



Drumming was once the sound of war, but it is so deeply embedded in Korean culture as the sound of peace.

PEACE A KOREAN AND GLOBAL DREAM



Tanya Goel's Frescos is a powerful installation with debris from disappearing modernist buildings in India.

India celebrated the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi this week. Growing up in Andhra, it was a special day for me as in the old days the key messages of the Mahatma were explained. We all donated the day for Shramdaan, a precursor to the Swachh. Now, most of the pupils and even teachers do not know or have seen a Charkha.

While the Mahatma became a martyr for the nation, we celebrate a holiday and avoid working in his name. So how do we understand peace and freedom? Could we revitalise the grassroot discussions on what all the iconic national figures mean? Apart from garlanding the statues once a year and making speeches, perhaps a small step beyond the photo ops would go a long way.

Walking the talk as we say in Australia. One part of the world has become deeply conscious of the value of peace for the past seven decades. It is the Korean peninsula. Divided into two parts, North - South, by the players of the cold war.

Legacies have scarred one language speaking people and one cultural peninsula that is significant for its heritage assets in the world history. While Indians were busy taking long weekends away from the workplaces on mini family vacations, Koreans have started this week decommissioning one of the heaviest mined stretches of land in the world, the DMZ, Demilitarised Zone between the two Koreas.

September this year was busy with the Presidents of the two Koreas meeting once again charting out a way forward for coming together in the near future as one people. A range of activities across the Koreas were centred around Chuseok, a harvest festival on full moon three-day autumnal equinox. In sharp contrast to the demining, mass urban rural movement of populations from the 20 plus cities where over 90% of South Korea's population clogged the roads, shopping malls and meeting places. Commercialising at its best could be witnessed.

Family reunions in both the North and the South are signified through Charye or memorial services for ancestors at their rural extended family homes; and Seongmyo or family visits to respective ancestral graves. The acts of remembering. Collective memories of ancestors and those who gave their lives during the Korean War

and in the near future both the sides could celebrate together irrespective of the legacies of late capitalism in the South and resurgent socialism in the North. A range of activities such as summits, repatriation of skeletal remains and bodies, efforts at denuclearisation and so on have the hearts of all Koreans throbbing in the hope of peace, reconciliation and reunification.

Borders have left Koreans in a neurosis of insecurity and constant apprehension of nuclear holocaust. The post Korean war or 1953 generation rebuilt Korea; the next one worked hard to fast track growth and lift the

The Biennale was interspersed throughout with thought provoking video and digital installations. Print material is still essential for the audiences to enjoy the digital works.



The surrealistic image of Halil Altindere from Turkey is a deeply sad commentary on borders and millions of Syrian refugees from a country that straddles across Asia and Europe.



PROF. DR. AMARESWAR GALLA

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Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an Indo Danish Australian, was a guest speaker in Korea in September at the World Peace Summit and the Youth Forum in Gwangju

HERITAGE MATTERS

country out of poverty into an affluent urban society; and now the K-pop generation celebrates freedoms of all kind but lives under constant anxiety. Longing for peace and not war is part of the Korean psyche. In the current détente denuclearisation and peace are synonymous. In this context, the understanding of peace is not a middle-class luxury, but a mandatory promise envisaged by the Korean people.

Many distinct activities saturated the atmosphere with the start of autumn and the appreciation of bountiful harvest. Some of the few that I was part of were the Gwangju Biennale of contemporary art focussing on borders in Korea and across the world; a peace summit of the civic society and youth participation on a massive scale; and the UN World Tourism Organisation meeting.

Imagined borders is the theme of the 12th Gwangju Biennale. Artists from across the world worked with

**FOREIGNERS,
PLEASE DON'T
LEAVE US
ALONE WITH
THE DANES!**

curators animated the spaces of the Biennale site, the Asian Cultural Centre and a number of other spaces. Creativity in all art and across art forms brought vibrancy to the sites, with sombre engagement and immersions, with the realities of artificial borders manufactured through false sense of national identities and imagined nations and narrations.

Wars by the US and allies in the aftermath of 11th September 2001 and the façade of UK's imagined weapons of mass destruction on countries created unprecedented refugee cries in the world even greater than from

Photograph by Aners Sune Berg of the wall paintings & posters by Rasmus Koch featured in the Gwangju Biennale as a commentary on the situation of refugees in Denmark and in Europe.



Installation at the entrance with protest or counter discourse to the first Gwangju Biennale.

the World War II. Displaced people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and many other countries sought safe havens in Europe where the closing of borders has led to fault lines in the unity of the European Union. Artists for various European countries have come out with a robust critique of the xenophobia. Despite the years of EU efforts at integration, individual countries struggle for a common voice of compassion.

One of the unique strengths of South Korea in its peace building activities is the way elements of the countries intangible heritage are integrated into performances. These include theatre to music, especially drumming and historical or period enactments and costumes.

A large number of Buddhist monks and nuns participated from over 15 countries. The World Peace Summit last month became the means for young people to perform and celebrate various elements of their intangible heritage. The summit brought together volunteerism at its best in the world.

Over 100,000 youth, all volunteers donated their time and celebratory energy in making all performances possible. It is the culmination of year long and dedicated practice. They demonstrated that humility and passion are critical for peace building.

The UN World Tourism Organization meeting during September in South Korea provided advocacy to the peace building efforts by the Presidents of both Koreas. Participants went along to the popular DMZ tours and appreciated the importance of the reunification in promoting peace. The role of quality and responsible tourism in promoting peace through intercultural understanding is underlined. Understanding what peace is all about and what it means is critical for such promotion and advocacy.

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will focus on the Kochi Muziris Biennale, one of the premier contemporary art events on the global calendar