



A Festive Show of Cultural Diplomacy

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Deb Mukharji is a writer and a former Diplomat. He served as the Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and is a long time friend to our country. Being an ardent art lover and culture enthusiast, he writes about Bangladesh's involvement in the Khajuraho Dance Festival.

The temples of Khajuraho were built about a thousand years ago. For three hundred years, until the place was deserted and abandoned to forests, the platforms adjoining the main temples rang with the 'ghungroos' of the temple dancers, along with the artists giving joy to gods and people alike.

It has been forty-three years since the government of Madhya Pradesh brought dance back to the temples of Khajuraho with the institution of the annual Khajuraho Dance Festival. Of the many dance festivals on temple premises across India, Khajuraho has the pride of being the place where the most senior artists have felt privileged to perform. Until now, no foreign country has been invited to perform. The exception this year was Bangladesh.

Young men and women from Shadhona and Kolpotoru, under the overall direction of Lubna Marium, enthralled audiences in the afternoons and evenings with their range of dances with the accompaniment of Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti and Folk. The items were carefully chosen to depict the cultural diversity of Bangladesh, with emphasis on 'ekushe', or 21st February – the Language Movement Martyr's Day. There was also emphasis on the various genres of dance and music in Bangladesh, with spotlight upon the evolving story of the liberation of Bangladesh on the concluding day.

The people of Madhya Pradesh are not familiar with Bangladesh and local audiences were held spellbound by the artistry of the performers. The old folk tale of Behula and Lakhinder was brought to life and the Manipuri dance gave a flavour similar to, but different from, Indian Manipuri dances. Audiences were treated to Baul music and dance, which are integral to Bangladesh. Amit Chowdhury of Bangladesh was the first artist on the main stage on the concluding day. His performance of Bharatnatyam, with his students from Kolpotoru, fully justified the honour given to him.

A pavilion with the motto "Atithi Devo Bhava" had been assigned to Bangladesh. Thoughtful representations of the main features of Bangladesh's traditional crafts were tastefully displayed. One had glimpses of the famed Dhaka Muslin, Jamdani, brass-work, pottery and a photographic exhibition on the rivers of Bangladesh. A large map depicted the dependence of the country on the flow of rivers.

The organisers would have been happy at the evident positive reactions of visitors and audiences to the presence of Bangladesh at the festival. Shadhona and Kolpotoru would also have reason to be proud of their displays.

UPCOMING

JUSTIN BIEBER COMING TO INDIA!

Except for anyone living under a rock, everyone knows that Justin Bieber is coming to India to perform in a concert as part of his Purpose World Tour. The concert will be on May 10. The price of the tickets starts from Rs. 4,060 to Rs. 25,200. Although that might sound reasonable, wait till you hear the price of the VVIP tickets. The VVIP tickets are each worth Rs. 76,790! And astonishingly, the tickets were sold out within hours after going live on February 10. The VVIP tickets will not only give the viewer the best view of the show, but also access to the backstage before the show. The VVIP ticket holders might just run into Justin Bieber as well!



When the tickets went live, a whopping 50000 people lined up online to buy the tickets. The event received phenomenal response and set a new benchmark for concerts and events in India. Arjun Jain, the

director at White Fox India and the brainchild behind the event, said, "We have received phenomenal response to the ticket sales and it has also taken the international management by surprise. To clarify

to the audience, the tickets priced at 76,790 INR are the ones which are being overseen by Justin Bieber's management personally. These tickets give the holders an exclusive backstage tour, featuring a sneak peak at what happens behind-the-scenes and what it takes to create the Purpose World Tour. The special ticket holders can also receive an invitation to the Purpose VIP Lounge, a premium merchandise package created exclusively for them, and one exclusive commemorative laminate." The announcement of the concert has created frenzy amongst fans in India and they are eagerly counting the days until the concert.