

FESTIVAL REPORT 2019



Presented by Jaypee Group

An India-Bhutan Foundation Initiative

In association with Siyahi

AUGUST 22-25, 2019

Thimphu, Bhutan

FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE

- **Mountain Echoes Festival of Art, Literature and Culture** is an initiative of the India Bhutan Foundation, in association with Siyahi. The festival is presented by the Jaypee group.
- Bhutan's annual literary gathering was held in Thimphu from 23 to 25 August 2019 at Royal University of Bhutan and Taj Tashi with the inaugural on 22nd August at India House.
- Rich with words and ideas, centered on the theme *Many Lives, Many Stories*, showcased stories that explored and celebrated the many elements of personal, professional, mental and spiritual success.
- The milestone 10th edition saw a true example of a global audience with thousands of people from all strata of Indian, International and Bhutanese society.
- The festival brought together writers, biographers, historians, environmentalists, scholars, photographers, poets, musicians, artists, film-makers to engage in a cultural dialogue, share stories, create memories and spend three blissful days in the mountains.

CHIEF ROYAL PATRON OF MOUNTAIN ECHOES



Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

FESTIVAL DIRECTORS



Namita Gokhale



Pramod K.G.



Tshering Tashi



Kelly Dorji

FESTIVAL PRODUCER



Mita Kapur

FESTIVAL PARTNERS

INDIA BHUTAN FOUNDATION was established in August 2003 by the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India with the objective of enhancing exchange and interaction among the people of both countries through activities in the areas of education, culture, science and technology.

JAYPEE GROUP is a well-diversified infrastructural industrial conglomerate in India. Over the decades it has maintained its salience with leadership in its chosen line of businesses. Transforming challenges into opportunities has been the hallmark of the Jaypee Group, ever since its inception five decades ago. The group is a diversified infrastructure conglomerate with business interests in engineering and construction, cement, power, real estate, expressways, fertilizer, hospitality, healthcare, sports, information technology, and education (not-for-profit).

SIYAH in Urdu means 'ink', the dye that stains the shape of our thoughts. Siyahi is India's leading literary agency that constantly seeks out talented voices whose stories must be shared. They also organize literary events of all types - from international literary festivals to intimate readings and book launches. Siyahi was founded by Mita Kapur.

PARO POP-UP BAZAAR

Paro Pop-up Bazaar was held on August 17th at NAB Bistro at the picturesque valley of Paro.

Focusing on the festival's theme Many Lives Many Stories, the event showcased a plethora of modern Bhutanese lifestyle and cultural products by entrepreneurs.



A lively modern marketplace, reflecting the buzzing spirit of entrepreneurship that is so uniquely indigenous to Bhutan and its youth. The pop-up showcased various artisanal and lifestyle products such as chocolates, soaps, candles, teas, accessories and more by artisans who chose to give a contemporary twist to traditional items, food and

the event drew to a close with an evening of music by Bhutanese artists from different genres, curated by M-Studio.



INAUGURAL OF THE TENTH EDITION OF MOUNTAIN ECHOES FESTIVAL OF ART, LITERATURE AND CULTURE

The tenth edition of Mountain Echoes Festival of Art, Literature and Culture was formally inaugurated on August 22, 2019 at India House, Thimphu by **Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck**, the Chief Royal Patron of the festival.

Her Excellency Ruchira Kamboj, Ambassador of India to Bhutan, welcomed the guests for the inaugural evening at the India House, Thimphu.



The formal opening of the tenth edition of the festival began with the traditional lighting of the lamp ceremony by Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, His Excellency Lyonchhen Dr Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of Bhutan, Her Excellency Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj and Festival Director Pramod Kumar KG.

**MITA KAPUR, FESTIVAL PRODUCER AND CEO,
SIYAH**



Mita Kapur welcomed the dignitaries and audiences to the Festival and emphasized how a decade of voices resonating in the mountains has today thrown back a distinct echo—an echo of welcome, of resurgence and of renewed hope. Away from the humdrum of everyday life, Mountain Echoes offers a unique platform for language and literature unhindered by the many worlds we otherwise live in. She encouraged the audience to give freely to the many young Bhutanese who participate in the festival and look for interesting stories, poems, views, hopes and solutions to the many issues we must all face together. She thanked Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck for her continued guidance and patronage, for it is her vision that first gave the festival shape.



**HER MAJESTY THE ROYAL QUEEN MOTHER
ASHI DORJI WANGMO WANGCHUCK**

Her Majesty said that Mountain Echoes has brought about a better understanding and bonding between Bhutan and India through the friendships that have been forged. She also stated that while at a political level Bhutan and India have always enjoyed a great friendship, this festival has played a significant role for the better understanding of each others' cultures. Beyond being a platform for young Bhutanese to showcase their talents, she believes the festival encourages them to unearth their skills in the arts and literature.



**HER EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR
RUCHIRA KAMBOJ**

In her address, **Her Excellency, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj** emphasized the importance of art and how it unconsciously programs our minds to detect grace and finesse in reality, and that makes all the difference. She paid tribute to Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, saying that this celebration of such unique grace and excellence couldn't have been created without Her Majesty's vision and guidance. She said that this is a journey where one can detach from everyday life; a journey for the essence, for the human soul, for the mind and heart, devoid of the weight of reality.



FESTIVAL CO-DIRECTOR PRAMOD KG

Reflecting on the festival's decade-long journey, **Festival co-director Pramod KG** stated that the plurality of human expression is what Mountain Echoes seeks to celebrate. While 10 years is but a speck in the history of Mankind, he said that the experiences gained during this time has been truly humbling. From small but committed audiences, Mountain Echoes has over the years expanded the reach of the festival through multiple venues and sessions; this year's festival began with a pop-up at Paro.

Pramod KG went on to read a message by festival co-director Namita Gokhale: "Mountain Echoes has been a joyous celebration of literature and the arts, where we have shared so much, learned so much, from the proud heritage of Bhutan. It has been a transformative experience for writers and readers from India and Bhutan and around the world. I know the next few days will be filled with magic and creativity, and that you will all be the wiser and richer for being a part of it."



The highlights of the evening were a soulful performance by Indian world fusion music band Mrigya, followed by a dance performance by the talented Bhutanese group GOKAB.

DAY 1
Friday, 23rd August 2019

Venue: Royal University of Bhutan



9:30 AM - 9:40 AM | TRADITIONAL WELCOME

A PERFORMANCE BY STUDENTS FROM ROYAL ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS



9:50 AM - 9:55 AM | OPENING ADDRESS

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR KELLY DORJI

The day began with a warm welcome by Festival Co Director, Kelly Dorji as he reflected on the ten-year-journey with great pride and joy. His address was followed by a homage paid to the Noblest deed of Great Dharma patron Late Yab Dasho Ugyen Dorji.



10:00 AM - 10:20 AM | ADDRESS

HER MAJESTY THE ROYAL QUEEN MOTHER ASHI DORJI
WANGMO WANGCHUCK

Putting a spotlight on the theme, **Her Majesty The Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck** fondly shared personal anecdotes of her parents and recounted the teachings from the life of her Father, Great Dharma patron Late Yab Dasho Ugyen Dorji. She shared how his life is an inspiration for her and others in her family and how he inculcated the value of time, the belief in one's goals and the determination to work hard whilst being prepared for sacrifices to achieve them. Her Majesty also narrated stories about how he lived a life of peace, dignity and grace, and his vision to build a better life, for not just his family, but the Bhutanese people as a whole.



10:20 AM - 11:00 AM | THE RAVEN CROWN: LEGACY OF THE WANGCHUCK DYNASTY

LOPEN LUNGTAEEN GYATSO, DASHO YANKI T
WANGCHUK IN CONVERSATION WITH DASHO KARMA
TSHITEEM

The session put a spotlight on the lives and legacies of the Wangchuck Dynasty. The discussion began with the period preceding the establishment of the Wangchuck monarchy, and Dasho Yanki T Wangchuk spoke of the role of **Desi Jigme Namgyal** as the forefather of the Wangchuck Dynasty. He personally led the country's forces in the War in 1864-65, and initially forced the British to retreat from Devanagari and brought stability between the relationships between Bhutan and British India, as he emerged as the most powerful leader. Therefore, he is known to be the progenitor of the Wangchuck Dynasty.

Lopen Lungtaen Gyasto took us through history and evolution in the past one century and what each of the monarchs did in the time and situation that they lived for the well being of the nation.

Dasho Yanki T Wangchuk, speaking of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuk "Today we are where we are because of the confidence and the hard work that His Majesty the 4th King put in to ensure that we have the kind of life that we live right now. Where most people talk about GDP, His Majesty spoke about Gross National Happiness; GDP being merely a means to reach the ultimate goal of reaching happiness."



11:00 AM - 11:40 AM | CHAAROS, DRUKPAS, COUNTRYMEN

NEIL MACGREGOR, DASHO TSHERING TOBGAY IN
CONVERSATION

The session **Chaaros, Drupkas and Countrymen** was an engaging discussion between celebrated former director of the British Museum, **Neil Macgregor** and the former Prime Minister of Bhutan, **Dasho Tshering Tobgay**. Filled with friendly banter between the two, Neil Macgregor gave a brief visual presentation to the audience that offered a glimpse into the Bard of Avon, Shakespeare's world. He discussed Shakespeare's restless world that was reflected in his plays; the strong women characters that dominated his work and how through his imaginary world of words, he traversed across geographical boundaries, resulting in the universality of his narratives and its relevance in modern times.

11:45 AM - 12:00 PM | TEA



12:00 PM - 12:05 PM | TROWA TSORWA

A PERFORMANCE BY GOKAB



12:10 PM - 12:50 PM | THE OCEAN OF CHURN

SANJEEV SANYAL

Environmentalist, author of *The Ocean of Churn* and currently the principal economic advisor to the Government of India, **Sanjeev Sanyal** shed light on the Indian Ocean being the very cradle of human civilization and how history has played along the rim of Indian Ocean. Stories of maritime routes, medieval geo-politics and rich trading cultures from the Indian peninsula peppered his talk, offering insights into the ancient cultural and economic exchanges. History here is anchored at sea, linking the courtiers and former great dynasties that played a pivotal role in the Indian Ocean world.



12:55 PM - 1:30 PM | OF YASODHARA: THE
BUDDHA'S WIFE

VANESSA R SASSON IN CONVERSATION WITH DR TASHI
ZANGMO

Dr. Vanessa R. Sasson in conversation with **Dr. Tashi Zangmo** treaded on the seldom visited path to tell the story of the feisty **Yasodhara: The Buddha's wife** narrating her sense of deep loss when the young prince Siddhartha went away. Dr. Sasson conjured up a vivid imagery of the love story through many lifetimes of Yashodhara and Gautam Buddha before his sainthood.

1:35 PM - 2:15 PM | LUNCH



2:15 PM - 2:20 | FOLK MUSIC OF BHUTAN

A PERFORMANCE BY KHENG SONAM DORJI



2:20 PM - 3:00 PM | NO MASTERS, NO GURUS: RETRIEVING THE SACRED

VENERABLE KABIR SAXENA, INTRODUCED BY SIOK SIAN DORJI

In the next session titled **“No Masters, No Gurus: Retrieving the Sacred,”** **Venerable Kabir Saxena**, a monk since 2002 and founder of Root Institute of Wisdom Culture in Bodhgaya, spoke fondly on what makes Bhutan a special place as a reminder to humans to live in balance with the natural world. He questioned whether sacred is a state of mind or place. “We make ourselves happy and content by helping others” as he laid emphasis on the importance of sensitivity stating it as the highest form of intelligence and the need to remind ourselves of it in the modern world.



3:05 PM - 3:40 PM | MAPPING BHUTAN’S DIGITAL PATH

SONAM PELDEN

In an era where technology dominates our lives, founder of Code for Bhutan, **Sonam Pelden**, shared the personal story of her struggles and her vision behind **“Mapping Bhutan’s Digital Path”**. Reflecting on the challenges that Bhutan faces to keep up with rest of the world, her insights on how to use information in a more purposeful way was the highlight of her session. A passionate believer in the power of data as a source of real insights to problems faced by the people of community, she shared the importance of decentralization which works as an enabler of speed.



3:45 PM - 4:25 PM | A WALK THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

JONO LINEEN IN CONVERSATION WITH KUNGA
TENZIN DORJI

In his introduction of Jono Lineen, Kunga Tenzin Dorji told the audience that, 25 years ago, dealing with personal angst, Lineen walked 2700 km across the Western Himalayas and discovered many things along with himself through that journey that he has captured in his book, *Into the Heart of the Himalayas*. Lineen stated of his desire to visit Bhutan for the past 20 years and said that, "As soon as I got off the plane in Paro, I had that re-realization that Buddhists in the Himalayas are the embodiment of wisdom and compassion and there is so much the world can learn from the Kingdom of Bhutan."

4:25 PM - 4:40 PM | TEA



4:40 PM - 5:20 PM | THE LONG FLIGHT HOME: FOLLOWING THE RUDDY SHELDUCK

DR SHERUB IN CONVERSATION WITH DECHEN DORJI
PART OF THE ECOLOGY CAPSULE POWERED BY WWF
BHUTAN, BTFEC
AND RSPN

As a part of the ecology capsule powered by WWF Bhutan, BTFEC and RSPN, leading naturalist in Bhutan, **Dr Sherub** in conversation with **Dechen Dorji**, the country representative for the World Wildlife Fund program in Bhutan, took the audience through the journey of Ruddy Shelduck, a duck species that traverse the most breath taking regions in the world. Since 1996 the bird diversity of Bhutan from 616 identified species has grown to a commendable 747 identified species - thanks to the efforts of the local community of stewards of bird conservation.



5:25 PM - 6:05 PM | THE GRAPHIC IMAGINATION

JASON QUINN IN CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL
RUTLAND
POWERED BY BRITISH COUNCIL – IELTS

A key theme this year at Mountain Echoes was storytelling through different mediums. Award winning writer **Jason Quinn** and first British Honorary Consul to Bhutan **Michael Rutland** discussed the enormous skill of illustrated books to unlock new ways of learning for young and old alike as a powerful tool in storytelling.

Venue: Taj Tashi

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10:30 AM - 11:00 AM | TEMPLE OF THE BODY

THINLEY WANGKAY DORJI IN CONVERSATION WITH
KARMA "LHARI" WANGCHUK

This interactive session with Thinley Wangkay Dorji, in conversation with Karma "Lhari" Wangchuk, shed light on the upcoming culture of body building, and the ever growing importance of exercise and fitness in Bhutan. Karma "Lhari" Wangchuk, who is also Bhutan's first fashion blogger, has put Bhutan on the international scene with his work featured in VICE, BBC and most recently Vanity Fair UK to name a few. Through the session, he encouraged the audience to realise the weightage of having a healthy body, in order to have a healthy mind.

Thinley Wangkay Dorji, who is also the winner of titles like Mr. World and Mr. Asia in the field of Men's Physique, closed the conversation by saying, "Everyone talks about having only one life. We also only have one body to live that life, in and we must take care of it."



11:05 AM - 11:45 AM | STORIES OF OUR ANCESTORS

TONY JOSEPH IN CONVERSATION WITH SUDIPTA SEN

The session took the audience back thousands of years, courtesy Joseph's book *Early Indians: The Story of Our Ancestors and Where We Came From*. The conversation flowed through the Harappan Civilization, on to the effect of migration on the mixing of cultures, languages, occupations and lifestyles through history.

The speakers also examined how this state of “mixedness” led people to share ideas and habits with each other without any realisation, and that this is an essential factor to be considered in the process of evolution. And therefore, it is crucial to be cautious about mapping languages and cultures back to their origins to remember what our heritage is. Tony Joseph also shared that he will be working on a sequel of his first book, which will go deeper into how a population is shaped culturally.



11:50 AM - 12:30 PM FROM DARJEELING TO DELHI

PARIMAL BHATTACHARYA, SWAPNA LIDDLE IN
CONVERSATION WITH KELLY DORJI

This session took the audience through the different ways that Darjeeling and Delhi are planned in terms of architecture and also how different they are culturally. Swapna shared that she believes heritage walks are essential to increase awareness about the city you live in, to understand its history, in order to preserve it. The past is important, and it must be preserved. Parimal Bhattacharya talked about his experiences in Darjeeling, where he is still trying to fit in as a local. What he finds heartwarming about it is the fact that Darjeeling was created by people of different communities and faiths, coming together in peace. The culture of the Darjeeling community from then, is still predominantly intact even today. An instance of the preservation of and the use of toy trains in the modern time was mentioned, showcasing the supreme level of engineering from back in the day.



12:35 PM - 12:50 PM | CELEBRATING CRIME FICTION BY HARPER BLACK

ANANTH PADMANABHAN

Ananth Padmanabhan started the session by telling the audience how he is kicking himself for not having attended Mountain Echoes before this edition. He believes that HarperCollins has a significant fit with Mountain Echoes, as publishing, just like the Festival, is about unlocking one’s imagination and encouraging people to write.

The trailer of *Parcel*, by Harper Black, the only publishing house in India that publishes only crime books, was presented to the audience for the first time in the world. He added that crime is the highest selling and growing segment in fiction. He ended the session by showing a series of videos making us note how the publishing house is very interestingly using videos to make trailers for books, just like the movies. Ananth also shared that he looks forward to discovering new talent in Bhutan - do workshops with those who aspire to become writers, help them write and publish their books even. "If you can imagine it, just go ahead and write it."



2:00 PM - 2:40 PM | START-UP STORIES: THE POWER OF DREAMS

KINLEY WANGCHUK "GANCHU", NAMGYEL DORJI,
PEMA CHODEN TENZIN IN CONVERSATION WITH
SANGAY TSHERING

Start up Stories: The Power of Dreams looked at what it takes to identify a gap in the market and how one can proceed to conquer it. Entrepreneurs Kinley Wangchuk, Namgyel Dorji and Pema Choden, in conversation with Sangay Tshering discussed the challenges and joys of striking one's own path and building businesses from the ground up. Kinley Wangchuk, the founder of Radio Valley 99.9 FM began his story with a quote that he had heard at the age of 11 and stuck with him ever since – "If it is to be it's up to me". His ideas don't claim to be original but have all seeded from a personal need and he believes that "the best way to get creative is not to start from scratch but to borrow an idea, build on it, make it better and sell it."

Namgyel Dorji started Bundle.bt when he realised the absence of delivery services in Bhutan while ordering a book for his father. He stated that for "e-commerce to really grow we need to provide easy logistics." Pema Choden Tenzin's Yeewong was born out of her love for food and taking pictures of food. Speaking about the digital space she shared, "The magic of social media is in its instant gratification as long as you have the idea and the will to work hard. Positioning the correct vision of the brand on social media is the most important."



2:45 PM - 3:15 PM | AKU TONGMI'S SONG FOR BHUTAN

KHENG SONAM DORJI, JANE HANCOCK IN
CONVERSATION WITH TSHERING CHHODEN

The session, illustrated with visuals, showcased Aku Tongmi's music that lives on in a beautiful children's book *Aku Tongmi: A Song for Bhutan*, illustrated by Pema Tshering. The session narrated Aku Tongmi's inspirational journey from a remote village to the Royal Army Band, and discussed how the book provides a wonderful

window into mid-20th century Bhutanese history. The influence Aku Tongmi had on contemporary Bhutanese music was evident after some of his greatest compositions were played for the audience.



**3:20 PM - 4:00 PM |
HINDINAMA**

PAVAN K VARMA, VANI TRIPATHI TIKOO IN
CONVERSATION WITH RAHUL MAHAJAN
A KALAM SESSION

This session emphasised the dwindling usage of Hindi, especially in its pure form. “The ever increasing importance given to the English language is almost like falling while trying to balance between two stools. Neither can we speak English like the English, nor are we giving enough credit and attention to our own mother tongue,” said Pavan K Varma.

Vani Tripathi expressed her concern over the increasing use of English by the youth, as well as Hindi being turned into Hinglish. Not enough importance to speaking in, and to teaching Hindi is being given unfortunately, and that it is indeed upsetting that one’s level of education is decided upon on the basis of whether he or she speaks English or not, even in India. Weightage given to our mother tongue needs to be higher, as some of the greatest stories are written in Hindi, some of the most meaningful movies are made in our Hindi cinema and of course, the spoken word has an elegance to it that mustn’t be forgotten.



**4:05 PM - 4:15 PM |
ME CHANGING YOU CHANGING ME**

A PERFORMANCE BY RYHAAN G

4:20 PM - 4:35 PM | TEA



**4:35 PM - 6:05 PM |
KAHAANI EXPRESS**

A WORKSHOP BY NEELESH MISHRA

Neelesh Mishra shared insights about what it takes to write a good story, along with narrating personal experiences of his journey as a writer.

“A story writes itself”, Neelesh said, is one of the greatest myths we have been told. He spoke about the amount of effort that goes behind writing one - the planning, plotting, designing and editing. He also talked about how amazed he is by stories that resonate with so many people, especially in a diverse country like India. How do people in Kashmir and the South relate to Hindi stories, without knowing the language? It is because, they have a universal sense of emotion. The lives of the people in the story reflect in the narrative. And that is key to making a story the one that gets its readers attached to it.

Venue: Clock Tower



6:00 PM ONWARDS | MOUNTAIN ECHOES MUSIC STAGE

DRUKBI MUSIC STAGE CURATED BY M-STUDIO, AND
MRIGYA

DAY 2

Saturday, 24th August 2019

Venue: Royal University of Bhutan

POWERED BY MR SUDHIR MATHUR



**9:40 AM - 9:50 AM |
DRAMETSE NGACHAM: DANCE OF THE
DRUMS**

A PERFORMANCE BY STUDENTS FROM ROYAL
ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS



**10:00 AM - 10:20 AM |
WHAT REMAINS**

HER EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR RUCHIRA KAMBOJ

Her Excellency Ambassador Kamboj, started her address with a quote - “A stranger entered our world one day, he found his way out of nowhere on our planet. Never before had he come down to earth, only heard of our civilization in stories. He had been told about the great architectures and writers, he had grown up with tales of wonder of our intricately enigmatic, infinitely delicate universe. Yet, after days of travel upon arriving on earth, the stranger began to fear. This world was nothing like he had imagined - around him were men and women damaged by similar weaknesses and insecurity of character leading to the thirst for power, an overarching hand of greed and constant beckoning for more. A disregard for simple beauty, aggressively fast paced lives which had forgotten the smell of earth after rain, which didn’t see morning due in sunlight where the eyes for beauty had seemingly been shut. Art and culture were fading in their noble pursuits. Every third step he took he heard the words Digital, Technology and Data being used. Nobel creations purely for the sake of its intangible benefits rarely blossomed on earth. The stranger then began to feel hopeless and decided to walk alone upon the great mountains. “

She went on to say that the world doesn't need battling heroes anymore, it begs for those who can be good throughout. HE Ambassador Kamboj also talked about the exceptional relationship that India and Bhutan share with the arts. Indians respect education, nature, and value balance, compassion and strength. Bhutan, blessed with rare beauty, is a land of devotion and faith, kindness and sophistication. While she acknowledged the power and potential of technology, she expressed concerns over whether science and technology would be able to articulate emotion like the written word.



10:25 - 11:05 AM | VIEW THROUGH THE LENS

XYZA CRUZ BACANI, JONO LINEEN IN CONVERSATION WITH
SHIVYA NATH

Photography has the power to capture the past for the future. Lucky are the ones with cameras, who can hold on to memories. With photography also comes responsibility - of capturing cultures and places in the right ways for the younger generations to be able to see them in their true form.

Xyca believes that photography has the ability to activate a movement, and bring about change. And photography mixed with social media can bring about change on a global platform as well, just from one spot in the world. Jono feels that the gift of photography is to create emotion, create perceptions or to even change them. The session closed with a message for budding photographers- "There's many voices out there, it's important to find your own and understand your medium. And practice is key!" And one for all, "take pictures when you travel, but don't forget to enjoy and experience the moment for real, for yourself and not just for Instagram."

11:10 AM - 11:25 AM TEA



11:25 AM - 12:00 PM | DESUUPS: BHUTAN'S GUARDIANS OF PEACE

VIVI TSHERING, TASHI PELYANG IN CONVERSATION
WITH PEM CHHODEN TSHERING "BOBO"

A volatile world necessitates systems to protect the increasingly endangered way of Bhutan's peaceful life. In the session **Desuups: Bhutan's Guardians of Peace**, **Tashi Pelyang** and **Pem Chhoden Tshering "Bobo"** explained the role of Desuups, who stand guard not against foreign invaders but against corruption and apathy, internal factors that erode civil society and weaken democracy. Tashi, a proud Desuup himself, shared that His Majesty The King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck's noble vision for the community is what binds them together with the aim of putting the relief and rescue of others above one's own life.



12:05 PM - 12:45 PM | THE PAST TAKES US TO THE FUTURE

MAKARAND R PARANJAPE IN CONVERSATION WITH
DEMA LHAM

Makarand Paranjape talked about the role that the past plays in shaping the future. He believes that tradition nurtures modernity, and that tradition need not, and must not be discarded for modernity. Modernity is value free, it's about modern science, whereas tradition is full of values, and Makarand encouraged one to be anxious about getting the best of both worlds.

Modernity has equipped everyone to unprecedented levels of safety security, luxury and more. Yet there are so many drop-outs of the modern world - people looking for meaning, peace and happiness. People travelling to places like Bhutan and Kashmir. Therefore, this makes us realise that unidirectional or specialised knowledge will not help us in the long run. A convergence of fields is essential in order to not just achieve power or profit, but for crafting a future for the planet. That is a challenge, but also an opportunity especially for the young generation.

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**12:50 PM - 1:20 PM |
THE SNOWMAN RUN**

DECHEN DORJI IN CONVERSATION WITH DORJI
DHRADHUL



The conversation was based on the focus the attention of the global community on the perils of climate change and the transformative actions needed to avert the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced. This trek that has been completed by fewer people than Mount Everest, was envisioned by His Majesty The King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and is a stellar example of showcasing the country's conservation efforts. Dechen Dorji and Dorji Dhradhul emphasised the message “we need nature, nature doesn’t need us. We must save the planet, and only then will we save ourselves.”

1:20 PM - 2:00 PM LUNCH



**2:00 PM - 2:05 PM |
SHARCHOGPA NGANG THUR**

A PERFORMANCE BY JURMEY CHODEN RINZIN, CURATED BY M-
STUDIO



**2:05 PM - 2:40 PM |
NYEKOR: FROM BENARAS TO SARNATH**

NANDINI MAJUMDAR, VENERABLE KABIR SAXENA IN
CONVERSATION WITH SONAM WANGMO JHALANI

Venerable Kabir Saxena and Nandini Majumdar explored the concept of pilgrimage in the modern world ; on the idea of embarking on it as a way of slowing down and challenges of experiencing time, body and the world in a different way than time allows today.



**2:45 PM - 3:25 PM |
ADI
SHANKARACHARYA: HINDUISM'S
GREATEST THINKER**

PAVAN K VARMA IN CONVERSATION WITH
ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM

Arundhathi Subramaniam spoke with writer Pavan K Varma, about his book titled, *Adi Shankaracharya: Hinduism's Greatest Thinker*. Arundhathi started with saying that, "the book adopts a tone that is neither uncritically worshipful and neither dismissive or scornful; it is in its core, searching, exploratory, deeply engaging and respectful. Adi Shankarcharya is worthy of being remembered and explored as a figure we desperately need reclaimed for ourselves today."

Commenting on why he wanted to explore the life of Adi Shankarcharya, Pavan K Varma said, "This for me was a personal quest to try and understand what Adi Shacharcharya's life was and what he symbolized. There was a personal curiosity to try and find the roots of my religion, through the minds of the greatest thinker."

They spoke of the fascinating and remarkable mind he had. And even though he died at the young age of 32, apart from having emerged as one of the greatest philosophers, he also set up the 4 monasteries in the 4 quarters of India, which can be considered as the civilization map of India that was around 1200 years ago. With an aim to make sure that the book is not a “dry chronology”, Pavan K Varma, personally visited every spot which is associated with the life of Adi Shankarcharya and so in a sense created a book that can also be seen as a travelogue.



3:30 PM - 4:10 PM | MY BACKPACK AND THE WORLD

SHIVYA NATH, TSHERING DENKAR IN CONVERSATION
WITH PEMA CHODEN TENZIN

Sharing their adventures, travel hacks, experiences with locals (hitchhiking with truckers included), well-known travel bloggers **Shivya Nath** and **Tshering Denkar** had the audience in splits. Denkar is popularly known as the backpacking and hitchhiking "Bolero" lady of Bhutan while Shivya - also a vegan - has navigated her way through more than 50 countries.

4:15 PM - 4:30 PM TEA



4:30 PM - 5:10 PM | GANGA: RIVER OF FAITH

SUDIPTA SEN, SANJEEV SANYAL IN CONVERSATION WITH
NANDINI MAJUMDAR

The idea of the sacred continued with **Sudipta Sen** and **Sanjeev Sanyal** in a session on the river Ganga, which lies at the confluence of myth, ecology and faith. From the story of the great river merges the continuity of our civilization with the pollution it has to endure in present times. They

ended on a hopeful note, with the arrival of Siberian gulls in Benaras and the increase in dolphin sightings in the Ganga.



**5:15 PM - 5:50 PM |
WE ARE LIKE AIR**

XYZA CRUZ BACANI IN CONVERSATION WITH
NISHTHA GAUTAM

Filipina street and documentary photographer and author of *We are like Air*, Hong Kong based Xyza Cruz Bacani in conversation with Nistha Gautam shared her story as a second generation domestic worker, of breaking the cycle that faces so many women like her, of her rise to becoming an acclaimed globe-trotting photographer. The agony she faced of her internal battles, the tales of labour migration and human rights. She passionately spoke about "migrant mothers" who leave their families behind to look after a new one and encouraged everyone to not think of them as victims - but celebrate them as champions.



**5:55 PM - 6:35 PM |
SCRIPT TO SCREEN: FILMS ALIVE**

ABHISHEK CHAUBEY, RICHA CHADHA IN
CONVERSATION WITH VANI TRIPATHI TIKOO

Looking at cinema through a contemporary lens, film personalities **Richa Chadha** and **Abhishek Chaubey** were in conversation with **Vani Tripathi Tikoo**. Richa spoke of taking chances and accepting unusual roles to portray versatile characters, while Abhishek dwelt upon creating entertaining films without compromising the social concerns his stories aim to address. They also focused on how

content is being streamed and consumed today, and the democratization of visual entertainment through digital platforms.



6:45 PM - 7:25 PM |
MASTER OF ILLUSION: MAGICAL INTERLUDE

A PERFORMANCE BY KARAN SINGH

Delhi-based illusionist Karan Singh (who was 11 when he started practising magic) enthralled the audience, as he guessed ATM and phone pin numbers of people picked at random from the audience. Playing with the magic of numbers, he is well known for successfully guessing the ATM PIN of Indian film star Shah Rukh Khan.

Venue: Taj Tashi



**11:00 AM - 11:40 PM |
FLAVOURS OF SPICE**

MARRYAM H RESHII, LT COLONEL KESANG CHOEDON (RETD), MALVIKA SINGH IN CONVERSATION WITH CHIME PADEN WANGDI

In **Flavours of Spice**, renowned food critic **Marryam H Reshii** and **Lt. Colonel Kesang Choedon**, founder of Chuniding Enterprises, spoke of the integral ways in which spices shape what we eat. Chilli is not native to either Bhutan or India, but now these cuisines rely heavily on it. They discussed the need to rediscover and reintroduce traditional ingredients into our food, and the need to eat locally and seasonally.



**11:45 AM - 12:25 PM |
NOVELIST IN A NEWSROOM**

RAJ KAMAL JHA IN CONVERSATION WITH MANJULA NARAYAN

Raj Kamal Jha was in conversation with noted journalist **Manjula Narayan** spoke on the importance of speaking the unspeakable and thinking the unthinkable, a luxury that fiction allows him. "Fiction for me is always the question of 'what if', a space that facts do not give me." He said that the importance of fake news has been largely exaggerated, because people are more sceptical and are developing mental filters to sift fact from fiction.



**12:30 PM - 1:00 PM |
WATER HABITATS: WETLANDS AND
RIVERINE SYSTEMS**

INDRA ACHARJA, JIGME TSHERING IN
CONVERSATION
PART OF THE ECOLOGY CAPSULE POWERED BY
WWF BHUTAN, BTFEC AND RSPN

The talk focused on the black necked-crane, its habitats, along with their association with the Bhutanese culture. They also emphasized on the importance of wetlands for our natural environment, as they provide regulating services such as climate regulation, flood protection and water purification.



**2:00 PM - 2:40 PM |
EVEREST: REFLECTIONS ON THE
SOLUKHUMBU**

SUJOY DAS, LISA CHOEGYAL IN CONVERSATION
WITH TENZING CHOGYAL SHERPA

Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa spoke with **Sujoy Das** and **Lisa Choegyal** about their book ***Everest: Reflections on the Solukhumbu*** published this year to mark the centenary of Sir Edmund Hillary's birth. They discussed his involvement with the Sherpa community who live in the sacred valleys below the world's highest mountain, Mt Everest.



**2:45 PM - 3:45 PM |
TELLING TALES THROUGH WORDS AND ART**

A WORKSHOP BY JASON QUINN
POWERED BY BRITISH COUNCIL – IELTS

“If you think comics are only for children, get out!” Jason believes that with using word and art, one can convey any message in the world, provided one has an imagination.

He shared that there are two types of people. Those who write first and illustrate later, and those that illustrate first and then come up with a story around the pictures. Jason explained that it works well for him when the idea comes first, he then makes the script and the plot for the book. The illustrations are created after that, and that’s how a story completes.

3:50 PM - 4:05 PM TEA



4:05 PM - 5:05 PM | WALKING AND CREATIVITY

WORKSHOP BY JONO LINEEN

“There’s magic in walking.” Walking leads to clarity, problem solving and positivity. Many thinkers, poets, philosophers, entrepreneurs, scientists have said over thousands of years, that they get their best ideas while walking. Jane Austen, Einstein, Virginia Woolf, Mahatma Gandhi, Charles Darwin, Winston Churchill, Steve Jobs. Walking is a medium to creative thinking; it releases stress, hence enhancing flow of thought. Evolution and the 70,000 year long great migrations have affected the science of walking and why we walk. After all the journey is what counts.

Venue: CITY CINEMA

5:00 PM - 5:35 PM | THE GOLDEN MAHSEER: TIGER OF THE RIVER

INTRODUCED BY GOPAL PRASAD KHANAL

PART OF THE ECOLOGY CAPSULE POWERED BY WWF BHUTAN, BTFEC AND RSPN

5:45 PM - 6:15 PM | FRAMED!

ARUN BHATTARAI, ZUKI JUNO IN CONVERSATION WITH KUNGA TENZIN DORJI

6:25 PM - 6:50 PM | SEARCHING FOR WIVES

INTRODUCED BY ZUKI JUNO

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM | THE NEXT GUARDIAN

INTRODUCED BY ARUN BHATTARAI

Day two of Mountain Echoes enriched its audience with documentary film screenings at City Cinema. A variety of real stories and people were touched upon through these sessions - from the movie based on the research and conservation of *The Golden Mahseer - Tiger of the River*, introduced by Gopal Prasad Khanal as a part of the ecology capsule powered by WWF Bhutan, BTFEC and RSPN; on to *Framed!*, a discussion around the making of documentaries by filmmakers Arun Bhattarai and Zuki Juno in conversation with Kunga Tenzin Dorji. They spoke about what it's like and how different it is to film the truth. Arun and Zuki's films were screened after the session as well. ZukiJono's *Searching For Wives* documents the process of arranged marriages in India via a migrant from South India, working as a driver in Singapore, and sends his picture to his family to find a wife for him. The movie highlights the uniqueness of this process and the fact that one agrees to spend the rest of their lives by just looking at (and being enchanted by) a single picture of a person. *The Next Guardian* by Arun Bhattarai was screened after, and is based on an ordinary teenager who is chosen by his father as the next guardian of the family monastery. Contrasting dreams of two generations clash within the microcosm of an ancient Buddhist monastery in Bhutan. Meanwhile, his sister feels more like a boy than a girl, and dreams of a life as a professional soccer player. Unfortunately, not all wishes come true.

DAY 3
Sunday, 25th August 2019

Venue: Royal University of Bhutan



9:40 AM - 9:50 AM |
DRAMYEN CHOEDPA: OFFERING OF LUTE TO THE DEITIES

A PERFORMANCE BY STUDENTS FROM ROYAL ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS

The day began with a moving performance, **Dramyen Choepda**, with students of the Royal Academy of Performing Arts playing the lute as an offering to the deities.



10:00 AM - 10:40 AM |
THE FOUNDER OF BHUTAN'S DRAGON TRADITION

KHENPO KARCHUNG, TSHERING TASHI IN CONVERSATION WITH DR TASHI ZANGMO

Khenpo Karchung and **Dr.Tashi Zangmo** discussed the life and philosophy of Tsangpa Gyare, the founder of Bhutan's Dragon tradition - and the Drukpa lineage of Buddhism - who continues to be a spiritual guide for the Bhutanese.



10:45 AM- 11:25 AM | JADOOWALLAHS, JUGGLERS AND JINNS

JOHN ZUBRZYCKI IN CONVERSATION WITH KARAN SINGH

An engaging and interactive session followed, with author **John Zubrzycki** in conversation with Indian master illusionist **Karan Singh** on the former's bestseller *Jadoowallahs, Jugglers and Jinns*. They discussed the fascinating world of magic, the most famous Indian magicians who shaped its history, and the current popularity of illusionists and mentalists.

11:30 AM – 11:45 AM | TEA



11:45 AM - 12:25 PM | LOVE WITHOUT A STORY

ARUNDHATHI SUBRAMANIAM IN CONVERSATION WITH ANINDITA GHOSE

Award winning author of eleven books of poetry and prose, Arundhati Subramaniam in a conversation with Anindita Ghose took the audience on a journey to seek the beauty of poetry as the very soul of life. "We turn to poetry for solace" she said as she spoke of the power of poetry to help us have deeper and more profound experiences and to recognise the exuberance of life. The author's readings of some of her poems filled the audience with a sense of wonder - the very purpose of poetry.



12:30 PM - 1:00 PM | TRACKING THE TAKIN: BHUTAN'S NATIONAL ANIMAL

DR PEMA CHOEPHYEL, DR SANGAY IN CONVERSATION

PART OF THE ECOLOGY CAPSULE POWERED BY WWF BHUTAN, BTFEC AND RSPN

Dr Sangay apprised the audience about efforts spent on researching on and documenting, as well of conservation of the vulnerable Bhutan takin with the help of BTFEC. The session was closed encouraging the audience to discern the significance of the national animal and spread awareness about need to save them.

1:05 PM - 1:45 PM LUNCH



1:45 PM - 1:50 PM | MANY LIVES, MANY STORIES

A PERFORMANCE BY GOKAB



1:55 PM - 2:25 PM STARS OF STYLE

KARMA "LHARI" WANGCHUK IN CONVERSATION WITH UGEN CHODEN

Mountain Echoes got a shot of glamour with Bhutan's style heroes discussing fashion, influences and social media. They discussed how the fashion industry of Bhutan has, by being open to the world while also looking inward, shaped its unique identity. They reflected on what style is—beyond the

beautiful designed clothes, beyond external appearances. The worthiness of following one's passion was also touched upon.



**2:30 PM - 3:10 PM |
INTERPRETING HISTORY: A LIFE AMONG
OBJECTS**

NEIL MACGREGOR IN CONVERSATION WITH
PRAMOD KUMAR KG

"Objects tell us the stories of people who don't write" said acclaimed former director of the British Museum **Neil MacGregor**, in conversation with **Pramod Kumar KG**. Objects tell stories of power, war, faith, music, curiosity and shared cultures. McGregor transported the audience to a world that told stories of Aztec, British, Spanish, Portuguese and Middle Eastern empires.



**3:15 PM - 3:55 PM |
2062: THE WORLD THAT AI MADE**

TOBY WALSH

With our ideas of AI heavily shaped by Hollywood's killer robots and sentient super-computers, it is no wonder that many people approach technology with caution. The majority of experts in AI and robotics predict we are likely to have built machines as intelligent as us by the year 2062. Toby Walsh, the rock star of Australia's digital revolution, broke down some of the fears, explained the actual advances that artificial intelligence has made, and discussed how education and regulation will be necessary for humans to keep up with evolving technologies. He answered some of the most important and pressing questions facing us today - on the impact that AI will have on work, war, equality, politics and, ultimately, the fate of humanity. Walsh concluded that, if we plan well, the future past 2062 could be very bright indeed but we need to start making some difficult choices today.

11:30 AM – 11:45 AM | TEA



4:15 PM - 4:55 PM | THE STORYWALLAH

NEELESH MISRA

“When we hear or tell a story, we become the other”, expressed India’s most loved oral storyteller **Neelesh Misra** in his solo session, **The Storywallah**. Rich tales dominate the region of South East Asia and within the vast landscape of India. In the digital age, as oral storytelling traditions slowly disappear, Mishra plays a significant role in reviving the same on his radio show. His spoken and video content app, Mic, has deepened his commitment towards this tradition, expanding the repertoire to include regional languages, songs and children’s literature in a way that has never been done before on a mass platform.



5:00 PM - 5:30 PM |
THE HEART OF A POEM: WORD, IMAGE, TEXT

CHADOR WANGMO, ACCOMPANIED BY TEJ
NARAYAN PRADHAN

Poet **Chador Wangmo** and musician **Tej Narayan Pradhan** regaled the audiences with a mixed media performance; as she recited her poem “F For” and Tej accompanied her on his guitar.



5:35 PM - 6:15 PM DEFINING OUR TIMES

SONIA SINGH, LYONPO DECHEN WANGMO,
SANJEEV SANYAL IN CONVERSATION WITH JOHN
ZUBRZYCKI

The final session, **Defining Our Times**, featuring principal economic advisor to the government of India **Sanjeev Sanyal**, Editorial Director of NDTV, **Sonia Singh** and Minister of Health, Bhutan, **Lyonpo Dechen Wangmo** in conversation with author **John Zubrzycki**, shed light on the changes that define the era we live in. From the scientific discoveries and medical progress that shaped the times of the earlier era to the importance of strengthening the education and healthcare systems and the values and belief systems that shape a nation, the session ended on a note of hope for the future generations.



6:15 PM - 6:20 PM | CLOSING ADDRESS

FESTIVAL DIRECTOR TSHERING TASHI

In the closing address, Festival Director **Tshering Tashi** gave a vote of thanks to everyone who contributed in making the tenth edition of Mountain Echoes a great success. Speaking about the engaging conversations held over the past three days, he recalled the moments of sharing that lead to transformative experiences at Mountain Echoes Festival.

Venue: YDF

7:00 PM ONWARDS | MOUNTAIN ECHOES GRAND FINALE

MOJO PARK

8:00 PM ONWARDS | HAVE THE LAST WORD: OVER TO YOU!
