



JNU CULTURAL COMMITTEE, DOS and IHA



with
SPIC MACAY
organized
VIRASAT 2017

The words of Nelson Mandela: “Our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our nation”, that holds true for any society in the world, not only highlights the importance of cultural heritage in nation building but also motivates us to preserve and promote it amongst the youth who can, in turn, with their creativity, further beautify them.

It is with the same vision that Jawaharlal Nehru University has joined hands with SPIC MACAY (The Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture Amongst Youth), a voluntary youth movement which promotes intangible aspects of Indian cultural heritage. That is how JNU-SPIC MACAY chapter has come into being. After inviting many eminent artists to the campus, the university organised a week-long program “**VIRASAT 2017**” from 9 Oct-14 Oct, 2017 which is dedicated to artists like Sayeeduddin Dagar, M Balmuralikrishna, Kishori Amonkar, Rehmat Khan Langa and certain others in recognition of their invaluable contribution to further enrich the country’s intangible heritage.

Under this program, apart from a series of performances by some widely renowned artists, different workshops were also organised throughout the week in order to promote a culture of participation on the campus. These four workshops, ranging from dance (Kathak) to theatre, Hindustani vocal and calligraphy, caused a stir in the campus and managed to attract not less than 40 students per workshop. All the four instructors, who were called, are not only fine artists with worldwide recognition but also proved to be highly patient and dedicated *gurus* during this experience. The lessons started with a group of highly enthusiastic students who had started registering themselves a week and a half before the program started. The workshops took place at Teflas (Student’s Activity Centre).

The first day (9 Oct) of the event started with an inauguration program when the excitement was at its peak and where we were all prepared to welcome the instructors of various workshops as well as the participants, in the presence of the co-ordinator of JNU Cultural Committee, Mrs. Meeta Narain, the faculty incharges of various clubs: Prof. Ishtiaque Ahmed and Prof. Sudesh Kumar Yadav. We felt highly privileged to welcome the instructors: Pt. Rajendra Gangani (Kathak), Pt. Sarathy Chatterjee (Hindustani vocal), Anuradha Kapoor (theatre) and Qamar Dagar (calligraphy), whose presence was appreciated with a token of thanks. During the inauguration, the people present inside the hall were from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from little kids to university students, professors, instructors, artists etc. But the only thing common amongst them was ‘their love for art’.

On the same evening, an internationally recognized great Indian classical dancer, Smt. Geeta Chandran, was invited by JNU and the SPIC MACAY team collectively, to enlighten our soul with her beautiful hand movements, amazing footwork and eye movements of extreme finesse. She was

welcomed with the lighting of lamp in the presence of the university Vice-Chancellor, Prof. M. Jagdeesh Kumar and the three proctors. **Smt. Geeta Chandran** is not only an Indian Bharatnatyam dancer and vocalist, but is also the founder and President of Natya-Vriksha Dance Academy. Besides being conferred with the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Puruskar, she was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour, in 2007, for her contributions in the field of art. She was also accompanied by other artists (instrument players) on the stage. The impact of her performance was not limited to its aesthetic sense but was able to take the audience along on a sublime journey into the world of art. It was interesting to see such an overwhelming response from the side of the audience, as the auditorium was flooded with people.



The following day, 10th Oct, adds another memorable episode to this chapter. The great Indian classical singer, **Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar**, accompanied by other artists (instrument players) was able to create a magic with his spell-bounding performance. Few among the audience were even found seated, in an entirely relaxed posture and closed eyes. Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar is an Indian classical singer of the dhrupad genre and the son of dhrupad singer Ustad Nasir Faiyazuddin Dagar. He is a widely recognized artist at international level and was awarded with the Padma Shri in 2010. The performance was highly appreciated by the VC, the proctors and the dean of the university. The entire event retained an aura of relaxation, calmness and mesmerisation.

The third day was the time to lend ears to the strings of an ancient Indo-Persian musical instrument – Santoor, played by none other than **Pt. Bhajan Sopori**, an incredible santoor player. Pt. Sopory, an Indian instrumentalist born in Srinagar, is considered as the cultural link between Jammu and Kashmir and rest of India not only because of his invaluable contribution in the field of art but also because he runs a music academy called *SaMaPa* (Sopori Academy for Music and Performing Arts), which is actively involved in promoting Indian classical music. He was also accorded Jammu and Kashmir State lifetime achievement award in 2016. The objective of such performances is not limited to entertainment but extends to an attempt to create awareness among people, for example, about a historically and culturally significant musical instrument as santoor, which is not only the national musical instrument of Iran but is also native to Jammu and Kashmir. And yes, the performance gracefully struck the right chords!



On the following day, the time had come to celebrate the richness of one of the most prolific, Japanese Film Industry. The evening was reserved for the screening of the legendary film “**Rashomon**” directed by Akira Kurosawa. Besides winning awards such as the Golden Lion in the Venice Film Festival and the Academy Honorary Award, the movie is known for marking the entrance of Japanese cinema onto the world stage. The screening followed a small discussion about the importance of the film and the appreciation it got at the international level, by Prof. Dhananjay Singh, faculty in the Centre of English Studies in JNU. He was given the JNU Cultural Committee memento as a token of thanks by the Cultural Co-ordinator and the faculty incharges of clubs. Interestingly, despite the fact that the timings of the screening were overlapping with the common dinner timings in the campus, the audience remained glued to their seats till the end. With its beautiful cinematography, talented actors and twisted plot, no wonder Rashomon is now considered as the greatest crime film ever.



Parallel to these performances and film screening, the four workshops were flooded with participants from different age-groups. The workshop sessions started at 4pm and lasted for two hours.

The dance workshop started with the question- “What is Kathak?” as was asked by the guru Pt. **Rajendra Gangani** who was also accompanied by his students. Pt. Gangani is an Indian Kathak dancer known for his innovative style and technical wizardry. He is one of the leading practitioners of Jaipur Gharana style of Kathak who has also received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2003. The participants were able to learn multiple things, ranging from mudras to footwork, eye movements, facial expressions and also some small sequences like Ganesh Vandana, teen taal etc.

“Within a span of just five days, we were able to learn a whole range of interesting things...It was indeed a great experience!” – Such were the words of a girl from the university pursuing bachelors in language who attended the calligraphy workshop. The university had the privilege to have **Mrs Qamar Dagar**, a renowned calligrapher. Inspired by her spiritual and calligraphy guide Hazrat Amir Abdullah Khan, she started working since the early nineties in Hindi and Urdu scripts using alphabets/letters as art material giving visual interpretation to a chosen theme. Her work has got exhibited in many fests, including The Sacred Arts Festival (Delhi), Sufi Rang Festival (Ajmer Sharif), Inner Path Buddhist Festival (Delhi) etc. Also, as founder Director of Qalamkaari Creative Calligraphy Trust, she has organised and curated International Calligraphy festivals in Delhi and Jaipur. Since there were participants ranging from 4-40 years of age she started the workshop from the very basics.

Another workshop that attracted many participants was that of Hindustani vocal which was taking place under the guidance of **Pt. Sarathi Chatterjee**, one of the foremost Hindustani classical vocalists in India. The unique musical expression in his singing is a beautiful blend of the elements of two different gharanas: Benaras and Kirana gharana. After receiving his initial training from his father, Prof Arun Kumar Chatterjee, a highly respected and accomplished representative of Kirana gharana, he continued his musical ‘sadhana’ under the guidance of the celebrated vocalists Pandit Rajan-Sajan Mishra of the Benares gharana. Apart from organizing workshops around the world, he has

performed in different countries: USA, UK, Canada, Switzerland, Finland, France, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Dubai, Muscat, Doha etc. He not only extended his basic knowledge about classical singing but also motivated the students towards this, throwing some light on the importance of this art form amongst the youth.

The theatre workshop, which strangely had the least number of students pre-registered, surprisingly attracted maximum number. The reason to this overwhelming response is known to everyone: **Anuradha Kapoor**. Former Director of National School of Drama, New Delhi she has directed many plays in India and abroad. Also, she has written widely on the theatre and her book- *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: the Ramlila at Ramnagar* was highly appreciated. She is also one of the founding members of Vivadi, a working group of painters, musicians, writers and theatre practitioners, which was formed in 1989. She has conducted theatre making and workshop sessions in Korea, Germany (Berlin), UK (London) and Japan, among others. Many participants compared their experience of the workshop a session of meditation that has unique healing powers.

On the Finale, a certificate distribution ceremony was organized by the Cultural Committee, which followed a high tea. Also, the participants were asked to share their experiences about the workshop. The Convenors of different clubs gave a brief presentation about their respective workshops while extending gratitude towards their *gurus* who were also part of the ceremony. This was followed by performances by the Hindustani vocal and Kathak groups. Besides presenting *Teen Taal*, which comprises of *todas*, footworks and *Gad Bhava*, the Kathak group also presented a short piece of *Katha* prepared by the students themselves.

Following are some pictures taken on the day:







During the vote of thanks, one could easily notice those gloomy expressions on our faces as this lovely week-long journey had come to an end. In the hope that the series of such events will remain incessant in future as well, I would like to thank the university and the entire SPIC MACAY team, for giving us an opportunity to not only be a part of but also to organize such events!

-APOORVA KAUSHIK