



# *The Oral and Intangible Heritage of South Asia*

UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADOR MADANJEET SINGH

COMPRISING A DVD OF LIVE PERFORMANCES BY  
40 SOUTH ASIAN DANCERS AND MUSICIANS



Collection  
Editions UNESCO



AFGHANISTAN



PAKISTAN

# IN CELEBRATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNESCO ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADORS



BHUTAN



INDIA



BANGLADESH

## THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

### THE ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF SOUTH ASIA

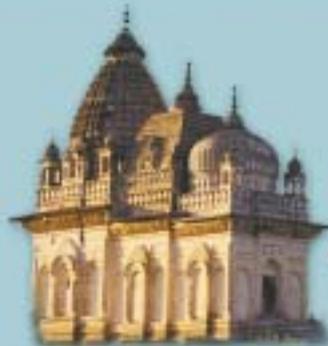
BY THE PERFORMING ARTISTS FROM AFGHANISTAN, BANGLADESH,  
BHUTAN, INDIA, MALDIVES, NEPAL, PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA

UNESCO HOUSE (ROOM 1) - 125 AVENUE DE SUFFREN, PARIS 7

ON 16 MARCH 2006 AT 1900 hrs



NEPAL



SRI LANKA

On the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage is this unique nineteenth century shrine of Khejuriha, India, invoking the weaker Bhakti-Sufi ideology. Its three cupola represent a Hindu temple, a Buddhist stupa and the dome of a mosque. The shrine was open for worship to everyone irrespective of religion, caste, class or sex.

Courtesy: UNESCO Publishing: The South Story by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh



The UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh thanks Mr. Koichiro Matsuura for bestowing on him the medal (below) in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of UNESCO. Mr Mahendrajeet Singh, a Trustee of South Asia Foundation is seen on the right.



Front cover picture: In a traditional ritual, a father and son offer holy water to their ancestors as they worship the sun. — Published in The Sun in Myth and Art by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO 1993).

**Madanjeet Singh**

# **The Oral and Intangible Heritage of South Asia**

PERFORMANCES BY 40 DANCERS AND MUSICIANS FROM AFGHANISTAN, BANGLADESH,  
BHUTAN, INDIA, NEPAL, PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA

Foreword  
**Koichiro Matsuura**



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

IN COOPERATION WITH SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION

## OTHER BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

Indian Sculpture in Bronze and Stone (1951)  
Etruscan Cave Painting (monograph, 1953)  
India, Painting from Ajanta Caves (1954)  
Indian Miniatures (1963)  
Ajanta, Paintings of the Sacred and the Secular (1964)  
Himalayan Art (1968)  
The White Horse (1976)  
MADANJEET, The Early Sixties (monograph, 1986)  
This My People (1989)  
The Sun in Myth and Art (1993)  
Renewable Energy of the Sun (monograph, 1996)  
The Timeless Energy of the Sun (1998)  
The Sasia Story (2005)

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## Director General

On the occasion of the annual meeting of UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors and that of the South Asia Foundation, I would like to express how much I appreciate their support for the safeguarding of the world's intangible cultural heritage, particularly through the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' programme. The three Proclamations issued by UNESCO since 2001 serve to draw attention to our fragile and perishable cultural heritage and highlight the broad spectrum of oral traditions in music, theatre, rituals and cosmogonies across the world.

South Asian countries were among the large number of UNESCO Member States that were strongly in favour of incorporating the oral heritage of developing countries within the *History of Mankind*, conceived by Julian Huxley in 1946. As a result, the General Conference of UNESCO embarked in 1976 on a new and completely revised version 'to ensure that the traditional methods of historical research, based on written sources, were used side by side with new critical methods adapted to the use of oral sources and contributions from archaeology'.

Since renamed the *History of Humanity*, the revised version was briefly directed in the early 1980s by the former Indian Ambassador, Madanjeet Singh, then a director in the Culture Sector of UNESCO. It is against this background that, in his capacity as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, he has organized this unique performance of oral and intangible heritage in cooperation with the chairpersons of the South Asia Foundation's chapters in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Over forty talented dancers and musicians playing on traditional musical instruments – some of which can be traced back to the Indus valley civilization – reaffirm South Asia's unity in diversity, which is deeply rooted in the oral and intangible culture that blends with the mythology, history and geography of the region.

I would like to extend my particular thanks to the group of artists from Bhutan, who have come to UNESCO Headquarters to perform the Mask Dance of the Drums from Drametse, and the musicians from Bangladesh, who will be singing traditional Baul songs. These two 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' were included in the Proclamation issued by UNESCO in 2005.

Finally, I would like to express my warm appreciation to Madanjeet Singh for his generosity, commitment and vision in organizing this evening of spectacle and performance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Matsuura".

Koichiro Matsuura

Paris, 16 March 2006



*The folk culture of Kashmir was kept alive by the 'coolie poet' Aasi, an illiterate Muslim labourer doing menial jobs in Srinagar. With his secular poetry he inspired people from all walks of life in forming a cultural front to resist the brutal attack by Kabaili tribes who had invaded the Kashmir valley in 1948 --- first published in the book This My People by Madanjeet Singh (1989).*



# The Oral and Intangible Heritage of South Asia

Madanjeet Singh

It was in Kashmir that I first became aware of the prevailing influence and power of oral folk culture. There, I met Aasi, the 'coolie poet' – an illiterate Muslim labourer performing menial jobs in Srinagar. His secular poetry had inspired all communities, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians, to form a cultural front against the tribal terrorists who brutally attacked the valley in 1948 soon after India's partition. Aasi was a devotee of Kashmir's patron Sufi saint, Hazrat Nuruddin Nurani (or Nund Rishi), and often went to pray in his shrine one floor of which was used as a temple and the other as a mosque.

Aasi intoned his poetry like *Vedas*, lengthy oral teachings which were composed in archaic Sanskrit by Indo-European-speaking semi-nomadic Aryan herders who crossed the Himalayas from the Asian steppes during the second

millennium BC before settling on the banks of the Indus and Ganges Rivers. The roots of modern secularism can be traced back to the animistic world-view of four Vedas they composed and worshipped the Nature deities, such as the Sun, earth, sky, fire, water, rain and storms. The great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* give some clues to the thinking and way of life of these Aryan settlers. The liturgical corpus which was handed down from these early days is preserved orally even today, as several of these hymns are invoked throughout India with subtleties of intonation, tone and rhythm as recited in the olden days.

The Vedic animist culture led to the notions such as agnosticism and atheism. The 'agnosticism' which Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, preached as *Theravada* (Way of the Elders), was not a conventional religion but observance

*The four Vedas, orally composed in archaic Sanskrit (c. 1500-1200 BC), are inherently agnostic, extolling the elements of Nature. The Vedas were proclaimed by UNESCO as among the first 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'.*

of certain norms of daily life for human salvation (*Nirvana*). When asked by some skeptics to prove that he had in fact achieved Enlightenment, the Buddha did not point towards the heaven but touched the earth as his witness.

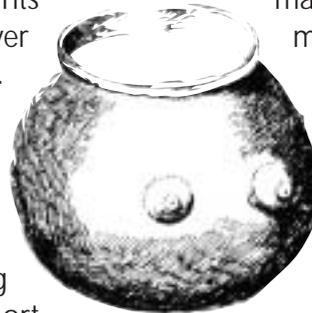
Many Kashmiri poets were women, like Lalla, or Lal Ded (fourteenth century), who wrote poems about the god Shiva. Hubb Khatun (sixteenth century) and Arani-mal (eighteenth century) were famous for their hauntingly beautiful love lyrics. There is much poetic literature written by Muslims in Kashmiri, commencing with the Islamic invocation of Allah, which nevertheless betrays strong Hindu influences. Islam was among the different religions and cultures that India assimilated from abroad over the centuries. Historically, India covered the whole of South Asia, the early inhabitants of the subcontinent naming it after the mighty river Sindhu, which in Sanskrit means 'like an ocean'. Later, the Greeks named it 'Indus', and in the course of time the whole of South Asia came to be known by the generic name of India.

The advent of languages in prehistoric times began with verse rather than prose. This took place long before a rudimentary script of 2,000-odd short inscriptions was invented by the talented Harappans of the Indus valley. Verse was easier to memorize orally and was therefore better suited for transmitting information for the benefit of succeeding generations. The addition of a rhythm and beat aided memory and in this way music became an part of oral traditions, even after writing became commonplace.

The musical rhythm of life, as it were, seems to have begun with clappers: flat pieces of wood that were held in each hand and beaten together. This was a more effective version of hand

clapping that accentuated the rhythm of the dance and the song. The most ancient musical instruments are believed to have been conceived by beating on common household earthenware pots, a practice which can be traced back to the terracotta toys of the Indus valley civilization. Known as *ghatam* (symbolizing the womb), these instruments are still played today, particularly in South Indian temples. In later times, leather was stretched over the mouth of the pot and probably fixed with wooden pegs.

Likewise, a rudimentary one-string instrument called an *ektara* was invented by stretching a gut or a metal wire over a dried melon sound box. A varieties of string instruments are played all over South Asia such as the sitar, rabab, veena and many other variations, as the lute was a favourite musical instrument during the Gupta period (320 to 486). Sarangi, modeled after the lute is a popular bowed instrument played during festivals such as Holi, especially in Rajasthan. A short bow plays over three or four stings made of gut, below which thirteen metal stings serve as resonators. It is amazing that these musical instruments are still in use especially in rural areas.



The flute, originally made from a simple bamboo reed, is a universally popular musical instrument, played particularly on joyful occasions. Generally identified with fertility (symbolizing a phallus), it is a regular accompaniment to love songs and thought to exercise a lascivious influence upon the hearer.

South Asian bamboo flute is a very simple keyless instrument. Two main varieties of flutes are currently used: *Bansuri*, which has six finger holes and one blowing hole, is used predominantly in northern regions of the Indian subcontinent

*A terracotta pot with protruding breasts used in archaic Vedic rituals representing womb of the Earth Mother. It was discovered at Ponga, a remote village in Kerala, India. The most ancient drums were common household earthenware pots, a practice which can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization (National Museum, New Delhi).*

# INDIA



**Vikku Vinakram** is India's foremost traditional player of ghatam, having started to beat on the clay pot at the age of 3 while learning from his father, Harihara Sharma. He then played in several southern Indian temples where his exceptional talent was recognized and enabled him to perform at the United Nations in New York at the age of 13. He has had many famous musicians in India and abroad as mentors, accompanying them on his ghatam in traditional and modern, avant-garde ensembles. He has played with such great musicians and vocalists as Srinivasa Iyer, MS Subhalakshmi, Balamurali Krishna, Bhimsen Joshi and Hariprasad Chaurasia. His unforgettable performances include *Shakti*, a fusion

of Indian music with acoustic jazz alongside guitarist John McLaughlin, violinist Shankar and Zakir Hussain on tabla. In 1991, he participated in the recording of *Planet Drum* as composer and co-producer, together with Mickey Hart, the drummer of The Grateful Dead. *Planet Drum* won the Grammy Award for Best World Music Album.

Vikku's son, **Vinayakaram Umashankar** is now following in his father's footsteps, keeping alive the oral and intangible tradition of the ghatam. Together, they play their favourite rhythm, *Saptakshra*, which comprises seven notes.



and *Venu* or *Pullanguzhal*, which has eight finger holes, is mostly used in southern regions. Presently, the 8 holed flute with cross fingering technique, is common among many South Asian flautists. The quality of the sound from the flute depends on the specific bamboo used to make it, and it is supposed that the best bamboos are from the Nagarcoil area in South India. In traditional folk societies, music is a necessity in almost all festivals and rituals.

The singing accompanying the dances is tuned to local oral traditions, and interprets the sentiments of common people in a manner that it is related to their life and often critical of current social and political issues. In this way, folk music takes on a 'functional' role; it is not only entertainment but an accompaniment to other social activities. The words of folk songs can serve as chronicle, newspaper and agent of enculturation.

*A group of rural folk dancers in Bangladesh enacting the legend of Krishna playing on his flute, while the gopis (wives and daughters of the cowherds) dance ecstatically with him in the forest — published in The Sasia Story by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO 2005).*



In modern societies, folk music is perpetuated by ethnic, occupational or religious minorities, among which it is thought to promote self-esteem, self-preservation and social solidarity.

In South Asia, musical instruments are invariably played in festivals such as Diwali, the festival of lights; Holi, where people sprinkle coloured water on one other; and especially Basant, which celebrates the onset of spring when clear blue skies come alive with colourful paper kites. Lahore in Pakistan celebrates the festival of Basant as nowhere else in South Asia. Originally associated with a Hindu festival called *vasant panchami*, it became a truly secular celebration as Indian culture absorbed different religions and cultures from abroad. Kite-flying recognizes no boundaries.

*Festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm all over South Asia, but none equals the fervour and joy with which the Basant spring festival is celebrated in Lahore, Pakistan, where men, women and children unleash colourful paper kites and go dancing in the streets — published in The Sasia Story by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO 2005).*

South Asian folk music and dances with their inexhaustible variety of forms and rhythms are predominantly secular, as the oral traditions have grown from elements of Nature mostly preserved by tribal communities. There is hardly a national fair or festival where these dances are not performed, differing according to region, occupation and social status. Several aboriginal tribes, such as the half-naked Adivasis and the Murias, Bhils, Gonds, Juangs and Santals are the most uninhibited in their singing and dancing.

Bauls are the wandering minstrels of Bangladesh, itinerant singers who do not belong to any religious denomination. The lonely Baul roams places trying endlessly to find his identity through music, devotion and love. Their songs invoke

*The Rasleela folk dances are performed by women in Rajasthan, recalling the legendary Rajput princess Mira Bai, as they sing and dance in the streets around an imaginary Krishna, the divine lover and flute player — published in The Sun in Myth and Art by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO 1993).*



traditions that can be interpreted as a revolt against the conventions and bindings of established society. They believe that the 'spirit' does not reside in an unknown heaven but instead can be traced within us through love and compassion for one other. Baul songs transcend religion and inspired poet Rabindranath Tagore to write the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh. In the Proclamation issued by UNESCO in 2005, Baul traditional songs were included in the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.'

Both in the Indian and Pakistani parts of Punjab, the most electrifying social folk dance is *bhangra*, the male harvest

*Performing artists from Bangladesh playing on ek-tara (one string) and wooden clappers. These were among the earliest of musical instruments and remain popular today in South Asia.*



dance. The dance is punctuated by singing while at the end of every line a drum thunders. The final line of the song is taken up by all the dancers in a chorus as they spring, bellow, shout and gallop in a circle, in ecstasy.

The national social folk dance of Rajasthan is the *ghoomar*, danced by women in long full skirts and colourful chuneris (headscarves draped over shoulders and tucked in front at the waist). These dancers are performed during festivals.

The *kacchi ghor*i dancers of this region are also spectacular. In this dance, the men are arrayed in the traditional attire of a bridegroom and equipped with shields and long swords.

*A court jester playing on string instrument known as the sarangi. Eighteenth-century Mughal miniature painting (Clive Album, Victoria and Albert Museum, London).*

They 'ride' brilliantly coloured papier-maché horses built up on bamboo frames and enact jousting contests at marriages and festivals. The Bawaris, a tribe that lives on the fringe of society, are generally expert in this form of folk dance.

The *kolyacha* is among the better known examples of folk dance traditional to fishermen indigenous to the Konkan coast of western central India. The *kolyacha* enacts the rowing of a boat. Women wave handkerchiefs to their male partners who move with sliding steps. For wedding parties, young Kolis dance in the streets carrying household utensils for the newlywed couple who join the dance at its climax.

The Lambadi gypsy women of Andhra Pradesh wear mirror-speckled headdresses and skirts and cover their arms with broad, white-bone bracelets. They dance in slow, swaying movements, while the men acting as singers and drummers. Their agnostic dance is imbued with impassioned grace and lyricism and is more subdued than that of gypsies in other parts of the world.

Of the endless variety of ritualistic folk dances, many have magical significance and are connected with ancient cults. The *karakam* dance of Tamil Nadu state is mainly performed at an annual festival in front of the image of Mariyammai (the goddess of pestilence) to deter her from unleashing an epidemic. Tumbling and leaping, the dancer precariously balances on his head a pot of uncooked rice, which is surmounted by a tall bamboo frame. People ascribe this feat to the spirit of the deity, which is believed to enter his body.

Masked dances as cultural objects of oral tradition have been used throughout world history since the Stone Age and have been as varied in appearance as in their use and symbolism. The essential character of hiding and revealing personalities or moods is common to all masks. Many masks are associated with ceremonies and rituals that have religious or social



*There are several varieties of string instrument played in different regions of South Asia. The sarangi in Rajasthan is similar to the rabab, played here by a musician in the Hans Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur, Rajasthan.*



*Kathakali, also known as Kutiyattam, is the most ancient Sanskrit theatre of Kerala, India. In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed it as among the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'.*

significance or are concerned with funerary customs, fertility rites or curing sickness.

*Kathakali* is indigenous to southwestern India, its subject matter taken from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and stories from Saiva literature. The faces of the dancers are made-up to look like painted masks. The costume consists of a full skirt, a heavy jacket, numerous garlands and necklaces, and a towering headdress. The presentation is an all-night show during which voices chant the story as mimed by dancers accompanied by drumbeats. Stylized gestures and facial expressions follow the rules of the *Bharata-natya* treatise. The gestures are wide and strong by pointing of a finger and rolling of the eyeballs from side to side, being preceded by a sweep of the body and a great circling of the arms.

The entire Himalayan region from east to west is well known for its fantastic masked dancers. In the yak dance in the Ladakh section of Kashmir and the eastern fringes of the Himalayas, the dancer impersonating a yak dances with a man mounted on his back. In *sada tapa tsen*, men wear gorgeous silks, brocades and long tunics with wide flapping sleeves. Skulls arranged as a diadem are a prominent feature of their grotesquely grinning wooden masks, representing spirits of the other world. The dancers rely on powerful, rather slow, twirling movements interspersed with hops.

The *chhau*, a unique form of masked dance, is preserved by the royal family of the former state of Saraikela in Bihar. The dancer impersonates rainbows, night or flowers. He acts out a short theme and performs a series of vignettes at the annual Chaitra Parva festival in April. Chhau masks have predominantly human features slightly modified to suggest the aspect they portray. With serene expressions painted in simple, flat colours, they differ radically from the elaborate facial makeup of kathakali or the exaggerated ghoulishness of



the Noh and Kandyan masks. His face being expressionless, the chhau dancer's body communicates the total emotional and psychological tensions of the character. His feet have a gestural language; his toes are agile, functional and expressive, like those of an animal. The dancer is mute; no song is sung. Only instrumental music accompanies him.

The tradition of masked dances has flourished in particular in Bhutan. Among them, the *Drametse Ngacham* is the most popular and is performed at the festival, Drametse Tshechu in honour of Guru Padmasambhava – the saint who brought Tantric Buddhism to the country in the eighth century AD. A variety of religious dances are performed during the festival when people from neighbouring villages and districts come to

renew their faith in Buddhism and to obtain blessings. For over four centuries, the Drametse community has been the sole custodian of this cultural event which represents their social and religious identity.

The Therayattam festival in Kerala is held to propitiate the gods and demons recognized by the pantheon of the Malayalis. The dancers, arrayed in awe-inspiring costumes and hideous masks, enact weird rituals before the village shrine. A devotee makes an offering of a cock. The dancer grabs it, chops off its head in one stroke, gives a blessing, and hands the bloody gift back to the devotee. This ceremony is punctuated by this prolonged and ponderous dance. Such traditional dances are no longer as popular as in the olden days.

*Drametse Ngacham dances are performed annually during the Drametse Tshechu festival, held at the famous Thegchog Ogyen Namdroel Choeling monastery in Bhutan. The monastery was founded in the sixteenth century by a Buddhist nun, Choeten Zangmo. The spectacular masked dances of Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism are performed all the way along the high Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan — described in the book Himalayan Art by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO 1968).*



A bas-relief stone sculpture of a dancing girl carved on a wall in the fourteenth-century temple of Kanchipuram, India — published in *Indian Sculptures in Bronze and Stone* by Madanjeet Singh (ISMEO 1951).

The men and women of the Muria tribe in Madhya Pradesh exist on equal terms and perform the bison horn dance together. The men wear a horned headdress with a tall tuft of feathers and a fringe of cowry shells over their faces, while carrying a log-shaped drum slung around their necks. The women's heads are surmounted by broad, solid-brass chaplets and their breasts are covered with heavy metal necklaces, while they carry sticks in their right hands like drum majorettes. Fifty to a hundred performers dance at a time. The 'bisons' attack and fight each other, spearing up leaves with their horns and chasing the female dancers in a dynamic interpretation of nature's mating season.

In the *dindi* and *kala* dances of Maharashtra, the dancers revolve in a circle, beating short sticks (*dindis*) to keep time with the chorus leader and a drummer in the middle. As the rhythm accelerates, the dancers form two rows making geometric patterns by stamping their right feet and bowing and advancing with their left. The *kala* dance features a pot symbolizing fecundity. A group of dancers forms a double-tiered circle bearing other dancers on their shoulders. On top of this tier a man breaks the pot and splashes curds over the naked torsos of the dancers below. After this ceremonial opening, the dancers enter the main square and start the battle dance by feverishly twirling sticks and swords.

The *garaba* is a folk dance that takes its name from *garabi* or 'decorated votive pots'. Although categorized as religious, the dance has strong secular connotations and forms a very popular part of the Gujarati festival. During this celebration, a group of fifty to a hundred women dance together in honour of the goddess *Amba Mata*, known in other parts of India as *Durga* or *Kali*. Men move in a circle, bending and turning and clapping their hands, as they sing in praise of the goddess. The oral and all embracing character of folk culture comes into

# BHUTAN



At UNESCO, the Drametse Ngacham dance was performed by: Nim Gyeltshen (Lead Dancer), Penjor (Dancer / Musician), Wangchuk (Dancer / Musician), Tsagye (Dancer / Musician), Dung Norbu (Dancer / Musician), Ap Dodo (Dancer / Musician), Sonam Chogey (Dancer / Musician),

Pema Samdrup (Dancer / Musician), Khandu (Dancer / Musician), Tshering Tashi (Dancer / Musician) and Senge Gyeltshen (Dancer / Musician).

focus as it is carried around the world on the wings of traditions and blends with the mythology, history and geography of different countries.

As the great Indian epics the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* fanned throughout Asia, they became interwoven with indigenous myths. Until recently they were recited by Indonesian Muslims at the roadside – a practice which has long disappeared in India. Interpreted by the master puppeteer (*dalang*) and using the three-dimensional wooden puppet (*wayang klitik* or *golek*) the singers and musicians play melodies on local bronze instruments and beat on gamelan drums. The puppets are also made of flat leather (*wayang kulit*) and played as shadows on the stage by performing artists who sing, dance and mime.

The puppet carries a sense of universality that springs from its impersonality and the unreality imposed upon it by its own limitations. The art of puppetry justifies itself when it adds something to nature by selection, by elimination or by caricature. Some of the most effective puppets are the crudest: the Rajasthani puppets of India have no legs at all. India provided the models for the more stylized, birdlike profiles of the Indonesian shadow figures, and the intricately shaped leather cutouts of Thailand. It is precisely among these most highly stylized types of puppets that the art reaches its highest manifestations. In the Javanese puppet theatre, a grotesque giant is a personification of the destructive principle, while an elegantly elongated local deity is a personification of the constructive principle. Here the puppet theatre reveals its close relationship with the whole spirit of oral folklore and legend. Unlike Western music, modal concepts permeate all manifestations of Oriental music, representing a synthesis of well-established systems both of scalar constructions and a

variety of melodic formulas. They are essentially derived from the folk music of many tribal societies and show well-organized scalar and modal patterns. The amalgamation of these elements yields specific melodic types imbued with ethical and emotional connotations.

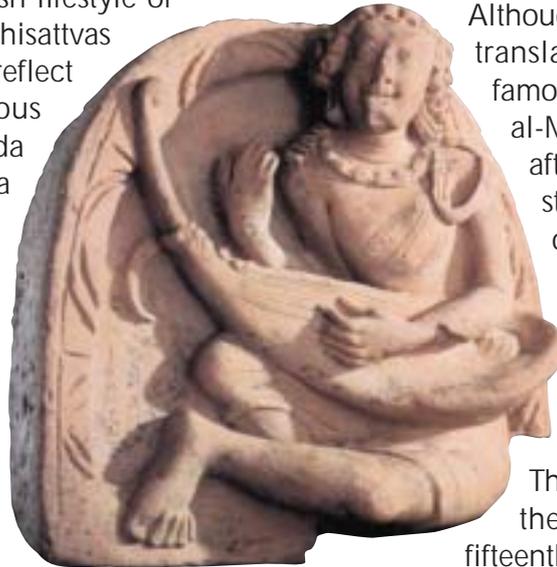
South Asia's social, cultural and religious landscape underwent a radical transformation with the ascendancy of the Mauryan Empire. By about 260 BC Emperor Ashoka, accepting the Buddhist philosophy of nonviolence, proclaimed his policies of tolerance, truthfulness and compassion. During his reign and after, the simple secular tenets of Theravada, preached by the historical Buddha (born c. 563 BC), interacted with the metaphysical notions of Mahayana Buddhism and the ignominy implicit in representational art began to decrease. It recreated the art tradition of the Indus valley civilization representing animal figures such as tigers, buffaloes, crocodiles, elephants, deer, trees and flowers. It encouraged the rendering of Bodhisattvas by symbols borrowed from animistic nature cults while the Buddha was represented by symbols such as the Bodhi Tree and his footprints. This taboo of representing the Buddha in person continued until the First century AD.

Music became fashionable during the 'golden age' of the prosperous Gupta dynasty from 320 to 486 AD. King Kumaragupta, noted for his musical accomplishment, had a golden coin minted showing himself as a musician. An account of a day in the luxurious life of a Gupta king was as follows: *'He woke up early in the morning and the bards started their music. Then he adorned himself with splendid clothes... The king and his companions drank wine out of ruby cups while lutes were strummed; there was dance and music. In the evening the king returned to his palace and*

attended musical performances and dramatic shows.’ The Gupta rule led to a great flowering of Indian literature, architecture, sculpture, painting and science.

The nascent Hinduism during the Gupta Empire was tolerant towards Buddhism. Their way of life is reflected in the cave paintings of Ajanta that illustrate the lavish lifestyle of courtiers. The imposing images of Bodhisattvas radiating wisdom and earthly splendour, reflect the secular message of ‘religious agnosticism’ embodied in the Theravada doctrine preached by Siddhartha Gautama. His followers continued to propagate his doctrine after his death (c. 483 BC), as they built numerous cave monasteries along the trade routes. These ‘cultural stopovers’ became important adjuncts to oral tradition where local scribes, painters and sculptors gathered to immortalize the Buddha’s message through paintings and sculptures.

*Jataka* tales of the Buddha’s previous lives illustrate a vast panorama of daily life: landlords and peasants, hunters and fishermen, saints and priests, merchants and shopkeepers, thieves and mendicants, gamblers, animals and a variety of birds. Among the masterpieces is the famous painting of ‘Dancing Girl with Musicians.’ This depicts the tale of a queen who invited 700 dancing girls and musicians with flutes, cymbals and drums in a futile attempt to persuade her Buddhist husband to abandon his ascetic lifestyle — illustrated in the first volume of the UNESCO World Art series, *INDIA, paintings from Ajanta caves* (1954).



The *Jataka* stories are said to derive from another storehouse of Indian oral and intangible heritage, known as *Panchatantra* – Sanskrit for ‘Five Chapters’. The original Sanskrit work, now lost, may have originated at any time between 100 BC and AD 500. The Persian royal physician, Burzo, translated it into Pahlavi (Middle Persian) in the sixth century.

Although this work is also now lost, a Syriac translation has survived, together with the famous eighth-century Arabic translation of Ibn al-Muqaffa’ known as *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, after the two jackals that figure in the first story. The Arabic translation led to various other versions, including a second Syriac translation and an eleventh-century version in Greek, the *Stephanites kai Iehnelates*, from which translations were made into Latin and various Slavic languages.

The seventeenth-century Turkish translation, the *Hilmayun-name*, was based on a fifteenth-century Persian version, the *Anwar-e-Suhayli*. In Europe, a version was written in Latin hexameters by the fabulist Baldo, probably in the twelfth century, and in the thirteenth century, a Spanish translation was made on the orders of Alfonso X of Leon and Castile. It was the twelfth-century Hebrew version of Rabbi Joel, however, that became the source of most European versions. First translated into Latin by John of Capua as the *Liber Ketilae et Dimnae*, it led to various European versions including another Latin version, the *Liber de Dina et Katila* by Raimond of Beziers in the fourteenth century, and the *Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen* by Antonius von Pforr in the fifteenth century.

*The Indian Gupta dynasty (320–486) governed a prosperous realm where arts and commerce thrived under their rule. They were great patrons of music. The pear-shaped string instrument played at the time anticipated the lute and several other string instruments worldwide.*

The Panchatantra stories also travelled to Indonesia through Old Javanese written literature and possibly through oral versions.

During the middle ages, a devotional movement emerged that believed in the intense emotional attachment and love of a devotee toward his personal god. This led to a large number of Bhakti (devotional) cults that mushroomed all over the Indian subcontinent that eulogize the mythology of Krishna, the 'black'. He is credited with having composed *Bhagwat Gita*, the holiest of the Hindu scriptures while he served as the charioteer of Arjuna of the Pandava clan in the great battle of the *Mahabharata*. Later In the *Chandyog Upanishads* during the Vedanta period (around the second century), he is described as a 'learned man', articulating the resentment felt by his own growing pastoral community against the dominant culture of nomadic Aryan 'masters' and their god Indra.

This was the start of a mythology that developed around Krishna that caught the imagination of people over the centuries. He became widely renowned as a youthful divine lover; the sound of his flute attracting the *gopis* (wives and daughters of the cowherds) to leave their homes and dance ecstatically with him in the forests. His favourite among them was the beautiful Radha, the wife of another cowherd, thereby invoking the morality of the 'liberated female' cultures of indigenous matrilineal societies. Matrilineal way of life encouraged music

and still practiced by many tribal communities, such as the Khasis in the Indian state of Meghalaya, and in Kerala where the inheritance of property and succession runs through the female line.

Thereafter, the popularity of the Krishna cult grew rapidly throughout the Indian subcontinent. In southern India, the Alvar and Nayanar hymnists who roamed the countryside from the seventh to the tenth centuries orally promoted the devotional fervour of the Bhakti. In northern India, the ideals of divine love inspired the thirteenth-century poet Jayadeva to write *Geeta Govinda*, which invokes the love of Krishna and Radha. They also inspired the fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Bengali mystic Chaitanya to eulogize a woman's yearning for her beloved, and his contemporary Valabha's delights in the exploits of Krishna as the divine lover. In Assam, *Bhagwata Purana* was the basis of Bhakti cult of Krishna which was propagated by Shankaradeva, a charismatic personality.

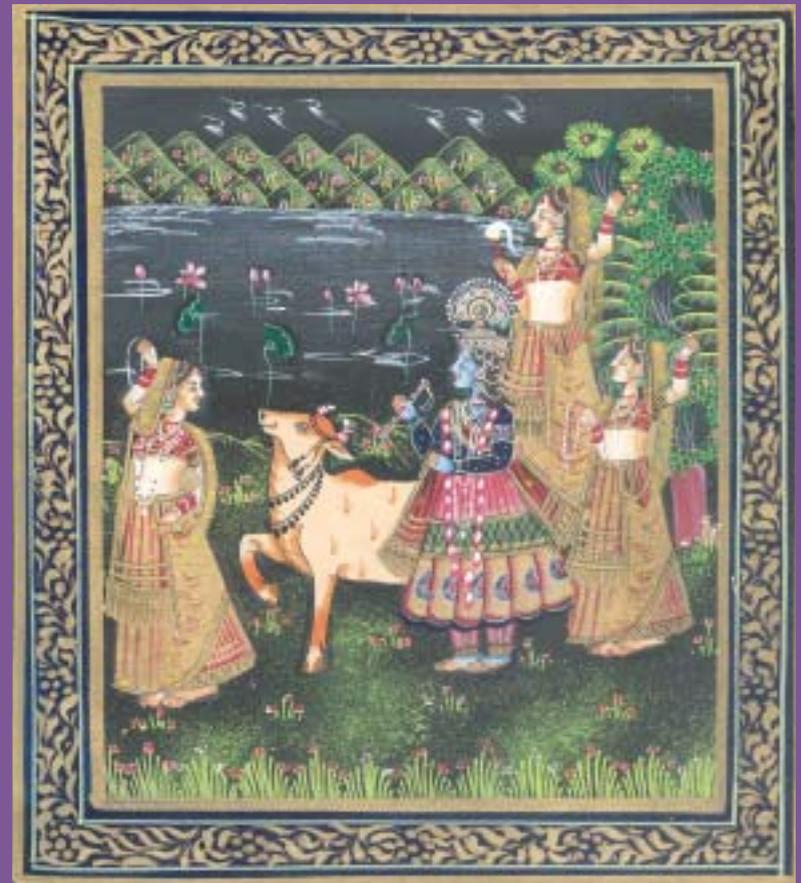
The Bhakti poet-saints hailed from all parts of the Indian subcontinent and from all sections of society, irrespective of gender, class or caste – ranging from mendicants like Namdev, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Surdas, Gorakhnath, Chandidas and Mira Bai, the Rajput Princess of Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Bhakti cult was practiced almost entirely without images and devotees participated in congressional singing, preferring the use of their own locally spoken languages rather than Sanskrit. Mira Bai, a Rajput Princess,



Silk embroidery of Krishna's image in silver thread (Sawai Man Singh Museum, Jaipur, India).



*Among the second–fifth century AD paintings in the caves of Ajanta is the ‘Dancing girl with musicians playing on flutes and drums’. Models such as this masterpiece inspired generations of artists to keep alive the oral and intangible heritage of South Asia — published in the first volume of UNESCO World Art series, INDIA, Paintings from Ajanta Caves by Madanjeet Singh, with a Preface by Jawaharlal Nehru (1954).*



became famous for her Bhakti poems, her day-long prayers in Krishna Temples, dancing in the streets and her wanderings. Her spiritual peers were the Bhakti saints Tulsidas and the blind Surdas.

However, it was not until the Bhakti notions interacted with the Islamic mysticism of Sufism that a South Asian

'renaissance' flourished, inspiring superb poetry and literature in regional languages. There are texts that proclaim Krishna as part of the line of Islamic prophets, and as a teacher of the unity of God. The origins of this literature can be found in the accommodating character of early Indian Sufism. Foreign influences included classical Sufi mysticism ascribed to an

*A large number of Bhakti (devotional) cults mushroomed across the Indian subcontinent during the Middle Ages that eulogized the mythology of Krishna, widely renowned as a youthful divine lover. The favourite among Krishna's admirers was the beautiful Radha, wife of another cowherd, thus invoking the morality of the 'liberated female' cultures of indigenous matrilineal societies (National Museum, New Delhi).*

# NEPAL



There are two forms of Chacha dances: one is performed wearing costumes and masks and the other in everyday dress, the dancer representing a particular deity during the ritual. Chacha dances are performed by practitioners as well as travellers along the Silk Road.

*Prayer to the Lord of Dance:* This dance is performed by a Jyapuni dancer, a girl from a Newar farming community who becomes a devotee and – through the medium of dance – prays to obtain boons for the poor and the perfection of dance. Using medieval classical Newari music, this dance is choreographed both for male and female dancers.

The mostly Hindu culture of Nepal has continued to be influenced by Buddhist oral traditions of music and mythology ever since Gautama, the Buddha, was born at Lumbini, a grove located on the India-Nepal border.

*Chacha Pyakhan* (Chacha dance): The Chacha dance enacts the legend of Bodhisatwa Manjushree, a Tantric guru, who manifested himself with his two wives; created the Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu valley) by draining the lake; and then retreated to He-Vajra Nairatma. The dancer transforms himself into the personality of the deity and, in conformity with oral tradition, symbolically tells the story by using different hand gestures (mudras), postures and facial expressions. The style of dance, which dates from about the sixth century, is accompanied by a vocalist and traditional musical instruments – a lute, two kinds of drum (kota and damaru), two kinds of cymbal (ta and babu), five trumpets (ponga), and more recently, harmonium.

*Jayapune Pyakhan:* This rhythmic dance is accompanied by the drum (khin and ta). It is performed by a dancer who, as a nymph, calms an angry man-lion deity – an incarnation of Vishnu. The theme is derived from *Katty Pyakhan*, a sixteenth-century classical theatre that originated at the Malla Palace, Patan, and is very popular with both Newari men and women.

Kala-Mandapa (the Institute of Nepalese Performing Arts) was established in 1981 for the purpose of preserving traditional performing arts as well as creating contemporary works. The Institute is concerned with developing the artistic quality and integrity of its performers. Here, Nepalese music and dances are performed by well-known artists: **Mr. Rajendra Shrestha, Miss Roopkamal Chetri, Mr. Shreeram Acharya, Mrs. Krishna Devi and Mr. Rames wor Mahajan.**

Iraqi woman from Basra, Rabiah al-Adawiyah (who died in AD 801), as well as others originating from Egypt, Iran and Turkey.

The oldest Bengali book, *Gorakhvijaya*, was written by Abdul-Karim, just as Muslims were authors of many *padyavalis* – poems celebrating the love of Krishna and Radha. Bengali culture in particular emphasized the element of love, which altered the notion of asceticism to mysticism. Several religious sects attempted to harmonize Hindu and Muslim religious traditions at different levels. The story of the Rajput heroine Padmavati – originally a romance – was beautifully recorded in Hindi by the sixteenth-century Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi, and later by the seventeenth-century Bengali Muslim poet Alaol. The synthesis between Bhakti and Sufi elements from Islam also incorporates aspects from Buddhist literature, such as certain Ismaili texts like *Umm al-kitab*. The *Kalachakra* also speaks of Mecca and introduces Islamic formulas into mantras.

The Sufi ideals seem to have inspired the great Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542–1605) to create a new religion, Divine Faith (Din-e Ilahi), in the hope that it would unite all his subjects in the belief in one God, and thus promote cultural interaction among all communities. Himself an illiterate, Akbar designated eminent scholars, poets, painters, architects and musicians, called the ‘Nine Jewels’ of his court. Among them was also the legendary Hindu musician, Tansen, whose ‘miraculous’ music was believed to ignite fire and draw rain clouds.

Persian was the official court language of the Mughal emperors. But the language used by the common people was Urdu, literally a ‘bazaar language’ which originated as a result of oral interaction between the Persian-speaking Moghul soldiers and the commonly spoken eastern Punjabi and Haryani languages of north-western India. Based on Bhakti-Sufi court culture, Urdu literature began to develop in the

sixteenth century in and around the courts of the Golconda and Bijapur rulers in central India. Various known as Gujari, Hindawi and Dakhani, the Urdu oral tradition flourished at frequent gatherings of poets, called *Mushaira*, at which a poet was required to spontaneously compose a couplet on a given theme as an oil lamp was placed in front of him.

Mir Bulleh Shah (1680–1758) was among the great Punjabi Sufi poets of the Qadiri Shatari sect. His writings and philosophy have been compared with those of Rumi and Shams-i-Tabriz. He became the disciple of Inayat Shah, a low-caste gardener. To accept a menial worker as his Master in the social conditions of his times shook society to its core, especially as he traced his descent from the Prophet Mohammad. His philosophy was in tune with Sufi-Bhakti mysticism in which the guidance of a Master is indispensable for spiritual realization. He became known as ‘the sheikh of both worlds’ as one of Bulleh Shah’s *kafis* (Fana-fil-Sheikh) gives a detailed account of how the disciple’s soul is fused with that of the Master.

Folk cultures also embrace architecture, with traditionally constructed houses, palaces and shrines incorporating the diverse designs and decoration of building styles, techniques, and arts and crafts. The Moghul Emperor Akbar tried to harmonize Hindu and Muslim architectural styles in his new capital in Fatehpur Sikri, a project which began in 1570 and abandoned in 1586 for want of water. Within tangible and oral folklore lie a wide cultural spectrum of custom, ritual, myth, festival, folk drama and dance. To these verbal and material elements are added group behavioural traits that vary between different individuals and societies.

Musicians invariably accompanied the poet-saints. Mardana, a Muslim player of the string instrument, *rabab*, and his

# PAKISTAN

Now aged 60, Saeen Zahoor started singing at the age of 5. 'I dreamt of a hand calling me to Baba Bulleh Shah's dargah (shrine)', he recalls. 'There I met Ustad Sain Raunka Ali of Patiala. My first lessons in the Sufi kalams were under his guidance.' With his robes, beads, tightly-bound turban and ektara, Zahoor delivers kalams by poets like Baba Bulleh Shah with focused and flamboyant joy. Zahoor was born and raised in a rural peasant family and for decades performed exclusively at dargahs and melas in Okara, his native district of Pakistan.

Qawwali is well known and documented throughout the world, but Zahoor is among the more obscure breed of 'street' singers who still practice the art at the shrines and festivals of Pakistan and Northern India. In 1989, Zahoor was invited to the All Pakistan Music Conference to give his first ever performance on a concert stage. This was a great success, arousing repeated emotional applause from the 2,000-strong audience. He now tours the world, often accompanied by harmonium and dholak players, creating the same blissful feeling in devotees as the oral tradition invoked by Mir Bulleh Shah. **It is interpreted here by the lead singer Saeen Zahoor and his companions Ranjha (tabla and dholak), Qaiser Ali (harmonium), Riasat Ali (dholak) and Mohammed Ijaz (flute).**



# AFGHANISTAN



The culture and history of South Asia is interwoven with Afghanistan since for thousands of years it existed at the crossroads of the trade routes between India, Iran and Central Asia. The Greek principalities in India, Afghanistan and the Kushan sovereignty, thereafter, further strengthened the historical bonds. The magnificent Bagram Collection included discoveries made at a Kushan fort in 1939 that held 1,800 pieces of sculptures and coins, mostly from India.

The art of music and dance also flourished during the pre-Islamic period and Afghanistan's deep-rooted folk music heritage has survived largely because it is cherished and closely linked to its traditional ethnic groups – Dari, Pushto, Tajik and Hazara. Songs are mostly monophonic with the recurrence of melodic phrases and an emphasis on marked rhythms relate to the frequent role of music as an accompaniment to dance. The musical instruments are closely related to those of central and south Asia, but specific forms and playing styles are purely local. There are numerous variants on the long-necked lute, with names derived from the Persian *tanbur* or *dutar*; small spike fiddles, various horizontally-held flutes and two basic drum types: a single-headed vase-shaped drum of pottery or wood and a large single-headed frame drum, or tambourine. Even the Taliban's brutal suppression of dance and music could not completely uproot Afghanistan's traditional art and culture even though secretly performed folk music was limited to solo playing and singing in small private ensembles.

It was with a great deal of effort that the Ministry for Culture and Information of the present government of Afghanistan succeeded in assembling a talented group of musicians, some of whom, like **Nouria Mehryar**, live abroad. She is accompanied by **Shapariy Naghma**, **Mohammad Zafar**, **Masroor Omid** and **Ghulam Sakhi**.

# BANGLADESH

*Manipuri* dance is predominantly ritual-based and although it has evolved through the centuries, has preserved its ancient musical vigor and rhythmic variations. Manipuri dance movements are uniquely soft, graceful, delicate and lyrical. The dance is also famous for its colourful costumes. The song of the dance is a Kirtan-based Bangla song. The musical instruments are the traditional flute, sitar and *Mridanga* (Pung) as percussion.

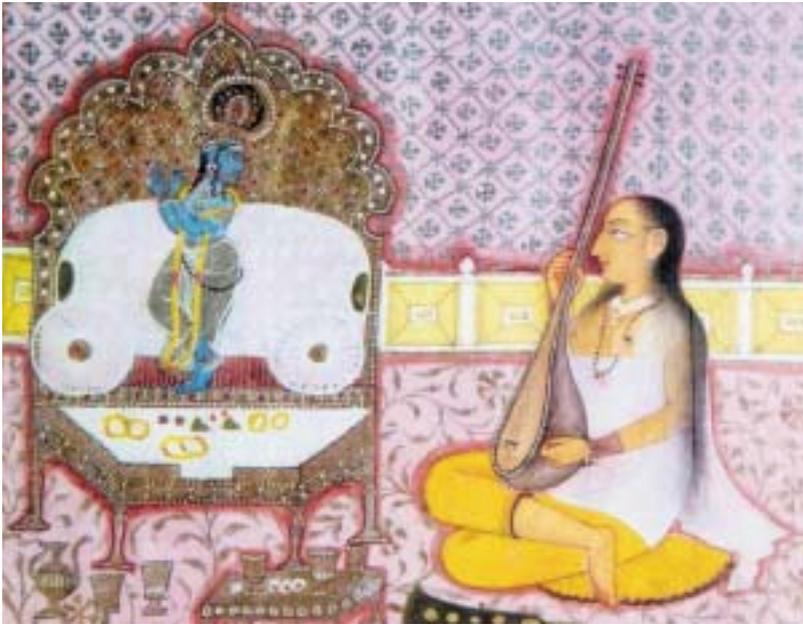
*Manipuri*, indigenous to Manipur, is one form – others being *bharata natayam*, *kathak*, and *kathakali*. They are based on the *Natya-Sastra* of the sixth century BC. Themes are generally taken from episodes in the life of Krishna, the pastoral god. A narrator who chants dialogue and describes the action interprets the dance during the performance. The manipuri was popularized throughout India when, in 1917, the poet Rabindranath Tagore saw demonstrations of the art and brought back teachers to serve in his *Visva-Bharati* (arts university) at *Shantiniketan*.

**Tamanna Rahman** performs Manipuri and Folk dances. Trained in Bangladesh and India, Tamanna has revived successfully the lost glory

of Manipuri dance in Bangladesh, performing both locally and internationally.

'Bangla' is one of Bangladesh's leading young bands. They have very successfully popularized the Baul tradition with the country's younger generation. This event gives them an opportunity to present performances of the Manipuri and Folk dances of Bangladesh. The group comprised **Anusheh Anadil (lead vocalist)**, **Subrata Kumar Das and Faizan Rashid Ahmad (lead instrumentalists)** and **Shafiq Mia (lead percussionist)**.





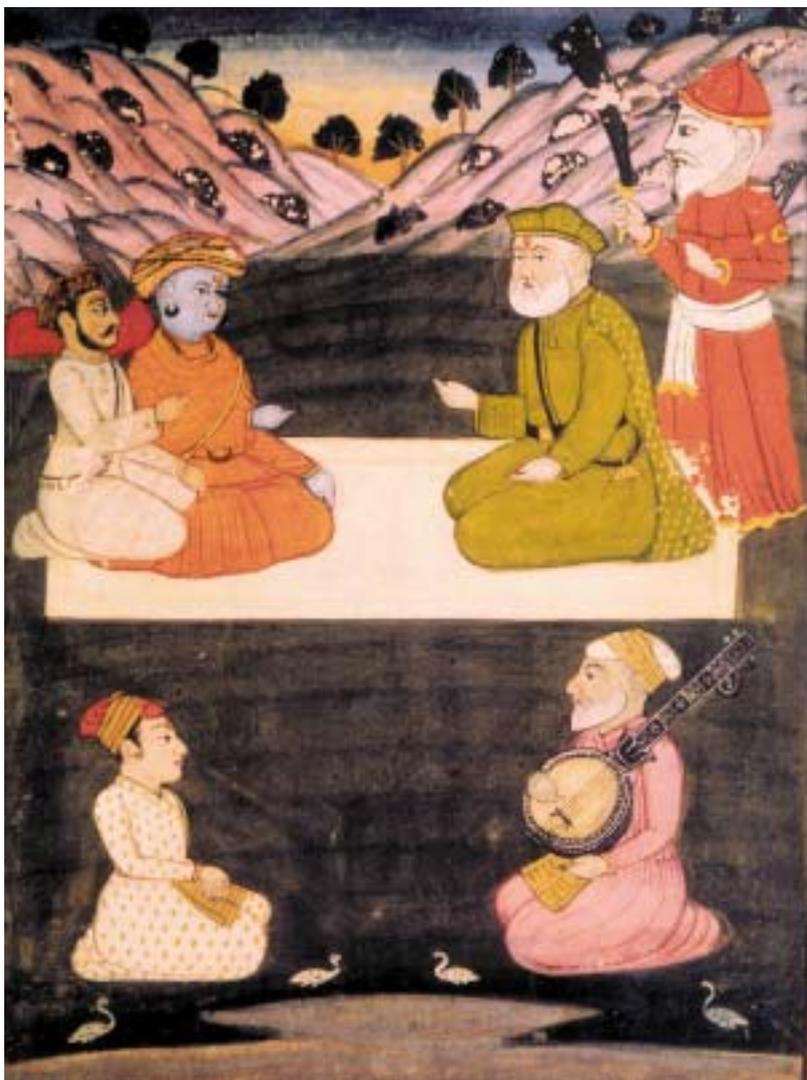
companion Bala, a Hindu, invariably accompanied Guru Nanak Dev as they walked around the countryside singing verses composed by the founder of Sikhism. Together, they reached as far as Mecca and Medina. The foundation stone of the holiest of Sikh shrines in Amritsar was laid by Mian Mir, a Sufi ascetic and its inner sanctum is named Harmandir after the Hindu god Shiva. Nanak and Kabir were devotees of a god whom they were unwilling and unable to delimit by sectarian description. The fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, who compiled the holy book, *Adi Granth*, specified the music (*raga*) in which each verse had to be recited.

*Mira Bai, Rajasthan princess, was born about 1500. She was a talented Bhakti poet who became famous for her lifelong devotion to Krishna. After her husband's premature death she left the palace and began her lifelong wandering. She is believed to have died around 1550. (18th century Pahari Painting in National Museum, New Delhi).*

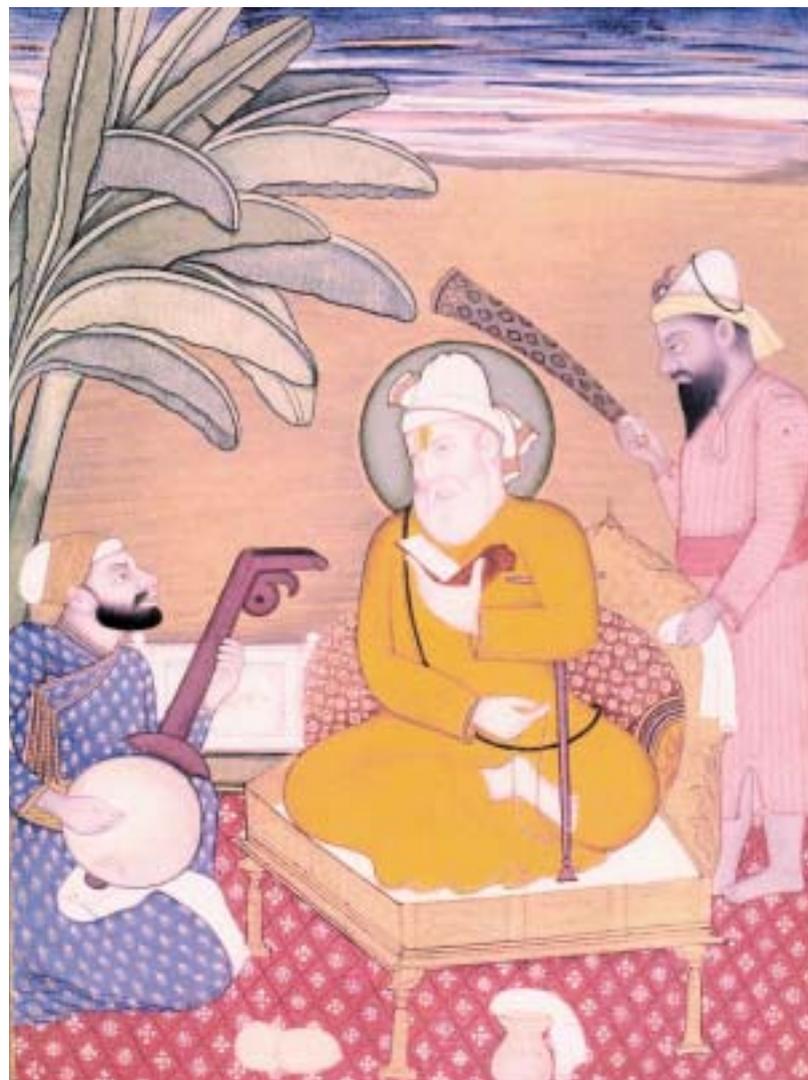


Oral interactions and folk legends also inspired and laid the foundations of some of the most magnificent monuments in South Asia. This is illustrated by a series of sun temples all built on the premises of identical mythologies. One legend has it that Samba the son of Krishna cured himself of leprosy by spending twelve years in Mitrabana, the forest of Mitra, which is found on the bank of the river Chandrabrabha. In so doing, he appeased the sun god Surya and in gratitude, Samba built the great sun temple at Sambapura (modern-day Multan in Pakistan) in the early centuries of the Christian era. Long after the Multan shrine was destroyed, the

*Weaver Saint Kabir (1440—1518) at his loom, with a disciple. Born to a Hindu widow in Varanasi who abandoned him, Kabir was brought up by a Muslim weaver. His poetry reflects the life and concerns of common people, invoking his secular ideals and promoting harmony among Hindus and Muslims. (National Museum, New Delhi).*



*Guru Nanak Dev receives Gorakhanath and his disciple Gugu (who later converted to Sufi Islam), while Mardana plays a rabab for another companion. Nanak and Kabir were devotees of a god whom they were unwilling and unable to delimit by sectarian description. They did not subscribe to Gorakhanath's practice of magic and miracles. (18th century miniature painting in National Museum, New Delhi).*



*Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1536) devoted all his life promoting Hindu Muslim unity. Accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim rabab player and a Hindu disciple Bala, he traveled long distances in India and abroad and preached his doctrine of equality, fraternity and peace by singing the verses he composed (17th century miniature painting, Sheesh Mahal Museum, Patiala, India).*

# SRI LANKA



In common with South Asian folk dances, Sri Lankan oral tradition and rituals invoke the power to heal and bless. The folk dances can be broadly classified in three styles following their geographical area of origin: the *Kandyan*, *Low Country* and *Sabaragamuwa* dances. All begin with traditional chanting and ceremonial drums that invoke blessings.

The art of *Kandyan* dance is wholly based on the healing ritual of Kohomba Kankariya. Tradition has it that the benedictory ritual was performed to exorcise evil influences. Wearing sixty-four ornaments, the Kandyan dancers beat the drum known as the *Udarata Beraya* or *Geta Beraya*.

*Low Country* dances are based on four main traditional benedictory rituals associated with the southern coastal belts of Sri Lanka. These dances are the only ones to use the famous masks that portray the faces of evil demons, each mask exhibiting the distinctive features of the character it represents.

The *Sabaragamuwa* dance is derived from both the *Kandyan* and the *Low Country* forms of dancing. The drum used is known as *doula*. The musician plays the drum with one hand and beats it with the other using a stick called a *kadippuwa*.

**Ravibandhu Vidyapathi** hails from a family of renowned Sri Lankan artists. He was trained as a child in the *Kandyan* dance form and has been an eminent student of Chithrasena and Vajira, the foremost dancers of Sri Lanka. He has studied in India, specializing in the Kathakali dance form at the Kerala Kalamandalam and also trained in Indian classical music.



*Ravibandhu Vidyapathi, performing the Kandyan dance with his talented group of artists from the State Dance Ensemble, Colombo, of which he is the director. He is a member of the Sri Lankan National Commission for UNESCO.*



*Kum Kum Mohanti and her companions performing a Sun Dance on the ramparts of the magnificent Surya temple at Konarak. This shrine was inspired by folk legends and oral interactions between cultures stretching from Central to South East Asia — described in the book, *The Sun in Myth and Art* by Madanjeet Singh (UNESCO, 1993).*

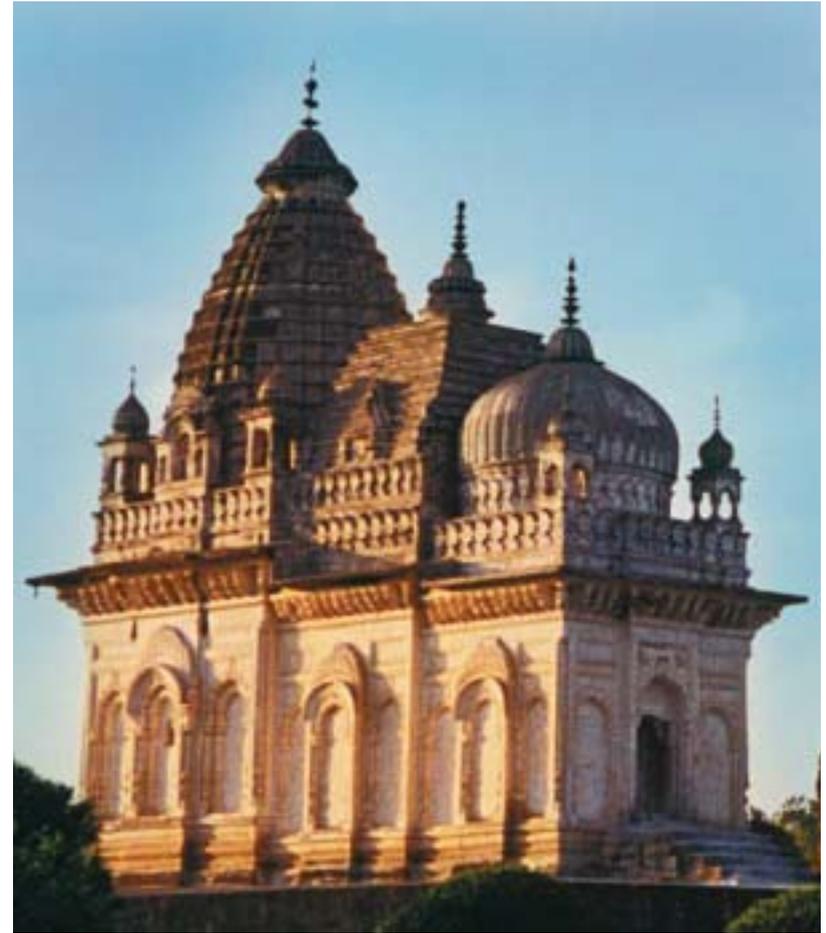
Chandrabrabha myth continued to spread though traditional folklore. The legend travelled as far as Indonesia where a fifth-century inscription, attributed to Samba by the Indonesian King Purnavaman, mentions the river Chandraprabha. Curiously, the myth does not stop in Indonesia and returns to Kanarak in India, where a magnificent thirteenth-century Surya temple was built and the river Chandraprabha identified with a pool of water in a nearby forest called Mitrabana — described in my book, *The Sun in Myth and Art* (UNESCO, 1993).

This trend of religious syncretization appears to have continued as late as the nineteenth century, when Raja Pratap Singh Judeo of Chhatarpur attempted to translate the Bhakti-Sufi spirit into temple architecture. In one temple (on the UNESCO List of Cultural Heritage), the traditional domes on the top of a shrine represent a Hindu *shikara*, a Buddhist *stupa* and the dome of a mosque. The Raja wanted the shrine to be open for worship to everyone, irrespective of sex, class, caste or religion, much like the Sufi shrine in Kashmir, where one floor was used as a temple and the other as a mosque.

Folk culture thus embraces architecture, houses and shrines constructed in traditional ways as also with the design and decoration of building styles and methods, arts and crafts. Between the tangible and oral folklore there is a wide cultural spectrum of custom, ritual, myth, festival, folk drama and dance. To these verbal and material elements are added group behavioral traits that vary for individuals and societies. But essentially folk cultures are 'democratic' by virtue of their local and participatory nature and dependence on acceptance by a community as a whole.

Notwithstanding that each country has its own cultural repertoire and stylistic features, South Asia's unity in diversity is deeply rooted in the oral and intangible heritage

of the region, reaffirming South Asia's ancient wisdom that civilizations represent a people's dream, their imaginative interpretation of human existence, and the perception of the mystery of human life.



*On the list of UNESCO Cultural Heritage is this unique nineteenth century shrine at Khajuraho, India, with its three cupola, representing a Hindu shikara, a Buddhist stupa and the dome of a mosque. Invoking the Bhakti-Sufi beliefs, the shrine was open for worship to all, irrespective of religion, caste, sex, class or creed.*



[www.southasiafoundation.org](http://www.southasiafoundation.org)

South Asia Foundation (SAF) is a secular, non-profit and non-political organization, founded in 2000 by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh. The cardinal objective of the organization is to sustain a movement, in particular involving youth, to promote regional cooperation and peace through education, cultural interaction and mutual understanding among the people of South Asia.

SAF has been admitted into official relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and recognized as an Apex Body of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The aims, objectives and activities of SAF are in conformity with the spirit, purpose and principles of the two international organizations.

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**Back cover picture:** *The Director-General of UNESCO Mr. Koichiro Matsuura and the Goodwill Ambassador Madanjeet Singh with some of the 40 artists who performed at UNESCO House in Paris on 16 March 2006. Songs and dances representing the oral and intangible heritage of South Asia met with repeated, thunderous applause from over 1,600 spectators who clapped in rhythm with the musicians and dancers.*

IN CELEBRATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNESCO AND ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADORS AND SAF GOVERNING COUNCIL, SOUTH ASIA FOUNDATION ARRANGED PERFORMANCES OF 40 OUTSTANDING SOUTH ASIAN DANCERS AND MUSICIANS AT THE UNESCO HOUSE, PARIS.

## DANCERS AND MUSICIANS

### - AFGHANISTAN -

NOORIA MEHRYAR - SHAPARIY NAGHMA  
MOHAMMAD ZAFAR - MASROOR OMID  
GHULAM SAKHI

### - BANGLADESH -

TAMANA REHMAN - ANUSHEH ANADUIL  
SUBRATA KUMAR DAS FAIZAN RASHID AHMAD - SHAFIA MIA

### - BHUTAN -

NIM GYELTSHEN - PENJOR - DUNG NORBU AP DODO  
SONAM CHOGEY - PEMA SAMDRUP KHANDU  
WANGCHUK - TSAGYE - TSHERING TASHI SENGE GYELTSHEN

### - INDIA -

VIKKU VINAKRAM  
VINAYAKRAM UMASHANKAR

### - NEPAL -

RAJENDRA SHRESTHA - ROOPKAMAL CHETRI  
SHREERAM ACHARTYA KRISHNA DEVI - RAMESHWOR MAHAJAN

### - PAKISTAN -

SAEEN ZAHOOR  
RANJHA - QAISER ALI  
RIASAT ALI - MOHAMMED IJAZ

### - SRI LANKA -

RAVIBANDHU VIDYAPATHI  
VIDYAPATHY SAMANTHI RADHANIKA  
JAYASURYA ARCHICHINGE SUNETH GEETHADEVA PERERA  
MEEPAGALAGE AJITH JAYASHANTHA PERERA  
MERAGALA PADIGE SAMAN KUMARA  
KANKANIGEDARA ASANKA JAYAMAL GUNAWARDANA  
LIYANAGA RUVINI THAREENDRA



The background folk music played on traditional kashmiri instruments  
(Rabab, Sarang, Note, Tumbaknar, Flute) by  
MUHAMMAD MAOBOOL BHATT - ABDUL MAJEED SHAH  
MUHAMMAD ABDULLAH SHAKHSAAZ - ZAHOOR AHMAD BHATT  
BILAL AHMAD MIR - MUHAMMAD AMIN  
MUHAMMAD RAMZAN LANGOO - FIRDOOS AHMAD BHATT

DIRECTED BY  
**MADANJEET SINGH**  
UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

In cooperation with  
JULIEN ODORICI - LAURENT METTERIE  
DAVID McDONALD - HÉLÈNE PIERRE  
CLAUDIO BRUNO MONTEIRO - CÉCILE MENÉTREY-MONCHAU

