

Pen  
through  
Rainbow

## Peace

Mainak Bhattacharya, FE 413

Round about every discipline known to belong to the genre that is the “Social Sciences” has inculcated discussions on the concept of peace through their unique lenses, each lens a construction with the foundational tools of each discipline. Deliberation on such a fascinating concept can be readily identified when navigating through subjects such as History, International Relations, Political Science, Philosophy, Psychology or even Economics for that matter. You shouldn’t get your hopes up, however, because this is indeed a very personal view that I am about to elaborate on. It may be selfish of me, but then you wouldn’t read this if I kept babbling on like a fifty-year-old researcher who wears glasses thicker than his hair and has a mountain of books surrounding him, would you? At least I wouldn’t.

I chanced upon these thoughts with an adequate degree of suddenness. It was, you can say, an epiphany that I had, perhaps an impending realisation born out of habitually traversing the road stretching from Hati Bagan to my college, in other words, one of the most happening places of the city.

On the way, I see so many people around me, some desperate to reach somewhere, both a place and perhaps a better point in life, some standing and engaging in lively conversation. I see

thousands of stories around me, stories where I feature as an extra for a mere second and then vanish into obscurity. In contradiction, there is a sense of familiarity perpetually present in assurance, because I see the same shopkeepers every day, their faces so ingrained in my mind that claiming them as acquaintances wouldn’t be far-fetched. Passing through the stalls almost feels rhythmic now, knowing that the tailor would always sit beside the watchmaker, knowing that the tea shop would always be packed with customers during the morning, the *puris* being fried only for that time of day, knowing that the bouncers would always be sitting in front of a table fan, guarding the jewellery shop with intense zeal, apparently. Maybe this is the idea that I have of peace as a concept. It is finding familiarity in the unknown, stability in the unstable and certainty in the uncertain. Never could I have imagined that a bustling street would provide me comfort against the rigours of life, but here we are. I have found peace in the ‘familiar,’ and have boasted about it to my heart’s content, perhaps because communicating it through regular chatter is a difficult task, and I have tried to do justice to such a complicated emotion. Maybe this coterie of thoughts would resonate with others who are slowly falling in love with their surroundings, wherever in the world it might be, and find

joy in functioning harmoniously to the tunes of a life that need not always be a bed of rocks. Such optimism is, I admit, unwarranted, but needed. How else would you be able to look in the mirror and smile once in a while?

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*“You find peace not by rearranging the circumstances of your life, but by realizing who you are at the deepest level”*

*-- Eckhart Tolle*

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# Death of a Dream

Gargi Samadar, FE 248

A tiny seedling of a mango tree  
Stares at me in blissful glee  
Verdant in hue  
Lovely to view  
In shape diminutive  
But with a zeal to live  
As though it wishes to babble in delight  
"Today I'm small, but tomorrow I'll grow in  
height  
Do not underestimate my capability  
Because I am determined & gritty  
Tomorrow I'll grow into a tall tall tree.  
My branches will no longer remain wee.  
But stretch out to reach the horizon's zenith  
As though to unite the sky & earth beneath  
The gentle breeze blowing by  
Will create a soothing lullaby.  
Lulling the buds & birds to sleep  
In complete peace & dreams deep  
Passers by & wanderers travelling  
Will rest under my shade, their minds  
unravelling  
The breeze & my shade will make them doze  
Eyelids heavy & almost on the close  
My bountiful shade -- a blessing in summer  
Leaves & branches in love do murmur  
Birds make a shady haunt in their nest  
Their twittering is interspersed with rest  
Children at my juicy fruits will pluck.  
Laughing in joy at their blessed luck  
A bounteous blessing I do shower  
Offering rest & peace in my bower

Today I am a teeny tiny sprout from a seed  
And so my innate potential you cannot read  
Just permit me to remain alive  
And of my bounty mankind will thrive."

Having said thus, the seedling made a humble  
appeal  
"Please could you protect me from worldly  
ordeals?  
Because I am so naive & so small  
I humbly beseech protection from you all.  
Could you protect the sapling with a tall  
fence?  
Because I cannot make provisions for self  
defense.  
Could you ensure that I receive water & sun-  
light  
And with the help of support I can stand  
upright  
Could the gardener tend to my special needs  
Could he take special care & root out the  
weeds?  
Could I receive the much needed love for a  
child?  
So that I am safe from any predator wild...  
"But alas! Fate had something so cruel in  
store.  
And the sapling's monologue was crushed  
to the core.

All of a sudden a storm began to brew  
With Thunder & Lightning, more intense it  
grew

The poor seedling unable to grapple with the storm  
Was uprooted & fell, unable to conform.

"Help me Help me" the little sapling cried.  
But none heard its cry & none replied.  
Nobody noticed the helpless little sprout

Nobody came forward to assist thereabout  
And so lying helpless, crushed & run over  
by feet,  
The hapless plant its unfortunate end did  
meet.  
All dreams, aspirations were nipped in the  
bud  
As the naive sprout to its death succumbed.

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*“All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction. Love is therefore the only law of life. He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying. Therefore love for loves sake, because it is law of life, just as you breathe to live ”*

*-- Swami Vivekananda*

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# My Growing Up Years

Shreya Chaudhuri, FE 187

When I come home from college after long intervals of time, I get hit with a wave of nostalgia. Everything about home reminds me of my childhood. I have changed so much ever since I left home for college, yet somehow, home has not changed at all. It still has that warm smell, of biscuits and winter clothes. It still has those markings on the wall which indicated how tall I was. It still has those glow-in-the-dark stars on my bedroom wall from the time I was too afraid to sleep in the dark. The door still gets stuck during monsoon and all of us have to make a joint effort to open it. And most importantly it's still home...

These nostalgic thoughts make me smile because of how wonderful my childhood was. Everyone, I am sure, feels that their childhood was unique and I too am guilty of this. I grew up during the time when Salt Lake had yellow street lights and not the modern day bright white lights. Most of the alleyways were desolate after 6:00 PM and the roads were of such bad quality that we often fell down and scraped our knees. Kidnappers, our greatest fear, were at an all-time high. And yet those were the best days of our lives. My friends and I would play every evening. When the clock struck 4:30 PM we would all rush outside with big smiles on our faces and on those rare evenings that I would not go out to play because of the rain or illness I

would have a morose expression on my face and it felt like the world was ending. The children I knew, didn't need fancy parks and expensive gadgets to have fun with. The familiar bumpy roads and that rundown park with broken swings was perfect for us. The grass in the park was overgrown and almost waist-high. I remember, on one occasion, my friends and I brought scissors from our homes in an attempt to cut the long grass so that we could play. We barely made a difference but we went home satisfied having done something that the adults should have done but didn't do.

We spent our evenings playing various games which changed according to the season. During the winter months, badminton was all we could think about. The oldest kid in our group taught us a set of made-up badminton rules. He claimed that this was how they played badminton at the Olympics and we believed him. And till this day I have those gibberish rules made by an 11 year old engraved in my mind. During the summer months we loved playing a game called "mega hide-and-peek", which involved the whole neighbourhood. It was virtually impossible for the seeker to find the other children because hiding places varied from the terrace of our neighbour's house to the top of another neighbour's garage.

One memory which is fresh in my mind is from a time when we had power cuts or loadshedding. We would all run up to the terrace with candles in hand and I would make creepy sounds and then I would hear my friend respond from his terrace and soon enough, all the kids in the neighbourhood would join the cacophony. And when the lights came back on, the adults would let out sighs of relief, whilst we kids would let out sighs of disappointment.

Our imagination ran like the wind. On some days we pretended to be wanted criminals on the loose. On other days, we pretended to be a Ninja warriors. We enacted stories that we would hear from our grandparents, the great folktales. One of us would be the evil witch and the rest of us would be the children the witch wanted to devour. The witch would say in a nasal tone “Auu Mau Khau” and we would all burst into peals of laughter and giggles. And when the sun would set, we would be called back home. Our names would be called out and we instinctively knew who was being called from which house even though most of us were called “Babu”. Going back home from playtime

would have been so much more difficult if we didn't have the hope of meeting again the next day. Our little minds could not comprehend that there would come a time when we would no longer be playing in the evenings. We just thought that this was something we would do be doing all our lives. Little did we know that one day these moments would become memories.

And now when I come home, I feel a tinge of sadness. The park that once reverberated with the laughter of happy children now lies barren. The swings have gathered dust and a crow has built her nest on the slides. Neighbours no longer have to worry about windows broken by cricket balls. Mangoes remain hanging from the trees because mischievous kids no longer climb trees in the hope of acquiring the juicy fruit. The parks have neatly mowed grass but no one to play in them. No grandparents call out their children to come home at dusk, because the child never left the home in the first place. And now when there is a power cut we just switch on our invertors. The neighbourhood might be more lighted now but it is missing the light that kept it alive...

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## ধাঁধাঁর উত্তর

- ১। সর্বদমন/ভরত (শকুন্তলার পুত্র)
- ২। মেরি, কুইন অফ স্কটস/ব্লাডি মেরি
- ৩। সম্রাট অশোক। (দেবানাম পিয়াদশী)
- ৪। মারী আতনায়েত (ফ্রান্স)
- ৫। শাহজাহান (আগ্রা দুর্গে বন্দী)

- ৬। রোমের সম্রাট নীরো
- ৭। সম্রাট হর্ষবর্ধন
- ৮। কুতুবউদ্দিন আইবেক। (কুতুবমিনার)
- ৯। ইন্দিরা গান্ধী (প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী)
- ১০। দৌপদী মুর্মু (আমাদের বর্তমান রাষ্ট্রপতি)

# Bali – The enchanting world of untouched Beauty and Serenity

Prof (Dr) A M Saha, FE 99

In the hustle and bustle of our fast-paced lives, it is often a challenge to find places where time slows down and makes you feel truly connected to nature. This summer we had ventured for an extraordinary journey to the hidden gems – the Bali and Gili Islands in Indonesia that promised to captivate our senses and left us with cherished memories.

Tucked away in the vast expanse of the deep blue sea, this tropical paradise is a pristine



island nestled between azure waters and lush greenery. With its untouched pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, lush-green rice terraces, iconic temples, volcanic mountains, delectable cuisine, friendly locals and flourishing wildlife, it is the epitome of natural beauty. In this majestic haven, distant from the relentless pace

of urban life, one can truly escape and immerse themselves in the wonders of Mother Earth. From the moment we set foot on its sandy shores, we were greeted with warm smiles and open arms by the local community. Their dedication to preserving the island's pristine environment and intriguing traditions



is truly commendable, and it resonates in every aspect of life on the island. Whether you're an adventure seeker, a nature enthusiast, or simply yearning for tranquillity, this set of islands offers something for everyone.

In the month of May, we had embarked on a breathtaking adventure to the tropical paradise of Bali. May to October is the best time to visit Bali and we were lucky to be treated with perfect sunshine. We had taken the Air Asia flight from Kolkata to Bali via Don

Mueang (Thailand). Our first destination in Bali was Ubud, the artistic hub of Bali, beckoned us with its vast expanses of lush paddy fields. The next day started with the renowned Ceking Rice Terrace, located in the village of Tegalalang, it is a haven for nature enthusiasts and photographers.

We were mesmerized by the verdant terraces cascading down the hills, reflecting the vibrant shades of green. Interacting with local farmers



allowed us to gain insights into the intricate rice cultivation methods practiced for generations.

While strolling through the intricate irrigation systems, we were able to witness the hard work and dedication put into rice cultivation. Interacting with local farmers allowed us to appreciate the beauty of simplicity and the harmony between man and nature.

For the adventurers among us, Bali swings were an absolute delight. These exhilarating swings, suspended above the abyss, allowed us to soar through the air while enjoying panoramic views of the surrounding forests and the rivers. It was a literal and figurative escape from the mundane into the realm of

pure joy and adrenaline. We can feel the wind caress our face as we soar through the air on



giant swings overlooking the stunning Ayung River. Any of you, looking for that perfect profile picture, then there is no dearth of such picturesque spots all around.

The Day ended with the magnificent Ulun Danu Beratan Temple, situated on the serene shores of Lake Beratan. This picturesque water temple not only captivated us with its charming architecture, but also offered a



tranquil atmosphere where we could immerse ourselves in spirituality. Its distinctive pagoda-like shrines appear to float serenely on the water's surface, creating a picture-perfect



scene. It was indeed a special moment to discover the significance of this sacred Hindu



temple, dedicated to the goddess of the lake. We marvelled at the harmony between nature and the spiritual realm, making it a must-visit for any traveller.

Having spent couple of days in Ubud, our next destination was Gili Trawangan. Our journey



commenced in the charming town of Ubud, where we caught a cruise from the nearby Padang Bai harbour for a scenic ride to Gili Trawangan. The cruise ride took approximately two hours, offering breathtaking panoramas of the crystal-clear

turquoise waters and lush landscapes. Passing by neighbouring islands, we eagerly



anticipated the adventures Gili Trawangan had in store for us. Upon our arrival, we were enchanted by Gili Trawangan's pristine white sand beaches and the inviting shades of the shimmering ocean. The island is famous for its postcard-worthy shores, where we whiled away lazy afternoons, basking in the sun and taking refreshing dips in the rejuvenating waters. We discovered that snorkelling and scuba diving were also popular activities on the island, allowing us to uncover the underwater wonders that lie beneath the surface. With no motorized vehicles permitted on the island, bicycles quickly became our preferred mode of transportation. We explored every hidden corner of the island, stumbling upon quaint cafes, vibrant marketplaces, and breathtaking sunset viewpoints. To experience the local culture, we opted for a traditional horse carriage, known as a cidomo, to explore the island. These colourful carts took us on a leisurely journey, allowing us to immerse ourselves in the island's unique ambiance and witness its vibrant streets..

Our taste buds were tantalized by the fresh seafood delicacies served at local restaurants. We savoured aromatic Indonesian dishes, relished Mediterranean flavours, and indulged in delectable barbecued treats and English



breakfast; all served in decorated cabanas by the beach front. The island's culinary offerings provided a memorable experience.

Having spent couple of days in Gili Trawangan, it was time to bid goodbye. Thereafter, the next couple of days, we were in Bali, basking ourselves in the beautiful beaches of Nusa Dua, Sanur and Canggu. As the sun began to set in one of the evening, we headed to the iconic Tanah Lot Temple. Perched atop a rocky outcrop, this temple holds immense spiritual significance for the locals. With the waves crashing against the cliffs and the sunset painting the sky with vibrant hues, it was a surreal experience that left us in awe of Bali's natural beauty. Our visit here was a reminder of the inseparable bond between religion, culture, and nature in Bali.

We were so happy that we had preserved this for the last - The Uluwatu Temple. This temple is situated at the edge of sheer cliffs, offering another breath taking experience. The temple's location atop a 70-meter-high cliff provided us with panoramic views of the Indian Ocean. The clear distinction of sky blue and ocean blue at the horizon made it extra special. However you need to pay attention to the mischievous monkeys, as they can often be really naughty.

Even a week in Bali didn't seem enough, as time flew faster than we expected it to be. With its vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and warm hospitality, Bali proved to be an unforgettable adventure. From exploring the lush rice terraces of Ubud on one side, to immersing in the spiritual ambiance of ancient temples like Tanah Lot, to the sandy beaches



of Nua Dua, virgin islands of Gili, it makes you feel that God has specially handcrafted its beauty in all-in-one show. Time for us to soak in this amazing journey as we plan for yet another adventure in the future.

# Was there at all a “Hinduization” of the Santal society?

## A Critical Analysis

Aishanee Mallick, FE 115

Santal society and culture are worth analyzing and admiring, beyond any doubt. There is no debate over the fact that the Santals possess an immensely rich cultural universe, which comprises of songs, dances, paintings, writings, and most importantly a plethora of myths and legendary stories circulated from one generation to the other, via mouth. Nonetheless, the point of contestation comes in when we talk about the Santal religion. Since years and decades, there has been a significant tendency to classify Santal religion as a part of “Hindu” society, both on the part of the popular writings as well as by some eminent sociologists, anthropologists and historians, as well. However, the point worth noticing is that the matter, in reality, is not at all, so very simplistic. Although from time to time, there have been contacts and cultural exchanges between the Santal society on the one hand, and their “Hindu” neighbours, and that there have indeed been inter-cultural transactions, such kind of interactions can however, never lead to the overwhelming conclusion that the Santal society was a mere part of “Hindu” one.

Unfortunately, two major problems surround the writings on the Santals; firstly they are either assumed to be complete isolates living in a state of primitive barbarism, or the other extreme depicts the Santals to be so much so absorbed by the Hindu society, that they

become a “mere sub-system” of the Hindu system, as Kumar Suresh Singh in his book laments. However, none of the two extreme viewpoints is correct in their individual approaches. Firstly, the Santals as the aboriginal inhabitants of the country; were never isolated, alien creatures from the mainstream society, since from time to time, there were indeed multiple occasions of them coming into contact with external cultures and religions. This disapproves of the first set of preconceived notion, as already mentioned, that the Santals were “Noble Savages”. At the same time, despite the fact that the Santals have come into contact with outside cultural influences, of which Hinduism played a major impact, such influences were never strong enough to outrightly classify the Santals a mere component or part of the Hindu system. Let us see why.

At the very outset, it is worth noticing that the religion of the Santals is either Sari or Sarna, and never Hinduism. In fact, I have conversed with 47 Santal respondents both from the remotest villages of Bankura, as well as from our very own city. All of them have emphasized on one point that there is absolutely so similarity between either the Santali worldview and that of the Hindu worldview; nor is there any similarity between the two religions. Indeed, all my respondents held on one point that the very living forms

and cultural paraphernalia of the Santals, including their outlook towards life, absolutely do not match with those of the Hindus. Firstly, the Santals do not believe in the concept of idol worship, and rather worship objects of nature and totems; unlike the Hindus, who, we all know, do practice idol worship. Secondly, there does not exist any concept of dowry within the Santal society, since every person has a fellow feeling for one another. On the other hand, dowry is a practice which is deeply rooted within the Hindu society for ages. Thirdly, materially speaking, the Santals are the producers of their own food; in other words, they themselves cultivate and grow crops and accordingly meet their needs, since agriculture is their sole occupation. On the other hand, the majority of the populations from the “Hindu” society are consumers, since they are mostly engaged in secondary and tertiary sectors. Once again, the basic outlook of the Santals towards life is totally different from that of the Hindu one. Starting from the *Janam Chhatiyar* ceremony (conception of a child) till the *Bhandan* (time of death), the cultural patterns of the Santals are completely original in their own unique ways.

Once again, their festivals or *Parabs* are also different from those prevailing amongst the Hindus. The Santals’ most important *Parabs* are the *Sohrae* and the *Baha*, which we do not find occurring within the Hindu society. Again, their *Dasae* festival, *Mag More* festival and the *Karam* are absolutely of their own. Likewise, their principal deities are *Marang Buru*, *Jaher Ayu* and *Moreko Turuiko*, and they regard their Supreme Deity as “*Thakur Jiu*.” Their origin stories once again, are

absolutely unique. They believe themselves to have evolved out of the bodily dirt of *Marang Buru*, and consider the *Has* (gander) and *Hasil* (goose) to be their ancestors. Once again, they claim their descent to *Hihiri* and *Pipiri*, and speak of their journey from there to *Chae Champa* and finally into the country of *Saont* or *Samantawala*. Therefore, the Santals were a community of people who had a unique history and culture, which was absolutely of their own.

However, the problem comes in because of certain interpretations. Firstly, the term “*Thakur Jiu*” which comprises of the word “*Thakur*” is not something which is originally found in the Santal vocabulary, and hence is believed to have entered into their lexicon through contact with the Hindu society. Likewise, the name for the Santal village council, “*panchayat*” is once again believed to be of Hindu origin. Similarly, the Santal tradition itself speaks of how the Santals adopted certain Hindu customs, like the aboriginal way of disposing of the dead by burial came to be replaced by the Hindu crematory practice. If one goes through J. Troisi’s work, one finds that he once again shows how several Santal ceremonies have similarities with certain Hindu practices. For instance, the Santal belief in *orak bongas* has its counterpart in the Hindu belief of *Griha Lakshmi*. Once more, the names of Gods like *Sim Bonga* who is associated with the sun, *Kali bonga*, with the Hindu Goddess *Kali*, *Dibi Mai* with the Hindu Goddess *Durga* and *Ganga Mai*, with the *Ganges Goddess*, have names of Hindu origin. So is the institution of the *ojha* which in reality, bears a great deal of Hindu influence. Interestingly, the term *ojha* itself is a Hindi

word. Similarly, many *mantars* (magic spells) used by the *ojhas* are not in Santali, but in a corrupt form of Hindi or Bengali.

Once again, with the Kherwar or the Sapha Hor movement, there was an alleged theory of “Hinduization” being suggested to have been felt on the Santal society. Following the Kherwar movement, there was an increasing call on the part of some Santals to even wear the sacred thread, as well as an increasing urge to live on vegetarianism. Thereby, there came to be a schism between Santals who wanted to follow the new so-called “Hindu” practices and the ones who did not. In fact, Martin Orans in his book shows how owing to increasing contact with the “Hindu” society, there were many Santals who were willing to give up beef-eating, believing in the notion that consuming beef would make them blind. Similarly, with increased “Hindu” influences, the practice of witchcraft which was once immensely popular amongst the Santals, gradually started to fade away. As a result, there were indeed certain new changes which crept in within the Santal society. Accordingly, many people, including some scholars, have felt that it was a process of cultural assimilation, by which the Santals were absorbed within the Hindu society; and that itself gave rise to the “Hinduization” debate.

Nonetheless, there are certain crucial points to be noted. Although many Santals gave up beef-eating, donned the sacred thread, insisted on vegetarianism and stopped witchcraft practices, not every Santal did so. Indeed, Orans brilliantly points out how despite certain new changes, there was no noticeable major mass conversion of the Santals, and literally, barring one or two, all

of them held on to their own religion. On another level, the incorporation of the terms “*Thakur*”, “*Ojha*” and “*Panchayat*”, and practicing cremating of the dead and using *sindur* at the time of marriage, although bear cultural similarities with the “Hindu” society, that does not become sufficient enough to regard the Santals as “Hindus”. In fact, K.S. Singh argues that just like Hinduism had certain impacts on the Santal world, the opposite holds true, as well, which he calls “*tribalization*”; by which the Hindu society incorporated certain beliefs and practices from the Santals. Hence, it was never a one-directional transaction, by which the Santals alone borrowed and adopted Hindu practices. Rather, historically analyzing, the process was bi-directional, whereby there was indeed an inter-cultural contact between the two societies, namely the Santal society and the Hindu one. Hence, to conclude, just like we do not categorize “Hindu” society to be “*Santalized*”, despite mutual gives and takes, why categorize the Santals as “Hindus”, because of a few similarities? Hence, time has come to recognize the individual identity of the Santals, in their own rights, without classifying them as a sub-system of another society.

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# FLAMENCO : An Iconic Art of Spain

Manasi Sen, FE 38

Spain and its diverse and lively culture is very intriguing. An mesmerizing blend of rich history and modernity with antique landmarks, 49 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, world famous museums, beautiful beaches, vibrant culture of dance, music, festivals, scrumptious gastronomy or simply the football frenzy make Spain an irresistible destination.

We all know that Spain has a long history: it has been inhabited since pre-Roman times. The Romans conquered Hispania and colonized it, followed by the Visigoths. In the 8th century, the Muslims took over, and Cordoba became the centre of power. Northern Iberia saw the emergence of several Christian Kingdoms, and in the Reconquista, the Christians expanded south, taking over what is today Andalusia. Spain is a melting pot of different cultural influence which can be experienced as we explore this fascinating country.

Andalusian region is the southern part of Spain on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, with Sierra (a range of mountains) Morena in the north, the Sierra Nevada in the southeast and the Guadalquivir River flowing over the fertile lands between them. This region is divided into eight provinces: Almeria, Cadiz, Cordoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaen, Malaga and Seville. Andalusia is a land where music and dance is just a part of everyday

life and Andalusians express themselves beautifully with the Flamenco dance. Most of the Flamenco dancers were born in this region. Different areas of Andalusia have their own regional styles and from these centres Flamenco spread all over Andalusia and rest of Spain. It is believed that Flamenco was brought to Spanish culture by a group of Gypsy men and women. The Flamenco history dates back from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, despite some scholars claim it existed long before that. It is said that it has roots from all the medieval cultures that inhabited Spain. It is a dance form that intermingles features from local musical culture and many others. This famous dance is the result of mixing of the Andalusian Roma (gypsy) music with the Hispanic Jews, Christians and the Western Arabs. Thus, Flamenco first emerged in Andalusia and has since become one of the icons of Spanish culture. Today its spirit is still very much alive and Flamenco continues to represent the culture and history of Spain.

Flamenco dance competitions take place every year in the month of May at Cordoba Festival of Courtyards (La Fiesta de los de Cordoba). During this time the residents decorate their squares and courtyards with different colourful flowers and with this famous dance they celebrate spring. Taberna Flamenca Pepe Lopez in Malaga hosts some of the top Flamenco artists in the world. A great place for witnessing thrilling Flamenco

performance with authentic Mediterranean cuisine.

Flamenco: intense dancing and story-telling, an art form bursting with emotion and passion, expressed in music, song and dance. Male dancer is known as the bailoar and the female dancer is known as the bailoara. Flamenco singer is known as Cantoar/Cantoara and the guitarist is known as Tacoar/Tacoara. Typical outfit is called Traje de Flamenca. Female dancers wear colourful dresses (usually red) representing strength, vitality, bravery and passion. The gown is body hugging to mid-thigh, and then continues in multiple layers of ruffles to the ankle. Some have polka dots, Traje de lunares. In some dance performances, women use colourful folding fans, creating a bright visual impact. Male dancers wear a shirt (usually white) underneath a vest, over tight-fitting black trousers, and sometimes tie a scarf around their neck. The dancers wear shoes with heels ranging from four to seven centimeters and have special nails on the sole to enhance their sound.

Flamenco is an art form based on four pillars-Cante (Song), Toque (Guitar playing), Baile (Dance) and the Jaleo which involve handclapping, foot stomping and shouts of encouragement (Ole! Ole!). This highly expressive Spanish Dance is characterized by the freedom and pride of posture, flirtatious movements, richness of body expressions and profoundness of emotions.

We were lucky to enjoy an unforgettable Flamenco Show at the famous Torres Bermejas Flamenco Tablao, a traditional Andalusian entertainment in Madrid. It was a beautiful evening with delicious authentic Spanish food, captivating entertainment and refreshing Sangria! Spanish Sangria is produced from fine Spanish red wine and a blend of natural citrus fruit flavours mostly Tempranillo grapes (widely grown in Spain). The talented troupe of Flamenco dancers



displayed unique agility, passion and energy on stage.

The greatest joy of Flamenco dance is watching the personal expressions and emotions of the dancer change several times during a single performance in accordance to the lyrics of the song, rhythm of the guitar and clapping and shouts of encouragement. It was amazing to watch the dancer standing

motionless and expressionless, absorbing the strums of the guitar for the first few moments and then with the start of singing and clapping the emotion builds up and the dancer begins a passionate dance, changing personal expressions and expressing emotions according to the lyrics and rhythm. It is a contrast between the light and graceful with the strong, noisy steps as the dancer's feet drill intensely on the floor. Lyrics are focussed on evoking and communicating expressions of love, sadness, despair, anguish, joy and humour. The entire ensemble of Flamenco consists of the movement of arms, movement of upper torso, footwork, heelwork and hand-finger movement. Male dancers usually perform sophisticated and complex footwork whereas female dancers emphasize their hands and upper torso. The guitarist is responsible for keeping the rhythm which is essential for the dance performance. The traditional mode of playing the guitar in Flamenco is called the Phrygian mode. The guitar accompanies sad songs with slow and high pitch strings and happy songs with warm and joyful strings. The traditional Flamenco guitar is made of Spanish cypress and spruce and is lighter in weight than classical guitar to give the output of sharper sounds.

The oldest record of Flamenco dates to 1774 in the book *Cartas Marruecas* by Jose Cadalso (1741-1782, Cadiz), a Colonel of the Royal Spanish Army, author, poet, playwright and essayist. Flamenco dance was

born in Andalusia and Murcia probably by the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century and from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century it spread quickly from Southern Spain to the capital Madrid and onward to other urban centres. Flamenco, associated with the Gypsy culture was despised and ostracized, but it had certain reputation among a section of Spanish elites of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite many political, social, religious protests against Flamenco in Spain this art gained increasing popularity among the intellectuals and artists in Spain as well as other parts of the world. Many World Fairs of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century gave Flamenco a boost and this led to opportunities for cultural exchange. Flamenco became a symbol of Spanish national identity all over the world. As a result this art form has created business with many ideas to encourage Flamenco bars and clubs, stage shows and outdoor performances to attract the public and tourists, which serve to stimulate the economy. Today Flamenco is one of the most quintessentially Spanish artistic discipline that was recognized by UNESCO on 16<sup>th</sup> of November, 2010 as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Although, Flamenco is a Spanish expression of human feelings, it has grown popular across the globe. People from different countries are interested in learning about the culture, style, songs and dance moves that make up Flamenco. Today it is practiced, performed and appreciated all over the world!!