

## Cultural Calendar - March 2016

8

Tuesday  
7.30 pm

### "Baawre Mann ke Sapne" (Sound of Dreams)

A National Award winning all-women Theater Production  
Presented by The Creative arts, India  
Directed by Ramanjit Kaur (Theater and Film Actor)

### To Celebrate International Women's Day

Organized by SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka  
in collaboration with Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

Venue: Lionel Wendt Art Centre,  
18 Guildford Crescent, Colombo 07  
(Admission by Invitation only)

Please contact SAARC Cultural Centre on tel # 2584451 /  
Indian Cultural Centre on tel # 2684698)

### Science of "Indian Vaastu and Feng Shui"

focusing on  
the scientific aspects of the age old practice  
specifically on  
"Prosperity through Vaastu and Feng Shui in the year  
2016"  
By S.BS.SURENDRAN  
Venue: ICC Auditorium

11

Friday  
6.00 pm

### lecture "Kitchen Chemistry"

The day to day impact on wellness through the use of  
Herbs, Spices & Vegetables according to the Siddha  
Medical System.

By Dr. (Mrs). Vivian Sathiyaseelan B.S.M.S(Sri Lanka), M.D  
(India) Senior Lecturer, Siddha medicine University of  
Jaffna  
Organized by The Indian Cultural Center  
in association with A.A.Y.U.S.H  
Venue: ICC Auditorium

13

Sunday  
10.30 am

14

Monday  
6.00 pm

### Bharatha Natyam Recital

Parshwanath and Shruti Parshwanath from India  
Venue: ICC Auditorium

### Flavours of India Cookery Demonstration

Venue: ICC Lawn

18

Friday  
10.30 am

19

Saturday  
10.30 am

### Holi Celebrations

Organized by the Hindi students and teachers of ICC  
Venue: ICC Front Lawn

23 - 27

Wednesday  
- Sunday

### Exhibition of Indian Handicrafts.

In collaboration with Investment  
& Technology Promotion  
Division of Ministry of External  
Affairs of India

Venue: Mihilaka Medura , BMICH

### Kathak Recital by Dumith Gunwardane

Venue: ICC Auditorium

31

Thursday  
6.00 pm



# Sanskarika

Newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

March 2016



Happy Holi



## Kantha - A Stitch in Time



Contd....

Each **Kantha** panel was its crafter's self-expression telling a unique story. There have been instances where an elaborate piece of work started by a woman has been continued by her daughter and granddaughter. Some samples of this kind of a century old **Kanthas** can be seen in the Gurusaday Dutt Museum and Indian Museum in Kolkata, Musee the Art Antingua in Lisbon, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and, most recently, in the Philadelphia Museum..., US.

All **Kanthas** were homemade for use by the family and, quite often, had parallel lines in simple running stitch, long before the word 'parallel' had found its way into the English language from the Greek word "parallelos".

The more creative among the rural women would embroider motifs drawn from the surrounding village vignettes as well as household deities -- all done in the simple running stitch. Themes from day-to-day life were also common subjects for the embroidery.

They were intensely personal, crafted with love and care by the rural women, and reflected the world around them.

Originally the primary use of **Kantha** was as a mat for the deity of the house, a quilt for a baby or a wrap for a new son-in law, made lovingly by the older women of the family. They were also made as quilts to be used on cold wintry nights. A daughter would make one for her father or a wife for her husband. In areas with a predominantly Hindu population, the motifs would have the Hindu deities, human figures, animals, scenes from everyday life and festivals like **Ratha Yatra** (Lord **Jagannath's** journey on his chariot), **Raas Leela** (Lord **Krishna's** celestial dance with the **gopinis**), **Durga Puja** (the worship of Goddess **Durga**) and other festivals. Scenes from the **Ramayana**, particularly **Ramabhishek** (the coronation of King Rama); episodes from the **Mahabharata** and **Geetopadesh** with Krishna as the main character (such as the lifting of the **Govardhan Parbat**, **Nauka Vihar**, **Raas Leela**, the **Jagannath Yatra**) are perennial favourites of the **Kantha** artists. Many **Kantha** mats had **vahanas** for the gods and goddesses, such as the **mooshak** or rat for **Ganesha** or the **hansa** or swan for Goddess **Saraswati**. Abstract or geometric patterns were more predominant in the work of Muslim artisans. The western influence of colonialism is also seen in **Kanthas** showing a **sahib** in a **palki** (palanquin) or a **memsahib** sitting with a parasol and a **teapoy** before her.

There are seven different types of **Kanthas**:

**Lep Kantha** is a rectangular wrap used as a quilt. Five to six layers of cloth are stitched together in wavy, rippled designs over which simple embroidery is done. The outer layers of the cloth are white or light-coloured on which the embroidery can stand out. When Bengalis speak about **Kantha**, they usually refer to a **Lep Kantha**, often with fewer layers.

**Sujani Kantha** is a decorated quilt used as a blanket or spread during religious rituals or on ceremonial occasions.

**Baiton Kantha** is a square wrap used for covering books and other valuables. It has a colourful border and an elaborate design.

**Oaar Kantha** is a rectangular pillow cover with simple designs and a decorative border sewn around the edges.

**Archilata Kantha** is a small rectangular cover for mirrors and toileteries. It has a wide colourful border with assorted motifs.



**Durjani** or **Thalia Kantha** is a small rectangular quilted **Kantha** piece with a central lotus design and an embroidered border. Three corners of the rectangle are folded inwards to form a wallet.

**Rumal Kantha** is used as an absorbent wipe or a plate covering. The design is similar to the **Durjani Kantha** with a lotus at the centre and a heavily-designed border.

**Kantha** embroidery was always begun at the centre, most often with the traditional **mondal**, and then worked outwards with surrounding motifs. As the work progressed, it fortified the quilt. After completing the embroidery of the motifs, the intervening areas of the cloth were quilted with running stitch. The border of the quilt was finished with very fine stitches to give it a firm edge.

Modern-day **Kantha** is no longer a multi-layered utility covering. It has been unshackled from its traditional confines of strictly utilitarian domestic products and transformed into a meaningful part of the crafts and textiles tradition of India lauded all over the world and prized by connoisseurs.

Behind the popularity of **Kantha** are the unknown faces of the ordinary women who once used **Kantha** stitchery for blankets, quilts, shawls and other items of everyday use. The craft has emerged as a new trend in **haute couture** and **haute decor**,

even entering the domain of portraiture.

The rural woman's tradition of recycling and reusing old worn out fabrics to make utility products and embellishing them with embroidery for their loved ones, is today a tool for their empowerment. It enables them to take better care of their homes and hearths. To keep the tradition of using an old fabric, the central layer of the SitchArt panel is always an old, used cotton cloth.

The making of a **Kantha** may be compared to a symphony. Skilled orchestration produces enchanting music because the musicians play in harmony. This is true in the case of **Kantha** artisans as well. They work at different tasks such as dyeing, drawing, sewing stitches over the outlines and filling in the designs with various colours. It may all be in different phases but is totally harmonious.

**Kantha** art comes naturally to women. They are born to multi-task. From morning until afternoon they sweep and swab, clean and cook, feed the poultry and the cattle and perform numerous other tasks in the fulfilment of their duties as homemakers. Finding a couple of hours to spare in the afternoons, they get together for a 'chaa adda' and a 'chit chat' during which they work on their **Kantha** projects. Village vignettes or images of deities are recreated on fabric, be it a wrap, a pillow cover or a mat for the household deity.



The **Stree Shakti** manifest in the execution of their pieces merges with the three dimensions of the **Kantha** panels and produces a fourth dimensional power in the textiles which draws the viewer into its fold.

**Kantha** is now recognized as a top fashion statement with a social cause: the empowerment of women. They are imbued with **Stree Shakti** to battle the many obstacles in their lives. The 'green' ideology has long been gathering momentum and **Kantha** is the clarion call for rejuvenation of the old. Similar to the ideal of **Khadi**, **Kantha** is a kind of **satyagraha** for the empowerment of women and against the assembly line mass production of machine made items that fill the showrooms in upscale Malls. The ideology of **Kantha** may even be a silent condemnation of the sweat-shop labour practices that are rampant in many parts of the world.

Source: **Through the eye of a needle**  
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