Discovering Cultural Unity in a Diverse Asia by Manohar Khushalani

The One Asia project which was born in Auroville, two years ago, held an exhibition and a series of performances in Mid December, at IIC. According to Jyoti Naoki Eri, its Founder Director, the aim was to present Asia's cultural richness and profound spirituality by underscoring the oneness of it's spiritual beliefs.
The entire event was bound together by' Ek Sutra' a Calligraphic exhibition created in collaboration with Qalamkaari Trust. Nineteen artists had presented their works at this exhibition. Some of the works were unusually innovative. Qamar Dagar's Peacock assembled with hindi alphabets and Irshad Farooqi's Qoranic verses carved out of a wooden wheel attracted attention. As one Calligrapher put it, he turned to this art form, because people had stopped writing.

I attended one of the workshops conducted by a Dutch Performer, Grace Gitadelila, introducing a South Indian art form called Kolam, popularly known as Rangoli in North India. This form includes intricate rice-flour designs that are drawn on the floor outside homes. Kolam's are considered auspicious and it is the believed that the rice-flour, which may be eaten by birds and insects, symbolise reverence for all life forms. Amongst other documentaries, there was the screening of a remarkable film, Koi Sunta Hai, which interwove the folk music of the mystic poet Kabir with the musical works of the late vocalist Kumar Gandharva. It traced out Kumar's sources of inspiration – common folk singers such as an urban folklorist, a street fruit seller, a social activist and a Dalit folk singer.

In the end the audiences were regaled by a surprise live vocal performance by the Director of the Film, Shabnam Virmani, who was accompanied by one of the Singers from the film itself, Prahlad Tipanya