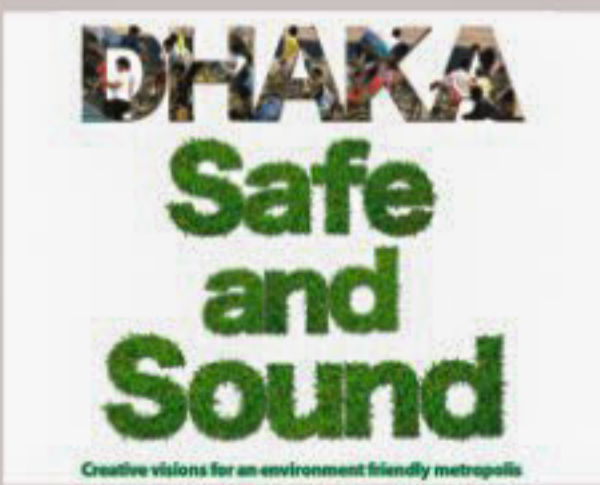


## WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

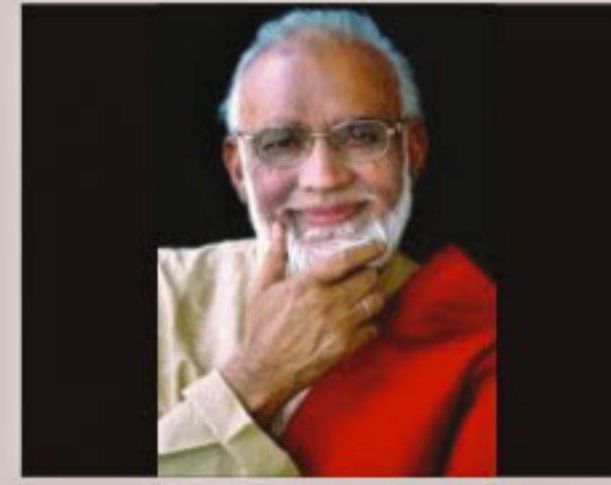
**14th Asian Art Biennale 2010**  
 Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy  
 Venue: National Art Gallery (BSA) and Osmani Memorial Hall  
 Date: October 8-November 6  
 Time: 11am-7pm



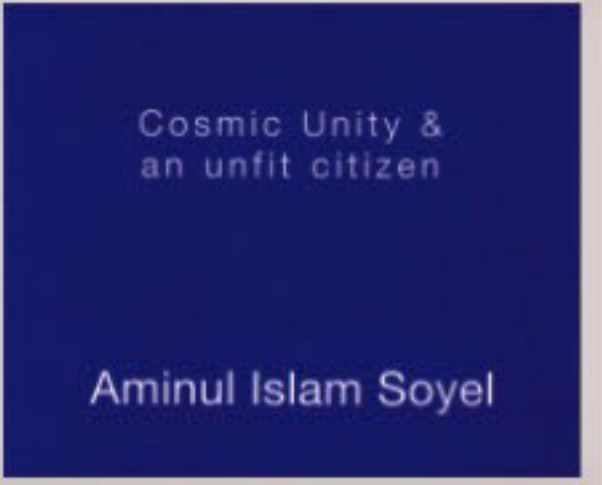
**Exhibition**  
 Paintings, Installations, Photography, Films, Literature and Architecture  
**Title:** Dhaka Safe and Sound  
**Organiser:** Goethe-Institut Bangladesh  
 Venue: Goethe-Institut, Shilpangan Gallery and Dhaka Art Centre  
 Date: October 18-30  
 Inauguration: 6pm



**Musical Soiree**  
**Title:** 109th anniversary of Abbasuddin Ahmed  
**Artist:** Mustafa Zaman Abbasi  
**Organiser:** Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre  
 Venue: Rd 24, House 35, Gulshan 1.  
 Date: October 29  
 Time: 7pm



**Solo Art Exhibition**  
**Title:** Cosmic Unity & An Unfit Citizen  
**Artist:** Aminul Islam Soyel  
 Venue: Kaya Galleri, H-20, R-16, Sector-4, Uttara  
 Date: October 15-26  
 Time: 11am-8pm



## The bliss of Charya dance

LUBNA MARIUM

*If in the Ananda, or bliss, one dances for the sake of salvation, let it be performed with the songs of Vajra in the company of yogis.*

-- Hevajratanttram (6.10)

Last week, Shadhona -- A Center for Advancement of South Asian Dance & Music -- presented 'Charyapada', also known as 'Vajrapada' or songs of Vajra, as a living Nepalese performative tradition within Vajrayana tantric rituals.

Bengal has been familiar with the medieval Buddhist text of 'Charyapada' since 1907, when Sri Haraprasad Shastri discovered a manuscript of the 'Charyacharchavinischaya', the earliest example of written Bangla, in the Royal Archive of Nepal. Linguistic analysis by scholars tells us that many of the authors of the poems of 'Charya' were from medieval Bengal. In 1960, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah published translations of 50 poems from this text in his book 'Buddhist Mystic Songs'. Ever since, there has been ample debate on 'Charyapada', viewed mainly as a literary text. Shadhona's presentation, for the first time, added dimensions of dance and ritual to these ancient Buddhist writings.

That ancient Bengal had deep-rooted ties with Buddhism, and regions adherent to the Buddhist way of life, including Nepal, is evident from various archaeological and literary sources. Unfortunately, not only have these ties been severed, even the memory of these contacts have been erased from our collective history.

Shadhona's initiative to invite a seven-member dance troupe, led by Rajendra Shrestha from Kalamandapa of Kathmandu, to present and teach ritualistic Vajrayana Buddhist tantric dances, is an effort to re-establish spiritual linkages with Nepal based on a shared cultural history. The team members included Sarbagya Ratna Bajracharya, a Vajrayana tantric priest.

It is important to preserve the cultural history of a region, as that provides its people with important clues to their identity, through the history of ideas and thoughts that culminate in present day ideologies shaping the nation. Shadhona hopes that this cultural exchange with Nepal will provide some important details about the history of philosophy, particularly 'tantricism', in Bengal, giving us clues to the extant practices of esoteric rites within present day Bauls and Fakirs.

During their stay in Bangladesh from October 12 to 21, the troupe conducted a workshop on 'Charya



Nritya' for 25 dance and theatre activists at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy; presented a Vajrayana ritual, including 'Charya Nritya' at the Dharmarajika Buddhist Temple in Kamapur, Dhaka on October 19 and participated in a scholarly seminar on 'Charyagiti-nritya', jointly organised by Shadhona and the Bangla Academy on October 20. In his presentation, during the Seminar, Sarbagya Bajracharya, stressed the fact that the goal of 'Charya Geeti', singing and dancing, is to reach 'ananda', or bliss, of realising 'sunyata' or absolute reality, which is the aim of Vajrayana Buddhism.

After the seminar 'Charya' dances, based on 'Charyapada', were presented by the dancers. To emphasise the connection with Bengal, the troupe performed the dance of Vajrayogini on a 'Charya Geeti' written by Shantikara Acharya, the pseudonym of King Prachanda Deb of Gaur (ancient Bengal) and one of the 'Charya' songs included in Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah's translated text.

The writer is a noted dancer and general secretary of Shadhona

**(From top) Meena Gamal performing the 'Vajrayogini' dance; Rajendra Shrestha during the 'Mahamanjushri' dance; Local dance and theatre activists at the workshop held at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.**

## Laughter is the best medicine

Naveed's Comedy Club unveils new projects



Naveed Mahub (centre) at the press conference.

PHOTO: MUMIT M.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Naveed's Comedy Club, the first stand-up comedy venue in Bangladesh, unveiled its new projects at a press conference held yesterday at the VIP lounge of Dhaka Reporter's Unity.

A comedy club is a venue where a comedian performs for an audience. Making the audience laugh, providing them with pure entertainment and producing subtle humour where use of intelligence is concerned are the goals of the club.

Stand-up comedy is a little different from telling regular jokes. It involves the comedian talking about his/her personal experiences (with a bit of exaggeration of course) laced with generous doses of humour.

The founder of the comedy club is a Bangladeshi engineer turned stand-up comedian Naveed Mahub. At the press conference Naveed delivered samples of his act -- comic takes on urban issues like traffic jam, incessant power cuts and more.

"We are holding comedy shows every Saturday at 8 pm at Baridhara (House 13/1, Road 12), Dhaka. Besides, open mic night, where anyone

can perform, is held every Wednesday at the same venue," Naveed said.

"Our next project is to arrange stand-up comedy shows at our new branch at Omni Books in Dhanmondi. We also have a plan to hold a big show at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. We'll arrange road shows in Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna and Rajshahi. We would like to make people laugh, as we believe laughter is the best medicine," Naveed added.

Two other comedians -- Yamin and Solaiman -- of the club were also present at the conference.

Naveed decided to become a professional comedian during his 20-year stay abroad. So far, he has performed in 25 countries including USA and Japan. Naveed won the Best Male Comedian title at the Las Vegas Comedy Festival, USA in 2007.

Founded on March 7 this year, Naveed's Comedy Club hosts both Bangla and English stand-up comedy and is open to all. It has already acquired a reputation for being a venue for pure recreation not just for the locals, but also for expatriates living in the city. The club promotes local as well as touring international comedians.

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### EXHIBITION/ SEMINAR

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 Oct 22nd & 23rd  
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