

## 5<sup>th</sup> Vibrant Asia Symposium

By Dr. Bishakha Sarma

The 5<sup>th</sup> Vibrant Asia Symposium was held on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 1800 hours (IST) on the online forum on the Facebook page of the Asian Literary Society. This symposium is an offshoot of the Asian Literary Society's Journal of Asian Art, Culture, and Literature. It aims to explore and preserve the various facts of majestic Asia characterized by history, heritage, and architecture with diverse cultures, ethnicity, and languages.

The authors of the JAACL are Kalyani Menon, Sanjula Sharma, Sudha Subramaniam, Dr. Aparna Bagwe, and Dr. Bishakha Sarma. The symposium was moderated by Dr. Bishakha Sarma.

The authors discussed various topics of Asia:

**Kalyani Menon** discussed in detail the life of Benazir Bhutto from her published article entitled "Daughter of the East" (JAACL vol1. No.2. June 2020).

She spoke about how Benazir played the traditional gender role on the one hand and as a leader of the political party and of the Islamic country on the other hand. She gives her opinions on the challenges she faced as a woman in a predominantly patriarchal and rigidly conservative Islamic country.

**Sanjula Sharma** discusses the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy from her published article "K-Pop – Expanding Horizons of Korean music" (JAACL vol1. No.2. June 2020). K-Pop not only ballooned South Korea's music industry but boosted the economy of the country.

Dr. Bishakha quotes Bernie Cho "It wasn't really an evolutionary process; it was very much a revolutionary process". Sanjula Sharma describes K-Pop from Cho's perspective and puts forward her view "Gayo or domestic pop already existed in Korea when international influences mingled with this, K-Pop was born...The defining moment was in 1992, when Seo Taiji and Boys performed in a live TV contest and created absolutely new sounds. There were Korean lyrics ..... fusing with international music forms, synchronized dancing, coordinated costumes, and magical ambiance. This redefined pop music in many attractive and innovative ways and that led to the global appeal. This was not a passing phase, as many had predicted,

but a whole new musical world was created and reshaped, and I think this is the outcome of any successful revolution.”

Sanjula discusses on the socio-political significances that shaped the cultural identity of the nation. She says:

“The sociocultural ramifications of KPOP involve connecting domestic routes with diverse cultures across the globe. Fans of K-POP have different backgrounds and social classes and sometimes POP supports a subculture too, although it is itself part of the dominant culture that the government of the country endorses. So, we may say that KPOP is sociocultural in its worldview. For example, redefining masculinity, the concept of "handsome" in Korea in contrast with the other parts of the world.”

Sanjula concludes her discussion by saying, “K-Pop as a beacon of hope in the lives of youngsters across the globe when their world seems bleak, grim and devoid of hope, especially during the pandemic... Watching their idols strive hard to fulfill their goals, fans draw inspiration to remain constructive and move forward in life despite the pandemic or myriad hurdles.”

**Dr. Sudha Subramaniam** explores temples and pagodas of Nepal and throws light on the “Hidden Treasures of Nepal” (JAACL vol1. No.2. June 2020). She throws light on the perpetual glory of Asian heritages treasured on the temples and sacred corners of Nepal. She discusses, “traveling the length and breadth of Nepal opens the door to a true visualization of the Ramayana, of Buddha, and of the beautiful abodes of the Gods. ....The Pashupatinath temple, the Swayambhunath Temple, the Budhanilkantha temple where the deity floats in water, the Dakshinkali temple, the Jagannathkrishna temple, Taleju temple in the Darbar square with an overlooking hotel set inside an ancient palace area, the Boudhanath Stupa in a gargantuan spherical shape and then, of course, the hidden living Goddess of Nepal!

“Magnificence is one word that best describes the architecture of Nepal”. Dr.Subramaniam discusses in detail: “Nepal architecture can roughly be divided into three groups namely the Pagoda style, the Stupa style, and the Shikhara style; together with indigenous elements from the Newari people. The architectural heritage of Kathmandu city is integral to that of the Kathmandu valley since all monuments have evolved over centuries of craftsmanship influenced by Hindu and Buddhist religious practices. The architectural treasure of the

Kathmandu valley has been categorized under the well-known seven groups of heritage monuments and buildings. In 2006, UNESCO declared these seven groups of monuments as a World Heritage Site (WHS).”

**Dr Aparna Bagwe** takes the readers and the audience on a tour to the “Dzongs of Bhutan” (JAACL Vol1. No.1 March 2020). She describes three dzongs and a monastery (which covered her trip) – in/near Paro (Rinpung/ Paro dzong - Ta dzong - Drukgyal dzong - Taktsang monastery/ Tiger's nest), one in Punakha (Punakha dzong) and two in Thimphu (Tashichhoe/ Thimphu dzong, Simtokha dzong).

Dr. Bishakha enquires on the significance and functions of the dzongs - how is historic continuity and religion achieved in these dzongs. She opines “Dzongs began as temples, enlarged to include monasteries- and we're fortified for protection. Today dzongs are mainly used as places for religious practice, monasteries for Buddhism education, some include museums, others as administrative offices”.

She discusses the architecture -protective ramparts, drawbridges and watchtowers, and ambiance of inner shrines, the embellishments with wooden carvings, paintings and murals. Statue of Buddha, etc.

She also discusses her impression of the life and people of Bhutan. The Traditional clothes are worn with pride and flair by men women even college and school kids. Traditional clothes are also mandatory as formal work clothes in all Govt offices. She also mentions the Gross National Happiness which leads to sustainable growth through a holistic approach.

Dr. Bishakha Das (Sarma) discusses on “Arunachal Pradesh as a Paradise for a Linguist”. She states her views that the state is a reservoir of numerous ethnic groups and 32 -34 indigenous linguistic communities, some of them which extend their fraternity to Tibet, Bhutan and Myanmar. These languages are classified into 6 ethno-linguistic groups: Lolo-Burmese (Lisu/Yobin), Bodhist languages (Monpa, Brokeh, Khemba, Memba, Meyor, Lishpa, Chugpa), Sal languages (Tangsa, Nocte, Singpho, Wancho), Tani languages (Apatani, Adi, Nyishi, Galo, Tagin, Mishing), Mishmi languages (Kamran, Idu, Taraon), Hrusso/Aka languages, Tai Khamti and other Tai varieties.

She further discusses that Tai Khamti, Wancho and Lisu have their own script. Few communities have devised modified Roman scripts. But most of the languages of the state are unwritten.

She also mentions that those languages which are not scheduled languages, they face difficulty in administrative tasks. Hence, they identify themselves in the name of a dominant or scheduled language (which may not be linguistically similar).

She concludes by saying that in Arunachal Pradesh, there is unity in diversity. She quotes Padmashree Anvita Abbi “Homogeneity kills. Diversity sustains our existence”. If our mother tongue is lost, we will lose the knowledge system. It is essential to preserve our mother tongue. We must speak our mother tongue at home.

Finally, she cites the example of the tonal language Tai Khamti (the surviving language of the Tai Kadai family).

In the end, Mr. Manoj Krishnan, Editor-in-Chief, JAACL, gave a vote of thanks to all the participants.

The JAACL sets a more ambitious goal to explore domains that are otherwise not easily accessible and preserve its unique heritage in the literature.

