

SAARC ART

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SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation



Message from the Director

It gives me great pleasure in bringing out the second issue of SAARC Art Magazine of the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) coinciding with the International Women's Day celebrations.

The year 2014 had ended most successfully in which almost all our planned programs were conducted to its full potential.

This issue, to celebrate International Women's Day, has profiled two leading ladies in the SAARC Member States of India and Bhutan. Ms. Helen Acharya is the Secretary Executive Officer of the Sangeet Natak Akademi in New Delhi while H.E. Lyonpo Dorji Choden is the first lady Minister in the young democracy of Bhutan. Both of them are leading experts in the fields of culture and technical fields bringing the richness of the society and gender equality.

We are also honored to profile the interview of H.E. Lyonpo Chenkyab Dorji who was the former Secretary General of SAARC Secretariat from 2005 to 2008. He is the Chairman of the Royal Privy Council in Bhutan.

We have included other write ups on culture and various dances performed at the recently held Traditional Dance Festival in New Delhi, India along with glimpses of musical instruments from India.

Wishing all readers warmest greetings.

Ayubowan

G.L.W. Samarasinghe
Director



FEATURED

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An interview with Bhutan's First Lady Minister - Lyonpo Dorji Choden



H. E. Lyonpo Dorji Choden is the first lady Minister in Bhutan under the present government of People's Democratic Party led by Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay. She contested in the first parliamentary election in 2008 which she lost but got elected in 2013 from the Thriming-Kangpar constituency with thumping victory and heading the portfolio of Ministry of Works and Human Settlement.

Among her many firsts, she is the first lady to become the lady engineer with a degree from the Birla Institute of Technology, Ranchi, India and Master of Arts in Public Administration from Syracuse University in the United States. As the first female engineer in

Bhutan, she advocated for new roles and professional standing of women in the country and inspired many young women to enter into technical profession.

While serving as Assistant Resident Representative in the UNDP, heading the poverty portfolio, she had successfully managed three projects that aimed to promote economic empowerment of rural women (Food security under PTF and Women's Empowerment Project under AGFUND), and youth employment with a special focus on female youth through promotion of entrepreneurial development (the Income Generation Start-up Programme under HSF has successfully established young women entrepreneurs).

SCC caught up with H.E Lyonpo for a few questions for the celebration of International Women's Day and got to see some of her inner thoughts and outlook on world affairs.

Lyonpo Dorji Choden, we look at you with pride for being the first lady Minister in the young democracy and cabinet in Bhutan.

As a woman from the SAARC Region, what were the difficulties faced during your professional career?

► Firstly, thank you for giving me this special space in your SAARC Art Magazine. I am humbled.

To begin with, I want to believe that Bhutan is relatively one of the most fortunate countries when we talk about regional and global challenges posed by environment, social and cultural, governance, and of course gender among others. Our enlightened Monarchs have carefully charted our development path for inclusive wellbeing of the country and its people.

Since the time Bhutan began modernization, we started on an equal gender footing with regard to public policies and legal frameworks, thus offering equal opportunity to both girls and boys. I ventured into a male dominated profession

i.e Civil Engineering as early as the 1980s. Opportunities were open, but I must admit that the mindsets of our people were not very open. Many, including my family members discouraged me to pursue this profession.

Academic was not an issue, neither the competency to shoulder professional responsibilities. What came, as a big hurdle at work is the stereotype gender roles of child-care and domestic responsibility that I am expected to fulfill. This is expected by the family, the society; yet on the other hand not understood at the workplace. The so-called "triple burden" could be felt. While there is no explicit gender discrimination as exist in some of our SAARC countries, structural inequalities such

as this, comes in the way of women's full participation in public domain. Although changing with education, more needs to be done.

As a woman who has achieved success in your country, what is your advice to those from the region, who aspire to be like you?

No individual succeeds on her or his own, I think. Each one of us exists as a member in a family, as a team member in a work place or a member in a society. I believe that we are as social being, all inter-related and inter-dependent. Therefore I like to work in an environment of equitable partnership, with mutual respect, care and support to each other. When I am required to dedicate long hours to my professional career, I look for the support of my family members to take care on my personal and domestic fronts. To me success comes when I have been able to balance important aspects of life – career, personal and social life. So my message islive a full and balanced life so that you are happy and contented.

A brief insight to your current day to day

My days are filled with meetings, public functions, dinners and field visits. Then, I cannot ignore social calls from the general public for service or for some support. Often, I have to wake up to the reality and remind myself that I am not just a public servant with fixed responsibility, as I used to be. [I served in the Royal Government for many years before the Parliamentary Democracy]

I spend lot of my time in the Cabinet, the highest decision making body, which meets every week. We are a new set of Cabinet members. We are for change that will make a positive difference to the lives of our

people. We deliberate on various policy matters guided by our overarching vision for "Happiness". I make concerted effort to ensure simplicity, practicality for ease of implementation, sustainability and inclusiveness in any policy matters. These are close to my heart. Then my Cabinet portfolio is vast. I look after a Ministry, comprising largely engineers, architects and planners, engaged in planning, development and construction works. We have ambitious targets set in the 11th Five Year Plan to improve and build good road networks and to developable urban centers across the nation. The most important but challenging task is to motivate my staff and to keep them motivated to perform. This is not easy and it takes lots of retrospection, introspection and planning for effecting implementation.

Away from my Ministerial responsibility, I am also the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women and Children. This gives me lot of opportunities to work on plans and programmes for empowering women. We are concentrating on creating an enabling environment for women to take active part in public and political affairs. One notable example is promoting non-commercial, self-help child-care centers within the office premises in support of the working mothers.

Every day remains fully occupied. There is literally no time for leisure, but I manage to make some time to read, pray and do a light exercise. I also spend time with my family and friends over the weekends.

Your views on the SAARC, in particular culture and SAARC?

SAARC means many things to me. It is a diversity of cultures; geopolitics, ethnicity and religion.

It is a group that comprises a large proportion of the South Asian population. It is also a group with great talents. As envisioned in the Charter, if every member of the SAARC country thinks alike, collaborate and coordinate unconditionally, respect and support each other and be true in implementing what is agreed, SAARC can influence the world. But we need to act more rather than meeting and talking.

In your opinion, could culture be a soft diplomacy tool, in bringing countries together?

The cultural diversity can be vast, yet commonality exists among many nations that speak of each country's history. Just few days back, I was attending a cultural programme organized jointly by the Embassies of the Indian and the Bangladesh in Bhutan to commemorate the "International Mother Language Day" on 21 February 2015. It was a wonderful cooperation through culture, that brought together not only the Bhutanese, Indians and the Bangladeshis, but also several international people. Yes, culture can definitely play a catalytic role in bringing friendships and relations closer among the nations.

A personal message from you, for International Women's Day.

I will paraphrase what a learned Buddhist teacher said. I like this.

"Our freedom does not depend on the graces of others, it depends on us; there is no cage we are in, nor are our hands tied"

Let us therefore, set free our minds from prejudices ... and negativities ... and use our wisdom in bringing about a free and an equal society in our SAARC region and beyond. We can "Make it happen"



SAARC FILM FESTIVAL

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COLOMBO



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation



Sangeet Natak Akademi

An Introduction

Sangeet Natak Akademi - India's national academy of music, dance and drama - is the first national academy of the arts set up by the Republic of India. It was created by a resolution of the (then) Ministry of Education, Government of India, dated 31 May 1952, which was notified in the Gazette of India of June 1952. The Akademi became functional the following year, with the appointment of its first Chairman, Dr P.V. Rajamannar, and the formation of its all-India council of representatives, the General Council. The first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, inaugurated it on 28 January 1953 at a special function held in the Parliament House.



Gallery of Musical Instruments

at the Sangeet Natak Akademi Museum

A rich repertoire of musical instruments are on display at the SNA collected over the years. The museum itself was inaugurated by violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1964. A large number of exhibitions of about four hundred instruments was mounted in 1968 representing varied traditions of performing arts in India

There are the four-fold classification of musical instruments in India since ancient times, viz, tata vadya (chordophones), sushira vadya (aerophones), ghana vadya (idiophones), and avanaddha vadya (membranophones).

Some of them are just shown here to simply convey the depth of the vast number of musical instruments in varied hues and colours.

The Akademi's charter of functions was expanded along the original lines in 1961, when Sangeet

Natak Akademi was reconstituted by the Government as a society and registered under

the Societies Registration Act of 1860 (as amended in 1957).

These functions are set down in the Akademi's Memorandum of Association, adopted at its registration as a society on 11 September 1961.



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, then Union Minister for Education, in his opening address at the inauguration of the Akademi, said:

"India's precious heritage of music, drama and dance is one which we must cherish and develop. We must do so not only for our own sake but also as our contribution to the cultural heritage of mankind. Nowhere is it truer than in the field of art that to sustain means to create. Traditions cannot be preserved but can only be created afresh. It will be the aim of this

Akademi to preserve our traditions by offering them an institutional form ... In a democratic regime, the arts can derive their sustenance only from the people, and the state, as the organized manifestation of the people's will must, therefore, undertake ... maintenance and development [of arts] as one of [its] first responsibilities."

The Akademi's charter of functions was expanded along the original lines in 1961, when Sangeet Natak Akademi was reconstituted by the Government as a society and



ALGOJA: Aerophone

RAJASTHAN (Courtesy: SNA)

A set of two equal sized bamboo, beaked flutes. Five finger holes and a fipple hole on each flute. Both the flutes are blown simultaneously by the player. Used by 'Meo' community of Alwar, Rajasthan as an accompaniment to their folk and tribal songs.



JANTAR: Chordophone

MADHYA PRADESH (Courtesy: SNA)

Stick type wooden body with two gourds tied to it. Twelve raised wooden frets at the centre. One main and one auxiliary bridge, with two steel strings. Played with a bow made of horse hair. Used by 'Pradhan' community of Madhya Pradesh as an accompanying instrument.



The Akademi's charter of functions was expanded along the original lines in 1961, when Sangeet Natak Akademi was reconstituted by the Government as a society and registered under the Societies Registration

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Since its inception, the Akademi has been functioning as the apex body in the field of performing arts in the country, preserving and promoting the vast intangible heritage of India's diverse culture expressed in forms of music, dance and drama. In furtherance of its objectives, the Akademi coordinates

and collaborates with government and arts academies of different States and Union Territories of the Union of India, as also with major cultural institutions in the country.

The Akademi establishes and looks after institutions and projects of national importance in the field of the performing arts. The Akademi established the National School of Drama and the Asian Theatre Institute in July 1959. The Asian Theatre Institute merged with the National School of Drama when it separated from the Akademi in 1975 and became an autonomous organization. It was registered as a Society the same year. Sangeet Natak Akademi now has three constituent units, two of these being dance-teaching institutions: the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipuri Dance Academy (JNMDA) at Imphal, and Kathak Kendra in Delhi. JNMDA has its origin in the Manipuri Dance College established by the Government of India in January 1964. Funded by the Akademi since its inception, it became a constituent unit of the Akademi in 1967. It was subsequently renamed after India's first Prime Minister. A leading institution in the teaching of Manipuri dance, JNMDA offers several comprehensive courses in the dance and music of



BORTAL: Idiophone

ASSAM (Courtesy: SNA)

A pair of large size Cymbals, made of refined bronze metal. A huge ball shaped depression at the centre. Both the units are gripped separately and clapped. Used in various folk traditional forms of Assam.



DAVANDI: Membranophone

TAMILNADU (Courtesy: SNA)

Hour glass shaped small drum of brass. Hooped parchment is stretched over both the faces. Held in left hand and is struck by a thin wooden stick by right hand. Used in religious, auspicious occasions and temple services.



BURRAKATHA DAKKI: Membranophone

ANDHRA PRADESH (Courtesy: SNA)

A pitcher shaped brass vessel having short neck and round belly. The wider end covered with skin with the help of cotton cord through hoops and an iron ring. Suspended from neck, played by hands. Used by 'Burrakatha' balladeers.

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Manipur, as well as other arts like Lai Uraoba and Thang-ta, The courses are designed as a foundation for professional artists. The Production Unit of the Academy has a rich repertoire of traditional and contemporary works.

Similarly, Kathak Kendra is one of the leading teaching institutions in Kathak dance. Located in Delhi, it offers courses at various levels in Kathak dance and in vocal music and Pakhawaj. Like the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Kathak Kendra too has a Production Unit which strives to enrich the repertoire and technique of Kathak dance through experimental work. Rabindra Rangashala is the third constituent unit of the Akademi. The management of Rabindra Rangashala was transferred to the Akademi by the (then) Department of Culture in April 1993. An open-air auditorium seating 7,000 people, the Rangashala is situated on the Delhi ridge. National Projects of Support to Kutiyattam, the age-old Sanskrit theatre of Kerala, Chhau dance of eastern India, and Sattriya traditions of Assam have been launched subsequently. The Akademi inaugurated its Centre for Kutiyattam, Kutiyattam Kendra, in Thiruvananthapuram on 27 May 2007.

The Akademi set up the Sattriya Kendra (a centre for Sattriya dance, music, and theatre traditions) at Guwahati, Assam, on 15 July 2008 to promote, propagate and preserve these traditions. The Akademi also set up its North-East Centre in Shillong the same year on 20 August 2008, for the purpose of preserving the traditional and folk performing art traditions of north-eastern India. The office of this Centre has now moved to Guwahati and is housed in the Sattriya Kendra premises.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards are the highest national recognition conferred on practicing artists. The Akademi also confers fellowships on eminent artists and scholars of music, dance and drama. The Akademi's Fellowships (Akademi Ratna) carry a purse of Rs 3,00,000 and the Akademi Awards (Akademi Puraskar) a purse of Rs 1,00,000. In 2006, the Akademi also instituted annual awards to young artists - the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar. These awards carry a purse of Rs 25,000. The Akademi subsidizes the work of institutions engaged in teaching, performing, or promoting music, dance or theatre; gives grants-in-aid for research, documentation, and publishing in the performing



CHIMTA: Idiophone

PUNJAB (Courtesy: SNA)

A long iron tong. Twelve sets of metal plates loosely attached to each blade. An iron ring fixed at the bend. Held in both hands, shaken rhythmically to produce jingling sound. Used in folk, traditional and devotional music in North India. Particularly in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.



CHIKARA: Chordophone

RAJASTHAN (Courtesy: SNA)

Arched resonator covered with skin, finger board and peg box made from a single block of wood. Three steel strings. A bird motif on top of the peg box. Played with a bow. Used by the 'Meo' community of Alwar district of Rajasthan for vocal accompaniment.



arts; organizes and subsidizes seminars and conferences of subject specialists; and documents and records the performing arts for its audio-visual archive.

The Akademi's archive, comprising audio and video tapes, photographs, and films is one of the largest in the country and is extensively drawn upon for research in the performing arts. The Akademi maintains a reference library consisting of books in English, Hindi, and some regional languages. The Akademi has a gallery of musical instruments, masks and puppets in Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi, where more than 200 musical instruments are displayed. It also has a documentation unit, which has recorded maestros in the field of music, dance and theatre.

The Akademi's publication unit publishes literature on relevant subjects. As the apex body specializing in the performing arts, the Akademi also renders advice and assistance to the Government of India in the task of formulating and implementing policies and programmes in the field of the performing arts. Additionally, the Akademi carries a part of the responsibilities of the state for fostering cultural contacts between various regions in India, and between India and the world.

Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and is fully funded by the Government for implementation of its schemes and programmes.

The management of Sangeet Natak Akademi vests in its General Council. The general superintendence, direction and control of the affairs of the Akademi vests in the Executive Board, which is assisted by the Finance Committee, Grants Committee, Publication Committee and Advisory Committees for Music, Dance, Theatre, Documentation and Archives, Puppetry, and the Folk and Tribal Arts.

In the management of its teaching institutions and other centres, the Akademi's Executive Board is assisted by Advisory Committees of each institution. The present Chairman of the Akademi (2015-20) is Shri Shekhar Sen, eminent singer, music composer, lyricist and actor.

The Secretary and Principal Executive Officer of the Akademi is Shriman Helen Acharya. The Secretary of the Akademi is assisted by Deputy Secretaries for Music, Dance, Drama, Coordination, Finance & Accounts, Administration, Publication, Documentation, Folk & Tribal Arts, and the Librarian of the Akademi. The Directors of Kathak Kendra and Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, and the Project Directors of Kutiyattam Kendra and Sattaiya Kendra, assist the Secretary in management of these institutions.



DEVALAI SANGU: Aerophone

TAMILNADU (Courtesy: SNA)

A conch shell with funnel shaped mouth piece of brass, fitted on the blowing end. An elaborate decorative piece of brass attached on the other end by means of wax. Used in 'Panchavadya' ensemble. Also used in religious, auspicious occasions in temples.



ROBANA: Chordophone

HIMACHAL PRADESH (Courtesy: SNA)

Body made of single piece of wood. Bowl shaped resonator covered with skin, long neck and a decorative peg box. Fivegut strings and one sympathetic steel string. Plucked by right hand with a bone plectrum. Used by folk and traditional singers of Himachal Pradesh.



BHAJAN CHAKKALU: Idiophone

ANDHRA PRADESH (Courtesy: SNA)

A pair of wooden clappers, with square ends and open slits, in which thin brass plates are attached. Clapped together by one hand. Used for rhythmic accompaniment with devotional songs

Helen Acharya

The Leader of Performing Arts in India



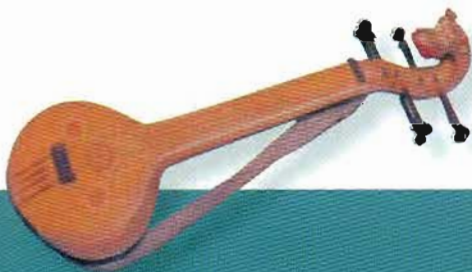
Ms Helen Acharya is the Secretary, Sangeet Natak Akademi, National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama, an organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. She is a well known dansense, trained Bharatnatyam under many Gurus like Sundri Sheshdari, K. N. Dashna Murti and many others at Bhartiya Kala Kendra. She is also an alumni of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. A well known critic of various folk arts traditions of India specializing in Chhau dance of India which has been inscribed on the representative list of ICH. SCC caught up with her during the Traditional Dance Festival.

We look at you with pride for being the successful Secretary of the SangeetNatakAkademi in New Delhi in organizing a Festival of Traditional Dance in the SAARC Countries.

At the outset I would like to thank you and I am honoured to be acknowledged by your office for the work done by us together.

As a woman from the SAARC Region, what were the difficulties faced during your professional career?

As a woman it is not easy to handle the challenge of balancing the responsibility of the office as well as the family.



TAMBURA: Chordophone

ANDHRA PRADESH (Courtesy: SNA)

Rounded belly, long neck, curved peg holder, all made of wood. Four strings - three of steel and one of brass. Main and secondary bridges. Decorated with inlay work. Struck with inward and outward movement of fingers. Used in traditional form - 'Burrakatha' along with a traditional drum called 'Burrakatha Dakki'.



DUTTATREYA VEENA: Chordophone

NORTH INDIA (Courtesy: SNA)

An improvised composite instrument. A gourd resonator attached to a wide finger board. Geared pegs on a square framed peg box. Five main strings of steel and brass, five drone strings, twenty 'Swarmandala' steel strings. It is played in the same way as 'Sitar' is played with occasional strumming on the Swarmandala.



As a woman who has achieved success in your country, what is your advice to those from the region, who aspire to be like you?

My advice is to be committed 100% to any responsibility even if to the smallest task.

A brief insight to your current day to day activities?

The work in Sangeet Natal Akademi involves 24x7 connections with the work in office and field. I try to priorities my schedule accordingly.

Your views on the SAARC, in particular culture and SAARC?

The commonalities of culture among the SAARC countries despite the

diversity are amazing. This creates immense potentiality, for keeping nations together in peace and harmony through cultural bonding. We must work towards strengthening these bonding and be an example of peace to the world.

In your opinion, could culture be a soft diplomacy tool, in bringing countries together?

Yes, culture is the best tool in brining countries together

A personal message from you, for International Women's Day.

A woman is the epitome of love and compassion and thus makes this world a beautiful place to live in.

Culture of the mind must be subservient to the heart.

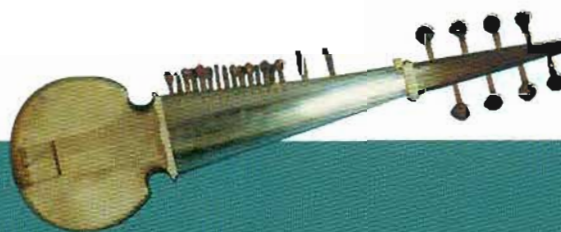
Mahatma Gandhi

All objects, all phases of culture are alive. They have voices. They speak of their history and interrelatedness. And they are all talking at once!

Camille Paglia

Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit

Jawaharlal Nehru



SAROD: Chordophone

NORTH INDIA (Courtesy: SNA)

A popular plucked instrument of North India. Entire body carved out of a single block of 'tun' wood. A round resonator, broad finger board and a tapering, arched, peg box. Resonator parched with a very fine membrane of goat skin.

There are two sets of strings. Upper set contains, four main playing strings, four drone and two chikari strings. Lower set is of fifteen sympathetic strings. All are attached to a metal string holder underneath the resonator, pass through the bridge and finally fixed to their respective pegs. The main ivory bridge is placed on the resonator. A small square bridge

mounted parallel to upper nut, to support the drone strings. Strings plucked by a coconut shell plectrum held in right hand. A portion of left hand finger tips and a portion of nail, are used to stop the strings over the polished finger board. Used in North Indian classical music for solo concerts.



SAARC CULTURAL FESTIVAL
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SAARC Cultural Events

April - May 2015

8 -12 April

Cultural
Festival on
Traditional
Dance

Bhutan

15-16 MAY

SAARC Regional
Seminar on Cultural
Dynamics in National
Harmony in South
Asia

Sri Lanka

14 MAY

Research Review
Meeting on Cultural
Heritage, Tourism
& Sustainable
Development in South
Asia

Sri Lanka

April

SAARC Literary
Festival on
South Asian
Poetry

India

26 -31 MAY

SAARC
Film
Festival

Sri Lanka



SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance

26 to 28 September 2014, New Delhi

Culture is a Many Color Splendor Thing

Divergent
cultures
among the
regions can
be shared
and bring
together the
peoples of
nations, in an
exchange of
art that has
no barriers.

Culture is a many color splendored thing. Not wanting to use the clichéd definition of culture, it has taken on international relations. Culture encompasses everything and gives an overarching umbrella under which many things can be shared among nation states to bring the people together and bring about global peace and happiness. Divergent cultures among the regions can be shared and bring together the peoples of nations, in an exchange of art that has no barriers. The SAARC region is home to a staggering wealth of intangible cultural heritage with its own characteristics.

Seeing and participating in Cultural Festivals is the best way in

experiencing culture, traditions, life, people, and to promote cultural cooperation and development.

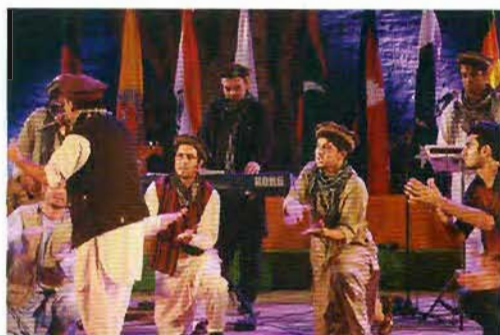
The Cultural Festival on Traditional Dances started coterminous with the Ministerial meeting from 26 to 28 September 2014 with 113 participants from 6 Member States in New Delhi at the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

The amphitheatre behind the Meghdoot Theatre was set ablaze with colourful stage lights and the decorations and dance performances from the SAARC Member States.

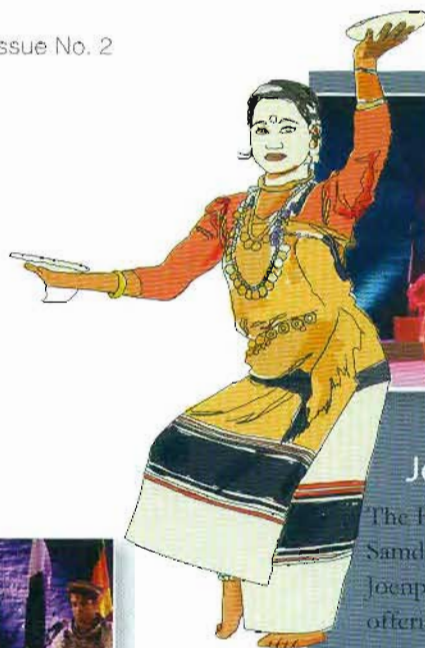
The ambience was perfect with the open balmy air of Delhi evenings of autumn.

The highlights
of the dances
from the SAARC
Member States are
the following:

Attan dance - Afghanistan



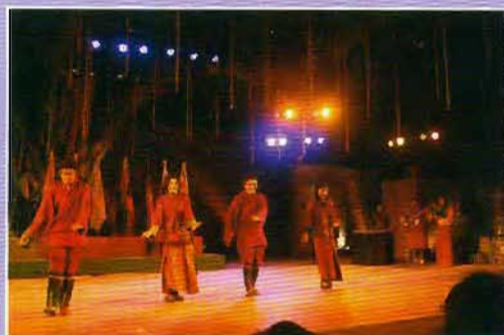
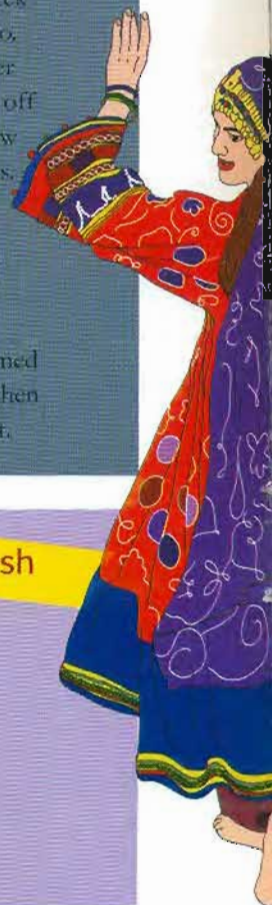
For the first in the cultural festival organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre, the Afghanistan troupe descended to perform the traditional Attan dance which is popular among the Afghanistan Pashtuns. It is usually performed with a Dhol, which is a double-headed barrel drum. The dance starts on a slow note with a rhythmic dance by clapping and holding hands among the dancers and picks up the tempo by loud beating of Dhol drums and waving scarves. Attan is the national dance of Afghanistan and always performed at festivals during weddings and other national celebrations.



Joenparlegso Zhabdro - Bhutan

The Bhutanese dance led by Pema Sandrup performed on stage the Joenparlegso Zhabdro greeting and offering goodwishes to the distinguished guests. They also performed on stage Merak & Saktienpai Zhabdro (Ae Mo Chog Lay) folk song and dance from the two villages of Merak & Saktien in eastern Bhutan, where there is a small group of semi-nomadic people with their distinctive dress and language. A unique dance of the highlander through which they seek refuge in their local deities Amo Jomo. It is also believed that when they offer this song to their deity, this can ward off evil and negative emotions and bestow them with blessing and good fortunes. On the last day they performed a Folk Dance (Dekinima) conveying the message of everlasting peace and prosperity.

Pema Sandrup played a long lute named Drammyen while one played Yang-chen (dulcimer) and one lent vocal support.



Traditional tribal dance - Bangladesh

The Bangladesh troupe performed the tribal songs and dances from the tribal areas of Chakmas in the Chittagong hills. The bottle dance and traditional hunting dances of the hill tribes were presented accompanied by very haunting and melodious flute music.

Varied dances of India

The Host Country had a number of dance items which started on a high note. They performed Purulia chhau dance from West Bengal, Chenda Melam from Kerala, Sattriya from Assam, Kathakali and Kutiyam from Kerala and Pung and Dhol cholom from Manipur. A brief description of Indian dances are given below.

The Chhau dance of eastern India Orissa Bihar, and West Bengal is a blend of martial tradition, temple rituals, and folk and popular performance of this region. There are 3 genres of this dance based on their origin: mayurbhaj from Bihar, Seraikella chhau from Orissa and Purulia Chau from Bengal. These dances are performed in the tribal belts of the States mentioned. However, this has been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO.



It enacts episodes and some scenes from the Indian epics Mahabharata and Ramayana, traditional folklores, legends and from abstract themes through the medium of dance and a music ensemble that consist, primarily of indigenous drums. In its traditional context, the dance is intimately connected with the festivals and rituals of tribal belts. Important among these is the Chaitra Parva celebrated in the month of April. The month of Chaitra celebrates the advent of spring and the start of the harvesting season. The dancers and viewers are immediately connected to nature through the medium of dances depicting the gaits of birds and other creatures in the form both dance and martial arts. Its origin is traceable to indigenous forms of dance and martial practices.

The dance is performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on the reed pipes mohuri and shenai. The reverberating drumbeats of a variety of drums dominate the accompanying music ensemble.





The Chenda melam dance is performed with a cylindrical percussion instrument used widely in the state of southern states of Kerala, and Karnataka

A Chenda is a cylindrical wooden drum, and has a length of two feet and a diameter of one foot covered at both ends with animal skin. The instrument is suspended from the drummers neck and beaten using two sticks. It is usually played for welcoming guests and in all the cultural activities in India. These

drummers use this as an accompaniment for Kathakali and Koodiyattam dances.

Kathakali is a traditional art form of southern state of Kerala. The dancers enact the epic stories by wearing special costumes through symbolic language called mudras. The dance is performed by invoking the God through Parappad which is the beginning of the dance for wishing all.

The main features of the costume is a large, billowing skirt for male characters and various elaborate headdresses.

The actor's performances in a Kathakali plays is completely speechless; the 'libretto' is sung by two singers on the stage who keep time on gong and cymbals, while a pair of drummers who are also on the stage play the Chenda. The story is enacted using a vocabulary of facial expressions and hand gestures.

Kutiyattam, is another form of Sanskrit theatre traditionally similar to Kathakali and 2000 years old. It was also performed briefly on stage for the benefits of the audience. It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Pung Cholom - India Dancers from the State of Manipur presented the Pung cholom and Dhol cholom ddrams dances.

They are the Dancing Drummers using a unique acrobatic classical dance with a touch of martial arts. It is the soul of Manipuri classical dance and Sankirtana music and traditional Maibi Jagoi dance.

Pung is an elongated form of hand beaten drum while Dhol is rounded drum with hollow part on the one side which is beaten for rhythmic sounds when dancing at the same time. The acrobatic effect is without breaking the flow of music and rhythmic dance.



Manjushree dance and Bhairab Kali dance of Nepal

Nepalese presented Manjushree Dance which is performed by the 3 dancers composing of 2 female and a male dancers narrating about how the Goddess created Kathmandu valley by draining the huge lake which once existed there and banishing the ignorance of the people. The 2 dancers also performed the Bhairab Kali Dance offering prayers of Lord Shiva and Consort Parvati.



Up country Kandyan dance and low country dance - Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan troupe portrayed a wide range of up country Kandyan dances which are usually performed in the temples and national events.

Kandyan dancing is developed during the period of Kandyan Kings. The dance is always imitative movements of dancing elephants and peacocks. The costumes of Kandyan dancers are colorful with white, yellow, black and red. The male dancers are usually bare chested and decorated with exquisitely silver regalia and spectacular



headgears and silver bangles worn around the arms and ankles. The performance is accompanied with hectic rhythms of drums called "gata beraya".

Pahathara dance is a low country dance which is highly ritualistic. This form of dance is performed to appease evil spirits which cause sickness. The dancers wear masks depicting many characters varied in forms.



The Fusion Dance

Highlight of the Dance Festival 2014

The colorful hues, the rapid movements of dances enthrall the audience one and all during the last day of traditional dance festival. It was choreographed by Guru Shashadhar Acharyaji. All the dancers came together performing a little bit of their own traditional dances on the stage with a crescendo music of dhol, tabla and percussion was simply heavenly with the audience giving them a thunderous applause. This was the fusion and denouement of the show.

This was also a clear indicator of how art and culture have no barriers. Music and dance in this instance was able to cut through all barriers and this beautiful and poignant finale was truly unity among diversity. Culture of the SAARC Region coming together.

The great soul Mahatma Gandhi had said, "No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive". It is truly so.

It was a successful cultural event on traditional dances.

- By Karma Tshering Wangchuk, PO, SCC





SAARC PHOTOGRAPHY Competition 2015

Theme: World Historical Sites

SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

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"Honey Collecters" by Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, Bangladesh

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2nd Place ●



"Clouds of Devotees" by Mr. Narayan Maharajan, Nepal

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● 3rd Place



"Golden Ganga" by Anilrishi Singh, India

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Highly commended ●



"Follow" by Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman, Bangladesh

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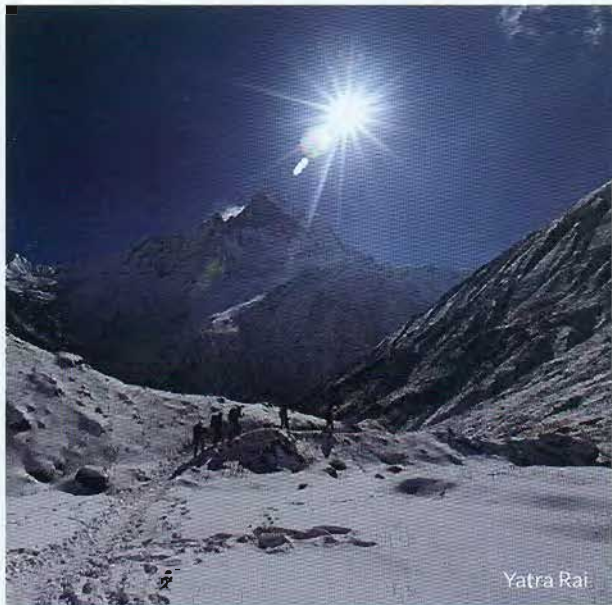
● Highly commended



“Kanshat Mango Market” by Muhammad Mustafigur Rahman Bangladesh

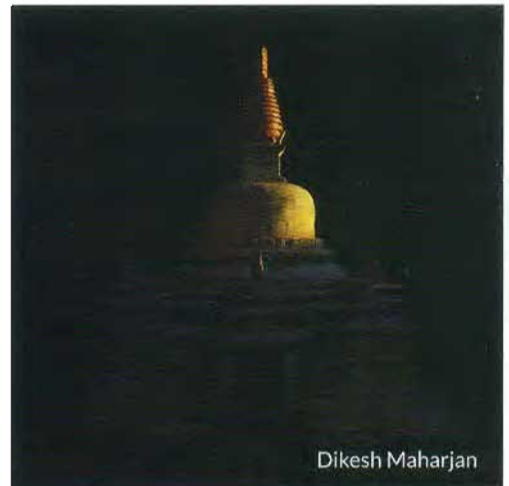
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Honorable Mentions



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● Honorable Mentions



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Honorable Mentions



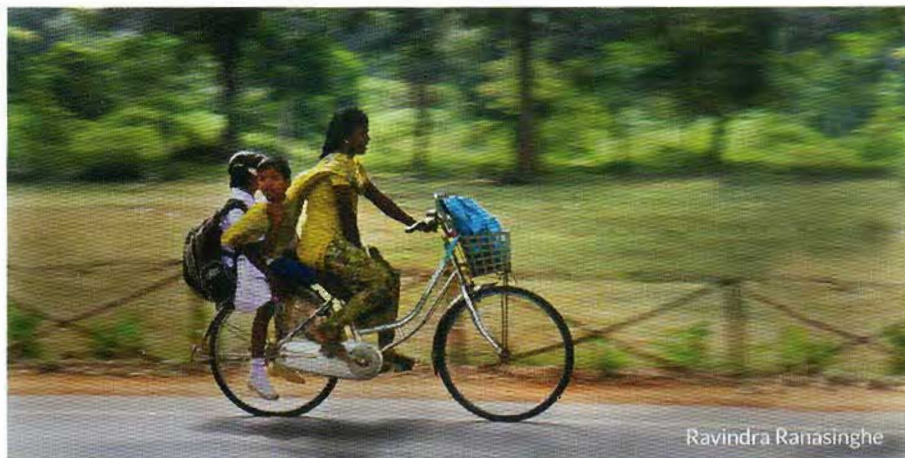
Tharmakulasingam Kugaruban



Pattabi Rahman



Viraj Liyanarachchi



Ravindra Ranasinghe



Tharmakulasingam Kugaruban



Biman Lakshitha Pathiraja

An Interview with His Excellency, Lyonpo C. Dorji (Former Secretary General, SAARC)



Lyonpo Chenkyab Dorji, born in 1943 has a very illustrious career spanning almost half a century serving under the three Royal Monarchs of Bhutan. Lyonpo had started his career in the Royal government of Bhutan in 1961 as a Trainee Officer and climbing up the social ladder headed almost all important portfolios. He also headed the Planning Ministry for many years as a Minister before serving as the Ambassador of Bhutan in Thailand from 1991 to 2005. H.E Lyonpo C also served as Secretary General from May 2005 to February 2008. Currently Lyonpo serves as the Chairman of Royal Privy Council since May 2008. Lyonpo's insights into the world affairs and especially in South Asia comes out refreshingly like a breath of fresh air in this interview.

Your Excellency, do you think SAARC is successful?

I firmly believe that SAARC offers an invaluable platform for building a stable and prosperous South Asia. The goals of SAARC emanating from its Charter are to promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, to accelerate economic growth, social progress, collective self-reliance and cultural development, and to contribute to mutual trust and active collaboration in various fields such as economic, social, cultural etc. The very fact that our Heads of States/Governments meet very often and as a fact they have already met 18 times is an indication that SAARC is useful and beneficial for the region. Besides the meeting of the leaders, our Ministers and officials meet very frequently on various issues such as trade, social issues and technical issues etc. and the fact that these meetings are held regularly indicates that SAARC has been successful. I have no doubt that in the years to come economic and trade agenda will dominate SAARC and we will

hopefully see South Asia Economic Union.

Was SAARC Cultural Centre one of the agendas when you were Secretary General?

I was the SAARC Secretary-General from 1st March 2005 to 29 February 2008 and the fact that the Cultural Centre was established in 2009 shows that the major part of the work for the establishment of the centre was carried out during my tenure as Secretary-General.

Culture is a soft power and cultural activities can achieve a lot in terms of building relations among Member States? Could you share some opinions of yours?

The 'soft power' approach has become a widely acknowledged tool for international relations today. Culture is regarded as one of the core resources of soft power, and as such, cultural activities can definitely

SAARC Cultural Centre has been promoting lots of cultural activities – from visual activities like cultural programs like artist camps, film festivals, literary festival, and traditional dances to handicrafts expo besides research works on traditional knowledge and cultural expression to tourism, world heritage sites. Your Excellency, as a former SG of the SAARC Secretariat, do you think all these activities are good for diffusing the negativity that is nagging among some member states to foster good relations?

play a major role in terms of bringing the SAARC Member States closer.

Countries in South Asia share a rich and diverse cultural heritage. A concerted effort towards promoting cultural cooperation under the umbrella of SAARC through activities like promoting and preserving cultures and traditions, developing networks and linkages, and facilitating exhibitions would directly appeal to sentiments of the people in the region.

Once the favorable sentiments of people and their leaders have been adequately worked up, improved relations among the Member States should come naturally.

► Surely, the activities conducted by the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) could help diffuse the suspicions some Member States may have with regard to fostering good relations. It would be too early or rather difficult to point out the impact that has been/ would be created, in concrete terms though. Culture is a soft power, and soft power tends to work indirectly by shaping policy environment and could sometimes take decades to produce the desired outcomes. Therefore, the SCC must work even harder and smarter to fulfill its mandate of promoting regional unity through cultural cooperation.

Your Excellency, what is your advice to us at the SAARC Cultural Center and your friends in Sri Lanka?

As one of the Regional Centers under SAARC, the SCC has the very important mandate of promoting unity and understanding in the region by spearheading the SAARC Cultural cooperation. Whether SAARC is able to effectively draw on its rich and diverse cultural heritage to bring about harmony and prosperity in the region will hinge, in large part, on the effort of the Center and professionals manning it.

It is of the essence of imaginative culture that it transcends the limits both of the naturally possible and of the morally acceptable.

Northrop Frye

Using Plastic waste for Handicraft, Nepal

ABOUT

JeevanKala, which literally translates 'art for life' is a non profit sharing company in Nepal that has been working in partnership with the NGO Himalayan HealthCare for the past twelve years. Designed and produced with a consciousness towards ecology, local traditions and resale potential in the global market, each beautiful handicraft positively impacts the lives of many living in difficult conditions in rural Nepal. As a member of the Fair Trade Federation and a socially conscious organization, the primary beneficiaries of each sale are the artisans, who are provided with fair wages and assistance in becoming independent selfreliant entrepreneurs. Through its profit sharing with Himalayan HealthCare, all profits are directly reinvested in artisan's communities in the form of health care, education and other income generating schemes.



HIMALAYAN HEALTHCARE

The mission of Himalayan HealthCare is to create sustainable development programs in the remote areas of Nepal that will improve the quality of life for its people. Himalayan HealthCare achieves its mission through a tripronged approach by providing primary healthcare, community education, and income generation programs that enable people to be self-supporting in the long-term.



OUR PRODUCTS

Most of JeevanKala's crafts are made with recycled materials that are collected from the streets of Nepal. Plastic packages, rice sacks and tire tubes that are difficult to dispose of in an environmentally friendly way, are collected and used to create our beautiful crafts.

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Why Culture Matters

Soundarie David Rodrigo



As one travels on the journey of life, as we meet people, learn about people, and try to better understand the meaning of life, little do we realize the importance culture plays in our day to day life. Culture is the stuff of life, it's the world around us and what we do within it. It's what we eat, where we go, how we live. It's how we communicate, it gives meaning to the things we buy and the choices we make.

At the 2014 International Culture Summit held in Edinburgh last August, where Culture Ministers, policymakers, artists and commentators alike, contributed towards a wide ranging conversation across three interlinked topics, which looked into

- The principles by which culture is valued and measured
- The number of international conventions for the promotion and protection of cultural diversity
- To consider the role of cities as incubators of cultural innovation.

Irina Bokova, Director- General of UNESCO, argues that culture is the driver and enabler of inclusive growth and a channel to forge new forms of global solidarity and citizenship; and that it should be the heart of all public policies, underpinned by human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Arts and culture can transform people's lives in subtle or dramatic ways that politicians often struggle

to achieve. Its outreach is vast, it communicates with people at a level where words fail to reach out. Today, in the globalized world we are living, embracing culture becomes more and more important. Cultural Festivals, Carnivals, film festivals, Artists Camps, become a way of communicating and bringing people together. At many of these festivals, with all its explosion of colour, joy, music, dance, art and film, it is clear that it not only builds up society during its public performance, but throughout the whole working process when several generations and various strata dialogue and agree which music, dance, costume, theme, song, lyrics they are going to use during their performance. By talking, eating, dancing, painting, singing, together, they learn of values and hierarchies existing in their community.

Arts and culture also help foster the international connections that are vital for any modern nation. Throughout history, relationships between countries have often been improved by means of cultural exchange or celebration. To put it simply, the arts can reach places that traditional diplomacy cannot. The emotional links created by culture can be as powerful as, and more enduring than, any short-term political or economic alliance. The SAARC Cultural Centre has used Culture as a powerful tool to bring together the nations of the region, showing solidarity despite political undercurrents that

may prevail between nations. The SAARC Artist Camp, Film Festivals, Handicraft Exhibitions, Cultural Festivals, are testimony to this very fact.

Recent research by the British Council has shown that the attractiveness of a country is strongly influenced by cultural factors, including its cultural and historic attractions and its arts.

Culture also continues to play an important role in the lives of young adults, where Global cultural icons such as Lady Gaga, David Beckham, Shakira, Banksy, Penélope Cruz, Lang Lang, Youssou N'Dour, Rhianna and Amitabh Bachchan have frequently had a higher profile and arguably a greater influence, particularly over young people, than any political figure.

Culture makes the difference between existing and living. It shapes our sense of ourselves and of the places where we spend our lives. It gives a community – whether a family, a village, a city or a nation – its sense of cohesion and identity, of pride and dignity: a collective understanding and shared experience which is the foundation of citizenship. This is why culture matters, no matter how hard one tries to deny it, culture will continue to play an important role in society today. Cultural Diversity in itself will pave the way for economic growth, if only one understands its potential.

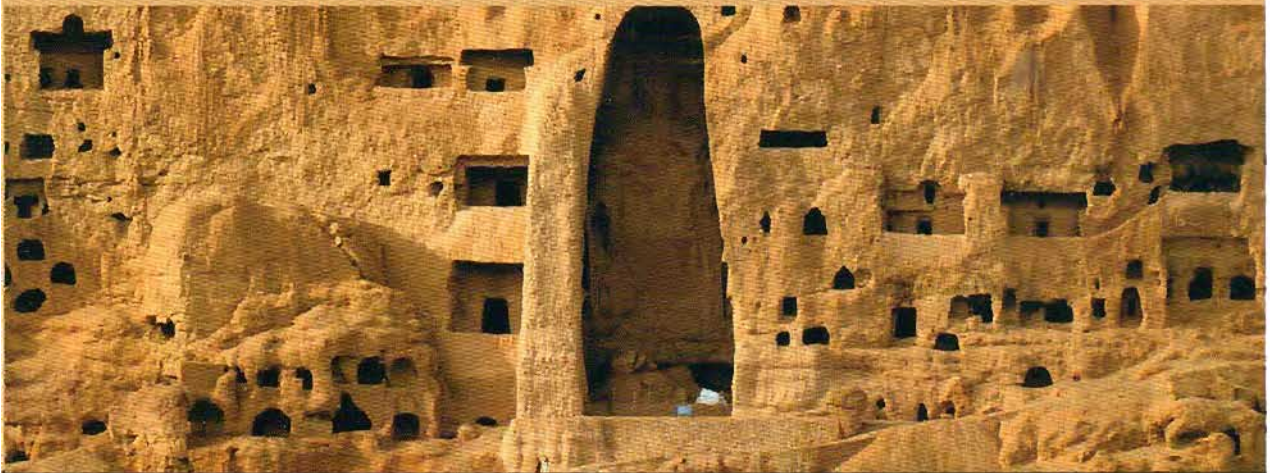
(To be continued – Next Issue - Why Culture Matters- The role of Cities and Cultural Capitals)

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