction of modern amenities, it has faced multifaceted challenges to its culture and tradition. Modern and universal education policy has let the younger generation seek for new and fashionable culture and tradition. Thereby learning and practicing traditional performing arts as this yak *cham* was seen and understood as very old fashioned practice. They prefer something with modern taste, latest jazzy music, and dance movements which are so lively. But the older generations take this performing art with pride and dignity as lively and enthusiastic as younger generations incline towards the modern fashions. Therefore, these differences grow up as a result of different mindsets, interests, and understandings driven by majority's taste. Since, majority of the population of the world and particularly in Bhutan is youth, the tastes and flavours are won by the younger generation. Thereby declining the trend to safeguard and promote traditional culture especially the yak *cham*.

Based on the above main cause, there are other causes that aggravate the declining trend. Driven by lack of interest, it is blamed at the episodes and steps of the yak *cham* which is very difficult to learn and practice. Moreover, when the global world is burning for the better incomes, younger and potential dancers of Merak community are looking for other economically productive and better earning works and careers.

On the contrary, it is blamed at the abolition of traditional system of development by introducing modern and democratic development. In traditional setting, people had to pay huge cash or in kind tax to the central government and people had to make labour contributions for months called *Woola* for any developmental activities. During which time, the yak *cham* dancers and other contributors to the community were exempted from taxes or *woola*. But with this modern and democratic development, the dancers are left without their proper share. As a result, the dancers are reluctant to contribute more for what they get less from the community. Meaning, while they involve themselves in festivals and other functions with yak *cham*, they are not well paid to sustain. So, rather than sticking on the yak *cham*, they better seek for economically productive work to sustain themselves.

### **Benefits of Yak Cham**

Yak *cham* and *wang* festival bring people from very far-flung pasturelands providing a platform for social gathering and helps in promoting community vitality. As a result, it promotes social cohesion and harmony living although some lead to disharmony due to excessive consumption of alcoholic substances. Yak *cham* is one of the two festivals that allow people to converge and interact with one's parents, siblings, relatives, and friends to

share happiness and sorrows. Otherwise, they spend their day and night on the high mountains, in the woods, snow, and meadows tending their animals for subsistence and income generation.

Since this festival is as a result of religious *nyung ney* ceremony, *wang* or blessing is empowered in the end. So they receive blessings which will be valued until next summer at this time of the year. Therefore, although there was low numbers of turn up for empowerment admonition, not a single person leaves without receiving the blessing. With this blessing, people ascertain themselves of sound health without any obstacle for the next one year term to themselves and their animals.

Further, people who had heard about the origin of yak *cham* seeks blessing from Thoepa Gali, the discoverer of yak. They recite words of propitious omen to Thoepa Gali to shower them with birth of female yaks, bountiful forages for the animals, and abundant dairy products to sustain their lives.

## **Conclusion**

The most valued heritage and unique yak *cham* of Merak community has come a long way since time immemorial and still it is not late in safeguarding and protecting it for the future generations although it has seen the performing art is diminishing, year after year. If measures are not taken instantly, not in a very distant future, very few of its episodes will be left for public show and rest episodes will disappear and become extinct with aging practitioners. Therefore, I would like to leave few concluding remarks for the interest of community's heritage and also for the interest of devoted practitioners, if there are any. Rather than whining over yak *cham*'s long episodes and difficult steps, younger generation must cultivate a sense of communal

belonging and social responsibility, and learn to practise in preserving, safeguarding, and promoting our invaluable cultural heritage especially this yak *cham*.

So as to inculcate above responsibilities and make the profession eye-catching and attractive, community should come up with a mechanism to provide incentives for the performers. The incentives have to be provided at least during the practicing period as well as on the festival days. So that mask dancers can have proper and systematic flow of episodes and steps to follow rather than spoiling the show with frequent interruptions by *Cham nyer* to *champas*, which is the current practice.

The current yak *cham* equipments including masks except the new yak belong to a private individual. Therefore, as it is a private property, public has no right and authority to pressurise the yak *cham* owner for yak *cham* performance if he is reluctant, because he and his team were not compensated. This is the crux of the problem leading to disappearance of yak *cham*, little by little. Therefore, make the yak *cham* community's heritage by procuring set of masks and other equipments from public fund. Besides, community has to procure sets of costumes for all the performers, so that this will maintain the originality of dress code. Mask dancers can wear *Pi-shub* and *Pu-lham* rather than those modern apparels.

Another observation is on the number of mask dancers. Although it is managed by five or six dancers, it is important to have few more to run the show in case if someone is drunk. Moreover, given the large number of episodes and having to dress up in different costumes for different episodes, it is important to entertain few more dancers. This would not only help to perform all the episodes in one day but would ease pressure on the meagre dancers while practicing the steps. For

instance, let a separate dancers can dance *Aei Meme cham* and rest dancers take a respite rather than involving same person for so many dances blemishing the charm and flow of the yak *cham*.

With these things in place and more importantly observing alcoholic free-day by dancers on the festival day would not only entertain the gods, public, and deities, but people would gain utmost satisfaction from the annual festival for leaving their important works behind. Moreover, a pride and dignity in the hearts of our young generation would regain and regenerate. Consequently, community might see more and enthusiastic youngsters participating in the cultural event not as mere audiences but as artists. But as for now, until and unless there are some improvements, the yak *cham* is nothing more than a clown dance and a mere eyesore show without proper dress code and episodes. Therefore, in order to regain to its original status and to see the natural systematic and systemic flow of the yak *cham*, it is duty of every citizen of the community, heritage lovers, devoted practitioners, and more importantly it is in the hands of local leaders to safeguard this priceless heritage of yak *cham*.

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# **Folk Dance as Ethnic Identity: A View from India**

*Sudha Gopalakrishnan*

## **Abstract**

*Dance is a creative and aesthetic cultural expression that evolves from within its society and reflects its aspirations. A folk dance is one of the earliest forms of art which represents the collective energy of a community. These expressions crystalize through times and are carried forward by each succeeding generation. Over time, they become markers of the cultural identity of these communities. In any analysis of the folk dances, a question that invariably arises is whether modern configurations of the community should be identified as „folk“. Delving on these issues, this paper presents an analysis of Poorakkali, a traditional dance ritual performance from Kerala. It argues that in the process of a makeover of the folk dances – from a community-based context to a cosmopolitan setting – they tend to lose their intrinsic character of spontaneity, rootedness in spirituality and their own cosmology.*

The dance and drama traditions that have survived from the past are representatives of a collective tradition, and a close look at these forms in their own context would throw light on the different processes at work to make its society and culture. Dance is a creative and aesthetic activity that evolves from within its society with demands and standards expected from it by society, and with different elements being prominent at different points of space and time. Dance and drama have vital connections to other areas of human activity including play, work and other daily functions, celebrations and festivals, rites and ceremonies, prayer and worship, and so on. Dance and

drama represent life as it is lived in this world, but in their presentation, they go through a process of aesthetic transformation from the ordinary to the universal level of perception and activity. In fact, they cannot be understood fully without the recognition of the broader aesthetic-social-metaphysical tradition of communities and their life patterns.

What we term folk dance is perhaps an expression of the collective energy of a community, which gets expressed as movements, often spontaneous and joyous. These expressions become crystallized across different times and are carried forward by succeeding generations. Over time, they become markers of identity and self-expression in these communities. This is what we now loosely term as folk dance, as perhaps distinct from classical dances, which are more formal and codified and evolved in specific ways and styles across time and space. The terminology is wrought with fuzziness and is used in different contexts in different ways, mainly because what is represented does not follow a singular definition or pattern of expression. However, on a closer analysis we can see that folk dances emerge from the stock of a collective imagination and expression, and have firm roots in the region and community from which they emerge.

If we accept the premise that folk essentially refers to a cohesive community with shared values, we need to extend the definition of folk dances, as we commonly understand them. Do we for example, include contemporary expressions of dance or modern configurations of community dances also as folk? At yet another level, if we see folk dance as expressions of rural/ethnic/tribal/indigenous communities, how do we account for their de-contextualization through carnivalizing them and making them as spectacles during say, tourism shows, state-

sponsored events and pageants? In the process of this make-over from a community context to the cosmopolitan setting of a proscenium stage with the clear divide between performers and audiences, folk dances lose their intrinsic character of spontaneity, rootedness in spirituality and their own cosmology, ritual and social mooring, and become codified, spectacular performances. What is folk about them then?

Apart from de-contextualization, another related question is that of stereotyping, of homogenization through the over-riding tendencies of globalization. The argument is that with the onslaught of powerful media tools and communication as never before, there is a risk of dilution and standardization of cultural identities but here we must perhaps also remember that culture is also fostered through interaction and cross-fertilization.

Instead of finding answers to these questions, would like to turn to my own country to look at the diversity of dances albeit in a sweeping manner, for it is impossible to achieve anything more in a brief presentation.

India is the repository of an astounding wealth of intangible heritage. Indian Civilization reflects the intermingling of diverse, yet rich cultural streams through a process of assimilation that has today given it its special pluralistic character. With more than 5000 communities, multiple faith systems, languages, dialects and diverse life processes, India is a seamless tapestry of ethnic and cultural diversity. There are countless expressions of intangible heritage expressed in its philosophic insights, mythology, knowledge systems, folklore, worship patterns, festivals, fairs and artistic expressions. Indian arts span various traditions across time and space, which nurture and overlap each other, making meaning only when they are understood as part of a comprehensive order of life. In its

artistic tradition including architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance and drama, each expression and form has a distinct regional and cultural identity. The expressions of India's heritage take a multiplicity of forms like fairs and festivals, worship and ritual, as well as games, play, arts and crafts.

In India, down the centuries, there have been multiple streams of dance that existed in harmony with each other. The folk dances of India span pastoral, agricultural and tribal communities across the vast span. From early times, dance was considered integral to the well-being of the community. The phenomenon of dance is seen to serve several functions in a society. In tribal societies, there is an intrinsic connection between dance and life. In the past, dance was distinguished from the day-to-day activities such as food gathering and harvesting, cooking and eating, worshipping god and making love. For them, dancing was part of their cosmology and eco-system; it was an act of celebration and spontaneous self-expression. In communities close to nature, all members of the community, irrespective of age and sex participated in dance and it was considered part of their lives. They also imitated the movements of animals and birds and other natural phenomena. Almost all communities have their own corpus and ways of expression of dance, which are often linked to their names and communities.

A popular dance among many tribes and communities of India is a circular dance. Depending on the community and region it also has different steps and formations and is performed as a collective activity and also as an entertainment. The dance performed by both the male and female members of the community, has vigorous steps and movements, which continue through the night. Standing in front of a lighted lamp

with folded hands, one of the participants sings and the others take specific steps. With the steps, the body bends to the left, right or to the front and sometimes they place the hands on each other's waist, leap forward or take vigorous steps in keeping with the rhythm. There are several dances performed by different communities and groups which use the same format with variations according to their own ceremonies and customs. The dance of the Gaddis in Himachal, the Bihu dance of Assam, or Kaikottikkali of Kerala may be cited as examples. The Cherurmars dance with sticks and the Kuravas also have Kambadikkali (stick dance) which employ its own *adavus* (dance steps), rhythms and songs. The dance of the Pulaya community has several *kalperumattams* (dance steps) and their most important instrument is 'thudi'. The Panivars of Wynad region in Southern India also have their own variety of dance with 'thuditalu' (striking of thudi, a special variety of drum) and kuzhal (a variety of pipe). The participants dance intermittently shouting "... y" to the beating of the drum, bending, kneeling and twisting their bodies and raising their heels and keeping up a vigorous pace. The womenfolk of Paniya community have their own dance, again in a circular formation, but with softer movements and the swaying of the body. The Kinnamkali (plate dance) of Tiyyas and Tattinmelkkali (dance on the board) of Kammalas requires unusual skill and practice. The women of Malavetan community perform Mudivattam (Hair dance) by untying their hair and weaving interesting patterns with it. Musical instruments such as drums, pipes and cymbals, as well as with vocal music accompany many of these dances.

There is a strong bonding and community base for dance in agrarian societies, for example, dances relating to work in the fields, rejoicing in a good harvest, women's dances celebrating

festivities connected with marriage, sharing the joy of child birth, the dance of young people anticipating and rejoicing in marriage and martial dances. Here dance expresses a range of feelings, which provides and communicates a sort of pleasurable excitement and commitment to shared values. It has a part in ceremonies like weddings, special occasions like birth, festivals and entertainment. In these communities, dance is a participatory act involving all members, and cutting across the barriers of age and sex. Here dance serves to evoke a feeling of camaraderie, generate pleasure, to reinforce shared perceptions and values and to reaffirm social bonds. Kaikottikkali and Garba performed by the Hindu communities, Oppana by the Muslims and Margamkali by the Christians share this feature.

In India, performances of dance and drama are also sometimes a medium to express protest and resistance to the established systems of power and dominance by ridiculing, admonishing and challenging the existing order. This includes open protests, ritual fights and rivalries, deliberate inversions, recasting of dominant narratives through subverted tellings, incorporating comic imitations in ‘serious’ drama, and so on. In some cases, the ‘allowance’ for the existence of these ‘ritualistic protests’ was a need for the society to exercise its hegemonic control, because by promoting these forms of dissent through a calculated sanction, these forces are co-opted and diluted. The first manifestation of power is the control and mastery of one’s own body and this realisation is perhaps the reason for the origin and popularity of the martial arts of Kalaripayattu in the south and Thangta in the northeastern side of India, which emphasise the psycho-physical control over oneself leading to the mastery of the adversary. These gymnastic practices with their rigorous system of body control through massage, the complicated physical exercises, plunging and thrusting

movements and its aesthetics of valour have deeply affected the dance patterns of India, infusing them with a unique vigour, vitality and virility. As a systematic method of individual warfare and as a perfect system of body training and culture through exercises and massage, and as an agent for achieving control of the breath and eventually the transcendence of the mind, Kalaripayattu is a valuable contribution to the martial tradition of the world. The impact of martial practice on performing arts is extensive and deep, with many dances, irrespective of region or style, drawing on its rich resources for modulating their performance technique. The martial dances that are vital to the tradition and culture of India, range from Kalaripayattu, Thangta or Chhau from Orissa range from the ritual striking, the martial exercises of Velakali to the battle scenes of Kathakali and other so-called classical forms.

A parallel stream of dance exists in India, which is linked to worship and ritual and also to the celebrations connected with the seasonal cycles in agrarian communities. These performances take several forms and create multi-layered meanings, by being intimately connected with the worship of the forces of nature, ancestors, spirits of death and disease, protector and guardian deities, the worship of mother goddess as a manifestation of the earth-mother and as a fertility symbol and also to a panoply of other gods and goddesses. These dances, held as ritual offerings in fixed time duration within a community, are based on the collective tradition of a shared belief system and are meant to open channels of communication between the humans and the gods, and symbolically they represent the crumbling of the old order, bringing in purification and rejuvenation to the community. Here mostly there is a division between the actor and the spectator, with one member or a group of members from the community representing the

deity, either as a medium of god, a representative or sometimes as the embodiment of the god himself.

There are performance traditions like Natasankirtana and Lai Harouba from Manipur, the lila-s, Ramlila and Raslila which express the power of community bonding to create an atmosphere of devotional fervour. Ramlila is a specific tradition of performance, based on the text of Tulsidas's *Ramacharitmanas*, Ramlila is performed all over the northern part of India, in every locality, village and town during the festival season according to the ritual calendar. While most Ramlilas narrate the incidents of the Ramayana in a series of performances lasting on an average ten to twelve days, there are some which are longer such as the one performed at Ramnagar lasting for thirty-one days. In the performance of Teyyam, the actor invokes the cosmic power believed to be inherent in the deity, transfers it to his own self through imaginative identification with the spirit of the deity and uses this power to benefit the collective self of the community. Drawing upon the rich resources from Indian mythology and recasting them through the creativity of popular imagination, these art forms reveal the cohesive character of the community and their immediate concerns with their environment, mythology and daily life. There are several performances across India like Teyyam, Patayani, Kaliyuttu, Garudan Thookkam, Tiyyattu which traverse the realms of both religion and art.

### **Poorakkali: the ritual performance combining ritual, dance and intellectual debate**

Poorakkali is a ritual performance from Kerala, the southwest of India. It is a traditional dance ritual performed by men during the nine day Pooram festival in temples devoted to the Goddess across Northern Kerala. The Pooram festival begins with the

Karthika asterism and concludes with the pooram asterism of the month of Meenam according to the Kerala calendar.

The dance itself is performed by a troop of young men decked in lion costumes and is performed around a huge multi-tiered lit lamp also known as a *nilavilukku*, and involves some pretty masculine movements and acrobatic martial art steps. There are no singers or musicians accompanying the dance and the dancers themselves keep rhythm by singing and clapping and synchronised foot thumping movements. The dancers usually observe a month of abstinence and undergo strenuous practice before the performance. Most of the songs sung are hymns from The Ramayana or The Bhagavata. Performed as a week-long activity; it is a spring festival celebrating the spirit of love through fertility cults, an expression of mirth through dance and battle of wits through a test. Poorakkali has a three-tier structure. The first part, *Kamane Veykal*, is a journey from ritual to romance: the ritual is dedicated to Kama, the god of love. The mythological base of the festival is linked to the story of the burning of Kama by Siva's wrath and Rati's attempts to revive her late husband. Symbolically, it relates to the awakening of the fire of love, the sustenance of the world, in the human heart and passing it on to the next generation through the power of ritual. Girls barely into puberty perform this ritual. At the conclusion of the ritual on the seventh day, Kama is released, with the request to come back early next year. One of the songs goes like this:

If you are going, start early, at the proper time, O  
Kama!

When you come back, reach early, at the proper time,  
O Kama!

Come back in time for the next festival, O Kama!

The second part, Poorakkali, consisting of songs and dances, is an expression of joy at the reincarnation of Kama. Though originally performed by women as part of the worship of Kama, men took to it, making it more vigorous and spirited. The dances have martial steps, complicated choreographic patterns and varying tempos. The performers, from six years to seventy are villagers belonging to the local communities. The songs invoke deities such as Ganapati, Saraswati, and Krishna, followed by Navavandana and obeisance to the elemental forces. The most important is the series of dances called *Pooramala* performed in 18 *nirams* (modes of dancing). Perhaps, the intricacy of the dance may have been integrated into the structure of Poorakkali at different points of time by different people.

*Maruttukali*, literally, ‘contest-play’, constitutes the third part of the festival. It is a debate on academic issues between representatives of two *karas* (localised regions of the same village), held inside the temple complex, mediated by a third person and held in the presence of the villagers. For each group, there is a leader, called Panicker, a title bestowed by the community for his erudition and debating skill. At the start of the contest, a participant asks complicated questions on varied topics to the contestant. The other person, who answers, elaborates his point by citing textual sources to convince the opposite party. The opponent can try to disprove the ideas and this leads to a powerful battle of wits. The entire community participates in cheering the participants. The debate touches on various topics such as philosophy, logic, grammar, dramaturgy and the arts. Both parties cite several theories (*sastras*), and the discourses are interspersed with Poorakkali dances and dramatic episodes. Though there is a general structure pertaining to the theme and topic of the discussion, the range of probing is

unlimited, and depends totally on the erudition and presence of mind of the contestant. At the end of the contest, one person is declared by the temple to have done better and the region which he represents has won the game. This marks the culmination of the festival and with a last ritual bath, the festival closes for the year. Preparation for the contest by enriching and expanding the knowledge base continues round the year, with each Panicker having his own corpus of texts and manuscripts in his personal collection. While Poorakkali exists in many temples, Maruttukali is limited to very few temples today.

What distinguishes Poorakkali from other similar performances is that it integrates highly erudite discussions on philosophy and the arts engaged in by the so-called subaltern classes over generations. It combines devotional, visual and intellectual activity in the form of a performing tradition by the socially disadvantaged Tiyya, Asari, Maniyani, and Salia communities. The marginalisation of these communities is the reason why it remains largely unknown. The debate based on classical Sanskrit sources belongs to an oral tradition and the practitioners hone their skills and knowledge through the year to face this intellectual contest.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Poorakkali has to be viewed not merely from the perspective of ritual and dance but in its social and historical context. Here, the participants belong to the rural communities; some not even having the advantage of a systematic curricular study, but have acquired knowledge of classical sources through an oral tradition of learning. An exposure to Poorakkali would help understand not only this unique form of cultural expression but subvert certain prevailing notions on the “ownership” of scholastic traditions. It is perhaps yet another form of establishing one’s own identity through resistance to established norms and cultural domination by the privileged classes of society through a conscious appropriation

of the tools of learning. Learning itself is not the exclusive property of the elite classes alone, but is part of a common inheritance, which, can be accessed on a wide scale. Religion, art and learning are processes of drawing common meanings and sharing common purposes within a community, but are also means by which society establishes its own identity, endorses common values and controls its environment.

# The Representation of Cosmic and Mortal Realms in Jain Art

*Indubala Nahakpam and Vismay H.Raval*

## Abstract

*The Jain Cosmology is the description of the shape and functioning of the physical and metaphysical Universe (loka) and its constituents such as living matter, space and time etc. According to Jainism, this includes the canonical Jain texts, commentaries and the writing of the Jain-philosopher monks. The Jain cosmology considers the loka or universe as an uncreated entity existing since infinity, having neither beginning nor end with concentric rings of islands and oceans. The Jain texts describe the shape of the universe is similar to a man standing with legs apart and arm resting on his waist. The universe according to Jainism is broad at the top, narrow at the middle and once again broad at the bottom.*

The oldest continuous monastic tradition in India is Jainism, the path of the Jinas, or victors. This tradition is traced to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (lit. ‘the Great Hero’ ca. 599-527 BCE), the twenty-fourth and last of the *tīrthankaras* (Sanskrit for ford makers). According to legend, Mahāvīra was born to a ruling family in the town of Vaishālī, located in the modern state of Bihar. At the age of thirty, he renounced his wealthy life and devoted himself to fasting and self-mortification in order to purify his consciousness and discover the meaning of existence. He never again dwelt in a house, owned property, or wore clothing of any sort.

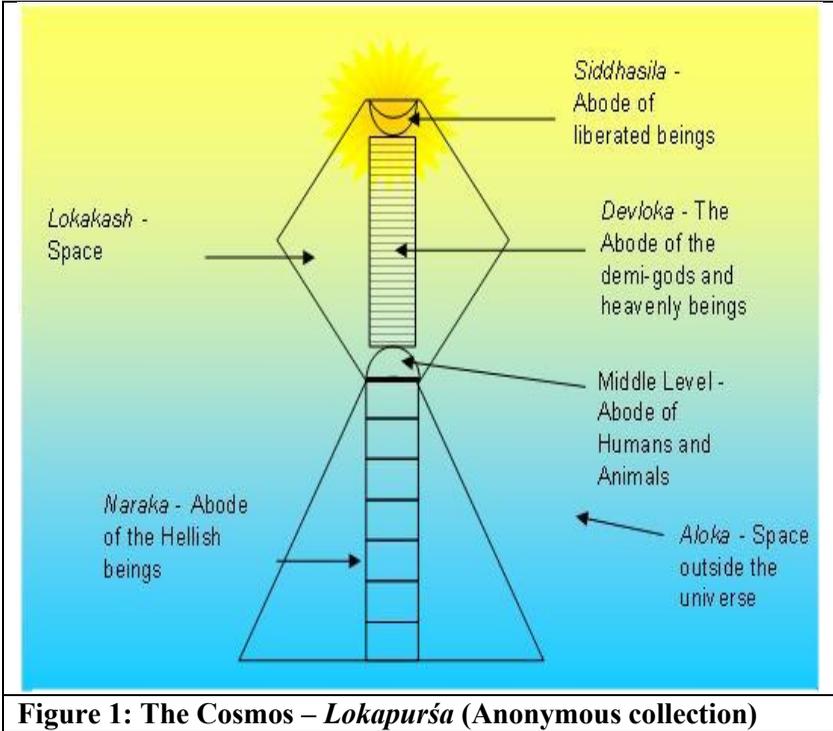
Following the example of the teacher Parśvanātha (ninth century BCE), he attained enlightenment and spent the rest of

his life meditating and teaching a dedicated group of disciples who formed a monastic order following rules he laid down. The ancient belief system of Jainism rests on a concrete understanding of the working of karma, its effects on the living soul (*jīva*), and the conditions for extinguishing action and the soul's release. According to the Jain view, the soul is a living substance that combines with various kinds of nonliving matter and through action accumulates particles of matter that adhere to it and determine its fate. Most of the matter perceptible to human senses, including all animals and plants, is attached in various degrees to living souls and is in this sense alive. Any action has consequences that necessarily follow the embodied soul, but the worst accumulations of matter come from violence against other living beings. The ultimate Jain discipline, therefore, rests on complete inactivity and absolute nonviolence (*ahimsā*) against any living beings. Some Jain monks and nuns wear face masks to avoid accidental inhaling small organisms, and all practicing believer try to remain vegetarians. Extreme renunciation, including the refusal of all food, lies at the heart of a discipline that purges the mind and body of all desires and actions and, in the process, burns off the consequences of actions performed in the past. In this sense, Jain renunciants may recognize or revere deities, but they do not view the Vedas as sacred texts and instead concentrate on the atheistic, individual quest for purification and removal of karma. The final goal is the extinguishing of self, a 'blowing out' (*nirvāna*) of the individual self.

### **The Jain Cosmology:**

The Jaina cosmology elaborated by Jain scholars include in their lists of fundamental principles, the soul which is life (*jīva*) as

well as among other space (*ākāśa*), both cosmic and ultra-cosmic. (see **Fig. 1**)



**Figure 1: The Cosmos – Lokapurṣa (Anonymous collection)**

These principles are translated more or less conveniently into pictures. The cosmological works which begins by mentioning the great units which make possible the measuring of being lives and the size of the different parts of the world etc. or when they speak of the cycles of the six descending eras, becoming progressively worse followed by six ascending eras, becoming progressively better by which the passage of time is marked out. It was the end of the third descending era that the universal monarch who was destined to become the first *tīrthankara* was born.

The Jain philosophy is based upon eternal universal truths. The truth lapse among humanity and then re-appear through the teachings of enlightened humans those who have reached *mokṣa* or total knowledge. According to Jainism the universe consists of infinite amount of *jīvā* (life force or souls) and the design resembles a man standing with his arms bent while resting his hands on his waist. The narrow waists part comprises various *kṣētras* for vicharan (*roaming*) for humans, animals and plants. The *bharat kṣetra* of *jambūdvīp* has the *deva loka* (heavens) are the symbolic chest of creation where all *devas* (gods) resides. Similarly, beneath the waist are the *naraka loka* (hell). There are seven *narka loka* each for a varying degree suffering a *jīvā* has to go through to face the consequences of its *paapkarmas*. From the first to the seventh *narka* the degree of suffering increases and light reaching it decreases (with no light in the seventh *narka*)

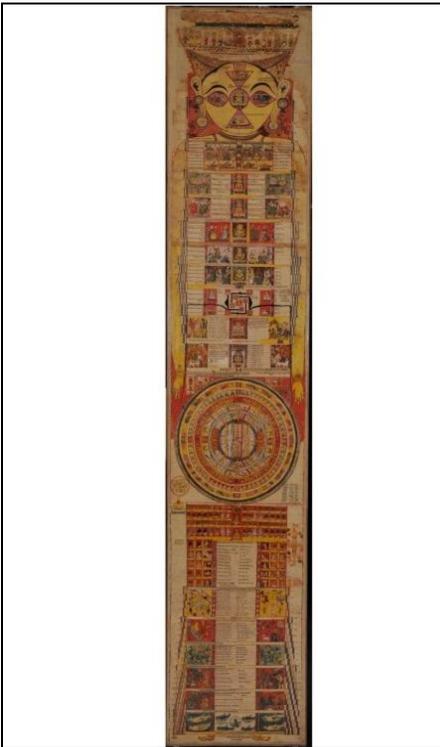
The *siddha kṣetra* or *mokṣa* is situated at the symbolic forehead of the creations where all the *jīvās* having attained nirvana reside in a state of peace and eternal happiness. Outside the symbolic figure of this creation nothing but *aloka* or *ākāśa* (sky) exists. The Jain evolutionary theory on the grading of the physical bodies contains soul according to the degree of sensory perception. All souls are equal but are bound by varying amounts of *aśravas* (karmic particles) which is reflected in the type of the body they inhabit.

The Cosmology *patas* which symbolically interprets the Jaina concept of Cosmology such as:

- i. *Lok Puruṣa Pata* (the cosmic man personifying the concept of the universe and the three worlds lokas)

- ii. *Jambū dvīpa Pata* (the map of the rose apple tree continent)
- iii. *Adhāī dvīpa Pata* (map of 2 islands continents)

With reference to the *loka*, three worlds are depicted. (see **Fig. 1**)



**Figure 2: Lokpuruṣa, Painted on cloth, Gujarat, V.S. 1858=1801 A.D. (photo courtesy L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad)**

The upper world (*urdhva loka* or *deva loka*) forms the upper part of the world which is celestial and is divided into different abodes and are the realms of the heavenly beings (*demi-gods*) who are non-liberated souls.

The *Madhya loka* or the middle world is horizontal and always shown is full face-like a disk or plate or an immense cymbal or denoted by the central parts of the man's abdomen where human beings live. *Madhya loka* consists of many continent and islands surrounded by oceans, first eight whose names are:

<b>Continent/ Island</b>	<b>Ocean</b>
<i>Jambūdvīpa</i>	<i>Lavanoda</i> (Salt Ocean)
<i>Ghatki khand</i>	<i>Kaloda</i> (Black Sea)
<i>Puskarvardvīpa</i>	<i>Puskaroda</i> (Lotus Ocean)
<i>Varunvardvīpa</i>	<i>Varunoda</i> (Varun Ocean)
<i>Kshirvardvīpa</i>	<i>Kshiroda</i> (Milk Ocean)
<i>Ghrutvardvīpa</i>	<i>Ghrutoda</i> (Butter-milk Ocean)
<i>Ikshuwardvīpa</i>	<i>Iksuvaroda</i> (Sugar Ocean)
<i>Nandishwardvīpa</i>	<i>Nandishwaroda</i> ( - )

The *adha loka* is the lower world, is infernal (*hell*) and has the shape of palanquin or a stack of umbrellas one inside the other. It is divided into several parallel layers of the earth depicted in different hues. The central white bands between the legs of the figures have multiple writings in different hues and numerals giving the distances in *yojans* while the legs or the lower portion is divided horizontally into seven layers in which hell scenes are painted.

### ***Loka-puruśa:***

The *loka-puruśa* (see **Fig. 2**) is frequently illustrated with a total height of fourteen *rajjus*. At his waist, which is pinched in is found the middle world, the smallest of the three but the most important in many respects for it is there where five-sensed animals and human beings live, and it is there where *tīrthankaras* are born. It is therefore the only place where release can be obtained. It is among the mountains of the middle world that the gods of light ( *jyotiśa*) move and dwell.

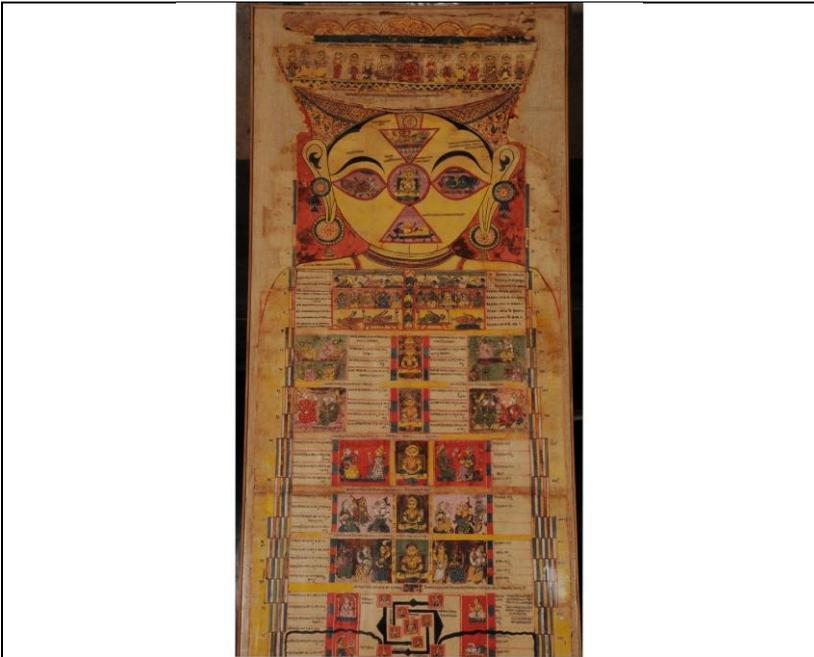
The largest in size is the lower world where damned beings live and also certain types of divinity who are strongly opposed to good order. The middle world, whose thickness is negligible, the upper world is also seven *rajjus* high. It is at its summit on the border between the world and the non-world (*adha loka*) that the perfect ones (*siddhas*) are located. Their inhabitant is often represented by an open umbrella (which sideways-on looks like the moon's crescent) on the forehead of the *loka puruṣa*.

The regions are divided into horizontal levels (*prastṛta*) more numerous in the top region than in the bottom one. They surround a central hell of enormous dimensions, from which many other hells radiate, shaped like prisms, cubes, spheres and cauldrons, sometime sin regular lines or scattered at random. These are the dwellings of the infernal beings whose conditions are all the more miserable. They suffer innumerable evils burning heat, intense cold, nauseous smells, insatiable hunger, blows, lacerations, insults and ill treatment from the *asuras*. Besides the malignity of their divine jailers, they endured the hatred of their birth-companions, for all these unfortunate creatures inflict cruel and unavoidable tortures upon one another.

Their present miserly expiates their former crimes. Only creatures that are free, whether human or animal, excluding those internal and celestial beings that are not accountable for their actions, are destined to go to their lower world (*adha loka*) where they will obtain rebirth as animals or quasi-human beings.

On the other side of the middle world, the realm extends the third categories of divinities, that of the 'gods of light' (*jyotikas*). The fourth category, the *vaimānikas* normally live in the paradise or twelve levels (*kalpas*) of the upper world which is symbolizes by an animal, antelope, buffalo, boar, lion, goat,

leopard, horse, elephant, snake, rhinoceros, bull and a type of antelope. Occasionally its member passes from one part of the world to another. Except for the very highest categories of *devas* the divine states are organized on the same lines as earthy kingdoms and princely courts, with their rulers (*indras*), surrounded by counselors, guards, courtesans, queens and followers, etc. the *vaimānikas* generally represented as couples are installed in the twelve lower paradise, while the higher group which generally abstract symbols are reserved are above the *kalpas* (*kalpātīta*) at the height of the neck and face of the cosmic man, whose fore-head is marked with the umbrella of the *siddhas* (see **Fig. 3**).



**Figure 3: Lokpurusa (*siddhas*) Painted on cloth, Gujarat, V.S 1858=1801 A.D(photo courtesy L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad)**

All in all the representation of the world which the Jainas have elaborated permits them to show in a condensed way, which would have a greater impact upon the mind of a believer, the myriads of densities through which one will transmigrate in the course of innumerable *aeons* (indefinite period). The regions which the soul which is capable of gaining released is all situated in the middle world. Although much smaller in size than the lower and upper worlds. It is arranged around the ‘continent of the rose-apple tree’ (*jambūdvīpa*), surrounded by precious, highly-wrought walls and a lotus terrace. Surrounding this disk, whose diameter is 100,000 *yojans*, are set out horizontally to the farthest sea, which is impossible to reach, an incalculable series of concentric rings, of alternate oceans (*samudras*) and islands or continents (*dvīpas*).

**The World of Men (*manuṣya loka*) and the ‘two and a half continents’ (*Adhāī dvīpa*)**



**Figure 4: Adhi dvipa pata, Painted on cloth, Gujarat, Early 16<sup>th</sup> century CE (photo courtesy L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad)**

The World of Men (*manuṣya loka*) occupies ‘two and a half continents’ (*Adhāi dvīpa*) (see **Fig. 4**).

The middle world (*madhya loka*) is the only one of the three worlds where it is possible for men to be born or reside. It stretches horizontally from the centre to the eastern and the western ends of *lokakasa*. The luminous gods (*jyotiṣka*) – the sun and moon are always moving around it, and by their movements human measure the time, calculate periods and develop their lifestyles. *Jambūdvīpa* is at the centre of *madhya loka*. It is the island of roseapple tree contains a description of *jambūdvīpa* and life biographies of *Rsabha* and King *Bharata*.

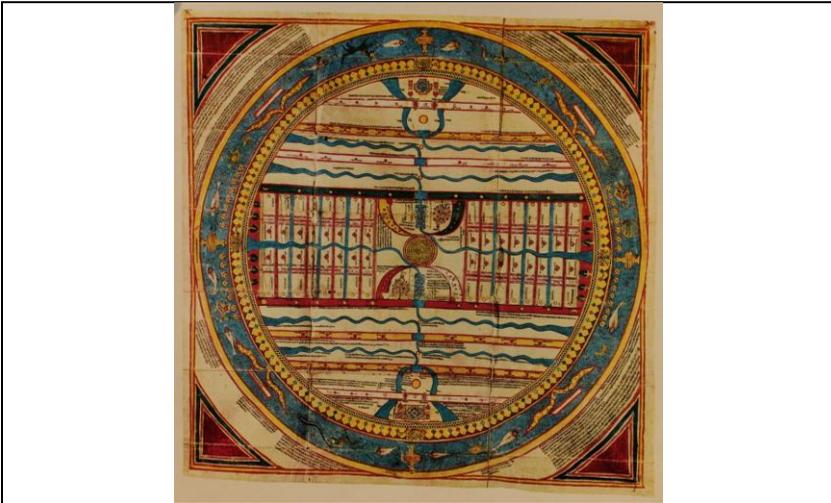
*Madhya loka* consists of many current islands surrounded by Oceans, lakes and fishes –*lavaasamundra*, the continent (*dvīpa*) of *dhātakīkhanda* surrounded by the ‘black-water ocean’ (*kālodadhi*) and the inner half of the third continent, called *puskarā-dvīpa* (‘lotus-island’), which lies on the inner side of the circular mountain barrier called *manusottara* (‘beyond humankind’) to signify that it serves as a limit to the normal human domain.

### **Jambūdvīpa:**

*Jambūdvīpa* is painted with long chains of mountains running from east to west which divide it into seven countries, great rivers flow from peaks to the oceans and the division of the provinces can be seen in the large middle zone of *videha*, to the east and west of *mount merū*, whose peak dominates *uttarakuru* in the north, and *devakuru* in the south with their trees, *jambuvrksa* and *śālmālī*. (see **Fig. 5**)

The *himavat* mountains in the south and usually their northern counterparts also, extended into the *lavana* ocean where

there are always at least two of the vast receptacles (*pātālas*) which cause the tides. The islands attributed to the moons and the suns are usually depicted. The range of the ‘arrow-like’ (*isvakara*) mountains runs from north to south as straight as an arrow in flight, and separates from two halves, eastern and western, first the continent of *dhātakīkhānda* and then the half of *puśkarā*. Each of these four halves is a precise replica of *jambūdvīpa*. All four reproduce, with certain changes essential to their semi-annular shape, all features of the ‘land of the rose-apple tree’.



**Figure 5: *Jambudvīpa*, Painted on paper, Gujarat, 16<sup>th</sup> century CE. (Anonymous Collection)**

The disk of *jambūdvīpa* is set within its rampart of diamonds which is surrounded by a fence of jewels crowned by a high garland of lotuses made from gems. It is washed by the *lavanasamundra* where the tides which regulate its months rise, where the islands of its moon and sun are situated and into

which some of the mountains project. At the four cardinal points four ‘\_triumphal’ gates open on to the ocean. Through the east and west of these, named *vijaya* and *vijayanta*, project the mouths of the two principal rivers of the middle land.

The six main mountain ranges cross the continent from east to west and thus divide it from north to south into seven lands. The three to the north of the central area occupied by *mahāvideha* correspond symmetrically with the three to the south. At the very south is the land of *bharata* (in which will be recognized the name of India), *airāvata* is an exact replica of this at the north. From *bharata* to *mahāvideha*, and similarly on to *airāvata* the sizes of the countries and of the mountain chains between them increase by geometrical progression, by a factor of two. So, *videha* is 64 times larger than the land of *bharata*. The map shows especially the long mountain ranges by which the intermediate countries are bounded. Their peaks are crowned with sanctuaries. Rising from huge lakes in the mountain heights, long rivers flow down to where a peak impedes their course and turns them towards the east and the west, until they finally flow into the *lavanamundra*.

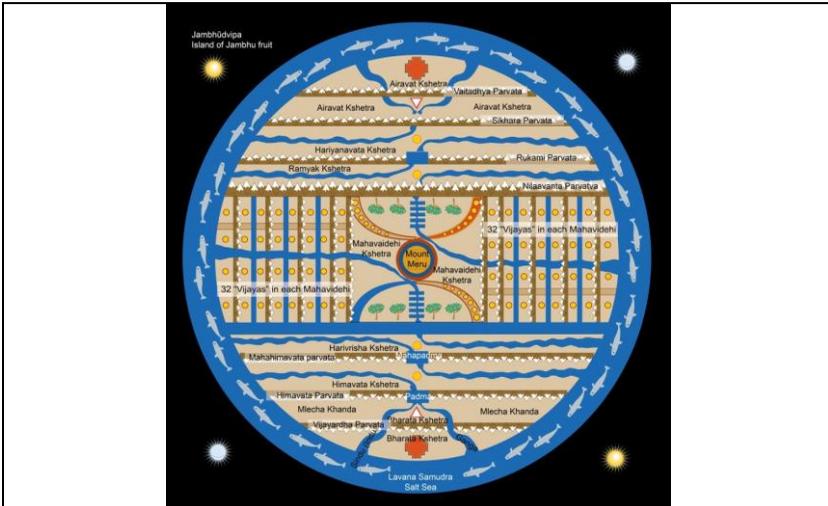
The geography of *bharata* (and *airāvata*) follows the same pattern, bounded at the north by the *himavat* mountains which project into the sea the double promontories of the *damstras*, each carrying seven red spots which represents the *antaradvipas*, *bharata* is cut again from east to west by the range of the *vaitadhya* mountains, bristling with nine peaks. From the central lake of the *himavat* mountains the river Sindhus flows towards the south-west and the river Ganga towards the south-east. Their stream flow on either side of *mount abhagiri* – the dwelling place of the first prophet-and then penetrates the *vaitadhya* mountains. Remerging they spread

out in the plains where there are capital cities like Ayodhya, before emptying themselves by means of vast mouths, into the salt sea.

*Mahāvideha* is even more complex, in the centre is the *mount merū*, to which are joined, to the north and south, the two pairs of ranges of the ‘elephant-tusk’ mountains, whose are enclosed the two *kurus*, *devakuru* (where the *śālmālī* tree is found) to the south, and *uttarakura* (where the *jambū* tree grows) to the north situated between the *nīla* mountains in the north and the two acres of the *vaśkāra* mountains, which join together in the south. At the foot of the *nīla* mountains are the ‘twin’ mountains. The inhabitants of this region who are born in the form of couples can also be seen. They are subject to desire which the *kalpavrksas* (*wish granting tree*) that help to satisfy. It is stated that *devakuru* is the mirror image of *uttarakuru*. Growing in the north-eastern quarter of *uttarakuru*, spreading its main branches out towards the zenith and cardinal points, the *jambū* tree of the continent of *jambūdvīpa*, contains the nest of the guardian bird the *anadhrta*. The map shows the open spaces at the foot of *Mount Merū*, (see **Fig. 6**) towards the east and west, where the forests grow to which correspond the woods which lie on the shores of the ocean and its roots are half a *yojna* deep. The four branches, northern, eastern, southern and western bear thrones and divine places, while the branches stretches up to the sky bears a sanctuary of the Jinas.

Between the central plain and the coastal woods the eastern and western regions of *mahāvideha* are cut into two halves, north and south by the two great rivers *sītā* and *sītodā*. They flow across to the woods which spread out in the neighbourhood of their mouths. Upstream the course of the rivers is schematized which indicates that they flow down from the *naisadha* and *nīla*

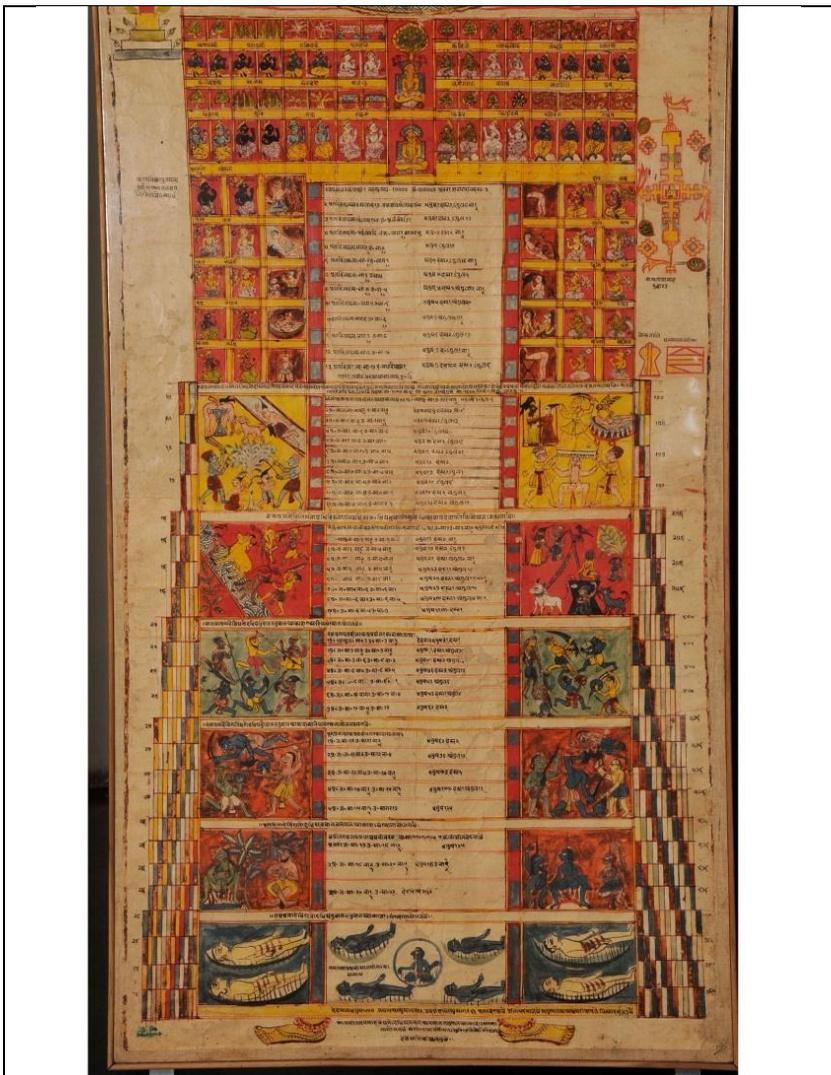
mountains, then cross the ‘elephant-tusk’ (*vaksāra*) mountains. These in their turn are each divided into eight empires or provinces by three rivers alternating with four mountain barriers running from north to south.



**Figure 6: Jambu dvipa, Painted on paper, Gujarat, 17<sup>th</sup> century CE. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Jain cosmology)**

### The lower world (hell):

The seven lands (*prthvī*) in the lower part of the *loka* are called *naraka* (hell) (see Fig. 5) with each lower land having a wider base than the one above. The upper four hells are increasingly hot hells; while the three are increasingly cold *narakas* are abodes of infernal beings, born there because of their sinful acts of virulent aggression and excessive possessiveness. The *narakas* are distinguished by different colours that also reflect the grades of passions (*leśyā*) of those who dwell there. Both human and five-sensed animals may be born in the *narakas*.



**Figure 5: Lokpurusa (*naraka loka*) Painted on cloth, Gujarat, V.S. 1858=1801 A.D. (photo courtesy L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad)**

### **Devas and their abodes:**

With its rather special structure, the highest stage of the lower world, called 'hell of jewels' (*ratnaprabhā*), harbours in its centers, towards the north and south, the lowest category of divinities (*devas*). The first category consists of 'the occupiers of dwelling or lodgings' (*bhavanavasins*). These are all brilliant and charming young persons, gracious, and sportive, each with gems, weapons and distinctive insignia. The *asuras* belong to this class. It is believed that some of these *devas* are born as a result of a cruel act of self-mortification in their past life, whether in pursuit of magic powers or other worldly gains. Their power prevails beyond the first hell, over the earthly realms of human and animals. It is said that in this part of the first hell there are islands, oceans, mountains, rivers, lakes, villages, towns, seaports, plants, trees and animals.

The area between the first hell and the earth, and in many areas inhabited by the humans, is the abode of a lower level of God called *vyantara-devas*. Notable among them are the yaksa, who can be benevolent and may receive oblations from the laity as 'protector deities' guarding the Jain shrines.

The third class of Gods, after the mansion gods and the intermediary gods are the luminous gods (*jyotiśka*), who live in the area of middle world, above the plateau of Mount Meru.

The fourth class is called *vaimānika*, empyrean gods who live in the heavens (*svarga*) in the upper division of *lokākāśa*. Their name derives from the word *vimāna*, meaning an aerial vehicle or a palace. This association of the gods with the religion of the Jina renders rebirth in these heavens a meritorious and desirable goal for the Jain laity.

## Conclusion

In Jainism everything that lives has a soul. In their innate capabilities all souls are equal, all souls have the potential to liberate themselves from karma and achieve perfection. The Jain biology recognizes four possible states into which a soul can be born. It further categorizes the bodies that souls can inhabit according to the number of senses. The Jain universe in keeping with the Jain doctrine of multiplicity is beautiful, pacific, benign and predictable. It is a universe that offers ample opportunity for feelings of awe and reverence and aesthetic pleasure but also for contemplation of the transience of life.

## Glossary

<i>adha-loka</i>	is the lower world
<i>adhai-dvīp pata</i>	map of 2 islands continents
<i>aloka</i> or <i>ākāśa</i>	sky
<i>aśravas</i>	karmic particles
<i>devas</i>	gods
<i>deva loka</i>	heavens
<i>jambūdvīp pata</i>	the map of the rose apple tree continent
<i>jīva</i>	life
<i>leśyā</i>	passion, karmic stain
<i>lok puruśa pata</i>	the cosmic man personifying the concept of the universe and the three worlds loka
<i>madhya-loka</i>	the middle world
<i>mokśa</i>	liberation, spiritual deliverance upon death
<i>naraka loka</i>	hell
<i>prastrta</i>	horizontal levels
<i>rajju</i>	rope, measure of distance as defined by medieval Jain cosmographers

<i>tīrthankaras</i>	Sanskrit for ford makers, a human teacher born in the middle world, of whom there have been twenty-four recurring without beginning or endthroughout successive temporal phases
<i>urdhva-loka</i>	the upper world

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# Oral-written Nexus in Bengali *Chharas* over the last Hundred Years: Creating New Paradigm for Children's Literature

*Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai*

## Abstract

*The world of Bengali childrens' chhara (poems, riddles, rhymes) represents an important part of oral tradition of Bengal in India – reflecting the daily life of people, especially rural Bengal – the seat of their creation. The first quarter of twentieth century in Bengal witnessed an important effort of introducing new chharas for children – marking a part of the nationalist movement pertaining to the partition of Bengal in 1905 – in which a significant contribution towards the penning down of new charras was made by Rabindranath Tagore. This is important, as charras were only part of oral traditions, but through Tagore's efforts, they were being created through pen and paper for the first time. The tradition continues till date, with other authors and poets having contributed over the years. This paper is an ode to Tagore on his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary for his contributions towards the intangible heritage of Bengal.*

## I

The kingdom of chharas is not a simple one. There everything can happen quite easily and in the same manner everything cannot happen quite easily as well.  
[Trans.]

- Nityanandobinod Goswami, 'Introduction',  
(Tagore 2002: 1).

Perhaps this best explains the world of Bengali childrens' *chharas*. Where imaginary creatures with two horns called *Hattim a Tim Tim*<sup>9</sup> can dance happily in an open field or a little boy by the pet name of *khokon* can travel across a river in a boat driven by seven crows<sup>10</sup> or even a parrot is fondly referred to by a mother to come and watch her son dance.<sup>11</sup> Bengali *chharas* bear the essence of the masses down the path of history. Created by the very common man, they bear their symbol and emblem

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<sup>9</sup> (Bengali) *Hattim a tim-tim*  
*Tara mathey parey dim*  
*Tader mathai duto singh*

Translation:- *Hattim a tim-tim*  
 They lay eggs in the field  
 They have two horns on their heads  
 They are called *Hattim a tim-tim*.

*Tara Hattim a tim-tim* - a Bengali childrens' popular *chhara* written by Annadashankar Ray.

<sup>10</sup> (Bengali) *Khokon khokon korey maye*  
*Khokon gechhey kader naye*  
*Saat-ta kagey danr baye*  
*Khokon re tui ghorey aye*

Translation:- Mother is looking around for *khokon*  
 He has been on somebody's boat  
 Seven crows row the boat  
 O! dear *khokon*, you come back home.

<sup>11</sup> (Bengali) *Aye re aye tiye*  
*Naye bhora diye*  
*Na niye gelo boal machhe*  
*Ta dekhe dekhe bhondor nachey*  
*Ore Bhondor phire cha*  
*Khokar nachon dekhey ja*

Translation:- Come hither o parrot and watch the boat  
 The boat has been taken away by boal fish (*Wallago attu*)  
 The badger dances watching this  
 O badger look around  
 Watch my darling son dance.

and epitomises the daily life of everyday common man. Explaining this very ethos, Rabindranath Tagore had further elaborated once about the world of Bengali *chharas*:

[Trans.] The repertoire of *chhara* maintains on one hand almost juxtaposed words and meanings and on the other, represents those sentiments of people who walk amidst the crowd down the road, who does not leave a thick trail of their departure behind them- and when these people walk, their footprints along the shores of sands and fields afar, are wiped out time and again. (Tagore 2002: 1)

This further goes to explain the beauty of the unexpectedness that creates the mysticism of Bengali *chharas* and thereby, lie the simplicity of the medium to approach young minds- across ages and down the path of history.

Amidst this world of Bengali *chharas*, lie the innate world of childrens' *chharas*- encased within its own magnetism- to mesmerise both the young and the old. With changing times and down the path of history, the world of childrens' *chharas* has witnessed various modes and channels of communication aiding its spread, e.g. books, pamphlets, journals, brochures, advertisements, radio and television broadcasts of popular childrens' shows, CDs, DVDs and animation films based on characters of Bengali childrens' rhymes – and many others. Though varied in nature, yet, the basic essence of the age-old oral tradition remains the same, to which has been added a plethora of new messages, as *chharas* started to be compiled, written and published in due course of time – starting more than a hundred years back.

A significant change in oral-written nexus and the presentation of data started occurring in the world of Bengali

childrens' *chharas* from about the time of the formative years of the reform movement in Bengal – towards the last quarter of nineteenth century and continuing into the first quarter of twentieth century – often termed as the period of renaissance in Bengal. It is also important to mention that the term has often been under severe criticism from historians- being often compared to the European renaissance of the ninth and the fifteenth centuries. According to them, there were many flaws and failures of the reform movement in Bengal which forbids in naming the movement a renaissance. However, this paper does not focus on the critical appreciation and appraisals of the movement, but rather on a significant aspect of socio-cultural representation- which has often been ignored- the world of Bengali childrens' *chharas*. Various schools of thought speak about the success and failure of the Bengal reform movement, which especially escalated during the time of the *Banga Bhanga Andolan* or the Partition of Bengal Movement of 1905-1911. These studies also specifically mention the different reformatory ideas mushrooming to form a unified identity- which is intrinsically indigenous. Amidst the various disciplines studied, literature occupies a special place of mention and the various influences and contributions of literature as an important tool, contributing towards the freedom movement and reaching out to various sectors of the society, has been also an important area of study for historians and analysts for nearly a century. However, the world of *chharas* has seldom found a special place of mention amidst the vast productions of the last hundred years, especially childrens' *chharas*. There has been stray mention of specific contribution of few authors and poets over a period of time behind the freedom movement of Bengal, but none led to a substantial analysis of data pertaining to the gradual changes that were taking place within the world of Bengali childrens'

*chharas* and thereby, analysing any role of specific authors- all influenced by the rural ethos of Bengal.

This paper focuses on the changing formats of contemporary Bengali childrens' *chharas* over the last hundred years, with a focus on oral-written nexus and also looks into the contribution of Rabindranath Tagore towards the same. This paper is also an ode to Rabindranath Tagore as 2012 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebration of the Nobel laureate, one of the biggest contributors towards the creation of new *chharas* for children that paved a way for further development in years to come in the genre of intangible heritage.

The time preceeding the period of 1905 (till 1911), saw a new genre of continuation of a folk tradition in Bengal – the writing of new *chharas* for children. *Chharas* have always been part of oral tradition, but it was for the first time that it was originating on paper, instead of the mouth. This, on one hand not only helped to identify fresh pastures for the gradual growth and spread of childrens' *chharas*, as reflected through oral-written nexus, but on the other hand, also helped to establish a process that continues even today. Various efforts in the form of articles and research papers have also tried to explore and evaluate the efforts of specific urban and literate cognoscenti, who heavily borrowed from rural Bengal to portray the significance of the roots of Bengal, yet data to analyse the significant influence of the same on Bengali *chharas* or childrens' education remains limited in nature. Thus, age-old prince and princesses, flying horses, white elephants or talking animals- the subject matter of oral traditions and conventional Bengali childrens' *charras*, gradually met their new counterparts in similar creatures and animals as reflected in the \_new-age children' of colonial Bengal. This was a continuous process and

stretched from the politico-social upheaval of the entire period from pre-1905 (when the region was partitioned according to the orders of Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of Bengal), till 1911 (the announcement of the annulment of the partition of Bengal). The period was witness to a new phase of creation of Bengali childrens' *charras*- which, even after a century, is still reflected through the writings of popular authors and poets of the region, who extensively write on childrens' *chharas*- liked and enjoyed by both the young and the old in recent times.

### **Bengali *Chharas* for Children: Rhyme and Reason**

Conventionally, *chharas* for children, quite like its subsequent categories including, *chharas* for grown-ups as well as poems from *bratakathas* of Bengal, had originated as oral traditions in various parts of rural Bengal. The word *chhara*- can be roughly translated as rhymes- which often include one line proverbs, anecdotes and four or eight-line poems. Sometimes a *chhara*, especially those for children, are also to be found embedded in various childrens' stories- which relate to the characters and incidents within the stories. As is the tradition with most folk trends, it is hard to ascertain the dates of the origin of specific childrens' *chharas*, but it can be postulated that they originated as and when there was a need. However, at times, the subject matter of a specific *chhara* can help to understand, the probable period during which it must have originated in an area, with the help of historical data- e.g. narrating any historical incidents or speaking about the popularity of any historical character, etc.

An important aspect of *chharas* for children is its spontaneity. Most of them were framed for children by grandmothers or mothers, amidst half-dark and earthen lamp-lit courtyards and corridors or beds, as the children sat amused or

got ready to go to sleep at night. They explained happiness, sadness, anxieties, fear and above all, were educational as well as entertaining in a world sans the glamour and glitz of modern media.

**a. Theorising three broad categories of childrens' *chharas* from Bengal**

Before leading to an understanding about the new forms of *chharas* that evolved with time in Bengal, this paper proposes to institute and theorise three broad categories of childrens' *chharas* to understand the various meanings and connotations of *chharas* for children. A.K. Ramanujan (1985) while describing the folktales, mentioned few classification based on various plots, such as chain tales, ritual tales, trickster tales, or sibling tales. The following three divisions of Bengali childrens' *chharas* also attempt to categorise broadly the floating mass of folklore. All the three examples cited below as part of the theory of this paper also form parts of the age-old oral traditions from rural Bengal which are popular even today. All the three however, cannot be defined within water-tight compartments and thus, can be recited at various other times and by various other people, other than the ones specified within each category, e.g. the *chharas* used for children while playing, can often be heard to be recited by a mother to a small child. Also the third category is specifically for children who are a little grown up, as compared to small infants below the age of two, who would be more engrossed in the recitation of elders in the house. Thus, the role of a mentor is an important aspect in all of these *chharas* – which could be in the form of a mother or a grandmother, an elder friend or even a friend's mother or a grandmother or even an elder brother or a sister.

To broadly understand Bengali childrens' *chharas*, based on the main motive behind framing them, or behind their recitation:

1. *Chhelebhulano chhara* or the *chharas* used to amuse children

They can be roughly stated to consist of recitations, poems and anecdotes, which are mostly aimed at amusing children, which can be further roughly translated into a definition that explains specific *chharas*, used to calm down infants or children at various times of the day, especially in the midst of temper-tantrums. Thus, accordingly for amusement purpose, the subject matters are often chosen from the surroundings, especially nature, e.g.:

*Aay aay chand mama ti diye ja,  
Chander kapaley chand ti diye ja.*

[Come hither Uncle Moon, come and put an auspicious mark on the forehead of my dear little moon.]

Or

*Moumachhi moumachhi  
Kotha jao nachi nachi  
Ekbar danrao na bhai  
Oi phul phote boney  
Jai madhu ahorney  
Danrabar samay to nai.*

[O bee where art are you going dancing all along?  
Do wait for me,  
There the flower blossoms  
I go to gather nector  
I do not have time to wait.]

The target audiences of the category are infants – mostly below the age of two – whose power of understanding is greatly influenced by the statements made by elders around them and they learn by imitating and emulating, replicating and thereby reproducing the exact original gradually. The length of the *chhara* is often more than two and four lines, which is the minimum lines related to in any Bengali *chhara*. One of the reasons for this and probably behind its very recitation is to engross the child and divert his or her attention from the tantrums and misbehavior. Thus, the importance of intonation is very significant, often exclaiming amusements, fun and jester, through both simple as well as complex characters.

2. *Ghumparani chhara* or the *chharas* used to put infants or children to sleep, e.g.

*Ghumparani mashi pishi ghumer bari jeyo,  
Bata bhorey paan debo gaal bhorey kheo.*

[O sleep fairies visit the land of sleep  
I will give you paan to chew on.]

Or

*Aye ghum aye ghum,  
Bagdi para diye...*

[Sleep comes and slowly goes down the lane of the  
Bagdi locality...]

Quite similar to the last category, the target audience of this category is infants, mostly below the age of two, but this category consists of *chharas* which are recited at specific times of the day, e.g. during afternoon naps or at night while going to sleep. Supposed to be harbingers of sleep, they often narrate pleasant thoughts and imaginary characters to induce a

pleasurable sleep in infants, e.g. fairies and pixies or guardian angels in the form of aunts and grandmothers. The length of the *chhara* is often only limited to two to four lines, which are repeated again and again in a typical musical tone to induce a slumber effect. Thus, the importance of intonation is limited in nature to encourage a child to go to sleep without distracting his or her attention. The *chharas* thus, do not relate to many complex characters and incidents and are simple in nature.

3. *Khelar chhara* or the *chharas* used by children while playing within themselves, e.g.

*Aikom baikom tara tari*  
*Jodu master shoshur bari*  
*Rail come jhamajjham*  
*Pa pichhley alur dom.*

[*Aikom baikom*, there he goes quickly  
 Jodu master goes visiting his in-laws  
 The train comes along  
 Jodu master falls down with a loud thud.]

The target audiences of this category are children above the stage of infancy and can be grouped as pre-schoolers to early-schoolers. Interestingly enough, they are often seen to be narrated by an adult in the house who could fondly remember it from their childhood. The characters and contents could be simple as well as complex and they could be explaining situations and circumstances from various spheres of contemporary life both rural as well as urban, e.g.:

*Inkir mikir cham chikir*  
*Chame kata Majumdar*  
*Dheyelo Damodar*  
*Damodarer hanri kuri*

*Doarey bosey chal kunri  
Chal kunte holo bela  
Bhat khabey sey Jamai-Sala  
Bhatey porlo machhi  
Kodal diye chanchi  
Kodal holo bhonta  
Kha Siyaler matha.*

[*Inkir mikir cham chikir*  
Comes the stingy Majumdar<sup>1</sup>  
The Damodar<sup>1</sup> comes chasing  
Damodar's household utensils  
We sit at the doorstep to dehusk the rice  
Which took half the time of the day  
The son-in-law and brother-in-law would sit down for  
lunch  
A fly comes and sits on the served rice  
I try to swat the fly with an axe  
The axe goes blunt  
Thumbs down and boo to you.]

Or

*Sa re ga ma pa dha ni  
Bom phelechhe Janani  
Bomer madhye keute sanp  
British bole bap re bap.*

[*Sa re ga ma pa dha ni*  
The Japanese have dropped the bomb  
A poisonous snake comes out of the bomb  
The British cry in despair.]

The first example tries to portray the vagaries of contemporary rural life at the hands of the local police on one hand and the

desperate need to entertain the son-in-law with good food and all necessary arrangements to satisfy him, on the other. The second example is probably related to the Pearl Harbour bombing during in USA in World War II by Japan and reflects the anti-mentality towards the British in pre-independence colonial India. Though the latter was a part of the Allied forces during the World War, the *chhara* is a mockery at the fearful plight of the allied powers at the hands of Japanese raids during the war.

### **b. Travelling from oral to written world**

As mentioned earlier, the above three divisions of children's *chharas* cannot be separated within water-tight compartments and they can often override the boundaries of definition, finally to serve the main purpose of its identity- to amuse an infant or a small child. However, the above theorisation holds ground for only the traditional *chharas* of children- transmitted down the ages through families and friends.

To the plethora of existing *chharas*, in due course of time, an important diversion of trends was witnessed with the publication of *chharas* through introduction of printing in Bengal by the second half of nineteenth century. It helped to render an aspect of permanency to the otherwise floating mass of literature. This permanency also established the formats, forms, expressions and ideas within each *chhara*. However, such attempts also helped to render a historical perspective to the shelf-life of Bengali *chharas*. Thus, for the study of this paper, documents were available on conventional oral traditions of Bengal through various publications- more than a hundred years old.

The story of childrens' publications begins from the time of the attempts of few British Civil Servants and administrators of various posts placed throughout Bengal during colonial times. They helped to collect, compile and publish various folktales, along with *chharas*, anecdotes and poems for children, e.g. Rev. William McCulloch (1912), Carolyn Sherwin Bailey (1907), J.F. Campbell (1886) and others, apart from the various indigenous efforts of literate dignitaries to transcribe folktales from Bengal – including Dineschandra Sen (1866-1939), Upendrakishore RoyChowdhury (1863-1915), Jasimuddin (1904-1976), Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) to name a few – all contributed immensely towards the recovery and preservation of Bengali folk literature, especially taking shape and influencing the *Swadeshi* mind or nationalist mindset during the tumultuous period of the *Banga-Bhanga Andolan* (1905) or the Bengal Partition Movement of 1905 (Maitra 2007).

### ***Chharas* - New Trend and Influence of Rabindranath Tagore**

Whatever be the geographical boundaries, the realm of folklore and oral narratives occupy a distinct category of importance. A generally accepted notion about folklore is that it survives within a particular society because it fulfils certain social functions which can be many and also, on the other hand, be specific to certain cultures. These can be broadly grouped into:

- Recreation or amusement
- Education
- Socialisation
- Protest or propaganda
- Communication of knowledge

(Bhattacharya 2005 and Maitra 2007)

Children's *chharas* have always maintained their specific functions within the socio-cultural ethos of a society. Thus, culture-specific connotations from Bengali childrens' *chharas* not only help to recreate situations, but also keep a message of local history and tradition alive. There however remains a strong opposition of the time. It is often argued that the compilation and subsequent publication of the oral tradition/folklore in contemporary Bengal was only limited to few urban population, who helped to gather them and publish them and extended all attempts to disperse them only within the English-literate in the pre-Independence society in India. The main reason behind this, could also be the very fact- the forerunners of the collection of folklore were the British administrators in Bengal. It was from them, attempts of recovering and 'saving' the local tradition inspired local Bengalis, like Dinesh Chandra Sen, Dakkhinranjan Mitra Majumdar and others – who wanted to keep the ethnic ethos of Bengal alive – prominent through the oral traditions of the region. On the other hand, there was also felt a dire need to recover and establish one's traditional context within the parameters of English education in Bengal. The efforts of streamlining Bengali texts started with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and continued with various contributions down the ages. In the process and down the path of history, many significant people got involved, who were considered socially significant cognoscenti of urban Bengal, including Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Sukumar Ray, Jogindranath Sarkar and others. Most of these people had significantly contributed towards framing new text books in Bengali for children, well bestowed with Bengali childrens' *chharas* and fables- all borrowed from the oral tradition of the region. Thus, most of their works were inspired by the ethnic ethos of the rural identity of Bengal and helped to render an

intrinsic edge to the nascent creations of the so-called renaissance age, which were perceived in later times, to induce great works of art and literature.

#### **a. Creation of new *chharas* for children in Bengal**

The period between the last quarter of nineteenth century and the first quarter of twentieth century also witnessed another significant contribution from the urban literate masses, thereby bringing upon a change and setting a new trend in the creation of new *chharas* in Bengal. These were based and influenced by the ethnic rural identity of Bengal and were for both- children and adults. These did not have their origins in the oral traditions of rural Bengal, but were the novel and original creations of the contemporary age as the *chharas* started to originate on paper, rather than the mouth. This gradual change came when a new phase of history introduced new *chharas*, which were created by various authors. Though it is difficult to gather an exact list of these authors, but stray examples proved beyond doubt, the significant contributions of people including, Raindranath Tagore, Abanindrantah Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, Jogindranath Sarkar and others.

An important aspect to note is also the creation of new poems, which left historical marks on the sands of time. Thus, it is also important to understand the basic differences between childrens' poetry and *chhara*. Though coming under the bigger paradigm of poetry, Bengali *chharas* has a very distinct place of its own, which imparts a sense of ingenuity. This very basic difference between *chhara* and poetry perhaps can best be summarised by the words noted down in the introduction of his book on *chhara* by the late Annadashankar Ray – noted civil servant and a well-known author as well as poet. Ray articulated the simplicity of *chharas* by explaining:

[Trans] Like poetry, there is no fixed rule for framing *chharas*. They are spontaneous. There is an art within that and no place for artificiality... *Chhara* is irregular and also sometimes uneven. There is no significance of lyrics... Poetry can be in any form and formats, even within prose. *Chhara* has only one rhythm, which Rabindranath Tagore has named it as the rhythm of *Chhara* with a little tone resembling various Bengali folk songs and a popularly called as *dulki* and there is also an official name for it. *Chhara* can only be written in that tone. (1980: 1)

The very basic ethos of a *chhara* is spontaneity and this stems from its days of yore- from the evenings, nights and lazy mornings and the oil-lamp-lit courtyards of rural Bengal, when a child would sit down to listen to stories and poems from their mother and grandmothers as the latter mostly remained busy doing various household chores, or were putting their children to sleep at the end of the day.

A similar notion- explaining the ethos of childrens' *chharas* from Bengal can also be further summarised with the words of Rabindranath Tagore (2001):

[Trans.] These *chharas* have been written for youngsters. They are not all the same in size. I have not put them through a roller to make them of equal size. If there is any one which is comparatively complex in nature, then it will bear a difficult explanation, but still it will have a ring to its rhythm. Youngsters do not complain about explanation and meaning. They will play around with the rhythm. They are not the greedy type.

Studies pertaining to the creation of Bengali childrens' *chharas*, influenced by the freedom movement of Partition of Bengal

(1905), is very limited in number. This posts a difficult task to understand any historiography of any attempts of the creation of new *chharas* in modern Bengal. Thus, without the availability of detailed literature to determine a date for the beginning of the creation of new *chharas* for the purpose of printing, it becomes difficult to determine an exact date for the process however, the explanation of maiden attempts by Tagore to create new *chharas* for children is provided with dates of writing in various manuscripts of Tagore. This also further aids the process of understanding the language and paragraph formation of various *chharas*. Thus, Tagore's explanations in various introductions mentioned the need to create new *chharas*, as well as the format and sentence construction that is an integral part of the creation of any *chharas*. While penning down the new creations, Tagore also explained the contents, idea and subject matter of the *chharas*- which further highlights a need to keep the basic ideology of *chharas* alive- an attempt to maintain the rural tradition- and the essence and ethos of Bengal. Thus, explains Tagore in *Chhorar Chhobi* (2001):

[Trans.] The rhythm and repertoire of *chhara* has particular influence of innate Prakrit language of the masses. This has the female banter as well as the gossips of males. It does not need to bother being in shape to be presented in society. Poetic rhythm formulates itself beautifully within it, but in an unbeknownst manner. Heavy words are expressed lucidly and it does not bear the gloom of seriousness. However, while writing *chhara*, I realised what I had thought to be easy is not so.

Thus, emphasising on the texture of *chhara*, Tagore also further mentioned that since it belongs to the masses, it cannot be penned down in *Suddho Bhasha* or the formal written language

of Bengali, which has great influences of Sanskrit (*ibid*). Rather, Tagore emphasised on the significant use of colloquial Bengali and compared the texture to the language of the masses (*ibid*).

In the process of the creation of new *chharas* for children, Tagore's two significant ideologies are reflected about life and its socio-cultural environs- his serious thoughts regarding the basic education away from school for all children- which would be free from the manacles of formal training and teaching on one hand and his closeness and proximity to the unblemished beauty of rural Bengal. Thus, his *chharas* for children are lucid expressions of everyday life of rural Bengal and find a place and resemblance till date in every nook and cranny of Bengal's rural life. All of Tagore's books on childrens' *chhara*, including *Sahaj Path*, *Shishu*, *Chharar Chhobi*, *Chheleder Chhara*, and others, maintain the same lucid explanation of words, phrases, sentences and meanings and in the process follow a rhythm and a repertoire of their own to be recalled back to memory time and again. Various research papers, worldwide focus on Tagore's elucidations about formal training and education and his beliefs about the holistic development of the mind and spirit of a child, which he considered can never be imparted within the tight walls of a classroom. In a similar manner, various research works across the world, has spoken about Tagore's ideologies regarding the significance of maintaining proximity to ones ethnic bonds- reflected within the rural traditions of one's culture. In the process, Tagore was greatly influenced by various rural Bengal artists, singers, farmers, craftsmen and simple villagers, including the Baul tradition of Bengal.<sup>12</sup> As the subject

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<sup>12</sup> Baul tradition of Bengal is a non-orthodox faith that still exists in Bengal. The Baul philosophy is very similar to Sufi philosophy- complete surrender to the Almighty and lead a life through begging, singing and dancing and praising God. He was greatly influenced by the simple life of the Baul singers wandering around singing

matter of the many *chharas* for children portray, Tagore's association and proximity with both ideologies helped in the process of creating *chharas* for children at the time of the nationalist movement- reminiscing upon the ethnic ethos of Bengal. Thus, were created text books and *chharas* and poems for children. In a similar manner, several of Tagore's characters from his text book is still popular amidst both rural and urban children, amidst others, including:

*Chhoto khoka bole a aa  
Shekheni shey kotha koaoo.*

[The little baby has just learned his first alphabets- a and aa,<sup>13</sup>

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and dancing – always absorbed in the joy of life.” At Silaidaha (Tagore's family estate) Tagore came into contact with Baul Gagan Harkara, Fakir Fakirchand (1833-96) and Sana-ullah. In Santiniketan he came to know Nabani Das Baul.” Tagore was also acquainted with Lalan Fakir's songs though there is no evidence of their meeting.” The songs of Bauls had such impact upon Rabindranath that his novel *Gora* starts with a Baul song. In his book, *The Religion of Man* (Hibbert Lecture, Oxford, 1930) he quoted a number of Baul songs and he composed many songs in the Baul tune, in keeping with the Baul spirit, such as”: [Tr. cited from Chakravarty 2010: 65]

*O my mind,  
You did not wake up when the  
man of your heart  
Came to your door.  
You woke up in the dark  
At the sound of his departing  
footsteps  
My lonely night passes on a mat  
on the floor.  
His flute sounds in darkness,  
Alas, I cannot see Him.*

The above text emphasises the relation between the singer and the God – ‘the man of the heart’ – is very intimate. Sometimes Tagore calls this ‘man of the heart’ the ‘Eternal Friend’ and sometimes he calls him a ‘lover’.

<sup>13</sup> The first two alphabets of Bengali vowels.

And he is yet to learn to speak.]

(Tagore 2006a: *Sahaj Path*, part-1)

And other popular childrens' poems with strong rural influences in describing a typical village environment by Tagore include, e.g.:

*Naam tar motibil*

*Bahu dur jal*

*Haans guli bheshe bheshe korey kolahol...*<sup>14</sup>

(Tagore 2006a: *Sahaj Path*, part-1)

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<sup>14</sup> (Bengali) *Naam taar motibil* by Rabindranath Tagore in *Sahaj Path*, part-1. Illustration by Nandalal Bose.

*Naam taar motibil, bahudur jal,  
Hansguli bheshey bheshey korey kolahol.  
Pankey cheye thakey bok, chil udey choley,  
Macchranga jhup ko "rø porey eshey joley.  
Hetha hotha danga jagey, ghas diye dhaka,  
Majhey majhey jolodhara choley ankabanka.  
Kothao ba dhankhet joley adho doba,  
Tari ,porey rod porey, ki ba taar shobha.  
Dingy cho "rø ashey chashi, ketey loy dhan,  
Bela geley ganye pherey geye shari gaan.  
Mosh niye paar hoi rakhaler chheley,  
Banshey bandha jaal niye macch dhorey jeley.  
Megh choley bheshey bheshey akasher gaye,  
Ghono shaolar dal jaley bheshey jai.*

Trans.: The name of the rivulet is Motibil which is a wide one  
The ducks swim all across creating a din  
The crane looks into the mud, the kite flies overhead  
The kingfisher dives into water  
Little bits and pieces of land could be seen on both sides  
The water winds its way through them  
In places in between there are submerged rice fields  
They glisten in the sunlight  
The farmer comes in a dingy to harvest the field  
At the end of the day, he returns home with a song to his lips  
The bullockherd returns home with his herd  
The fishermen continues their day's catch with a net tied to bamboo poles,

As well as another similarly popular poem referring to a simplicity of a river in a village:

*Amader chhoto nodi chaley ankey bankey,  
Boisakh mashey taar hantu jal thakey...*<sup>15</sup>

(Tagore 2006a: *Sahaj Path*, part-1)

It is also important to understand the concept of folk-urban continuum in the context of transcribing Bengali oral tradition and the subsequent creation and publication of Bengali childrens' *chharas* - where the folk is often referred to as the

The clear clouds float across the sky  
Thick water hyacinths float down the water.

<sup>15</sup> (Bengali) *Amader chhoto nadi* by Rabindranath Tagore in *Sahaj Path*, part-1. Illustrations by Nandalal Bose.

*Amader chhoto nadi choley bankebanke,  
Baisakh mashey taar hantu jal thakey.  
Paar hoye jai goru, paar hoye gaari,  
Dui dhar unchu taar, dhalu taar pari.  
Chik-chik korey bali, kotha nai kada,  
Ek dharey kash bon phuley phuley sada.  
Kichi-michi korey setha shaliker jhank,  
Raatey othey theke theke sheyaler hank.  
Aar-parey aam-bon taal-bon choley,  
Ganyer bamunpara tari chhaya toley.  
Tirey tirey chheley meye nahibar kaley  
Gamchhay jal bhori gaye tara dhaley.  
Shakaley bikaley kabhu naoa holey porey  
Ancholey chhankiya tara chhoto machh dhorey.  
Bali diye majey thala, ghotiguli majey,  
Bodhura kapor kechey jai griha kaajey.  
Asade badol namey, nodi bhoro-bhoro-  
Matia chhutia choley dhara khorotoro.  
Mahabege kal-kal kolahol othey,  
Ghola joley pakguli ghurey-ghurey chhotey.  
Dui kuley boney-boney po'rø jai shara,  
Barosar utsabey jegey othey para*

ultimate example of a society and the urban society takes and borrows various definitions from its counterpart from time to time. In this respect, can be mentioned Oscar Lewis's reference to the 'folk concept' as an 'ideal type and hence a matter of definition' (Miner 1952: 531). With reference to the continuum, one also needs to understand the significant importance of poems, riddles, anecdotes and stories from rural oral traditions from Bengal.

### **The Continuity thereafter Uptill Now**

Around the time of the anti-partition movement of Bengal-towards the turn of the last century, a number of works originated during the period, roughly dating to the beginning of twentieth century, but most of them fall under the category of childrens' poems, rather than *chharas*. The main attempts made by these poems were chiefly to impart a sense of reverence and respect for ones motherland. This was contributed variously by different writers of the time, including Rabindranath Tagore, Jyotirindranath Tagore, Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Gurusaday Dutt, Kaliprasanna Kavyabisarad, Kalidas Ray, Kamini Kumar Bhattacharya, Mohinimohan Gangopadhyay, Gobindo Chandra Das, Atulprasad Sen, Dwijendralal Ray, Mankumari Basu, Golam Mustafa, Rajanikanta Sen, Sukanta Bhattacharya, and others. The intrinsic qualities, as reflected through these poems were mainly to maintain a disciplined life and inculcate values and morals in the young minds. In this respect, as mentioned earlier, the works of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar deserves special mention – as one of the earliest exponents in the direction of the publication of childrens' *chharas* – collected and compiled variously, e.g. mention should be made of his patriotic flavour, which imparted the childrens' books an exceptional character, including *Barna Parichay* (Know Your

Alphabet), *Kathamala* (Book of Fables), *Bodhodaya* (Dawn Of Knowledge) and *Akhyanmanjari* (Collection of Stories) are amongst the many. Furthermore, a need to impart a sense of entertainment into children's education, saw various other important examples taking shape, including, Madanmohan Tarkalankar's<sup>16</sup> *Shishu Shiksha* (Child's Reader), which, became quite famous and amongst the many poems, one is still remembered by one and all:

*Pakhi sab kore rab  
Rati pohailo...*

[The birds sing  
Signaling the end of the night...]

Thereafter, efforts continued with the collection and accumulation of children's fables and lores. Mention should be made of Akshay Kumar Datta's *Charu Patha* (1853, 1854, 1859), which was published in three parts and was one of the earliest examples of exploring popular science for children. Rev. Lal Behari Dey's (1824-94) publication of *Folktales of Bengal*, which was later translated in 1978 by Lila Majumdar, also spoke of oral traditions, especially for children. Rangalal Bandopadhyay (1828-87) and Dinabandhu Mitra's (1830-73) *Surodhuni Kavya* presented a collection of verses for children. Another book with poems for children – *Padyamala* of Manmohan Basu (1831-1912) also gained much popularity amongst children. Finally, with the publication of Jogindranath

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<sup>16</sup> Madanmohan Tarkalankar was the son of Ramdhan Chattopadhyay of Bilwagram in Nadia district of West Bengal. He was also the class-mate of Ishwar Chandra Vidysagar at Sanskrit College, Kolkata, and later studied at Hindu College (later was named Presidency College). He extensively worked for furthering the cause of Bengali and Sanskrit language as well as the cause of women's education.

(Source: [http://maps.thefullwiki.org/Madan\\_Mohan\\_Tarkalankar](http://maps.thefullwiki.org/Madan_Mohan_Tarkalankar))

Sarkar's (1866-1937) *Hansi O Khela*, the concept of Bengali children's literature ushered into a new era thereafter. Mentions Datta, (pp-693), *—Hansi O Khela* was the first to break away from the class-room tradition and was solely for the pleasure it would give to children. What the child would incidentally learn was an extra benefit." Soon, in 1897, Sarkar's *Hansi Khushi* was published and as mentions Datta, *—mastering the letters became a jolly game for children. Hanshi Khushi* changed the whole face of primary education. It was a pleasure for children to read and behold the countless rhymes, drawings and sketches of this book." Finally, came up *Sahaj Path* of Rabindranath Tagore. Though in between, there were several publications related to children's literature, yet they were mostly related to the telling of stories, poems, fables and lore. None of them concentrated on introducing the very basics of learning- the alphabets, the vowels and consonants. The improved method of publication which was one of the boons of Bengal, especially brought over by Upendrakishore Roychowdhury from England, was also put to use to bring closer to children, the stories of yore- from the very nooks and crannies of rural Bengal. This is one of the reasons, the introduction of *Sahaj Path* was a success. The drawing skills of Nandalal Bose, which was explored in introducing alphabets to children, added a special fervor to the new attempt and the result was something quite different, which is followed in schools even today. In a similar manner, the very famous poems and *chharas* of Sukumar Ray, who was also greatly influenced by the likes of Rabindranath Tagore, also helped to infuse a new system of satire, reflected through poems. Though, most of the printed materials were limited in nature of its reach and circulation, especially limited to the upper middle-class of Bengal, where a majority were followers of the Brahma Samaj and movement, yet the influence of these

poems stretched beyond the period of the Partition of Bengal and went to continue throughout the period of the struggle for Indian independence and even beyond. Along with new poems for children, new *chharas* continued to be written, solely for the purpose of printing and reaching the masses through printed materials, instead of the conventional methods of oral transmission and the trend continues till date. Thus, the number of authors and poets increased to include the names of others like, Jatindramohan Bagchi, Nazrul Islam, as well as comparatively recent ones like, Annadashankar Ray, Dhiren Bal, Premendra Mitra, Bhabaniprasad Majumdar, Nirendranath Chakravarty, Amitabh Chowdhury, Nabanita Debsen, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Jay Goswami and others, many of whom are from the most recent times. Thus, remains alive the *chharas* of new poets and authors of Bengal, with people often forgetting their creators and making them a part of the original floating folklore of Bengal and a very typical example is the *chharas*, for example written by Annadashankar Ray:

*Hattim a Tim Tim*  
*Tara mathey parey dim*  
*Tader mathai duto singh*  
*Tara Hattim a Tim Tim.*

[Hattim a Tim Tim  
 They lay eggs in fields  
 They have two horns on their heads  
 They are Hattim a Tim Tim.]

(Ray 1980: 45)

Or

*Teler shishi bhanglo boley khukhur porey raag koro*  
*Tomra je shab buro khoka Bharat bhenge bhag koro tar*  
*bela, tar bela, tar bela.*

[You are scolding the little girl because she broke a  
bottle of oil  
But who is there to scold you when you break (partition)  
the nation?]

(Ray 1980: 49)

Or, more recent creations by authors and poets like Nabanita  
Debsen, who wrote *Dinner-e* (To Dinner) (in Baul 2005: 127):

-“Naam ki tomar?”- “Raja Ray.”

-“Jachho kothay? ”- “Bazaar-ey

-“Kinbe ki ki? ”- “Bean, alu.

-“Randhbeta ki? ”- “Vindaloo.

-“Tomar bujhi niramish?”

“Thik sheta noy ki janish,

Deshta boddo poor ki na?

Mangsho nei ko shuor bina.”

-“Machh achhey to saral, punti?”

-“Kaali khelam asto duti.

-Aajke menu neem-begun-

Mashta kina Chot-Phagun?

Ashbi naki, Dinner-e?

Ginni amar, Rina Ray,

Vindaloo-te exparot-”

-“Ashbo boiki, nextobar.

Ajkey khabo baritei

*Bhat phutechhe hanrite.*”

What’s your name? Raja Ray  
 Where are you off to? To the bazaar  
 What are you going to buy? Bean and potatoes  
 What will you be cooking? Vindaloo  
 You are having vegetarian dishes today?  
 Not exactly, the thing is-  
 You see, the country is very poor,  
 There’s no other meat readily available other than pork  
 But there is cheap fish like *saral* and *punti*  
 Just had yesterday, some of them  
 Today, we are having neem and brinjal curry  
 As the month is Chaitra and Phalgun  
 Do you want to come over for dinner?  
 My wife- Reena Ray  
 Is an expert at making Vindaloo  
 Surely, but next time  
 Today, I’ll eat at home as the rice stands cooked in the  
 pot.

As well as a more recent one entitled *Baba aar Ma* by noted litterateur Sunil Gangopadhyay (in Baul 2005: 121):

*Babao naki chhotto chhilen*  
*Ma chhilen ekratti,*  
*Thammi didu bolen eshob*  
*Mitthey noi satti!*  
*Baba chhilen amar shoman*  
*Tua-r shoman ma,*  
*Baba chorten kather ghoray*  
*Ma diton hama.*  
*Baba chhilen dossi chheley*  
*Ma khub chinchkaduney*

*Baba kheten kaan mola  
 Biswas hoi shuney?  
 Ami chhoto bubun chhoto  
 Tua jia aar bhai  
 Mayera shob mayer moton  
 Baba-ra shob baba-i.*

It seems that father was even little once upon a time  
 And mother was small as well  
 My grandmothers tell me this  
 These are true and not lies  
 Father was as big as me  
 And mother was as small as Tua  
 Father used to ride on rocking horses  
 And mother used to crawl  
 Father was very naughty  
 And mother used to cry at all times  
 Father used to get his ears boxed  
 Can you believe it?  
 Ami small as well as Bubun  
 Tua, Gia and my little brother  
 Mother's will always be mother's  
 And father's will always be father's.

And another significant example from more recent contributors include works like *Phutkarai* by poet Jay Goswami (in Baul 2005: 121):

*Porir pashey porir bon,  
 Danriye achhey kotokkhon.  
 Jar theke to uthlo kaal,  
 Roder tapey mukhti laal.  
 Lamba line ischool-er,  
 Dao durwan gate khuley.*

*Porir pashey porir ma-o,  
 Bolchhey, Thakur rod komao,  
 Abar asukh korbey or  
 Nosto hobey ek bochhor.  
 Boyosh koto? Boyohkrom?  
 Sheyshab bhabar samay kom.  
 Bhorti hoar janyo aaj,  
 Test-e bashai Porir kaaj.*

Next to Pori stands her younger sister  
 Standing for a long time  
 Just recovered from fever yesterday  
 Her face is red with the rays of the sun  
 The long queue in front of the school  
 Gatekeeper, please open the gates  
 Pori's mother stands next to her as well  
 Praying to go to reduce the intensity of sunlight  
 –She will fall sick again  
 And loose a year in the process.”  
 –How old is she?” –Approximately?”  
 There's no time to think about all that  
 Today is school-admission day  
 And Pori has to sit for the admission test today.

Though the exact dates of the above cited poems and *chharas* are not specified, however, the names of the authors themselves denote the creations to have been penned down in various times over the last six decades of Independent India. Keeping in line with the intrinsic ethos of the creation of Bengali childrens' *chharas*, they help to express contemporary life and their anxieties, emotions and sentiments of recent times, including a worry of a mother over her daughter's admission to school or

the dialogues over the inflation in market economy or the pathos associated with the partition of India in 1947.

It is also significant to note the diversion from the influence and mention of rural tradition of Bengal. This can be attributed to the very fact- of the creators being part of urban, social litterateur class- found it apt to express the modern anxieties through contemporary *chharas* of urban life. Thus, what started with a rural influence more than a century back, in due course of time, started including various urban voices to express themselves. Bengali childrens' *chharas*, thus, traversed a long distance down the course of history.

It is also necessary to mention, the recent creations cannot be included within the three basic divisions of Bengali childrens' *chharas* noted previously in this paper as a theory to understand the subject matters of Bengali childrens' *chharas*. These were created and made, whenever a need was felt- simply for the fun and enjoyment of expression. In the process, not only limiting themselves within the parameters of young minds, but also encompassing the sentiments and expressions of grown-ups. Thus, what began as reinventing ones tradition through patriotic fervor, continued through time, to create history on its way, adding a new facet in the direction of Bengali childrens' *chharas* by the creation of new ones, which continue to exist with varied popularities, alongside the Bengali traditional childrens' *chharas* handed down through generations.

Thus, today, as *chharas* from traditional folktales like *Saat Bhai Champa* still echoes through various recorded versions of CDs and DVDs and television programmes in recent times, the popularity of various *chharas* by Tagore or of *Hattim a Tim Tim*, *Teler Shishi* or *Chhoto Pori*, continues with equal, lucid dexterity- forming a part of the bigger tradition of Bengali

childrens' *chharas*. The kingdom of *chharas*, truly continues to be far from being a 'simple one', where 'everything can happen quite easily and in the same manner everything cannot happen quite easily as well.'

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# **Fashioning a Heterotopia in Mumbai: The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival**

*Preeta Nilesh and Nilakshi Roy*

## **Abstract**

*Fairs and festivals in the island city of Mumbai are but a reflection of the multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity of the city and its people. While pan-Indian festivals are celebrated with gusto, some celebrations are typical of the city itself. A trend of the recent past has been the celebration of cultural festivals in Mumbai at the behest and encouragement provided by the state government and municipal authorities and also supported by corporate sponsorship.*

*The paper examines the origins of the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival and gives a detailed account of the events during the festival. The paper is based on an empirical study of the various stakeholders of the festival, including those who put up stalls, participants in the various events, organizers, visitors and sponsors. Standard primary and secondary sources including contemporary newspaper articles and journals have helped in the writing of this paper. Culture theories have helped to contextualize the paper.*

## **Introduction**

Fairs and festivals in the island city of Mumbai are but a reflection of the multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity of the city and its people. While pan-Indian festivals are celebrated with gusto, some celebrations are typical of the city itself. A trend of the recent past has been the celebration of cultural festivals in Mumbai at the behest of and encouragement provided by the

state government and municipal authorities and also supported by corporate sponsorship. There is general consensus on the social role of cultural festivals and this leads, year after year to a vibrant festival culture in Mumbai. Such festivals transform places from being everyday settings into temporary environments that contribute to the production, processing and consumption of culture, concentrated in time and place.

Celebrating festivals is becoming increasingly identifiable with the global cityscape. Some cities have specific festivals like the kite festival in Ahmedabad, the Notting Hill Festival in London, the Sydney festival etc. This paper enquires into the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival (KGAF) in south Mumbai as promoting a unique identity and giving a face to Mumbai as the country's art capital. The paper views that short duration cultural festivals play a very special role in attracting locals as well as tourists and that festivals like the Kala Ghoda facilitate community pride and are unique leisure experiences.

The paper examines the origins of the KGAF and gives a detailed account of the events during the festival. The sub-festivals, special events, street and stage performances and display of cultural artifacts are of great interest to this paper. The paper is based on an empirical study of the various stakeholders of the festival, including those who put up stalls, participants in the various events, organizers, visitors and sponsors. Standard primary and secondary sources including contemporary newspaper articles and journals have helped in the writing of this paper. Culture theories have helped to contextualize the paper.

The paper theorizes festivals like the KGAF as examples of postmodern urbanity: of heterotopias of a distinctly Indian flavor. In India, *melas* (fairs) have always been spaces where the

spiritual and the everyday coalesced in a deeply mystifying, almost mystic experience. Indian festivals seem to contain in them the essence of postmodernity, the jumble and the disarray of the global and the local.

In the west, especially at the height of imperial Europe, fairs and exhibitions, and festivals mostly displayed such a hopeless admixture of the exotic and the semi-mystical. On the one hand there were deeply exploited peoples and animals, which would be carted around from place to place and were on show just for themselves, for money and food. On the other, there were scientific or pseudo-scientific machines, cures, remedies and spiritual solutions for temporal problems, epitomized by the crystal ball. Critics in the west have pondered over the function of these special spaces like fairgrounds and festival halls etc.

According to Foucault (1984) the function of what he calls ‘heterotopias’ is in relation to all the space that remains: —.either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory.”<sup>17</sup> While discussing the sixth principle of heterotopias, he posits that they can in turn, —create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.”

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<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault discussed heterotopias and the six principles of their formation in his lecture ‘Other Spaces’ that was delivered in March 1967. It was later translated by Jay Miskowiec and published in the French journal *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* in October 1984 with the title, ‘Des Espace Autres’. Although the text of the lecture was not reviewed for publication by Foucault (and thus not part of the official corpus of his work), the manuscript of the lecture was released into the public domain in an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Foucault’s death.

## The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival

Re-living the ancient experience of the *melas* that Indians are familiar with and in keeping with the heterotopia described by Foucault is the KGAF (**Fig. 1a**). It is a medium for the revival of arts across Mumbai.



The festival derives its name from *Kala Ghoda* (or black horse) – an equestrian statue of King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales) in stone black in South Mumbai, which was erected by Sir Albert Abdullah David Sassoon (1818-96), a Jewish businessman and philanthropist.<sup>18</sup> (**Fig. 1b**). Since the festival is

<sup>18</sup> Although in 1965 this statue was removed to the storehouse of the Bhau Daji Lad Museum (formerly the Victoria and Albert Museum in Byculla, Central Mumbai, the acquired name by the area persists. This statue is now in the Jijamata Udyan in Byculla.

held in the area around this statue it has acquired the name, Kala Ghoda.

The KGAF is organized by the Kala Ghoda Association, which was established in 1988 with the aim of improving the existing infrastructure of the area, and giving it a distinct identity as Mumbai's art district. The Kala Ghoda Association is a non-profit organisation that aims at "physically upgrading the Kala Ghoda sub-precinct and making it the Art District of Mumbai" (Personal Communication: Brinda Miller, 2 December 2012).

Teams handling each of the sub-festivals curate the festival. The festival is an important fund raising event for the development of the area and conservation of the heritage buildings, the main sponsor being *The Times of India*. (Dekhne, Personal Communication: December 2012). The Association seeks to preserve the historical Fort area and develop the Kala Ghoda area for which changes are brought in every year according to needs. Brinda Miller, a notable office bearer of the KGAF says, "The whole purpose of hosting this fest was to collect funds to restore the area; Elphinstone College, Cama Hall, David Sassoon library, Chhatrapati Shivaji Vaastu Sanghralaya, and many buildings have benefitted" (Personal Communication: 2 December 2012).

The KGAF is an annual event, nine days long, held in late January or early February, preparations for which begins in the month of September. The dates are announced well in advance which helps stakeholders and visitors to plan ahead so as to take full advantage of all that is being staged, exhibited and sold. As much as the festival is beneficial and enjoyable, it is a source of learning and knowledge. Festivals like the Kala Ghoda also

bring about a new relationship between the culture and economy. The festival rearranges social reality into some sort of order, to compensate for the chaos of everyday. The KGAF creates a heterotopia to compensate for the unpleasantness of daily life in Mumbai, and is that the reason why such a festival has been drawing thousands to it year after year for the last thirteen years. The KGAF and similar festivals reflect the values, interests and aspirations of residents and naturally, a sense of community and place are linked to such festivals. As Foucault (1984) suggests:

...a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.

The KGAF transforms south Mumbai from an everyday setting into a temporary environment that contributes to the production, processing and consumption of culture concentrated in time and place. It is an example of how culture is contested. Being attractive to communities looking to address issues of civic design, local pride, identity, heritage, conservation, urban renewal, and even employment generation and investment, the festival has, from its inception in 1999, been pulling visitors and participants from other parts of the country, and the world. The festival has helped us to know of the shared interests of residents and visitors (Derrett 2003a). It has grown in stature and popularity so much so that it has given a new identity to the Mumbai Fort area, and Mumbai city itself. In fact other area-based festivals have started following it in the past few years. For example, we have in the months of November to February, in the pleasant mild weather in Mumbai, several other festivals:

the Mumbai Festival, the Celebrate Bandra Festival, and since 2007, the Kitab Festival. Earlier, until 2011, a teaser of the KGAF used to be held in November, but due to objections from residents about noise pollution it has been withdrawn.

Entry to all events is free to all (only restricted by the size of the venues) and costs are met through corporate sponsorship. While there is innovation, it cannot be ignored the festival is controlled by commercial interests who attempt to transform art and culture into art and culture industries. (Personal Communication: N. Mistry, 31 December 2012). There is of course, no intent to have elite control so as to establish a plebian-patrician distance.

The precincts of the Fort area in South Mumbai, the Art District is representative of the island city and brings residents of the city and suburbs together on the festival days.<sup>19</sup> The area has a strong visual image reinforced by an impressive architectural ensemble of historic buildings, perhaps the finest concentrated collection of heritage structures in the city. The Kala Ghoda crescent has an existing mass of art galleries, museums and cultural spaces that is unrivalled in all of India and perhaps comparable to Art districts in other parts of the world. By creating a distinctly positive plan for developing this area in terms of conservation and versatile space utilization one could hope to contain and perhaps over time even eliminate negative, illicit and anti-social elements present on the streetscape. Artisans from all over the state and country display their wares and talents during the KGAF.

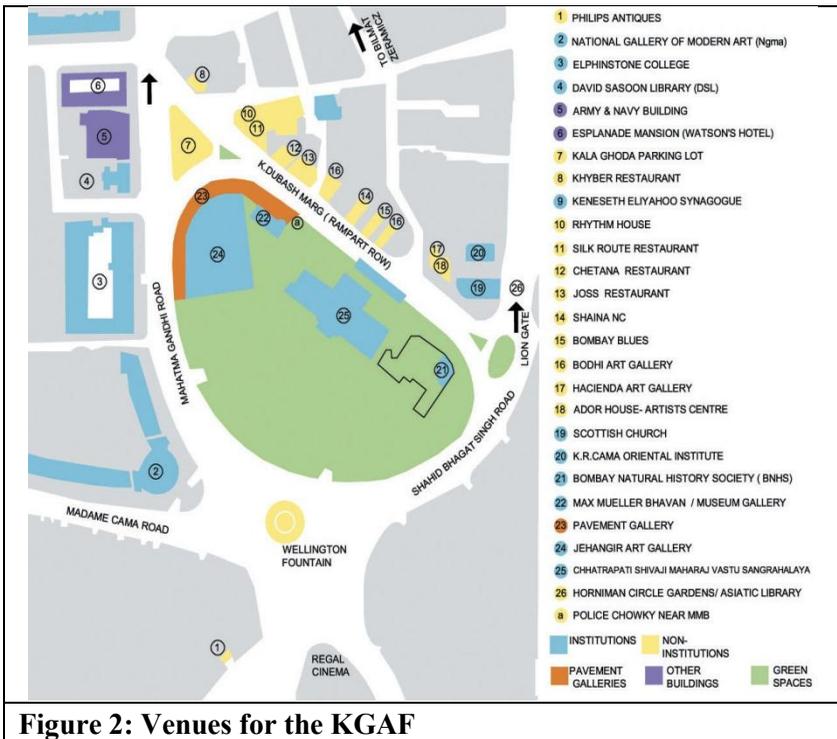
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<sup>19</sup> For further information on the discussion on the importance of destination in festivals, see, Derrett 2003b.

While describing a heterotopia, Foucault (1984) talks about how it –is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.” There is a lot of overlap between high and popular art, visual and the cinematic, the postmodern installations and the overtly classical and art deco venues. By raising public awareness both in terms of establishing a textual and contextual identity of the Art district, highlighting the historical and cultural significance of the area and showcasing the city’s cultural heritage through samplings of art work exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, book exhibitions, lectures and workshops, heritage walks, nature trails, the festival creates a meeting ground for artists and art lovers and also encourages public participation in the activities of the city. The festival thus enhances the prestige of Mumbai as a dynamic centre for the arts. Pavement exhibitions as also conversations with artists and recipe interactions with chefs and foodies are held in the same space. There is something for everyone. The KGAF is about multiple activities in multiple venues and suiting the tastes and interests and pockets of multiple visitors.

The venues for the festival include: The Jehangir Art Gallery, The National Gallery of Modern Art, The David Sassoon Library, Max Mueller Bhavan, Elphinstone College, The K.R. Cama Institute, the M.C. Ghia Hall, and the street area of Rampart Row. (**Fig. 2**)

These venues are chosen with great care since in such festivals the choice of venues does not mean finding just an arena that will hold a crowd. The selected venues meet the requirements of visibility, centrality and clustering and introduce the human dimension to static spaces that become animated.



The Rampart Row is closed off to vehicular traffic for the duration of the festival, with the entire area becoming a street *mela*, with food stalls, artisans selling their creations, artists who sketch instant portraits, street art installations and the like. In recent years, the Festival has expanded beyond the Kala Ghoda crescent, with events being held in Azad Maidan and Horniman Circle as well. Weekends are very crowded and parking becomes a concern. Visitors whom we interviewed said that it was prudent to take the train and walk from either Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus or Churchgate stations (Personal Communication: Shubha Chandran, 26 December 2012 and Moumita Sarker, 27 December 2012).

The sub-festivals feature the visual arts, dance, music, theatre, cinema, literature, lectures, seminars and workshops, heritage walks, special events for children, and a vibrant street festival. (Figs. 3a and 3b).



**Figure 3a and b: Glimpses of the KGAF, 2012**

The dance events organized in the evening had renowned professional artists performing and getting to see them perform in such an atmosphere was different from going to an auditorium and viewing a stage performance. Here again, the greatest beneficiaries were the photographers who could photograph the performances for free and in such an ambience (Personal Communication: Bharat Shah, 20 December 2012).

The entire area is decorated into a pedestrian plaza. Portrait paintings, traditional *mehendi* (henna), exotic bangles, cuisine and traditional breakfast are the main attractions of this festival. Says a regular, 'Food stalls made a kill. Since almost everyone ate, the stall owners creative display and sales of street food, savories and sweets were much sought after' (Ibid.). Another enthusiast adds:

Stalls which provided outfits of Maharashtra including the nine-yard *choli* (blouse) with accessories as well as the *pheta* (turban) for men was yet another stall that did very well. Similarly there were stalls with Rajasthani costumes, which was also popular with the crowd says one

(Personal Communication: Devendra Sharnagat, 21 December 2012).

Folk dancers, musicians and singers entertain the gathering with the crowds applauding thus making it an event or an arena of discourse enabling people to express themselves on wider cultural, social and political issues. (**Fig. 4**).



**Figure 4: Street performance at the KGAF, 2012**

Those who had put up stalls at the KGAF in the last couple of years carry fantastic impressions about their participation. They view the festival as a photographer's paradise. According to them, they may have walked up and down the same street throughout their lives but the festival days made it different. Photographing the ambience, the crowds, the events and the art forms put up for view on the days of the festival made all the difference. It was almost as if everyone knew each other: *'a party where everyone was invited'* (Personal Communication: Vinyl Sonar, 24 December 2012). Students who had participated in a film festival, part of the KGAF described how their team was provided with a song and a music video was to be made so as to justify the spirit of the festival and the city. They found this to be an experience, which brought out best their creativity and also gave them a sense of pride for their city (Personal Communication: Shama Chalke, 23 December 2012).

Another participant, a photographer by hobby decided to put up a stall to photograph visitors who came to Kala Ghoda. He narrates his experience as a *'once in a lifetime one'*. He invested Rs. 15,000/- (for a stall for 10 days and he made more than Rs. 40,000/-). He hired a make-up artist who would apply basic foundation and highlight features of the visitors and would himself photograph the customers in the ambience of the festival. He says he had huge crowds being drawn to his stall and people did not mind spending since they had come to Kala Ghoda for all unusual and different experiences (Personal Communication: N. Mistry, 31 December 2012).

## **Sponsors**

The main sponsors for the events include banks, Newspapers, telecom companies, bookshops, builders, airlines, event

management companies, as well as international agencies such as the British Council and the American Center. It is important to have the right sponsors since that alone will enhance the event, image through association and attract better participation, customers and media coverage.

Brinda Miller describes the relationship between the sponsors and the festival over the years:

We began the festival in a small way 15 years ago... It was sponsored by local philanthropists. Then we got Hong Kong Bank to come in as principle sponsor. In 2006 times of India stepped in and gave the festival a huge boost... It also got the fest enough publicity... And some more funding... Though never enough as the fest has grown huge in terms of programming as well as footfalls

(Personal Communication: 2 December 2012).

## **Impact**

Festivals are important in changing the functional structure of communities (McKercher et al 2006). This perhaps accounts for the local residents have gathered up in arms to complain about the noise, and debris left after the ten-day rush is over. The festival is slated to move to the nearby Horniman circle. However, the organizers have not confirmed this change of venue. Discussing this point, one regular said:

While shifting to Horniman Circle was bound to get an equally good response, there was a lot of apprehension whether having the Kala Ghoda festival anywhere but at the Kala Ghoda really made sense. The huge physical space was ideal for such a display

of culture since it was centrally located and attracted not only the locals but also foreigners whose shopping bags burst from their seams during the festival days.

(Personal Communication: Sarita Kumat, 27 December 2012).

Venue notwithstanding, the plans for the New Year, 2013 are already outlined on the website. In 2010, five years after the court ruled that Kala Ghoda was a silent zone, the organisers have announced that there will be no blaring loudspeakers and amplifier system this time.<sup>20</sup>

What direction does the KGAF head towards in the future? Does its impact on the decibel levels for a matter of nine days in a year take away from the number of artists and performers it showcases? Does it take away the last hope for the ever-so dwindling funds for preserving heritage buildings? The most important and pervasive impact of the festival is that it helps restore many of the heritage sites around the venue. “With support from generous sponsors, we have helped physically improve the area as well, restoring buildings and facades, building people-friendly street furniture and improving the amenities,” says Mr. Dhekhne (Personal Communication: 27 December 2012).

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<sup>20</sup> Sumaira Abdulali, anti-noise pollution activist and director of Awaz Foundation, spoke to the press, —~~At~~ after the 2005 court order, KGF organisers did not use loudspeakers for some time. But there were allowed to get away with flouting the order after that.“ See Kolhatkar 2010. The High Court order was not being followed by the KGF organisers as they played loudspeakers and amplifiers on Rampart Row road, which was declared by the Court as a silent zone.

Artists also get a great fillip to their career when their work is showcased here. Miller, herself an artist whose work is exhibited at the show, adds:

There are many artistes discovered at the festival... At one time the upcoming ones would beg us to be part of the festival. In the music world Kavita Sheth has made it big ...she has sung at many festivals....this was about 4-5 years ago. Visual artist Parag Tandel made it to Pundole Art Gallery and to international auctions after taking part in the festival as a visual artist.

(Personal Communication: 2 December 2012).

On the other hand there is always the feeling that the superior quality of art on the pavements of Jehangir Art Gallery displayed before the festival is wasted, and only those paintings inside the gallery sell well. Paintings do form a major part of the Kala Ghoda art extravaganza, and some sell well, in lakhs, perhaps due to power, contacts, and politics, whereas other sell for a few hundreds of rupees. That is the sad part of the story about politics entering art, as happens everywhere.

Is the future of the KGAF with elite clients, as with all art festivals in the world, which thrive because of affluent patrons? Despite the emphasis on street arts and performances does public response limit the extent and reach of the KGAF?

According to Foucault's discussion of heterotopias, they are also linked to slices in time i.e. they are heterochronies, in which different time periods are placed or frozen together, as in a museum or a library. Or they are ones where time exists ~~in~~ its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival" (1984). We tend to believe that the purpose of these festivals in this day and age is not necessarily spiritual as

in ancient Indian traditions, as happens in a ‘Kumbh mela’ for example. They are not oriented toward the eternal, their purpose is celebratory and commercial at the same time, and therefore to quote Foucault again, “they are rather absolutely temporal.” (Ibid.)

Festivals promote a continued renaissance in the city and create an inclusive and sustainable community. They help to enhance civic pride and enrich the lives of citizens by allowing exposure to art, culture, social issues and a thriving market place to market and consume artifacts. The streets are beautified, rendered safer from vandalism and vagrancy, and Art gains prominence over Commerce for at least these nine days, though of course, preparations are made for a year. We are certain that there will be ongoing support by patrons and tourists, sponsors and all stakeholders to fashioning the KGAF as a heterotopia: a unique space that renders present chaos to future order, stagnation to beautification, a space lending meaningful, collective and enduring artistic experience.

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# **The Vanishing Traditions of *Pakhtoonwali***

*Syed Minhaj ul Hassan*

## **Abstract**

*Pakhtoonwali is the Pakhtoons' code of life which has steadily declined due to urbanization and religious militancy. Amongst the pillars of Pakhtoonwali are three traditions, viz., Melmastia, Panah and Badal. A thorough observation would reveal the fact that all three are affected by both factors. Melmastia means hospitality that is welcoming a guest and giving him food, shelter and comfort. The present day situation has seen drastic decline in melmastia. Another tradition was/ is Panah which was/is to give shelter to those in need. Now we see that this noble tradition is either vanishing or has become a business, especially in the tribal areas. Badal is another casualty of the above stated two reasons. Badal is a tradition which can be negative or positive. In short it means tit for tat. The other traditions which have suffered are hujra, guddar, jagh, swara, walwar, jahez, mirata, etc.*

## **Introduction**

*Pakhtoonwali*, the Pakhtoon code of life is an unwritten constitution of Pakhtoons/ Pashtoons. The Pakhtoons have adhered to these socio-cultural traditions for centuries and have bequeathed these norms to their children through deeds and words (Khattak 1984: 135-7). The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have brought enormous changes in their life-style and traditions. The fairy-tales of Rudyard Kipling's Pakhtoons are passing through an evolutionary process of change. The changes have taken place due to modernization and talibanization/religious extremism.

Amongst these changes some are positive and some are negative. Pakhtoons' history is considered to be as old as 5000 years, so obviously those traditions which were governing the society for centuries need adjustments to cope with the modern needs and environment. However, some traditions were very good but with the passage of time those traditions also extinguished. According to Ghani Khan, these customs —. are neither good nor bad, for they depend on time, place and circumstance.” (1990: 27). If critically analyzed some of the traditions of *Pakhtoonwali* were in clash with both modernity and Islam, the religion of the Pakhtoons, so the change was inevitable. Since the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries on the one hand witnessed the modernization of Pakhtoon society, on the other hand, it also saw the rise of religious fanaticism amongst the Pakhtoons.<sup>21</sup> Though the rise of religious fanaticism is linked with global politics than indigenous reasons, it still has affected the *Pakhtoonwali*. Once these changes started affecting the Pakhtoons' society, the changes not only discarded negative traditions but also affected some positive aspects of the *Pakhtoonwali* as well, which should not have happened.

In this paper the author has tried to point out some changes in the *Pakhtoonwali* traditions. It does not mean that all the Pakhtoons have totally abandoned these traditions but it seems that slowly and gradually the percentage is increasing.

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<sup>21</sup> Religious fanaticism/extremism increased due to the following two reasons:

- a. The Saur Revolution in 1978 and the Afghans' Jihad against it duly supported by all anti-communists World.
- b. The Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979) and anti-Revolution plots by US-Saudi Arab led Arab world.

### **The Vanishing Traditions:**

The edifice of *Pakhtoonwali* was standing on the three main pillars: *Melmastia* (Hospitality), *Badal* (Revenge), and *Panah* (Shelter).

*Melmastia* or hospitality was/is a tradition that the Pakhtoons cherish(ed) the most. Under this tradition the Pakhtoons considered themselves bound to welcome guests in their villages and *Hujras*. The features of *Melmastia* were providing best food, and lodging to the guest. The Pakhtoons' *Melmastia* has been proverbial. Along with food and lodging it was also the responsibility of the Pakhtoons to protect the guest's person as well as his/ her honour (Spain 1972 and Banerjee 2004: 28-9). However, the modern times have seen its gradual decline, though Pakhtoons still cherish hospitality, it does not carry the same importance. Earlier a guest in the village was considered a guest of the whole *mohallah* or village but now the guest is only the guest of the concerned person. Further, earlier the host used to try to urge his guest for more and more stay but now this is no more the situation. In the cities even some Pakhtoons have been observed avoiding the guests, though a minority of them (Interview: Anis ul-Hassan).

The tradition of *Badal* or revenge has also suffered at the hands of modernization and religious fanaticism. *Badal* has both positive and negative aspects. In negative sense the Pakhtoons were always ready for tit-for-tat, which means that if any person inflicted dishonour, injury, damage, or fatality to Pakhtoons, they would pay the person or any body from his family in the same coin, rather in extreme cases they would try to inflict many times greater harm to the enemy. It was a very cruel tradition but the Pakhtoons were sticking to it for centuries. The positive side

of the *Badal* was that if somebody would do a favour to Pakhtoons, then they also considered it their duty to repay the person in the same coin (Spain 1985: 64 and Interview: Haroon Rashid)

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have also witnessed its decline or extinction. With education, modernization and now religious fanaticism the concept of *Badal*, particularly the negative one, is declining. When a person is modernized and educated, he or his family becomes more humane and law abiding citizens, so they take such cases to the court of law instead of involving in vendetta. *Badal* in case of religious extremism has a different situation. With the spread of talibanization, the religious workers/ zealots are working in organized groups. If they target any person for his/ her deeds, the affected person's family normally remains silent, which was not the case in earlier days. The religious groups' or individual's actions may not be always for religious reasons, sometimes they are also involved in personal matters but give it a religious colour, thus they get the support of their group and escape from *Badal* (Interview: Asghar Khan).

The tradition of *Panah* or Shelter has also not remained unaffected from modernization and religious fanaticism. In the traditional Pakhtoon society a Pakhtoon was always ready to provide shelter to any person who was in need of it. Once the Pakhtoon gave *Panah* to anybody, then no matter, come what may, even at the cost of their personal sufferings or damage, he/ they used to defend the person (Interview: Col. Falak Naz Bangash).

The Pakhtoons of plain areas used to seek *Panah* from their brothers in clan who were living in the highlands. It used to

happen in cases in which the Pakhtoons of plain areas would get involve in some enmities. In order to escape *Badal* from their rivals they would flee to the highlands seeking *Panah* from a family or tribe. In almost all cases such *Panah* was granted through their tradition of *lokhay* (utensil). Under this tradition the giver of *Panah* would declare that he/ his family has given *lokhay* to the person and his family. This tradition used to be held in such a way that the seeker of *Panah* would sacrifice some sacrificial animals and arrange a feast for the tribesmen and then it was announced there by the tribesman that he has given *lokhay* to the person and his family. In such a situation it used to become the duty of *Panah* giver to protect the person and his family everywhere, be that highlands or plain areas. This tradition has changed in a different way, now seldom *Panah* is given to the seeker if the seeker's financial position is weak. However, if the person is financially strong, then the *Panah* is granted for financial benefits. Even now directly no cash is demanded by the *Panah* giver but they get paid indirectly by receiving groceries and other daily consumable items, which normally run in thousands of rupees per month. Any person who is sought by the fanatic religious groups is seldom given *Panah* by any person or family; not because of religious reasons but because of the terror and fear of the religious groups (Interview: Shafiqullah Bangash).

Another important institution that is affected by modernization is *Hujra*. *Hujra* used to be the common place of the tribesmen, where not only they sat in free times but also worked as a guest house for the male guests. Traditionally all unmarried young males of the surrounding vicinity also slept in the *Hujra*. With modernization and urbanization this institution has almost vanished. Even if in some far flung villages it still exists, it has lost the traditional use. Most of the Pakhtoons have

now constructed either a small drawing cum guest room or the well-off people have constructed personal large *Hujras*. But these *Hujras* have obviously lost the traditional flavor of *Pakhtoonwali* (Interview: Shabir Raza).

Like the male members of Pakhtoon society the females had also their own common place known as *Gudar*. *Gudar* was actually either a community spring, well or canal, from where the young girls used to fetch drinking water for their families. And when they would gather at *Gudar* they used to have fun amongst themselves by playing or cracking jokes on each other. The males were prohibited or traditionally avoided *Gudar* and its route. With modernization and urbanization this is also affected. Now people have either piped water or dug wells in their own houses (Interview: Ali Gauhar Rahbar). The extinction of *Gudar* tradition is well explained by a poet in his well-known song, sung by a famous Pakhtoon singer, Haroon Bacha. The song says:

*Khalq Badal shu ka Badal shwaloo wakhtoonaa*  
*Jeenakai na raazee Gudar ta jeenakai na raazee Gudar*  
*ta*

(You Tube)

(Trans. Whether the times have changed or the people,  
 Girls are no more coming to *Gudar*, girls are no more  
 coming to *Gudar*)

Pakhtoon society is a male dominated or male chauvinist society, where the males have dominant or commanding role. Sometimes they exploit this position *vis-a-vis* females. One such tradition was *Jagh* or *Awaz*. *Jagh* or *Awaz* was the tradition when the male cousin of a female cousin would consider the marriage with the girl his right. Under this tradition the cousin

from the father side had a priority right over the mother side cousin. However, if the father side cousin was not pronouncing his right over the female cousin then the mother side cousin could pronounce his right. The tradition used to work in such a situation when the parents or family of the female were not ready to give in marriage their daughter to her cousin. In such a situation if the cousin wanted to pronounce his right, he would traditionally fire in the air some shots in front of the female cousin house or simply declare his intentions of marrying the girl. Once this declaration was made then it used to mean that anybody who wanted to marry the girl has to take the enmity of the male cousin. Obviously in tribal society no one could go for such marriage at the cost of personal danger and enmity. The right of the male cousin used to remain valid as long as he remained unmarried but if at any stage the male cousin would get married he would lose the right on his female cousin. What the male cousins used to do in such a situation, was that they would remain unmarried for awhile, once the female cousin's age of marriage would cross, then he would marry but the girl would remain unmarried for the rest of her life due to overage. Now with education and modernization seldom such cases occur. Rather there are many instances where even the engagements have broken but the male cousins have not created a big issue of that (Interview: Syed Mazhar ul-Hassan (Shahjee)).

Another tradition that was prevalent in the past but now seldom invoked was the tradition of *Swara*. This tradition was rather a cruel act on the females because under this tradition, when the two hostile families wanted to end the enmity the affected family would ask for a *swara* from the aggressor family. *Swara* would mean that the aggressor family would give in marriage one of their unmarried females to the affected

family unmarried male in marriage. The objective of such a tradition was that once the two hostile families would get engaged in nuptial knot and would have children from such marriage, the emotions of hostility would die down and the grandchildren would keep them away from re-engaging in enmity rather it would cement the relations. With education, awareness and modernization this tradition has almost vanished from overwhelming number of tribes (Usafzai 2004).

When we talk of the females marriages it reminds us of another tradition known as *Walwar*. *Walwar* was actually head money taken by the bride family from the family of the bridegroom. It was prevalent amongst all the Pakhtoons till recent past. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the well-known Pakhtoon nationalist leader, writes in his autobiography that he was the first to stand against this tradition in Hashtnagar area and did not pay for his bride (1362: 78). The urbanization and modernization also affected this tradition and now except in few tribal areas the tradition does not exist amongst overwhelming majority of Pakhtoons. However, though this bad tradition has vanquished, the modernization and urbanization has given rise to, equally bad, another custom, which is *Jahez*. *Jahez* means the household items for the wedding bride from the parents or family. For the past few years slowly and gradually this tradition is getting roots amongst the middle and higher classes of the Pakhtoons. They purchase expensive household items for their wedding females. It is now becoming a nuisance because even if some families cannot afford to do so they do it in order to keep their prestige intact and high in the society (Interview: Rahmat Ali).

*Mirata* was another cruel tradition prevalent among the Pakhtoons in the past. *Mirata* was actually killing of all male

persons of the family, old, young or even infants, in order to grab the property of male relatives, since in the traditional Pakhtoon society females did not have the right of property, so they were spared. With modernization and awareness this cruel tradition has vanished from the Pakhtoons and no more it is heard that a *Mirata* is carried out (Interview: Hassan Badshah Orakzai).

The Pakhtoon society was and is still a tribal society. Each tribe has a traditional head; that used to be either *Malik* or *Khan* or in some cases *Syed* (Spain 1972: 49). *Mullah* or the religious leader had a secondary role in the society. The role of *Mullah* was traditionally reserved for religious ceremonies and he was not considered part of the Pakhtoon Society, that's why in the traditional distribution of land under *Shaikh Mali* system (Caroe, 181-4) amongst the Pakhtoon tribesmen, he did not have equal right of land. He was given a small piece of land attached to the mosque known as *Serai*, so that he could sustain his family on the income. But with the rise of religious extremism and talibanization these roles have changed. Now, *Mullah* is not only the leader of the religious ceremonies, he is also the leader of the tribe. Without the consent of the *Mullah* now even the *Malik* and *Khan* hesitate to take a decision. Rather with the rise of talibanization hundreds of *Maliks* have been killed in the tribal areas by the religious zealots/ fanatics (Interview: Muhammad Ayub, Miranshah).

Due to the tribal nature of the society the Pakhtoons used to take the hostile common challenges combinedly. In emergency situations one such tradition was known as *cheegha*. *Cheegha* was actually an emergency pursuit party to nab the culprit(s). In this situation from a common place in the village either they would beat the drum loudly or make some announcement for the

gathering of the tribesmen to pursue the culprit(s). When the villagers would hear such announcement or unusual beat of drums they would immediately get their weapons and rush to the common spot. Once some people were gathered then they would run after the culprit(s). The culprit(s) could be the hijackers of either cattle, tribesmen or even some murderers. This tradition was a very effective tool in checking crimes in the vicinity of the tribal areas but with the rise of talibanization this tradition has also heavily suffered and now seldom it is heard that the tribesmen have arranged a *cheegha* party (Interview: Fazal Dad Khan).

*Badragha* was another good tradition of the Pakhtoons. *Badragha* was a tradition of giving escort to the travelers in order to pass them safely from the tribal areas. With the rise of talibanization and the weakness of the institution of *Khan* or *Malik* this has also suffered rather totally vanished. Under this custom the visitor would traditionally exchange some gifts with the *Khan* or *Malik* and the latter would take the responsibility of his/her safety during his stay in the *Khan* or *Malik*'s territories. In some cases this responsibility even extended beyond the *Khan* or *Malik*'s territory (Interview: Muhammad Ayub, Charsadda).

*Balandra* or *Ashar* is another casualty of the modernization and urbanization. Under this tradition the tribesmen used to extend combined help to an individual to complete his personal work. Whenever a tribesman would need such help; for example to harvest, thrash the harvest, cut trees for firework or even construction of a minor nature, he would ask his tribesmen for help. They would come and help him without any charges, however, traditionally the host would cook for them food and tea during working time. But with modernization and

urbanization this combined work is now replaced by paid labours (Interview: Syed Ghayoor Hussain).

Last, but not the least, a very good tradition which was prevalent in the past but no more exists amongst the majority of Pakhtoons was *Neendra*. *Neendra* was a kind of financial assistance by relatives, friends and co-villagers with the wedding family. Under this tradition once other customs of the wedding were performed, then the bridegroom used to be brought to the *Hujra*, where the relatives, friends and co-villagers would give cash money to the bridegroom or his parents. This was a kind of indirect help in footing the expenses of the marriage but with modernization this tradition has also vanquished (Interview: Syed Ghayoor Hussain).

## Conclusion

Cultures can not remain static because interaction with other societies and other factors lead to changes in each and every culture. Thus Pakhtoons are no exception, in spite of the fact that Pakhtoons are considered to be very traditionalists and orthodox and are not easily ready to accept changes, particularly in their traditions or *Pakhtoonwali*. It is obvious from the following two sayings:

*Da kalya ooza kho da narkha ye ma oowaza*

[Trans. You may get ready to be kicked out of village but you should not violate the traditions].

Another saying is,

*Dher bai Pakhto kaar da wako*

[Trans. You have acted against Pakhto norms which mean that you have done a very negative or bad thing and you have violated the traditions of *Pakhtoonwali*].

These sayings clearly show that Pakhtoons do not easily accept change in their customs and traditions. However, in spite of their love for their traditions they also could not escape the natural law of change. Though in the Pakhtoons' case the change has occurred mainly due to modernization and religious extremism, had these factors not effected the changes in *Pakhtoonwali* then something else might have resulted in the changes.

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# **The Buddhist Relic Casket of Chargono Shalkandi, 2003, Dir Lower, Pakistan**

*Zain ul Wahab*

## **Abstract**

*Pakistan is world-known due to two great civilizations i.e. Indus Civilization and Gandhara Civilization. The Gandhara was the ancient name of Peshawar valley comprising the ancient cities of Peshawar (Kanishkapura, Begram), Charsada (Pushakalavati), Shahbazgarhi, (Vershapura), and Hund or Udhbhandpur.*

*This article is about the Gandhara civilization. It deals with the recent excavations in Shalkandi site (district Dir Lower), and specifically, it discusses the newly excavated Relic Casket and its different archaeological aspects. The chronological study reveals that Shalkandi site belongs to Gandhara period particularly Buddhism.*

## **Locale**

Since ancient times Dir has remained a hub of history. Almost all the invaders i.e. Aryans, Achaemiads, Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Kushanas, Hunas, Turks, Mongols and the Mughals came to sub continent via Dir Bajaur. The Buddhist and Hindu Shahi remains are visible on every mound in the Dir Lower district. (Dani 1967-68: 251)

The Shalkandi site situated at a distance about 75 miles from Chakdara Museum in North West of district Dir Lower and tehsil Munda, in the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. To approach this site we have to move from Munda Bazar to Shalkandi site which is about 7 km away. On the way there is a stream of water spring come from 1.5 km and on

reaching the water resource the site is located on the left side of the stream known as Chargon Shalkandi.

This area is very attractive valley due to natural greenish beauty surrounded by huge and large mountains all around. To the north side of the area is Afghanistan whereas to the west is Bajaur Agency. (Wilkinson et al 2000: 78-9).

### **Brief History of the Excavation**

In December 2002 some illegal excavations were carried out by looters and local smugglers but due to the on time police raid it was stopped. This illegal activity caused a huge damage to the site. The Department of Archaeology (KP) contacted our team, after that we visited and prepared a comprehensive report on it. This report was submitted to Department of Archaeology in 2003. Dr. Ihsan Ali (the then Director General) provided all facilities to start excavation in April, 2003. (See **Fig. 1**).



**Figure 1: Dr Ihsan Ali (DG Archaeology) at the site**

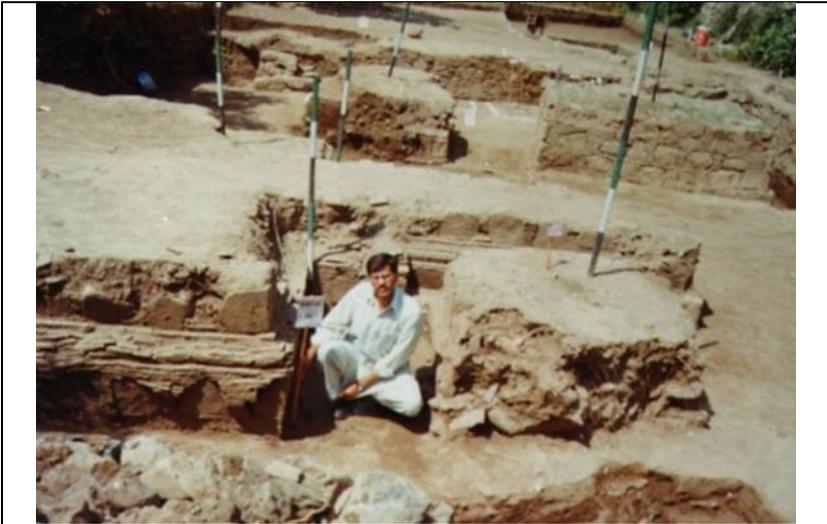
During excavation small monastery of the Buddhist period was exposed (Figs. 2-4) but the most important and valuable discovery was the relic casket of Buddhist period which might belong to the Buddha or other Buddhist personalities.



**Figure 2: General View of the Site**



**Figure 3: Main Stupa**



**Figure 4: Votive Stupa**

### **Relic Caskets in Buddhism**

The Relic caskets have tremendous importance in Buddhism. After the death of Buddha and his cremation the body ash was a reason of fight among various kings due to its religious value. Later Dhurna decided to distribute the ash among the kings equally (Ingholt 1957: 95).



**Figure 5: Stone Relic Casket in Private Collection.**

Casket is normally made up of stone and body ash of Buddha was added in it but some other belongings to Buddha were also put in these caskets. (**Fig. 5**)

These caskets were distributed in different parts of the world by different Rajas who obtained these ash and stupas were made for this purpose. These caskets were then put in these stupas and pilgrims made their rounds around these stupas. In the main stupas the ash of Buddha was placed in caskets but in votive and memorial stupas the caskets contain remains of Monks and other religious persons.

Relic caskets were transferred to the different parts of the world for religious purpose as an evidence of these relic caskets was found in Whole Buddhist dynasty. There is a sign of compressed rock which is assumed to be the remains of an elephant which was carrying ash filled casket of Buddha in this area.

The relic casket found from Shah ji ki Dheri (Peshawar) has an inscription which was the name of Kanishka and it later became the Peshawar (Kanishkapura is the ancient name of Peshawar) (Ingholt 1957: 180).

Relic cult played a very important role in Buddhism. The contention related to the distribution of Buddha's relics and similarly the opening of the earlier Stupas by Asoka and distribution of the relics to over 84,000 new built Stupas, were really meant to justify the relic cult. In the Bajaur (Shinkot) inscription at the time of Menander, a relic of Buddha is spoken of as being endowed with life.

The Relic cult with some variations is common to all Buddhist Sects, though their interpretations are somewhat different. For instance, the Dhar Maguptas, Sarvastivadins and

Mulasarvastivadins believed that the Stupa cult was beneficial because Buddha had stated that there was no difference between the relics and himself and at the time of his death had accepted gifts made to a Stupa in advance. The Caitikas and Mahisasakas, however, held that the only value of such a cult lay in the state of mind of the donor.

The merit accrued by a Bodhisattva – this cardinal concept of the Mahayana Sect of Buddhism – is considered transferable to others, assisting in awakening of the faith in them so that, becoming true followers of Buddhism, help them in their efforts to be enlightened and eventually to attain Nirvana, the ultimate goal of every human being.

It is believed that the exposition of the fundamental philosophy of the Mahayana Sect of Buddhism was the original work of the celebrated Sanskrit scholar and poet Asvagosha. However, no copies of this original Sanskrit text are available now to throw light on the beginnings of the Mahayana school.

### **Shalkandi Relic Casket**

This is most important relic casket recovered from the chamber of main stupa Shalkandai archaeological site (**Fig. 5**).



**Figure 5: Shalkandi Relic casket**

Serial No	20
Accession	2136
Provenance	Charganoo, Shalkandai
Locus	A01-2
Present Location	Dir museum, Chakdara
Date of discovery	2003
Material	gray stone/ silver
Condition	very fine
Dimension	2½ x3 cm
Estimated period	2nd/3rd century AD of Production

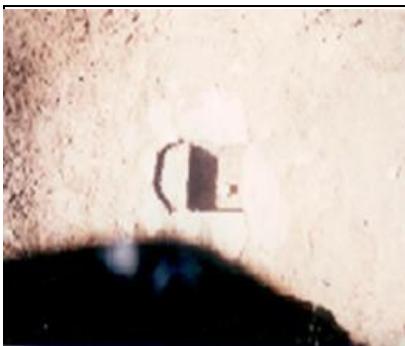
### **Description**

This is the only relic casket found in district Dir in an excavation conducted by a Government agency. A number of relic casket have been found in the excavations conducted by Government but the Dir find is of a unique shape and design, and therefore, it can be argued that it introduced the Gandhara art in the region for the first time. It not only fills the gap but also improves the chronology of Gandhara. The cover of relic casket is made of shiest and decorated with incised lines. It is in small ball shape. Inside the cover, a small cylinder shape relic casket was protected. Probably it is made of silver. The relic casket is properly sealed. It is unknown that what is in the relic casket. But in my opinion it is original relic casket because it is sealed properly.

### **Architecture of the Relic Casket Chamber**

The relic casket chamber was revealed during the excavation. It was located in the middle of main stupa. The chamber was beautifully constructed in a very architectural way. It is of a

square elevated shape and at its brim has a triangular shape which two stages, making it unique. This chamber was excavated by the author and was in original form that also makes it unique. (Figs. 6-7)



**Figure 6: Chamber of Relic casket**



**Figure 7: A View of Spot of the discovery of the Relic Casket**

## Conclusions

1. The most important point of discovery was the unique features of relic casket because its presence in the monastery was strange as it was expected that this relic casket may not be there due to illegal excavators.
2. Pre-excavated chambers from different areas are always found in debilitated conditions but this relic casket was in almost complete form without any sign of decay, despite the fact that the stupa where it was preserved showed signs of decay.
3. The excavated chamber has been well-documented and described in such a way that in future its characteristics could be very helpful for scholars and any person who will work on morphology of the relic caskets of the Buddhist period.

4. This casket can be differentiated from others as it has an outer casket made of stone (as were all others also found in stone made chamber). Besides, this casket also has a silver chamber inside it and it was so sophisticated that it looks like a plastic with knob on it. It is unique in its manufacturing so it was declared unique among others.
5. It may be concluded that this relic casket was originally not made there as inner silver chamber was not fitted and fixed inside stone chamber. It may also be concluded that it may have been transferred from some other site and was then put in this relic casket.
6. From the presence of this relic casket in Shalkandi Site it can also be inferred that it was transferred here from some other site due to any fear of looting of Buddhist belongings, and it was either removed from an original Stupa to this small and unfamiliar stupa.

### **Acknowledgement**

The author wishes to thank the members of his excavation team, namely Mr. Dost Muhammad and Mr. Javaid Khan.

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## *The Debate:*

### **Film vs. Digital: The Impending Extinction of the Celluloid Cinema and the Challenges Ahead**

The SAARC Cultural Centre, ever since its inception in March 2009, has been engaged in promotion of cultural cooperation amongst the people of its Member States. In this process, it started a ‘SAARC Film Festival’ in 2011 through which it intends to promote Colombo as the destination city for the SAARC Cinema.

Apart from showcasing some of the best films from across the region, these Film Festivals are also conceived as a platform where all stakeholders can meet, interact and engage in a meaningful dialogue concerning some of the most crucial issues of common interest. Towards this objective, in 2011 a workshop on the ‘Societal Role of the Film-makers: Balancing Commercial Success and Social Commitments’ was organized, which was attended by the film directors from Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka whose films were screened at the Film Festival, 2011; the members of the international Jury of the Film Festival; film critics, faculty members from universities and other academic institutions as well as others interested in the films in general.

Coming from a background of archival profession, I had been for long engaged in this debate of Film vs. Digital. The recommended format for archiving of documents and records world over remains the 35mm black and white microfilms, even today.

In the context of the Cinema, however, this debate really began in the opening years of this century. In fact it was in 1998,

that the High Definition Cameras based on CCD (charge couple device) technology for digital imaging were introduced in the market, and it was only then that the seasoned film-makers began to recognize the potential of this new technology in the film-making.

In May 2001, the first digital movie *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* was released. It was shot in 24 frame-per-second high-definition digital video, using a Sony HDW-F900 camera. Next year, also in May, another mega-movie, *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* was released having also been shot using the same Sony HDW-F900 camera. A trend was thus set and there was no looking back ever since. A decade later, also in May, we have assembled here to discuss the challenges that this new technology has posed for the future of Cinema in South Asia, which, thanks to Bollywood, produces the maximum number of films worldwide.

Philip Cheah, a Singapore-based Film critic of international repute and editor of *BigO*, Singapore's only independent pop culture publication, together with Dr. D.B. Nihalsingha, one of the most senior film directors in Sri Lanka and also a pioneer in the film industry and television industries, enter this debate in the two papers that follow. These are the modified versions of the Keynote address by Philip Chea and a panel presentation made by the Dr. Nihalsingha at the workshop on the same theme organized as part of the SAARC Film Festival, 2012.

– **Editors**

## **Nothing is meant to Last Forever: Perspectives on Digital Preparedness of the Asian Cinema**

*Philip Cheah*

1995 appears to be a magic year for cinema history as *Toy Story* became the first wholly digital film to be made. Digital is the making of cinema by digital equipment and computer software.

That year was also significant for the creation of the Dogme 95 Manifesto by Danish directors Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. Since the manifesto insisted on hand-held cameras and the use of natural light, digital cameras became the preferred medium. The first film that came from the Dogma movement was *The Celebration* by Thomas Vinterberg in 1998, and more than 60 features came out of this collective that broke up in 2005.

1995 also marked the 100 years of cinema and it's only fitting that this centenary provided the impetus for the digital revolution.

Coming to Asia we find that the first digital films were all made here around the same time. Garin Nugroho's *The Poet* (Indonesia) was shot digitally in 1999 even though it was blown up to film. Jon Red's *Still Lives*, also in 1999, was the first totally digital feature in the Philippines as well as Eric Khoo's *Stories About Love* from Singapore in 2000 and Amir Muhammad's *Lips to Lips* from Malaysia, also in 2000.

Historically, the fact that this digital wave was occurring simultaneously could be explained by a commonality in that period. It was the time of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the rising cost of film production and the decreasing budgets of film production due to new interest in cable TV, also mirrored the

declining cinema box office receipts. With all these problems, it became logical for the filmmakers to turn to the next reasonable alternative – the cheaper digital camera.

Then the digital revolution broke out. In 2000, the Singapore International Film Festival launched the first Asian digital film website ([www.8.Arts.com](http://www.8.Arts.com)), to reflect the new works that celebrated the digital medium. The next year saw the first Digital Talkies Film Festival in India, which showcased over forty new Indian digital works. Sadly, both initiatives faded away due to lack of funding. However, one initiative that did carry on is the Jeonju Digital Project that the Jeonju International Film Festival in Korea began in 2000. Each year, the festival selects three directors to make three 30-minute digital shorts with a fund of over US\$40,000 per film. This year, for example, Sri Lankan director, Vimukthi Jayasundara, contributed one digital film to the project.

But it was the hungrier countries that caused the revolution not to be televised. After Lips to Lips, Amir Muhammad and a group of like-minded independent filmmakers started making no-budget digital films. Ignored by the state funding bodies and with no hope of securing studio budgets, they took the word independent seriously and made no-budget films. Today, we look back and call it the Malaysian New Wave with well-known names such as James Lee (*The Beautiful Washing Machine*, 2004), Ho Yuhang (*Sanctuary*, 2004) and Tan Chui Mui (*Year Without Summer*, 2011).

### **Philippines - A Digital Miracle**

But a still hungrier nation is now leading the South-east Asian world and it's appropriate that Philippines, the world's former fourth largest movie producer, is leading the digital wave today.

In 2005, the year that the Dogme collective broke up, the Philippines started the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival that encouraged digital filmmaking by funding ten feature films annually, each receiving US\$10,000 or (500,000 Philippine pesos). It may be noted that an average cost of a big budget Filipino celluloid feature is about US\$500,000 including marketing and distribution, and it needs to make three times that figure to make a profit. If the film does not do well, it disappears from the box office in one week. In 2011, the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival produced two box office hits, one of which was Marlon Rivera's *Woman in the Septic Tank*, which made over 40 million Philippine pesos (or US\$950,000), the highest box office record for an independent film in the Philippines.

The flurry of indie digital films has become such a national habit that the number of celluloid films each year matches the number of digital films. Each sector produces an average of fifty titles. But this is still a problem, as the digital films are not breaking into the mainstream exhibition sector. Exhibition scouts attend the festival each year to procure titles for commercial distribution and two titles from the nine new competition features were bought last year.

An alternative to Cinemalaya is the Cinema One Originals Film Festival that also funds ten digital features but with double of the funding amount US\$20,000 or (one million Philippine pesos). Started by the ABS-CBN TV channel, the festival is a clever way to acquire new product for its cable network. So in this sense, the filmmaker is not worried about the exhibition, as his work will be broadcast in any case.

But Philippines embraced the possibilities of the digital alternative, wholeheartedly and examined all its possibilities. As

we can see from above, like the Malaysians, the Filipinos tackled the issue of no-budgets and low budgets. But it's in the aesthetics that they excelled. Lav Diaz blew the roof off Hollywood in 2004 when he made the 10-hour long digital feature, *Evolution of a Filipino Family*. Diaz believes in the cinema aesthetics of immersion that one learns to see anew with different rhythms and sense of time. The film's long length follows almost a real-time rhythm. When a character is walking on screen, the camera follows him faithfully almost for the duration of his walk. When characters talk, they end up being filmed in a lengthy discourse. Time is not so fractured as in a Hollywood production but is left alone to undulate.

Other Filipino directors such as John Torres and Raya Martin embraced digital freedom by going experimental. While the latter chose to re-appropriate early cinema forms such as the silent movie and the black and white film, in his debut feature, *A Short Film about the Indio National* (2005), the latter chose to use digital as an experimental diary form by speaking from inside everyone's heads in his debut, *Todo Todo Teros* (2006).

### **Back to the Future**

From the examples above, we can see that there are now two threads or two paths that digital cinema is taking, just as there were two paths that diverged when cinema was born in 1895. The two paths are fantasy and reality.

Prior to the camera being motorized, the early expressions of cinema were found in the nineteenth Century mechanical devices such as the Zoetrope, a circular drum of spinning static images or the Thaumatrope, a toy disc with two images on each side that is flipped quickly by attached strings to create an illusion of movement, and of course, the famous magic lanterns.

These devices were grounded in illustrative art that were then animated manually.

When the film camera arrived, fantasy gave way to reality. Early cinema was about ordinary life being recorded. Illustrated art then became a cinematic sub-genre – animation or the cartoon.

One hundred years later, digital has returned us to the beginning. The immersion cinema of Lav Diaz is a return to early cinema's recording of reality. Even though, the films are getting much longer now than the Lumiere brothers' short ones.

And animation has returned with a vengeance. The current wave of box office hits from *Spiderman*, *Iron Man*, *Captain America*, *The X-Men* to *The Avengers* are not only fuelled by comics titles but all the special effects are designed and illustrated via computer software - the magic of digital. This is actually the return of the illustrator who inspired cinema during the 19th century.

But the other key divergence that digital has opened is the window to experimental cinema. While experimental film has always been an underground and alternative genre, digital film is now drawing from one of the fundamental sources of cinema, that of painting.

The more visual aspects of experimental digital cinema have been so preoccupied with the image that the scriptwriter has almost been written out of the process. In its place, the painting has returned. The slower rhythms of experimental digital film has created a trend for contemplative films where the moving image is so static that the movie is almost a painting hung on a gallery wall.

As a result, there is less a necessity for scriptwriters to dream up witty dialogue. The term ‘visual literacy’ coined in 1969 has now become literal.

### **Challenges Ahead**

Digital archiving is a big problem and will be a bigger problem in the future. This is the key challenge in this digital age, as digital is one of the most unstable archiving and storage forms. Compared to celluloid that can last over 100 years, digital storage on hard drives, DVDs or solid-state memory, is measured in years, not decades.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences concluded early this year that the digital, —.technology that makes it easy to make the picture also underlies the lack of guaranteed long-term access to it.”

Unlike celluloid that can be stored and filed away, digital storage has to be actively supervised and constantly checked. As digital equipment and formats keep changing - think here about U-matic tapes, Digi-Beta, Hi-8, Hi-Def, Mini-DV and the fact that digital cameras don’t even use tape anymore – one can imagine how volatile the format is.

Then in addition, migrating to other formats has its own issues. Data can be lost in the midst of migration. Worse, the data’s lifetime could have exceeded. Most digital filmmakers do not realise that their data is so perishable that they won’t even be able to exploit their works within the copyright timeframe (in US laws, this is about 95 years).

However, digital remains a very attractive medium. Two years ago, with the Red camera technology, Filipino director,

Raymond Red shot Manila Skies using this camera and was so shocked that the resolution was near celluloid quality.

Today, the new cameras are even more affordable with the Black Magic and the Canon Digital SLR cameras. Digital resolution is now converging to celluloid standards but the cinema experience will never be the same.

I wish to conclude by drawing from a Buddhist saying, Nothing is meant to last forever, which is so true philosophically as well in our context of impermanence of the cine media.

# **The Digital Takeover: Challenges for the South Asian Cinema**

*D.B. Nihalsingha*

I propose to approach the topic from a perspective quite different from that taken by Philip Cheah. While I agree that digital alternative opens out a whole new vista for independent directors, I see that to get the audience which makes film making worthwhile it is necessary to have them presented in cinema halls, projected on to a large screen in a darkened auditoriums which alone gives the total immersion only cinema is capable of.

But first some basic definitions:

- Film is a process of generating images using a photochemical process whereby sensitized celluloid strips – cine films – are exposed to light in a camera and then that film is chemically processed to generate moving images in a negative form which then is printed mechanically on to a positive cine stripes for cinema exhibition.
- Digital cinema is an electronic process where images are broken down into a digital form and then recorded for eventual reproduction via projection on to a screen in a darkened auditorium.
- Digital cinema is distinct from high-definition television, uses a progressive scan of 24 Frames per Second (FPS) which mimics cine film rates of travel in a projector. In contrast television standers use interlace scan and is meant for television broadcasts, not projection as in Digital cinema.

- In digital cinema, resolutions are represented by the horizontal pixel count, such as 2K (2048×1080) or 4K (4096x2160).
- D-cinema is the Digital Cinema Initiative (DCI) 4K standard agreed to by major US film studios. 2K called E-cinema which term is used for any kind of projection process which can range from a home video projector to a large venue video projector.

While celluloid has been used as the only pathway to the cinema screen for hundred years, several alternative pathways incorporating digital image technology have developed and grown alongside the celluloid one in the last decade, especially since 1995. There are several pathways to the screen and celluloid is only one of them.

At this time four pathways exist:

1. The first and the best known: Shoot on film, finish and show on film.
2. The second is to shoot on film, post produce on digital to create a digital intermediate and then print copies off that for cinema screening. This became the rage since 2000, adopted and used by every major film studio in the US and in many parts of the world. The process is now in retreat.
3. The third is to shoot on digital, finish on digital, then transfer to film, and show on film. This was because until recently most cinemas around the world were film. Thus even though a film was digitally produced, they had to be transferred to film to reach an audience. A good example was George Lucas's *Star Wars - Attack of the Clones*.
4. The fourth is to shoot on video, finish and show on video.

Of the four pathways the first three are under continuing siege, with traditional full or part use of celluloid receding under the relentless onslaught or development of digital technology.

It is matter of time when the last pathway will prevail. Why would this be so? It is, to use the word of the topic of the workshop, impending, i.e. looming, approaching, nearing. However that impending reality is already happening.

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) reported in January 2012 that 2011 will be marked as the year where with unremitting, unyielding progress of the digital domain in every area of film production, exhibition and distribution digital took over as the foremost form to overcome film. Critical milestones had been reached in the retreat of film as the dominant medium of choice.

Take production. With the advent of progressive scan video yielding 24 FPS in video – something not possible with interlace scan prevalent before, progress has been fast and furious, Digital Cameras quality and definition have now equaled and surpassed those of film cameras. Many digital cameras were designed and made available with resolutions which equaled or even surpassed those of film cine cameras. Examples of these are Arriflex D20; Thompson Spider; Panavision Genesis.

The first milestone in the progress of digital as a an alternative to cine film was the announcement in January 2011 that three main film camera manufacturers – Panavision, Arriflex and Aaton had ceased production of film cameras, thus ending 100 years of development of film camera design. In another five years the supply of spares will also cease.

Indeed, film camera manufacturers have not only stopped making film cameras but have instead thrown in their lot with

developing and marketing digital cameras which surpasses their film cameras: Panavision with Genesis, Arriflex with Alexa and D21, and Aaton with Delta Penelope. To this must be added Sony Cine Alta systems, Thompson Spider, Silicon Imaging SI-2K (of the *Slumdog Millionaire* fame), RED Epic camera breaking the 5K barrier. Even China has designed its own called KineRAW Digital Cinema Camera.

Secondly, after its share price plummeted to less than a dollar, Eastman Kodak has filed for bankruptcy in last month. Kodak will sooner than later cease to manufacture cine film leaving the scene entirely to the Fuji. How long Fuji can remain a manufacturer as film ceases to be used for negative and print more and more is a moot point.

Thirdly, in place of cine film, file based image recording systems such as Panavision SSR-1, Sony HD Portable Digital Video Recorder – SRW-1, Codex Digital, use solid state to record internally or on to memory chips mounted on cameras such as SxS (S-by-S).

Fourthly, editing systems were the first to embrace digital; digitizing film shot on celluloid and then dieting on electronic systems such as Avid, which mimicked the film editing systems.

Fifthly, digital video is advancing into new frontiers progressing technically to be free of the intermittent flicker so perceptible in cine projection. Now digital is poised to increase film projection rate of 24 FPS to 48 FPS and even to 60 FPS. The result will be a marked increasing in flicker-free clarity, while permitting use of 3D technology to greater effect.

Sixthly, until recently, the growth of digital cinemas was slow because the cost of video projectors had to be borne by

cinema owners while the beneficiaries were distributors, producers.

As the costs of video projectors drop from 250,000 about ten years ago for a 8000 lumens large venue projector to \$100,000 at present, as the need for large venues diminish because of a boom in multiplexes, requiring less costly projectors, the number of digital cinemas are bound to grow at a faster pace.

In electronic cinema operation, greater choice of films is available digitally to cinemas, lowering cost of cinema operation, making digital cinema an attractive business proposition. Cinema operation is fully computerized across multiple screens offering more film choices for the audience, with programs fed in by satellite, telephone wire or hard disc.

With digital cinema being embraced rapidly, it was not surprising that greatest blow to film came with the announcement by SMPTE in January 2011 that there are more cinemas worldwide which are digital than which are film. That is to say that more than half of the world's 125,000 plus screens are now digital.

This digitalization is growing at a rapid daily rate, while film screens are not only dormant but receding. In many European countries as well as in the US cinema projectors have virtually no market as existing cine projectors are removed from cinemas and junked. The same trend is to be seen in Asia. Currently, the Asia region has approximately 7,000 digital screens. China alone has around 3,000 new screens either planned or under construction.

IMAX (an abbreviation for Image Maximum) reached a deal with a Chinese company to open 75 new IMAX screens, a

major step toward its goal of 300 screens in Greater China in the next five years. The IMAX projection of Avatar in 3D Digital, reaching screen sizes some 70 feet by 60 feet, was a grand display of digital capability.

Thus the 120 year reign of film projection is drawing to a close. In January, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and terminated distribution of 35mm prints switching to Digital Cinema Packages

E-cinemas are fast spreading in India while a similar phenomenon can be seen in China, the 4 the largest cinema market in the world.

And although it's the industry standard determined by Hollywood, D-cinema is also taking root in territories that are dominated by local content – which in Asia means most of the biggest markets including China, India, South Korea and Japan.

E-cinema – its lower-cost cousin which is not DCI-compliant but is used to screen Indian content. India currently has around 4,000 e-cinema screens, out of a total of 9,000, while the number of D-cinema screens stands at around 300 and growing.

This, alongside the enhancing of the projection systems-smaller projectors, at lessor costs with greater projection capability sees the march of digital cinema forward.

With the spread of smaller cinemas in multiplex form with seats of 200 to 400 being the norm, high quality projection and their automation enabled economies not possible before. Film distribution digitally can be accomplished by satellite, via the telephone or via hard discs slashing film print and distribution costs, with the print quality diminishing with each pass in the film projector, none of which happens when a film is projected

digitally. This is in place of bulky film cans shipped in suitcase sized heavy boxes.

This then is the impending extinction of film.

### **The Challenges Ahead**

The biggest challenge is to overcome the sense of complacency of those in the film industry. Most are either unconcerned or unaware or both of the quantum change of technology which will surely arrive. They need to understand that technology.

Equipment manufacturers often misguide by announcing high definition capability of cameras where there are several other factors involved, such as the chip size of the camera, color sub-sampling rate, the lenses used and compression applied.

Cinema owners need to understand the technology in order to make critical investment decisions. Producers, Directors and technicians need to understand to make full use of the potential.

The greatest obstacle is the mindset which refuses to acknowledge the coming eventuality. Many in traditional cinema production are either uninformed or are unwilling to accept the passing of celluloid. This is the greatest challenge: the belief that film is superior, when digital damages can be manipulated to yield whatever look a creator wants. This, combined with the belief or wish that cinema will somehow survive is the greatest challenge.

The task is for film makers to understand the digital technology and the need to change the methodology of working, whether in production, exhibition or distribution.

This requires more effort and a better grasp of the technologies involved. Analog Film was basically a mature

domain which had plateaued some decades ago. Digital is still growing and advancing at mind boggling rate. It is necessary to understand the technology to make full use of it, than to merely have all the bells and whistles but know only enough to make use of only a few of them.

At the end of the day, it will be the change of technology. The essence will be to deliver illusions of reality, illusions of emotion which move and deliver a sense of wellbeing, a sense of betterment, and a better sense of understanding of the human condition.

That objective will remain the same as cinemas passes into oblivion, and digital domain takes over.

## **Our Contributors**

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specializes in Military Technology, Indian Culture and Archival Studies. He has researched on Military Technology and Modernization trends under Tipu Sultan (1782-1799). His research findings have been widely published and acclaimed in National & International Journals, books and proceedings which include two books and over forty research papers. He is actively associated with different academic organizations and attends many national and international seminars and conferences on the subjects.

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**Philip CHEAH**

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He is programme consultant for the South-east Asian Film Festival, the AsiaPacificFilms.com website, Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival, Cinema Digital Seoul Film Festival, and the Dubai International Film Festival. He is also Advisor for the Vietnam International Film Festival. He has also been adjudicator at the SAARC Film Festival 2011 & 12.

He has co-authored/ edited several books, viz., *And the Moon Dances: The Films of Garin* (2004), *Critic after dark: a review of Philippine cinema* (with Noel Vera, 2005), *Modernity and Nationality in Vietnamese Cinema* (with Ngo Phuong Lan and Aruna Vasudev, 2007) and *When Strangers Meet: Visions of Asia & Europe in Film* (with Aruna Vasudev, 2012).

### **Sudha GOPALAKRISHNAN**

has studied India's traditional arts forms for three decades, especially the performing arts of Kerala. Her books include: *From the Comic to the Comedic: the traditions of comedy of Bhāsa and Shakespeare* (1993), *Krsnagiti of Manaveda* (1997), *Kaikottikkalippattukal* (2004), and *Kutiyattam: The Heritage Theatre of India* (2012). She is a trained dancer of Kathakali and was the Vice President of Margi (Thiruvananthapuram). She was also the Founder Director of the National Mission for Manuscripts, which has led India's effort to source and place information on one million manuscripts on [www.namami.org](http://www.namami.org). She has been associated with UNESCO's intangible heritage stream as an expert, and has steered three successful nomination dossiers for India to UNESCO. This resulted in the proclamation of Kutiyattam, Vedic Chanting and Ramlila as 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'. Currently, she is President of the non-profit SAHA (Stirring Action on Heritage and the Arts). She is working to create Sahapedia, an online repository on Indian knowledge systems.

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**Dr. D.B. NIHALSINGHA**

is one of the most senior film directors in Sri Lanka and also a pioneer in the film industry and television industries with an experience of over four decades. He holds a Master's degree in Film Studies from the Norwich University, Vermont (USA) and a Doctorate in Public Enterprises from the University of South Australia, Adelaide. He was the youngest incumbent to become the Director of the Ceylon Government Film Unit. Later, in

1972, he became the founding CEO and General Manager of the State Film Corporation, a position which he held for the next six years, till 1978.

Dr. Nihalsingha has won many awards and felicitations in recognition of his sterling contribution to the cinema and television industry. These include: Sri Lankan National honour Kala Keerthi for his lifetime contribution to Sri Lankan film and television and the Life Fellowship by the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers of America (SMPTE), the oldest film and television body in the world.

### **Preeta NILESH**

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completed his M.A in Archaeology from University of Peshawar in 1984 and Ph.D in 2004 from University of Ioannina, Greece. He worked at administrative and research positions at different Museums of Kyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The Government of Greece awarded him with Gold Medal, Ambassador of Hellenism in 2005. He has also received five National awards for his services for the development of the field. He was nominated for the highest national award Sitara-e-Imtiaz for protection of 2200 Buddhist Sculptures.

Dr Wahab has authored two books and ten research articles. He has presented his work at different National and International conferences and organized a number of exhibitions. Currently, he is working as Head, Department of Art and Design, Hazara University, Mansehra.

## ***SAARC Culture Centre*** **Guidelines for Contributors**

The SAARC Culture invites contributions in the form of research papers or book reviews on any aspect of Culture of South Asia. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, *SAARC Culture*, SAARC Cultural Centre, 224, Baudhdhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka. ([journal-scc@sltnet.lk](mailto:journal-scc@sltnet.lk) or [sccpublications@gmail.com](mailto:sccpublications@gmail.com))

1. Submissions should contain:
  - a. Author's name, affiliation, postal address, e-mail, phone numbers;
  - b. Brief biographical entry, in c. 100 words;
  - c. Abstract/ Summary (for articles only), in c. 100-150 words;
  - d. Keywords (articles only), up to five keywords, for indexing and abstracting;
  - e. Title and the text (based on the given guidelines);
  - f. Acknowledgements (if applicable);
  - g. Endnotes (if any);
  - h. References (Bibliography, film, videography, etc).
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3. Articles should be typed on one side of the paper (preferably A4) and double-spaced throughout (not only the text but also displayed quotations, notes, references and all other matter). Please provide one hard copy and an exact electronic copy in MS Word, preferably as an e-mail attachment or on a CD/ DVD.
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8. Full details of work cited in the text should appear in References.<sup>4</sup>(Please see number 9 below). Only the author's name, year of publication and page number should appear in the main body text, viz.:
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  - b. If the author's name is mentioned at the end of the sentence:  
     (Samaddar 2010: 110-12).
  - c. If a study is referred to in the text:  
     A recent study (Samaddar 2010: 95-100) in South Asia demonstratesthat ...
  - d. If more than two authors:  
     (Perera, et al 2007: 34).
9. A consolidated alphabetical list of all books, articles, essays and theses referred to (including any referred to in the tables and figures) should be provided. It should be typed in double-spacing and printed at the end of the article. All articles, books and theses should be listed in alphabetical

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Das, *Veena*, *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Culture and Society*, (London, 2010).

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**ii. Edited Volumes:**

Bhattacharjee, J.B., (ed.), *Studies in the History of North East India* (Shillong, 1986). OrBlusse, L and F. Gaastra, (eds.), *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancient Regime*, (Leiden, 1981).

**iii. Articles in Journals:**

Gopal, Surendra. A Note on Archival Material in Russia on Russo-Indian Relations', *The Indian Archives*, vol. 35 (2), 1986, pp. 29-36.

**iv. Articles in Edited Volumes:**

Bayly, C.A., Pre-Colonial Indian Merchant and Rationality', in *India's Colonial Encounter:*

Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes, Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta eds., 2nd revised and enlarged edn., (New Delhi,2004), pp. 39-60.

**v. Material from Websites:**

Complete reference of the material used along with full URL of the website together with the date it was last accessed must be given, viz.,

The Clemency of Canning', Punch, No. 33 (24 October 1857), p. 171 from

<http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/57.html> (last accessed 8 March 2011).

**b. Unpublished Works**

**i. Theses and dissertations:**

Ghosh, Utpal, 'The Communist Party of India and India's freedom struggle, 1937-1947', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Burdwan, West Bengal, 1991.

Vijoo Krishnan, 'Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in Pakistani Punjab, 1947-1977', unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1997.

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11. An acknowledgement or statement about the background of the article, if any, may be given immediately after the main text of the article under a separate heading, viz. Acknowledgement(s).

12. All Figures and Tables should be presented on separate sheets at the end of the article and should NOT be inserted in the text. Only a mention of each figure or table in the text is to be given, viz. ‘as shown in Figure 2’. Please distinguish between Figures (diagrams) and Tables (statistical material) and number them in separate sequences, i.e., ‘Figure 8’, and ‘Table 8’. Please use short and crisp titles and headings for each Figure or Table, citing source where applicable. The units used and the sources should be stated at the foot of the table. Notes relating to the table should be placed after the source.
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## **SAARC Cultural Centre**

The SAARC Cultural Centre is a regional centre established on the 25 March 2009 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to recognize and promote the profound cultural continuum of South Asia in order to sustain harmonious relations among the people and to contribute towards holistic development in the region.

The Centre, successfully completed programmes that saw the birth of cultural exchange of ideas, knowledge sharing and showcasing the cultural experiences of the SAARC Member States through various interesting programmes and publications.

### **SAARC Cultural Centre Programmes for 2013**

Programmes implemented in 2013 will focus on:

- **Establishing linkages between culture and other sectors**  
- As part of promoting Cultural Cooperation, the SAARC Cultural Centre will celebrate SAARC Charter Day, SAARC Non-Violence Day, International Women's Day, World Heritage Day, World Music Day, SAARC Cultural Centre Foundation Day etc.
- **Promoting SAARC Culture online** - SAARC Cultural Centre will use this website and web portal to reflect the essence of cultural heritage of the Member States of the SAARC Region, to promote socio economic development through tourism and other world economic forces.
- **Promoting Cultural Festivals in the Region** - For 2013, the SAARC Cultural Centre proposes to have the first ever South Asian Song Festival. This Festival would pay emphasis to the different songs and folkloric traditions coming from the SAARC Region. This festival will bring

singers from all the eight SAARC Member States, and all singers will be invited to join in this first ever Song Festival of the region. Running parallel to this Festival a Symposium will be organized to explore various issues on the preservation of folkloric cultures, with emphasis on Folksong Tradition – ‘Revival and Re-creation’.

- **Developing Archeology, Architecture and Archives** - the SAARC Cultural Centre will organize a Conference 6 day workshop on Management Systems of World Heritage Sites in South Asia. The workshop will focus on the shared understanding of the diverse systems and mechanisms in the SAARC Region that exist for the management of a variety of sites and would aim at developing and improving their own authenticity and integrity of respective properties.
- **Developing Cultural Industries** - In 2012, the SAARC Cultural Centre focused on Traditional Handloom, with an Exhibition and Design Workshop titled “The Wheel of Life” Delhi 2012. In 2013, the SAARC Cultural Centre will have a similar programme with focus on Handicrafts.
- **Promotion of Literature in South Asia** - SAARC Cultural Centre will launch a programme for translation of classical literature of South Asia into English as well as other national languages of the Member States; Literary Festival on South Asian Novel; Collection of Contemporary Short Stories in the SAARC Region; and Collection of Contemporary Poetry in the SAARC Region.
- **Promoting Visual and Performing Arts in the SAARC Region** - The SAARC Film Festival, SAARC Film Day, Photographic Exhibition and Competition, Artist Camp and Exhibition of Paintings.

- **Research Programme** - Research Project on Safeguarding Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions of South Asia will be implemented in 2013.
- **SAARC Publication Programme** - At the conclusion of all workshops, seminars, symposiums, conferences etc, conducted by the SAARC Cultural Centre monographs will be published using deliberations for reference for scholars and others, in addition to publishing this online.
- **SAARC Cultural Journal** - *SAARC Culture* – the annual research Journal (vol 4: 2013) of the SAARC Cultural Centre will be published in 2013. Contributions from scholars are invited for this issue. For details please contact [journal-scc@sltnet.lk](mailto:journal-scc@sltnet.lk).



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