



Sheikha Altaf Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, honorary patron of Al Sadu Cooperative Society (sixth from left) poses with Sadu House and Kuwaiti schools officials.

Sadu House

Students display their imaginations in woven works

Sadu makes its mark in national curriculum

By Chaitali B. Roy
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Traditional textiles tell us much about the history and cultural identities of societies. In the past, when women wove, they wove the fabrics of their societies both literally and figuratively. What they held in their hands while ‘manning’ the loom was not merely yarn, but the threads of their culture. Unfortunately, the art of traditional craft around the world has taken a beating in recent years, and Kuwait is no exception. Sadu, the art of Bedouin weaving is in trouble. A dwindling number of master weavers in a fast-paced mechanised world is threatening the survival of this craft. Some individuals, artists, and organisations have stepped up efforts to preserve, document and interpret the knowledge of this declining practice to prevent further loss and give it a more contemporary form.

Sheikha Altaf Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, honorary patron of Al Sadu Cooperative Society, who put up a stiff fight against the slow erosion of material culture believes that to grow and progress one does not need to forsake one’s culture. In her book ‘Kuwait Traditions’ she writes, “I believe we can blend tradition with modernity, continuity with change... we can harmonise the old with the new,” thus emphasising the importance of granting continuity to meaningful aspects of the past and giving future generations a sense of identity.” Sadu started as a functional domestic craft. When the scale of the craftsmanship reached a certain level, it became an art. The woven piece became a reflection of the personal perceptions and feelings of the weaver herself.

Relevance

A couple of years back, this drive to preserve Sadu which was spearheaded by Sheikha Altaf and later by her daughter Sheikha Bibi Duaij Al Sabah, Chairperson of Al Sadu Society took a more definite form when Sadu was included in the national school curriculum. It was a milestone in Sadu’s journey towards self-sufficiency and relevance in today’s world. But it was not an easy victory for Sadu activists. Artistic expression, an important aspect of an individual’s interaction with the components of the environment in which he lives, was underplayed. The fact that Sadu is an important element of Kuwait’s cultural history and studying Sadu in its cultural, social and historical dimensions can help future generations not only acquire new skills but give them a sense of the past was overlooked.

Integrating Sadu in the national school curriculum was high on the priority list of Sheikha Altaf and Sheikha Bibi Al Sabah. And the efforts of enlightened individuals like Hessa Al Muttawa, General Director of the Art Department in the Ministry of Education, helped facilitate the process.

Last week, Sadu House saw a long fulfilled dream when it played host to



Some of the Kuwaiti students textile works on display at the Sadu House.



an exhibition showcasing the works of elementary and middle school students from government and private schools and their interpretation of Sadu. Disabled and blind students also displayed their works. The works were colourful and innovative and showed the enthusiastic response of the students to a craft that is indigenous to their culture. “I was very satisfied to see and feel the excitement and enthusiasm amongst the teachers and students,” said Sheikha Altaf when asked about the exhibition.

“This first exhibition of the Sadu textile arts within the Ministry of Education art curriculum is very promising and a good step forward.” Speaking of

the interest and innovation displayed, she said, “The students, grades 8 and 9, 13 to 14 years of age, both girls and boys showed a lot of imagination in their woven works; few reflected traditional patterns and the majority showed colourful, innovative ideas. I loved the excitement and energy their works echoed!” Sheikha Altaf has been relentless in pursuing the preservation and continuation of Sadu in Kuwait. And one of the ways, she and Sheikha Bibi have tried to ensure this is by introducing future generations to the basics of the craft. “When I first entered the main courtyard of Sadu House and saw the exhibition, I felt so elated and euphoric!

I have always advocated the importance of preserving and honouring cultural traditions and the significant role they play in sound social development, creative expression and cultural identity. I believe the success we accomplished in pushing this vision through education is a very constructive good step in the right direction,” said Sheikha Altaf.

Innovation

Hanan Al Kazemi is a gifted textile artist and a liaison between Sadu House and the Ministry of Education. Hanan was pleasantly surprised by the innovation displayed by the students. “We were all surprised by the students.

They were very bright and innovative and had creative ideas that they skillfully applied.” Hanan and a few other Sadu activists had fought hard with the management of Sadu House to further the outcome. “We were overwhelmed with joy and feelings of accomplishment. Especially because Sadu has always been part of our culture, and it was extremely important to keep the future generations aware of this type of traditional art.”

Hussa Al-Mutawa, who coordinated efforts on behalf of the Ministry of Education, is very satisfied with the outcome. “The students learned the necessary skills and principles of the subject. The exhibits showed designs that are

typical to Sadu, but I think with more experience, the students will show more creativity and uniqueness.” Speaking of the collaboration between Sadu House and Ministry of Education, Al Muttawa said, “I believe that the collaboration is really strong. It has enriched the students with knowledge of Sadu, and this is reflected in the teachers who in turn, pass on this knowledge to the students. This was achieved with the help of many events and courses that the Sadu House provided to the educational art supervisors and teachers and from them to the students. We hope to continue this collaboration in the future.”

St Thomas Evangelical Church of India (STECI), Kuwait Parish warmly invites each one of you on Friday, Dec 20 at NECK premises by 6:30 pm to be a part of “Sneha Prakasham” – a Christmas gala comprising a trove of mel-lifluous carols by the Parish Choir, captivating Christmas Pageant by the Sunday school children and edifying Christmas message by Most Rev Dr Thomas Abraham (Presiding Bishop of STECI).

The programme is being organized under the guidance of the Parish Vicar

Rev John Mathew and assiduously supported by the Parish Secretary Boney K. Abraham, Choir Master Sijumon Abraham and other committee members to make this an enjoyable and memorable occasion.

General

AWL registration: If you were interested in joining the American Women’s League (AWL) please check out their website, www.awlkuwait.org, or email them at awl@awlkuwait.org.

American women over the age of 17 or wives of Americans are able to join. All other nationalities are welcome as associate members.

IEI Centenary Engineers Day: The Institution of Engineers India, Kuwait Chapter (IEI Kuwait Chapter) will be celebrating the “The Centenary Engineer’s day” and “The Second international Conference on Engineering Challenges in Gulf countries” on Nov 29 and 30, 2019 at Radisson Blu, Salwa, Kuwait respectively. Apart

from HE the Ambassador of India to State of Kuwait, many distinguished guests from Ministries, Universities, KSE, KISR, Engineers, technocrats, consultants, decision makers and business leaders shall be attending this program.

To commemorate the occasion, we shall bring out a souvenir that will include materials of keynote addresses from eminent speakers on different engineering fields and abstracts/articles related to International Conference topics. The conference will cover the engineering challenges and

innovative solutions in the area of Oil and gas exploration and exploitation, Water desalination, Food security, Infrastructure development, dust storm issues, Conventional and renewable Energy production, climate change and environmental degradation of land, water and air, Coastal infrastructure and marine facility developments, Waste disposal and management and Other engineering disciplines which affects the socioeconomic development of Kuwait and Gulf countries.

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STECI Kuwait Carol Service: It’s Christmas time! – a time to rejoice and reflect on the Birth of our Christ Jesus.