

Issue 6 | May - August 2025 | ₹ 25

Renaissance

Exploring threads of society and culture



❧ 'Baul Singers - Batik Painting' ❧



15 Years in Service

Centre for Cultural Studies & Development

presents

NRITYAARPAN

(3rd Edition)

**An Evening of Classical Dance Recitals
by Young Promising Artists**

on Saturday, 1st November 2025, 7PM onwards

**at Sabari Auditorium & Cultural Centre,
Sree Ayyappa Temple, C-47, Sector-62,
Noida**



**Dr. G. Subathra
Bharatanatyam**



**Inaugural Dance in Odissi Style
by disciples of Paulami Guha**



**Sree Bandopadhyay
Kathak**

All Are Cordially Invited



**ऑयल इंडिया
OIL INDIA**

Renaissance

Issue 6 | May - August 2025

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The Editor's Note



In July this year, Centre for Cultural Studies & Development completed 15 years. Over the years, CCSD as a socio-cultural organisation has played host to a range of impactful programmes that celebrate, preserve, and explore the nuances and depths of Indian culture. The Centre believes that empowering the next generation is key to keeping our heritage relevant in the modern world. Therefore, in every CCSD organized event, a strong emphasis is laid on engagement of youth, who are encouraged to explore their roots, appreciate the richness of India's traditions and carry them

forward with pride and purpose.

At the core of CCSD's initiatives is the belief that India's cultural essence is best understood through the traditions that continue to keep it alive. Among these, the Baul tradition of Bengal holds a distinctive place, which is also discussed about in this issue. Known for its simplicity and spiritual depth, the Baul philosophy reflects unity, harmony, and the search for the divine within. Through their songs of love and devotion, the Bauls remind us that culture is not only performed but deeply experienced and shared.

This idea resonates with the Centre's vision to preserve and promote the richness of Indian heritage while encouraging the youth to interpret it in ways that keep it relevant and meaningful today. By engaging with such traditions, they develop a deeper appreciation of their roots and understand the role of art in connecting people across generations and communities.

One of the Centre's mission aims to foster global understanding of the country's culture. This year CCSD organized two dance workshop events in two neighbouring countries - Sri Lanka and Bhutan, that contributed to strengthening the understanding of Indian performing arts in foreign lands.

The Centre's recent dance workshop in Bhutan created a meaningful space for interaction and learning. Artists and participants from both countries came together to celebrate movement as a universal language, reflecting the same sense of interconnectedness that defines India's diverse artistic traditions. These events reaffirmed CCSD's ongoing commitment to building cultural bridges and strengthening dialogue through art and expression.

- Paulami Guha



Baul & Beyond

-Dr Intaj Ali

This paper attempts to focus on ways through which a Baul seeks to represent the socio-cultural life of Bengalese in different parts of the world through their magical performance, social discourse and in sometimes hybridization of Baul songs through fusion. The global concept of Baul in the context of place local, national and transnational -- involves people engaging with wider social, cultural and political changes across the world. Baul song represents Bengali cultural heritage, which transcends both national boundaries and religious differences.

A modern day Indian continues to live in a 'sandwiched world' where he refuses to give up his cultural roots yet tries to adapt and acclimatise in his new situation. He does not sever relationship with his homeland. As Safran observes, "They continue to relate personally or vicariously to the homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship".

In the mainstream culture, the immigrants or the diaspora communities generally try to cling to the memories of their native land by replicating the ethnic cultural practices largely. The cultural factors create an impact in the construction of the national identity and ethnic identity apart from the diaspora identities of the diaspora groups or the immigrants. It is natural that diaspora communities are living far away from their homeland and they have to stay in the alien atmosphere where everything is uncommon and unnatural to them.

The feeling of nostalgia is a part and parcel of the expatriates' living in foreign lands. Benedict Anderson argues in his book 'Imagined Communities' that nationalism, the idea of a nation and nationality are nothing but cultural artefacts of a particular kind. Thus, practicing and preserving one's own culture in foreign lands is also a way of expressing one's nationalist sentiments within transnational conditions so far as diaspora are concerned. Generally, such practices are manifest most strongly among first generation

expatriates. They attempt to forge a native community within their diaspora existence.

When all these diaspora meet together in different social gatherings, they practice their ancestral cultures, ethos, beliefs etc. This community feeling is necessary and a positive step to sustain the lives of diaspora. In this case, Baul songs got more attention among the diaspora and as a result, they have been invited all over the world to perform Baul song through which they are trying to search their own cultural heritage. From the socio-cultural perspective, the baul song carries the significance of cultural encounter for the diaspora yet far away from their motherland. In addition to this, for the diaspora or the immigrants, Baul song generally provides a rich arena to recover their own culture from the complexities of the incidents and events involved with memory and nostalgia. In the present era of marketing, Baul song is no more restricted in context of West Bengal and Bangladesh, but has transcended the boundaries of other countries. Hence, different kinds of cultural festivals in the foreign land usually give an important stage for the Bauls to spread Bengali culture among the diaspora people.

Similarly, the rapid increase of media and technology have helped to spread the message and philosophy of Baul song among the diaspora people who are ready to cling themselves with their departed

culture. Baul music has the authentic voice of a Bengali imaginative folk tradition that has been developed over centuries by singers across the Bengal delta expressing the soul of the Bengali people. The music draws on both Hindu Bhakti and Muslim mystical traditions and the singers perform their songs with the ektara, a single-stringed instrument.

Unfortunately, the Baul tradition is in decline, but it still survives in Bangladesh, West Bengal, Assam and Kerala displaying a characteristic disregard for man-made boundaries. Apart from this Bengali diaspora provides a devotional space for the Bauls where Muslims and Hindus interact with each other forgetting their religious boundaries and create a unique one community. Today, Baul music is quite popular as many artists are experimenting with its forms and content. It is now a genre that permeates to the living rooms of many folk enthusiasts across the world.

Today, Bauls regularly record in studios and feature on television and radio. But for all these changes, one must credit the Baul music for maintaining its inherent message and its perceived world view. It is only natural to adapt to new ways of living and to render the crux of their thought in a contemporary relevant way. Bauls try to fit themselves and adapt their way of living according to the changed socio-cultural scenario of the society. There are

organized festivals annually held in West Bengal that celebrate the poetry and music of Baul. One of the most famous festivals is Poush Mela; an annual three-day festival held in Shantiniketan in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. It is an event that attracts the largest number of Bauls. It is held at the beginning of the month of Poush according to Bengali calendar that is the 3rd week of December and marks the establishment of the Brahmo religion.

Another large annual gathering of Bauls occurs in Joydev Kenduli in district Birbhum, West Bengal, which is regarded as the birthplace of poet Jayadeva and coincides with Makar Sankranti that marks the beginning of winter harvest and is considered auspicious. Here one can find the gathering of Bauls from all over West Bengal in large numbers. Even people across India as well as foreigners assemble to enjoy the songs of Bauls. Over time, more urban audiences have flocked to annual shows held in Kolkata such as the Baul Fakir Utsav and Sufi Sutra where Bauls from different districts of West Bengal and Bangladesh come to perform. The Baul Fakir Utsav usually goes on for 48 hours and offers those who do not seek to travel to rural events, an experience of folk and mystical music right in the heart of urban landscape. On the other hand Sufi Sutra is a three-day Sufi music festival where Sufi musicians from eight countries perform on the same

stage. It is organized by banglanatak.com. Sufi Sutra is the first-ever Sufi festival in Eastern India.

Troups and teams of Mawlawiyah (Egypt), Baran Ensemble (Iran), Vasu Khan (Rajasthan), Baul Fakiri (West Bengal), Nawab Khan (Afghanistan), Tahleeleh Troupe (Syria), Warsi Brothers (Andhra Pradesh), Bangla Qawwali (Kolkata), Anusheh Anadil (Bangladesh), Q Ramonov (Tajikistan), Dhruv Sangari (Delhi) and Haji MAK Warsi (Uttar Pradesh) mesmerised their audience virtually transporting them to a different world by their magical divine music. There are many people who have, rendered the philosophy of the Baul all over the world and spread the message of love and devotion among the people. Names like Purna Chandra Das Baul, Paban Das Baul, Kartik Das Baul, Lakhan Das Baul and Parvaty Baul can be mentioned in this regard.

Hybridization of Baul songs through experiments in fusion and creative impulse. Actually, I used the term 'hybridity' in case of Baul songs to understand the essence of the Baul existence and his faith and thus examine this term to realize the position of Baul (a premodern sect) in engagement with the phenomenon of modernity.

However, 19th century Baul mystic's search for an in-between position and undefined position that is neither Hindu nor Muslim is remarkable when viewed from the perspective of contemporary

articulation. During the twentieth century, music from around the world affected traditional forms of Bengali music and influenced the development of new forms. By the 1960s instrumental ensembles included such non-traditional instruments as saxophones and Hawaiian-style guitars. Electric guitars became popular, and commercial recordings and films included electronically modulated music. By the twenty-first century, simple harmonization often accompanied song melodies, especially in film songs and urban versions of folksongs. However, pure melody continues to be the main component of Bengali musical expression. The melodies of Bengali folksongs, especially Baul songs, remain sources of inspiration for classical compositions and popular songs). Baul music has caught the imagination in a big way among Bengali music lovers, with the soulful songs sung by wandering minstrels finding favour with Bengali bands and movies. "The Namesake" a movie which depicts the hardships and struggles of a Bengali couple in the US -and "Maner Manush", made on the life and works of famous Baul singer Lalan Fakir, extensively used Baul songs which were applauded by the audience. Besides, Bengali bands have also experimented with Baul songs in their fusion music to the accompaniment of modern musical instruments. Before advent of radio, stage performances of Baul singers used to be possibly the only entertainment for the vast rural

population of Bengal. After the arrival of new communication and digital media, many of the Baul songs were modernized and incorporated into modern songs. The globalization of the Baul philosophy became established through the efforts of Purna Das Baul. The direct descendant of Ananta Goswami, a well-known Baul guru in the late nineteenth century, Purna Das Baul represents the eighth generation of a traditional Baul lineage. He spent his childhood accompanying his father Nabani Das Khyapa Baul, the legendary Baul singer, mystic poet, and yogi, who was a close friend of the Nobel Prize winning poet Rabindranath Tagore. Purna Das Baul helped raise awareness of this unique Baul tradition in the rest of the Indian subcontinent and the West. He was recognized as Baul Samrat ("King of the Bauls") by the then President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, in 1967. He received another President's Award for his work in 1999 from Shri K. R. Narayanan. In India; Purna Das has brought Baul music to the attention of a wide section of people through concerts, performances at religious festivals, and numerous recordings.

He first came to the US in the late 60s, invited by Albert Grossman, manager of Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary. Along with Dylan and poet Allen Ginsberg, he resonated "Western Bauls." In 1968, Purna Das appeared with Dylan on the cover page of the latter's album, John

Wesley Harding. In addition to working with Dylan and The Band, Purna Das shared the stage with artists such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, and Gordon Lightfoot. In addition to numerous recordings in India, Purna Das Baul has released a number of recordings in Europe and North America on labels such as Electra, Nonesuch, Cram World, and Womad. Purna Das Baul is known for a singing voice of remarkable range, operatic power, and hauntingly evocative spirituality.

In India, Purna Das Baul and his family have actively supported the Baul community by setting up an ashram in Shantiniketan, a traditional center of Baul culture that houses Bauls who are involved in various community projects such as helping AIDS patients and educating the nearby communities about AIDS through their songs. He also works with various children's organizations by performing at their centers and hospitals. He has recently started regular visits to the local prisons to perform for the inmates. In all of these sessions he uses his songs and music to inspire his audience to solve their problems in spiritually creative ways. In these endeavours, he is always accompanied by his wife Manju Das, and son, Dibyendu Das.

The Bauls have a distinctive presence in everybody's heart and soul and their devotional songs have one goal -- to generate shanti (peace) and facilitate union with

God through singing from the heart with deep feelings. They are committed to express musically the sacred dimension and music is their sadhana or devotional practice to reach or communicate with God and Maner Manush (Man of the Heart). This oral transmission of spiritual feeling - both earthy and transcended dimensions of spiritual blessing for the Bauls - are similar to Sufi traditions of the Fakirs. In a true sense, Baul music creates the essence of global peace and harmony through their dialogue and soulful music. One can notice the importance of Baul music in the whole world due to its philosophy, which suits for every region.

Their commitment to musical and spiritual yogic practice demonstrate a consistent devotion in a world in which materialism frequently results in lack of discipline necessary for spiritual maturity. Baul tries to capture the spirit of fusion in world music where particular musical traditions seek no geographical boundaries. It is free to move beyond horizons, to be incorporated in other cultures. In the end, what evolves is a blending of the original with the adopting culture. For example, music that was once specific to lower section of people in Bengal has been traveling with people all over the world and getting incorporated in a religious festival in USA, Poland, Russia, Morocco, Bangladesh and is till date performed there. Such is the nature of its hybridity. Time is gradually

changing fast for the Baul community. The philosopher-poet-singer epitomized by someone like Nabani Khyapa, the father of the legendary Purna Das Baul - is giving way to the performer. This has raised questions about the authenticity of many donning the saffron attire. So, who is a true and real baul, the mystic or the regular performer? Currently the focus of bauls is very much on their performance, stage shows and concerts at different places & they are conducting tours in different foreign countries. People come up with a question where is the Baul sadhana which is based on dehatatva (the theory of the body), or the community's secret sexual practices? Yes, these we can observe in the rural village but not in cities like Kolkata. The urban interest in Baul music has also opened up new vistas for the musicians. The increased acceptance of this folk form in the 'mainstream' appears to be having an impact on the Bauls too.

At one level, as singer-songwriter and folk music expert Moushumi Bhowmik says: "The Bauls are making the most of the bigger market that is available now and rightly so." The melodious baul

music does not confine itself to the Baul akharas or village fairs rather it expands its ambit in the cities pub and cultural stages too. It is as if Baul tunes finds its home everywhere. It can be categorized as world music, says percussionist Bickram Ghosh, who had collaborated with baul singers and musicians Sahaj Maa and Utpal Fakir. Reinterpreting Baul music on the urban stage is fine but should be done with caution warns Bonnie. "Baul has been open to reinterpretation for generations. They re-structure and re-interpret their own philosophy and music. Alterations and re-adaptations can be done but without losing the essence of the song and philosophy." His thoughts are echoed by musician and percussionist Tanmoy Bose. "One reason why baul music has potential to be popular among youngsters is the whole idea surrounding the lifestyle of the bauls. However, one must guard against getting carried away. Thus baul music has become a common source of inspiration for all the young generation. Now the question is this expansion of baul songs are truly reflected in the young generation or not. I think this is the point which we should discuss or contemplate.

The author is an Assistant Professor of English at Netaji Subhas Open University and has done his doctoral research on 'Tradition of Storytelling in Radh Bengal: A Comparative Study of Oral and Visual Art Forms' at the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad. This paper was presented in a National Seminar 'Baul Tradition- an Eternal Journey towards Mysticism' organised by CCSD at India International Centre, New Delhi.

Journey to a Majestic Land –KERALA

-Staff reporter

Rejuvenate your body, mind and soul. Explore a majestic land where nature is still an integral part of everyday life, peaceful and pristine, unimaginably beautiful that is Kerala. Located at the Southwestern tip of India with the Arabian Sea on the west and the Western Ghats in the east, Kerala enjoys a unique geographic feature that has made it one of the most sought after tourist destinations in Asia. Popularly known as God's Own Country, Kerala was chosen by the National Geographic Traveller as one of the 50 places of a lifetime.

The state is divided into three regions- the coastal lowlands networked by endless backwaters and the deltas of forty four rivers, the midlands rich



with cashew, coconut, areca nut, tapioca, banana, rice, pepper, sugarcane and vegetable plantations, the forest highlands abound in tea, coffee, rubber, spice plantations and wildlife reserves. Kerala has an abundance of natural forests, replete with precious herbs and medicinal plants mentioned in the ancient texts.

Kerala is the only place where 'Ayurveda', the ancient form of science and the holistic system of medicine based on nature is practiced with absolute dedication and commitment. The monsoon season is the best time for Ayurvedic treatment. There are many Ayurvedic Centres across the state offering rejuvenation packages. But it is advised to visit only Govt. approved Ayurvedic Centres.

With highest rate of literacy among people, Kerala is one of India's most advanced and affluent states. The state is divided into fourteen districts and most of the districts have attractive tourist destinations worth visiting. Let us journey to some of the attractive tourist places where one

can experience the amalgam of nature and life.

Beaches- Kerala is home to a number of spectacular beaches that will take your breath away. As Kerala is a coastal state, some of the most popular tourist destinations in Kerala are beaches like Kovalam, Varkala, Chowara, Chavakkad, Nattika, Cherai, Kizhunna, Poovar and the list goes on and on. The Kerala coast is replete with exotic resorts and hotels where travelers can spend their time sunbathing, swimming or simply enjoying the stunning view.

Kovalam beach is 16 km from Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city. This internationally renowned beach has been a long sought after tourist spot since the 1930s. Kovalam consists of three adjacent crescent beaches. The southernmost, known as the Light House Beach, is very attractive to tourists coming from far and wide.

Varkala (40 km from Thiruvananthapuram city) is a seaside resort and also an important Hindu centre of pilgrimage. The 2000 years old Sree Janardhana Swamy Temple is situated here.

Thangasseri (5 km from Kollam town) is a seaside village. One can also see the ruins of an old Portuguese fort and churches built in the 18th century.

Tanur in Malappuram district is a small coastal fishing town. This place is one of the earliest settlements of the Portuguese. History says that St. Francis Xavier visited the place in 1546. Keraladeshpuram temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, one of the oldest temples in Kerala is situated at Tanur.

BACK WATER

Kerala is known for its endless backwaters. Stretching upto 900 km, back waters network of Kerala



originated from innumerable lagoons, lakes, canals and the deltas of forty four rivers. A cruise along the backwaters in a houseboat and looking at the scenic beauty of Kerala makes a perfect holiday. The backwaters mainly cover four districts of the state- Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam and Kochi. Vembanad Lake is the largest backwater body which flows through Alappuzha and Kottayam districts and opens out into the sea at the Kochi port. The second largest backwater is Ashtamudi Lake which is considered the gateway to the backwaters. The houseboats in Kerala are called Kettuvallom. It is an attractive craft, measuring upto 80 feet in length. Kettuvallom is made by tying together pieces of wood. Not a single nail is used in the making of a Kettuvallom. This luxurious furnished houseboat usually consists of one or two bedrooms with attached bath, an open lounge, deck and kitchenette.

HILL STATIONS

Armoured in green all the hill



stations of Kerala offer the most enchanting experience of nature. Some of the idyllic hill stations are:

Munnar (55 km from Idukki town)- situated at the confluence of three mountain streams-Mudrapuzha, Nallathanni and Kundala, this hill station was the summer resort of the British Government in South India. Sprawling tea plantations,

winding lanes and holiday facilities make Munnar a popular hill station. Neelakurinji, a flower which bathes the hills in blue once every twelve years is found here in Munnar.

Anamudi, situated in Munnar is the highest peak in South India. It is an ideal spot for trekking.

Devikulam (15 km from Munnar) is a beautiful hill station. Lush green lawns,

exotic flora and fauna and the cool mountain air make the place worth visiting. The Sita Devi Lake with its mineral water springs and picturesque surroundings is an ideal picnic spot.

Attappady in Palakkad district is a beautiful synthesis of mountains,

rivers and forests. This place is of great interest to anthropologists as it is habitat of many tribals like the Irulars and Mudugas. These tribal communities worship the Malleswaram peak as gigantic Siva Linga and also celebrate the Shivaratri festival with zest and zeal. The other hill stations located in different districts of Kerala are Ponmudi (61 km from Thiruvananthapuram city), Nellyampathy and Dhoni in Palakkad district. Pythal Mala and Ezhimala in Kannur district, Vythiri and Chembra Peak in Wayanad district.

District Idukki is one of the most nature rich areas of Kerala. As a tourist destination, Idukki offers diverse attraction like wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, spice plantation, tours, mountain treks, elephant rides etc. The famous 'Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary' is situated here. It is one of the world's most fascinating natural wildlife reserves. The most unique and memorable experience one can have is to view wildlife at close quarters from a boat on the Periyar Lake. The herds of elephants playing in the lake offer greatest attraction to the tourists.

Idukki has a large population of tribals who have unique customs and beliefs and maintain an ethos

which is distinctly different from the mainstream culture.

District Thrissur, with its rich history, cultural heritage and archaeological wealth is called the Cultural Capital of Kerala. From ancient times, this district has played a significant role in the political history of South India. Many rulers and dynasties-Tipu Sultan of Mysore and Europeans including the Dutch and the British molded the destiny of this region. Today, Thrissur is known in the world for its Pooram festival. A culture oriented place, the Kerala Kala Mandalam, the Kerala Sahitya Academy and Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy are located here.

Kerala is the land of Sree Shankaracharya, the great Advaita philosopher and Sree Narayana Guru who enunciated the famous dictum 'Oru Jhaathi, Oru Matham, Oru Daivam Manushyanu' (One caste, one religion, one God for man). Ancient Kerala followed the Dravidian way of life and religious practices which were free from caste barriers.

Christianity came to Kerala long before it became the official religion of the Roman empire and the first mosque in India was founded at Muziris (Kodungaloor) in Kerala. It was built in 629 AD and resembles as temple in appearance. All these religious faiths have made their

contribution to the process of cultural synthesis.

Spectacular Snake boat races are held during Onam, the harvest festival in August/September every year. Scores of long snake boats and other smaller crafts participated in these events. It is the largest team sport in the world and signifies the excellent team spirit and integration of the people of Kerala.

No celebration in Kerala is complete without an elephant pageant. The elephant pageants feature colourfully decked up elephants, with mahouts atop them holding high tinselled silk parasols and swaying white tufts and peacock feather fans.

Kerala has a rich repertoire of music, dance and arts. The two classical dance forms which are famous not only in India but also outside the country's border are Mohiniattam and Kathakali.

Mohiniattam is a traditional feminine dance of Kerala. Mohini denotes the enchantress and Attam means dance. This Mohiniattam is the dance of the enchantress. Its movements are soft and graceful (Lasya oriented). Rhythmic variations are based on patterns of rhythm syllables that are integral part of the vocal accompaniment- gracefully rendered by the dancer with beautiful hand gestures, footwork

and expression of the wide open eyes.

Kathakali is a classical dance drama, quite different from the other dance forms. It is dramatic rather than narrative in character and performed by men dancers. Now a days we can see participation by women aswell. It takes epic mythological themes as its content and portrays them through an elaborate dramatic spectacle characterized by the supernatural grandeur, a stylized large size costume and a mask like make-up on the face which is governed by a complex symbolism of colour, line and design.

Kerala also has a rich repertoire of folk performing arts, folk songs and folk drama. Theyyam, Thira, Mudi-yettu, Kaduvakali, Kakkarissinatakam, Chavittunatakam, Margamkali, Kolkali, Parichamuttukali, Bhadraklipattu, Pulluvanaatu and Thiruvathirakali are some of Kerala's folk art forms.

Kalaripayattu, the comprehensive system of martial arts of Kerala is regarded as one of the oldest and most scientific in the world. Even Kung-fu is believed to have originated from it.

Kodiyattam, the Sanskrit theatre of Kerala is believed to have originated two millennia ago. This art form was

declared by UNESCO as one among 'the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity'. Kerala is an ideal place to shop. The state is renowned for its handlooms, gold ornaments, spices etc. The handicrafts of Kerala are known for their uniqueness of style, perfection of form and elegance of design.

Explore Festivals

Onam is a Grand National harvest festival of Kerala which attracts a large number of tourists from different parts of India. Onam festival is celebrated to mark the return of demon King Mahabali to the land of Kerala. These ten days of Onam are named Atham, Chithira, Chodi, Vishakam, Anizham, Thriketta, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradom and Thiruvonam. During these ten days of Onam, Kerala looks utterly vibrant as people wear new clothes, cook delicacies, decorate their houses and organize various cultural events.

Attukal Pongala is a religious festival of Kerala that is dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathi. Celebrated for 10 days at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Attukal Pongala marks the world's largest congregation of women. The most fascinating part of this festival is that entry of men is strictly prohibited inside the temple complex since it is a women centric festival of the state.

Vishu is a spring festival of Kerala which is celebrated on the first day of the Malayalam calendar. Also known as the New Year in Kerala, the celebration of Vishu involves decorating houses and bursting crackers.

Thrissur Pooram is an annual temple festival of Kerala which is worth witnessing. It is a grand assembly of Gods and Goddesses who visit Vadakkumnathan Temple premises on elephants adorned with ornaments.

Kerala has a cuisine as distinctive as its cultural life. The sadya is the traditional feast of Kerala which is served on a plantain leaf and eaten with the hand. A three course meal, the Sadya includes an amazing variety of 40 vegetarian delights. Among the seafood delicacies are prawn, lobsters, crabs, mussels, etc. cooked with exotic spices. Karimeen or pearl spot, a backwater fish is famous for its great taste. The Moplah cuisine of Malabar show Arabic influences by Syrian, Dutch, Portuguese and British are unique in its rich flavor. Aromatic Malabari Biriyani is indeed a great treat.

Theyyam Festival- The spectacular dance festival of Kerala, Theyyam is precisely considered as God's dance which actually has 400 unique forms with different make-up,

costumes, songs, choreography in each dance form.

Boat Race Festival- One of the major highlights of Kerala Tourism, the Boat Race Festival of Kerala alone draws thousands of tourists from all over the world. Boat races are held during the 10 days of the Onam festival which falls somewhere in August and September. With as many as four popular snake boat races, the Nehru Trophy on Alleppey's Punnamada Lake and Aranmula Snake Boat Race draw the maximum number of visitors owing to the grandeur.

Makaravilakku- The famous Makar Sankranti festival of India is celebrated as Makaravilaku in Kerala. It is the traditional festival of Kerala when Lord Ayayapan is worshipped with great devotion and many rituals like purification, Prasadasudhi, Deeparadhana take place at the Sabarimala temple which is a popular pilgrimage place in India.

Adoor Gajamela is an elephant festival of Kerala which is celebrated to honor Lord Krishna. Adoor Gajamela is a ten day festival that is celebrated with great fervor every year. Various cultural programs are organized along with the parade of

9 mighty elephants that are beautifully adorned with paints and metal ornaments.

The most celebrated 10-day festival of Kerala, the **Painkuni Festival** is hosted at the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple with great pomp and show. On the ninth day of the Painkuni festival, the head of the Travancore Royal family performs the ritual of royal hunt which is known as Palli Vetta near the Vettakkorumakan Temple in the fort area. On the tenth day of the festival, these figures are immersed in the sea near Shanghumugham beach.

Ambalapuzha Arattu is a ten-day festival in the small coastal town of Kerala which begins with the special flag hoisting ceremony called Kodiyettu. During this festival of Kerala, the martial art form originated in Ambalapuzha is performed. A special feast, Ambalapuzha Nadakashala Sadya is served on Pallivetta day. The 10-day festival concludes with Arattu which is the holy bath of the deity at Shanghumugham beach.

Tourists visiting Kerala no doubt can enjoy the magnificent and varied allure of God's Own Country.



Bhutan: Where Traditions Meet Tomorrow

-Deeposri Choudhury

Imagine a country both ancient and recent, a land that weaves together folklore and fact. A country with an uncommon harmony – blending peace, prosperity, traditions, and progress. Perched high in the Himalayas is Drukylul – Bhutan, the Land of the Thunder Dragon – which has existed almost undisturbed for centuries, allowing unique traditions and ways of life to flourish. The slow-paced life many only dream of seems to find its home here. There is the quietness of mornings, an unhurried rhythm to life, a deep connection to roots and culture, and a way of working with nature rather than against it.

This Himalayan kingdom shares with India more than borders. What binds us is not only political friendship, but a deeper spiritual and cultural kinship – one that can be felt in our art, our faith, and our ways of life.

It is within this spirit that our journey as members of CCSD found meaning. Backed by the India Bhutan Foundation, and the Department of Culture & Dzongkha Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, Royal Govt. of Bhutan, we were given a chance to witness firsthand how a nation preserves its

culture while embracing change. With an agenda rooted in cultural exchange and mutual learning, we sought to understand

the very values that allow Bhutan to thrive in harmony with its people and its land.

Over four days in Thimphu, the theme of cultural exchange took the form of a dance workshop on the Ethics of Odissi. What truly brought life to the workshop sessions were the artists of the Traditional Performing Arts and Music Division, who despite witnessing this dance



CCSD's workshop session in Thimphu

form so closely for the first time, were quick to catch on all that was taught to them by Odissi dance exponent Paulami Guha. What followed was not just a teaching of dance, but a sharing of values, stories, and expressions across borders.

Through every interaction, what stood out was Bhutan's deep respect for art as a way of life, not just as performance. Artists here are not left to struggle on the margins but are given dignity, recognition, and even regular employment with opportunities to perform for the royalty as well as internationally. They are valued as much as any other profession, ensuring that families encourage young people to pursue their passions without fear of instability.

In India, the picture is often very different. While our land has an

artistic heritage just as rich, artists here rarely receive steady support or social recognition. Families worry about the uncertainty of choosing art as a profession, and often discourage it. This lack of support is one of the main reasons why art,

even though it is at the heart of our culture, struggles to find its rightful place in society.

What Bhutan shows us is that preserving culture is not just about honoring our past, but also about planning for the future. Their four guiding principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) — sustainable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, cultural preservation and promotion, and good governance

— shape policies that prioritize the holistic well-being of citizens. This largely differentiates them from the rest of the world, who run after GDP and focus solely on economic



Bhutanese folk artists

growth of the country, putting the needs and fulfillment of the general population at the back.

From wearing their traditional attire daily, keeping every region's textile traditions alive, to levying a sustainable development fee on tourists to protect nature, and providing their artists stable livelihoods – Bhutan truly balances modern growth with rootedness. It is this balance that India, with its vastness

and diversity, can learn from. Of course, our population and priorities make the path different, but the idea remains.

That development is most meaningful when it caters to the well-being of all citizens, while preserving what makes us who we are.

For us at CCSD, these weren't just observations from afar, but lessons we carried in conversations, meals shared, and in the quiet moments of reflection after each day. These moments reminded us that cultural exchange is not about similarities or comparison alone, but about learning, unlearning, and carrying back values that can enrich our communities. As CCSD, our mission to preserve and promote Indian culture & traditions, especially



Paulami Guha, Member Secretary
CCSD & Deeposri Choudhury with officials
of Department of Culture, Thimphu, Royal Govt. of Bhutan

among the youth, found new strength in this exchange. It reaffirmed our mission and reminded us of our own responsibility. To

ensure that India's vibrant cultural heritage is not only remembered, but lived, and passed on with pride and consciousness.

India's Cultural Treasure Trove

-Special Correspondent

Ancient Indian thinkers, philosophers, saints and authors contributed significantly to the growth, expansion and progress of mankind, their thought and culture both spiritual and material. Many philosophers who were the legends of their time such as Kalidasa, Aryabhata, Manu were the path guide to the achievement of high degree of senses and wisdom. There have been discoveries and re-discoveries of human culture.

Various traits of conversation, human traditions and customs were disseminated in the world. Right from the ancient time till the modern time, India's contribution to the world culture especially maintaining its century old traditions and customs is very significant. Her participation in the enrichment of the literature and culture especially its Persian and Sanskrit version are worth



Raja Rammohan Roy

mentioning. In the medieval periods, contribution of saints such as Guru Nanak, Kabir to the spiritual growth of wisdom of mankind cannot be omitted from the memories. To name a few more spiritual leaders, we have to mention Giriraj Kavi, Tyagaraja, Venkatachala Kavi. The philosophy

of these spiritual leaders have been adding from time and again to the growth of spiritual human wisdom. The artists of India have been equally

responsible for propagating spiritual approach to the achievement of human wisdom through poetic version of Natyashastra which is considered as one of the major collections of global literature and dramaturgy. Even in medieval period, a remarkable development of global cultural achievement was noticed in the adaptation of ornament poetry in prose. The

version of Natyashastra relates to the composition and presentation of dramas which considers rasa (sentiment prevailing in a work) as the essence of kavya (poetical composition).

Although the myth and false belief governs methodologically the minds of people in India but the composition of Vedas disseminate wisdom in different areas of man's thought and culture. It is clearly mentioned in Rigveda "Endow me with that wisdom which the gods and fathers worship. Let my words milk honey, let my sacred knowledge not forsake me (Rigveda, Parisishta,v.5 and 8 of the Medhasukta appended to x.151)".

The earliest Indian literature is the Veda, literally meaning "knowledge (vid, "to know"). The vedic literature commences with the Rigveda-Samhita, a collection of hymns in vedic Sanskrit. The majority of the verses were composed in about the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C., though these were collected, arranged and reduced to writing in later ages. The Samhita, consisted of 1028 hymns. The hymns as composed in Vedas have secrets of how to follow the life structure; how to create wealth for the nation and her prosperity, 'arthshastra'; the method producing such chemicals which by

applying to raw armaments, can result in producing agni (fire), pani (water), strong wind and other multiple weapons of destruction. Unfortunately, no one seems to have been able to interpret these hymns as written in Vedas. It were only Maharishis in ancient period who had the divine knowledge of interpreting the hymns as written in Vedas and were capable enough to depict the meaning of the hymns in true sense.

With the passage of time, situations kept changing and several philosophers, scholars, scientists, professors advocated their own theories based on social and religious codes and ancient customs to ensure integrity of the empire and peace, harmony and religious contentment among the people. The Indian philosophers possessed high degree of knowledge in medical science as well. Their theories of yoga system ensured physical discipline and function of body and theory on certain system of mind enabled any human to develop concentration of mind, breath control through which different kinds of physical problems could be cured. Indian Ayurveda or science of life also speaks of medical knowledge of high order. The Ayurveda considers any treatment

as process of restoration of lost equilibrium of doshas (morbidities of the body caused by imbalance in vayu, pitta and kapha and dhatus body constituents), has certain distinguishing features marking it as a unique type of medical system. When we proceed further to 4th century we notice a few worldwide famous Indian writers who produced beautiful literature. One of the most popular dramatists, poet Kalidasa came out with his drama Sakuntala and lyrical poems acclaimed all over the literary world. Similarly, other important poet Bharvi is the author of the famous court epic Kiratanjuniya. Indian literature is rich in fables (katha) and anecdotes (akhyayika), the oldest of which may go back to many centuries before the Christian era. A relevant collection, called the Panchatantra, which uses fables, stories and epigrams for teaching the art of administration, worldly wisdom and moralities, much have been known in its oldest form or in one or more of its old versions by the Gupta age, as it was translated in 570 A.D. into Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English etc, it has become one of the most well-known treasuries of stories of "gnomic" type in world literature. Incidentally this is the earliest work of Indian literature translated into

English (in A.D. 1570).

With the advancement of time there were changes in projection of various subjects affecting India's history and culture, religious, spiritual and material which included subjects such as cosmography, architectural, etc. Later on, the authors developed the literature to serve their own interest. In course of time, the literature, with several type of addition became a compendium of Indian history and culture and thereby attained a unique position in the world of literary activities. The spiritual philosophers were also vocal with their commentaries in the field of the study of Dharamashastra. The Smritis of Dharamasastra of the earlier times and commentaries and digests of the post Gupta Age form together a formidable class of legal literature. Similarly in spiritual literary work, the composition consisting of verses and prose seems to have been one of the distinguished features of literary activities during the period 600 to 1200 A.D. Special mention can be made of the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, describing in an attractive style the love of Radha and Krishna, is a wonderful collection of gem of literary work. Related to poetry the art of singing gets closer to Indian

culture of performing art and music. Indian music has its root in ancient period based on hepatotonic scale (grammer) and rhythmic style. It is very exciting form of art which attracts people from far and wide.

Indian contribution to the literature on music was considerable in volume and contents. Most of the works on music have chapters on dance and vice versa. The two arts were regarded as complimentary to each other. Indian wisdom had its greatest manifestations in devotional literature which cropped up from the new religious movements viz. bhakti led by Sufi saints. The quality of Indian music drew attention of expert writers in Persian. The Java-hi-al-Musiqat-I Muhammadi by shaykh abd al-karim al-Jaupuri is a Persian work on Indian music and the mystical experience gained by listening to it. Similarly, India is known for its sophisticated and graceful style of dances in the world. The different symbols of legacy of nature like opening of flowers in the hands of dancer, the birds imagination on the tips of finger, the movements of body, the eyes, dancing on poems, all speak about the proudest possession of Indian cultural treasury. In cultural tradition of India, there is much more to talk about.

The most popular contribution to Indian culture was through Bhaktirasa preached by Sufi saints. The teaching of these saints spread spiritual message India had ever conveyed among two distinct communities. The foremost of these saints were Ramananda and his disciple Kabir. The oral teachings of Kabir are collected in a work called Bijaka. Kabir did not acknowledge caste distinctions, nor did he make any difference between Hinduism and Islam. Ignorance, according to him was the root of communalism. Bhakti or intense devotion is the only medium of salvation.

The other two saints, who had exercised deeper influence on the people, were Nanak and Chaitanya. Nanak's teachings are embodied in the Adi-grantha. He envisaged a casteless and classless society and his dream was equality of human beings.

Ramacharitmanasa of Tulsidasa in Hindi is a beautiful exposition of the philosophy of the Bhakti cult. The Bhakti movement, which swept over the whole of India in the 15th and 16th centuries, contributed a lot to the development of the regional languages. It was accelerated by the teachings of the saints.

In modern era, despite onslaught of

cruelty and atrocities inflicted upon Indian people by Mughal and British rulers, the progress in Indian literature, literary and scientific activities did not diminish. The print media, small time periodicals, and several organisations engaged in India's cultural development continued their contribution to the dissemination of literary and scientific knowledge. A few regional literatures particularly in Bengal brought out transformation in India from medieval to modern period. Intellectualism burst forth once again on the Indian horizon in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century, rejuvenating the ancient wisdom. In the field of poetry and literature, several compositions were produced. The one which had worldwide recognition, Gitanjali by Rabindranath Tagore won for him the Nobel Prize. In his philosophical approach Raja Rammohan Roy known as "Father of Modern India" propagated the necessity of modernizing approach to achievement of progress in human activities. He discovered for modern India the treasures of Indian philosophy of the Upanishads. He laid the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj. Similarly, Indian wisdom found new interpretations in the writings of Swami Vivekananda,

Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, who championed the Indian cultural heritage. In the field of art and culture, though shastras exist for all the arts, great research, knowledge, experience and intuition are necessary to demonstrate the continuity of art forms from the ancient days to the present. The classical art of India particularly performing art which has gesture, music and rhythm taking its route in the highest spiritual level almost like the banyan tree that grows endlessly is known as divine art. The classical art curiously endures in the village, in the temple, in the dance and musical heritage and of course in individuals.

In the light of what is said above, one can say with confidence that Indian philosophers, scientists, artists, and others contributed to making the India's cultural treasury strong which brought about worldwide recognition to modern literature and culture. In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan "Religion is not correct belief but righteous living". He believed in the fundamental unity of all religions, and thought that "more religious we grow the more tolerant of diversity shall we become".

Fact File: DUKKAD –A Rare Instrument

- Staff Reporter

One of the ancient and rare form of instruments in the family of percussion is the cup shaped drum with distinctive features and various sizes. Often referred to as the conical drum- dundubhi, bheri, nisan, dhau- nsa still has its presence in folk and tribal music of India in present scenario. In ancient time, these instruments were so bigger in size that

they had to be carried on a bullock cart. Gradually, the size became smaller to the extent that the player could carry the instrument around the

neck. We can find the mention of dundubhi as a ritual drum in Vedic literature. Later in the medieval period, this conical drum was given the name derived from Persian word- Naqqara or Nagara. The instrument became the integral part of folk music and folk theatre during the time of Emperor Akbar.

With the passage of time, a smaller

version of naqqara called 'Dukkad' acquired a prominent place as an accompaniment to Shehnai (wind instrument). The duo is being played in the auspicious occasions and in the concerts of Indian classical music all over India. Dukkad is comprised of two pieces- right hand drum called jheel and left hand drum called banya or duggi. Unlike

Naqqara, it is played with palms and fingers. Presently, the Shehnai players often use tabla in place of Dukkad as accompaniment.



However, renowned Shehnai Maestro late Ustad Bismillah Khan preferred Dukkad and even other well-known Shehnai players of Varanasi prefer to use Dukkad for their performances of Shehnai recitals as it has less resonance than tabla and can merge with sound of the Shehnai more naturally.



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