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(Professor Dr. Amarewar Galla was an invited speaker and guest of the Adelaide Festival and the OzAsia Festival on several occasions. He was the policy driver and innovator for the successful festival strategy of The Australian Capital Territory when it first got self-government)



Tan Dun NuShu - The Secret Songs of Women OzAsia Festival



Moon Lantern Festival, OzAsia Festival, Adelaide



OzAsia Festival, Adelaide

# MORE THAN FOOD AND FROLIC

## Festivals in UN Sustainable Development Goals

Festivals have been an integral part of the spiritual and recreational lives of people across the world for millennia. They are critical spaces for ensuring the sustainability of the cultural diversity and intangible heritage of humanity. As sites for the promotion of peace through cultural

understanding, festivals have in recent years become secular events bringing together artists and audiences through creative programming. While traditional festivals such as Kumbha Mela in India, a spectacle like no other, attract over 20 million people, it is the smaller ones that provide the building blocks in the contemporary world facing challenges of safeguarding heritage values from the forces of rapid globalisation and homogenisation.

Korea showcases its creativity through spectacular events. Gwangju has become an intellectual and creative centre of excellence in the world promoting an inclusive and global aesthetic through its Contemporary Art and Design Biennales. On the other hand, Cheongju International Craft Biennale and the Gangneung Danje Festival, a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity that was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Representative List in 2008, are champions for safeguarding living heritage. In its recent commitment to promoting cultural diversity in general and multiculturalism in particular, Korea promises to promote such events to further cross cultural understanding and dialogue through the First Voice of carriers and transmitters of cultural values and creativity, much needed to promote peace in the world.

In Australia, a close friend of the Republic of Korea, with its location in the Asia Pacific Region, festivals have become critical for the

recognition of its cultural diversity. For example, the Dreaming and Boomerang Festivals showcase the contemporary creativity of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders informed by the knowledge systems that are dynamic and have evolved over thousands of years. Festivals foster the linguistic and cultural diversity of Australia. One such example is the unique OzAsia Festival that celebrates Australia's creative links with Asia in all its manifestations - from culinary heritage to film, in dance and theatre, through visual arts and music, and dialogue and intellectual engagement.

OzAsia Festival is an annual two-week event presented by the Adelaide Festival Centre. (www.ozasiafestival.com.au) It is the premier Australian event contributing to meaningful cultural exchanges with Asia. Each year the festival focuses on a particular Asian country.

Most importantly, the program includes traditional and contemporary artists from Asia and Australian artists who identify with the heritage of an Asian source community. It also showcases cross cultural collaborations. A signature event of the OzAsia Festival is the Moon Lantern Festival. It is held on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month of the calendar. The Moon Lantern Festival is a celebration of inclusiveness and our ability to live together in harmony. The day is full of performances from various cultural communities, workshops, food and market stalls, culminating in a stunning Moon Lantern Parade at sunset.

The Honourable Hieu Van Le, Lieutenant Governor of South Australia and OzAsia Festival Patron said that "Australia is looking forward to an Asian Century. The OzAsia Festival provides an important means of understanding and appreciating Australia's neighbouring Asian Countries. Cultural engagement and the arts can help build bridges, understanding and tolerance like nothing else can".

The founders of the OzAsia Festival considered it important that Australia should take the initiative and establish an international event that explores the relationship between Australia

and Asia through its Diaspora communities of Asian origin. The Festival explores ways in which, using creativity as a means, it can commence a process of better embedding the values of cultural diversity and sustainable development into our regional cultural policies and programs. It is a landmark activity that involves all tiers of government and a wide range of other civil society institutions, to model a new kind of partnership that includes those working across different levels in cultural policy and planning, the community sector, business, service delivery and educational institutions through students and academics.

The role of festivals as agencies of soft power has become increasingly significant in Asia for promoting a cultural of peace. Most of us will recall that the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (November 2001) came

### HERITAGE MATTERS

into being in a 'post-September 11' world and, consequently, its significance was lost in the environment of global shock that existed at that time. The Universal Declaration argues for a new global understanding of the value of cultural diversity. It is designed to protect the international intellectual, economic, spiritual and moral values of cultural diversity. The Declaration affirms cultural diversity as the vital resource to protect cultural rights, bio-diversity, individual self-value, social harmony, cross-cultural communication and to 'humanise globalization.'

Its significance, as an international policy framework, is that it can be adapted to national purposes through national policies, government and private sector institutions, community advocacy and local government planning. The Declaration continues to help transform civil society. It has the potential to improve our community harmony, our relationship with our environment and the way we develop our economy through a new understanding of the physical and human world. The international community made a further commitment to promote the values of the Declaration through the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which provides an international framework for promoting creativity and cultural diversity through festivals. In Andhra Pradesh, the expanding recreational spectrum of new and burgeoning middle classes provide a ready audience for domestic festival consumption. They want choice. Experiences. Comfort. Cleanliness. Service. Quality. Value for money. They also bring with them the globalising force of their tastes and preferences with the

cultural representations in festivals reduced to the tourist gaze and the middleclass perspective. The biggest challenge for Andhra is to bring together the recreational and leisure with cultural and heritage content.

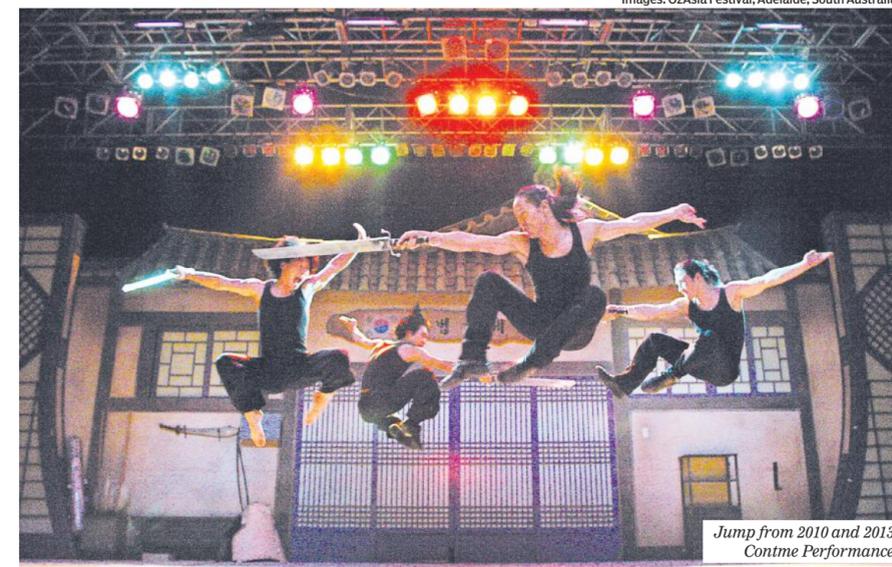
Festivals are of all kinds, from recreational to creative engagement, largely focused on possible economic outcomes in contemporary societies. They have also become central to culture, health and wellbeing for new generations that are addressing alienation and breakdown of traditional family life and associated support. I have often said that all tourism is cultural and that the visitors increasingly expect more than pure Disneyesque recreation. This is particularly so if we want international or even national visitation. My work experience in Australia was focused on social, cultural and economic and environmental outcomes from festivals.

International standard setting advocacy has created an inclusive discourse on culture that cuts across the UN SDGs. (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/) It includes several explicit references to cultural aspects. The following SDG Targets are significant. They provide windows of opportunity to ensuring that we locate culture through festivals in the SDGs and in doing so promote the safeguarding of all forms of cultural diversity:

- SDG 4. Target 7 refers to the aim to ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
- SDG 8. Target 3 addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support productive activities as well as, among others, creativity and innovation.
- SDGs 8 & 12. Targets 9 & 12.b respectively refer to the need to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture and products, and to the need to develop suitable monitoring tools in this area. Festivals in tourism could promote or diminish deep local cultural elements.
- SDG 11. Target 4 highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Festivals are a critical means to attract investment in safeguarding.

In summary, festivals have the capacity to facilitate community engagement and development by providing a mediating space in which participants are endowed with the capacity for educational and stimulating engagement. This can be facilitated through participatory measures with members of the community, cultural practitioners, and community elders. This in turn will enhance a sense of local residency and belonging as well as providing constructive cultural economics and sustainable development.

The personality of festivals provides a human face to globalization.



Jump from 2010 and 2013 Contme Performance



Peer Gynt performed in 2012 OzAsia Festival, Adelaide

### NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will take you to Alhambra in Granada, completed towards the end of Muslim rule of Spain - a reflection of the culture of the last centuries of the Moorish rule of Al Andalus

Ade and Peni\_Ontosoroh from 2013 festival. Photo by Arief Budianto Festivals