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VIVACITY

GODDESS AND HER MUSIC

Thursday, 05 December 2013 | Divya Kaushik




Ranjit Makkuni's interactive exhibition at National Museum tries to bridge the gap between culture and modernity. He shared details with Divya Kaushik

From traditional Indian sitar to musical instruments based on Myanmar saung harp, Thai xylophone, Korean kayagum, Chinese guzheng and pipa, Vietnamese dan tranh, Japanese and Balinese gamelan, there are installations that are worth experiencing. *Musical Landscapes and the Goddesses of Music* by Ranjit Makkuni at National Museum is an interactive exhibition that establishes a

connect between traditional musical instruments and technological changes. "It tries to bridge the gap between the traditional and modern. The instruments that you see in the exhibition are traditional but technology has been used to create some music, notes, to make it interesting for the youngsters. For example, I have musical chairs in the exhibition. As one would sit on the chairs, one would hear the sound of tabla, tambura and sitar. Through the use of these musical instruments I want to remind people that at a time when technology is changing fast, our traditional music and instruments have survived the test of time," explained Makkuni, a musician himself who understands the language of rhythm and notes perfectly. Even a master like him took two years to complete these works, "as a lot of thought went in creating these works."

The other theme that is prominently reflected in the exhibition is goddess Saraswati in various forms, worshipped across Asia. "Goddess Saraswati is the symbol of knowledge, wisdom and music and is known for her instrument veena. She is worshipped in different names across Asia. If you will go through the exhibition you will find these various forms. In Myanmar she is famous as Thurathadi. She becomes celestial angel in Thailand and in South East Asian mythology there is Kinnaris, the female counterpart of Kinnaras. They are depicted as half-bird half-human creatures. Kinnaris have the head, torso and arms of a woman and the wings, tail and feet of a swan. She is renowned for her dance, song and poetry, and is a traditional symbol of feminine beauty, grace and accomplishment. In Indonesia she is worshipped as Saraswati and in Buddhism Saraswati is known as the guardian deity who upholds the teachings of Gautama Buddha by offering protection and assistance to practitioners. There are other variations found in Japan and Korea. So there is a parallel thread running through the exhibition and why Goddess Saraswati because she is the goddess of music and is known for her veena," informed Makkuni.

He was the man behind Planet Health Museum launched during the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. The Planet Health is a "state-of-the-future", multimedia, interactive, digital museum and communication design that allows people to explore the concept and experience health from multiple perspectives and approaches.

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