



Book of Abstracts



SAARC Regional Seminar on
CULTURAL DYNAMICS *in*
NATIONAL HARMONY
in **SOUTH ASIA**

15-16 MAY 2015, PERADENIYA, SRI LANKA

SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

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Organised by
SAARC Cultural Centre,
Sri Lanka

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**Book of Abstracts: SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural
Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia**

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Message from the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



It is with great pleasure that I forward this message on the occasion of ‘SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) of South Asia’. South Asia is a unique region in terms of its rich cultural heritage that encompasses a mixture of enthralling and captivating practices, norms and events. However, the region is also increasingly becoming volatile for a variety of reasons ranging from socio-political ones to economic. Of these, political violence stemming from intense internal divisions, a result of ethnic/religious/sectarian animosity is seen occupying a prime place in the current socio-political atmosphere. What is crucial, yet forgotten is the region’s shared cultural heritage that teaches a valuable lesson of our common histories which could be used as a tool that will direct the region to a more peaceful and harmonious future based on shared identities.

With an aim to unearth such valuable commonalities in order to create a more cooperative South Asia, the SAARC Cultural Centre has initiated a research project entitled ‘Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) of South Asia’ as its fifth research

project. The project aims to focus on a range of themes including culture, identity, development, literature and arts, popular culture and peace education.

I thank all the paper presenters and participants who helped make this Seminar a success and hope this Book of Abstracts will be welcomed as an important reference work for all concerned.

G.L.W. SAMARASINGHE

Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

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Introduction

Culture is essential for lasting peace and sustainable development. For a culturally diverse region like South Asia, culture remains the first and foremost mode through which peace and harmony could be achieved. Culture, if left aside, leaves little room for social and economic progress that is mutually beneficial for a community. Path to development, may it be social or economic is firmly grounded in culture which encompasses diverse value systems, traditions, and beliefs. Therefore, culture influences people in a distinct and direct manner and determines ways and means to both shape diverse communities and bring them into contact with each other. Identifying the distinct role culture plays in such contacts helps tackle the inherent fear humans grapple with when coming into contact with the 'other.' Such understanding is pivotal to achieve peace, reconciliation and harmony since it expands our vistas so as to uphold the dignity of every human irrespective of their background. Keeping in mind the importance of reinforcing the cooperative elements of human interactions so as to avoid conflict, the SAARC Cultural Centre proposes to hold its fifth research programme on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony in South Asia.

Starting in the year 2011, the SAARC Cultural Centre has been undertaking annual research projects on a cultural theme of common interest and with a South Asian focus. The projects completed/ underway include:

1. Diminishing Cultures of South Asia (2011-12)
2. Diasporic Cultures of South Asia: From 18th to 20th Centuries (2012-13),
3. Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Traditional Cultural Expressions of South Asia (2013-14), and Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Sustainable Development (CHTSD) in South Asia (2014-15).

For the year 2015-16 the SAARC Cultural Centre will launch a Project on ‘Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia’ which will address issues within three broad themes, viz.:

- Promotion of culture sensitive approaches to conflict management in South Asia;
- Analysis of context-specific dynamics of national/regional harmony in South Asia; and
- Exploration of cultural workings of regional development in South Asia.

Research Programme

This Programme has the following steps:

- SAARC Regional Seminar on ‘Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia’ to discuss the country situation and to identify themes and subthemes for the research projects, and
- Research Projects on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia that will be conducted by researchers from SAARC member States.

SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia

Introduction

SAARC Regional Seminar on ‘Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia’ will be a brainstorming session to discuss key issues, moot research questions and to identify themes and subthemes of Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia that merit independent and in-depth research. Academics and experts on the subject are invited to present papers on a relevant theme.

Themes

- Culture and Development
- Culture and Identity
- Role of popular culture in promoting regional harmony (mass media/ sports/ films/ music etc.)
- Cultural approaches to conflict management
- Culture as ‘soft power’ in regional cooperation
- Role of literature and arts in creating a culture of peace
- Education and Peace building

Objectives of the Regional Seminar

The Regional Seminar aims to:

- Discuss the country situation (of the SAARC Member States) related to Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony;
- Identify various challenges faced by the SAARC Member States in sustaining National Harmony;
- Study the best cultural practices for maintaining a harmonious society despite ethnic/religious/caste/linguistic/ sectarian/regional differences in South Asia;
- Select research topics and questions related to Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia that need further investigation; and
- Recognise research approaches and methods for further research in Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia.

Seminar Outcome

The last session of the Seminar will have a Plenary Session which would prepare a document summarising the main recommendations emerging out of the deliberations and also chalking out a road-map for the research projects. The SAARC Cultural Centre will, subsequently, publish a report/monograph on the Seminar and would invite research proposals on the identified themes.

Resources

United Nations

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. Currently there are 193 UN Member States.

<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml>

Charter of the United Nations

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO is known as the ‘intellectual agency’ of the United Nations. It believes peace must be established on the basis of humanity’s moral and intellectual solidarity and strives to build networks among nations that enable this kind of solidarity.

<http://en.unesco.org/>

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

SAARC is a regional organization of eight South Asian countries established for economic, cultural, social and technical cooperation.

<http://www.saarc-sec.org/>

SAARC Charter

<http://saarc-sec.org/saarc-charter/5/>

SAARC Agenda for Culture

http://saarcculture.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=79

Online Publications

The Role of Culture in Peace and Reconciliation (2013)

<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/PeaceReconciliationENG.pdf>

Abstracts

Dr. Liyanage AMARAKEERTHI

Literary Arts and Intercultural Understanding: A Reading of Contemporary Sinhala and Tamil Literature

Literature, if used critically, can be a useful mechanism in intercultural understanding. In this paper, I look at a selection of literary works from Sinhala and Tamil literary cultures in order to understand how the 'ethnic other' is represented by the writers of two ethnic groups. During the last two decades or so Sinhala writers have produced a corpus of short stories in which the dynamics of inter-racial human contact are investigated. These stories remain as a significant testimony of Sinhala literary consciousness that imagined an alternative to the violent war of 30 years. Several major Sinhala writers have continued to write in the hope of nourishing a consciousness alternative to typical nationalist ethno-centrism. Contemporary translations of Tamil literature also attest to the fact that Tamil speaking community too sustained a certain literary consciousness markedly different from ethnic nationalism or separatism. Some of those Tamil writers have explicitly argued for a much more inclusive and cosmopolitan Sri Lanka critiquing extremism within their own community. Yet, this important literary output has not received any significant attention in the discourse of post-war reconciliation. One can argue that literary scholars are not usually called upon to reflect on matters such as peace-building and reconciliation. Policymakers and political authority tend to focus only on structural issues that cause and prolong inter-ethnic disharmony ignoring human dimensions of conflicts. Recent literary scholars, however, have shown that literary studies can offer invaluable insights into deep-set causes of inter-ethnic disharmony. In this paper, I want to tease out some of the key insights this literary output can provide us in understanding the post-war Sri Lanka. While I

believe these literary works broaden our understanding of intricacies associated with inter-ethnic relations, the aim of this paper is *not* to claim that literature and cultural activities alone are sufficient in creating an inclusive and tolerant society. Literature and art can only supplement major structural reforms that are required in creating a society where all human beings can live with dignity.

Dr. Lopamudra Maitra BAJPAI

Graphic novels from India: Creating Space for a Special Cultural Identity through Storytelling and Visual Narration

Graphic novels occupy a significant place in the modern global world of storytelling. Though not a recent phenomenon the world over, in India a major spurt in the exploration of the genre took place especially over the last decade and a half, paving way for myriad expressions and methods of storytelling and inspiring various illustrators, visual artists and scriptwriters in the process. The pattern of illustrations through panels takes after the age-old representation observable in the folk painting from West Bengal (India)- *patachitra*- or the many temple panel architecture across India. This paper theorises the attempt of graphic novels to effectively utilise the panels to communicate a new genre of popular culture in India using the theory of Picture-panel Communication of the author. The representation of illustrations and texts have been categorised into three sections namely Theme-oriented, Character-oriented and Neo-realism oriented.

As each depiction tries to highlight specific aspects of a story or its very essence, it also brings an important aspect of popular culture- visual narration. Visual narration across these three depictions also represents an important symbolism

of modern global popular culture that renders a distinct cultural identity. The Picture-panel Communication theory takes into account the important fact that it is a two-way process and depiction has a method of influencing the viewer or listener at the cognitive level, helping to reconstruct subjective models of explanation. It is an ongoing process and continues after the listener or viewer has been exposed to the illustration. This happens because the specific appeal of visual representation helps to build a foray of top-of-the-mind recall feature in the subject in question. The theory also takes into account the strong power of storytelling using illustrations which act as a means of communication involving the participation of both the hearer or listener and the orator or presenter.

About a decade ago, UNESCO declared the art of storytelling to be an integral part of the intangible heritage of mankind which needs urgent attention in order to be sustained. As words travel through oral traditions and across geographical boundaries, it is more than the mere essence of stories which are carried further; it is the socio-cultural contexts of those stories, the people who lived those experiences, and the life they had. Thus, when graphic novels narrate stories from Indian mythology, e.g. The Ramayana or The Mahabharata in English, it reaches not only the various corners of India, but the world over. It also helps to keep a strong thread alive- that of cultural continuity. With this same thread are also attached various other representations, including aspects like the folk-urban continuum, transcription of oral discourses and a linear representation of a story that often is told with regional variations in different parts of India. Hence the art of graphic representations through illustrations and renewed dialogues also helps to rewrite folklore.

Though changed in format and representation, the modern graphic novel is essentially a continuation of an

ancient form of storytelling. Hence it is vital to familiarise oneself with it not only to probe into the secrets of the past, but also to immortalise the present for the future.

Dr. Mokammal H. BHUIYAN

Lalon Song is a Tool of Cultural Harmony

Lalon, also called as Lalon Fakir, Lalon Sain, or Lalon Shah (c. 1774– 17 October 1890), was a Bengali Baul saint, mystic, songwriter, social reformer and thinker. In Bengali culture he has become an icon of religious tolerance whose songs inspired and influenced many poets, social and religious thinkers. He rejected all distinctions of caste and creed. He was both praised and criticised during his lifetime and after his death. Throughout his life, Lalon sang of a society where all religions and beliefs are in harmony. Though Lalon is primarily identified as a mystic, philosopher, songwriter and composer, it wouldn't be an overstatement to term him a social reformer. Lalon's philosophical expression, based on oral and textual traditions, was articulated in songs and musical compositions. The lyrics of his songs were explicitly meant to engage in the philosophical discourses of Bengal. He critically re-appropriated the various philosophical positions emanating from the legacies of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Islamic traditions, developing them into a coherent school of thought. Lalon's songs have attracted widespread attention for their mystical approach to humanism as well as their melodious tunes. There are different aspects of Lalon's personality and philosophy, but it would be easier to know him through his songs. Lalon proclaimed that he was beyond caste. In my paper, I will discuss how Lalon's philosophy could bring harmony in the society.

Dr. Neekee CHATURVEDI and Mr. Kartikeya MISRA

Popular Culture: Oases of Intercultural Scripts

“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

Rabindranath Tagore

Though Tagore’s words found expression many years ago, they are quite relevant for the present world, where the traditional concept of cultures has undergone a paradigm shift owing to the emergence of intercultural, multicultural and transcultural complexes. (Slimbach *Transcultural Journeys* 2002; *Becoming World Wise* 2010; Welsch *Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Culture Today* 1998). The altered cultural constitution translates the cultural reality beyond national boundaries. Factors like globalisation, economic interdependence and faster means of communication have encouraged inter-connectedness of cultures. There are many areas emerging in popular culture that redefine the relation between diverse cultures of South Asian region, replacing the traditional parlance of isolation and conflict with new-found territories of entanglement, intermixing and commonness.

The paper investigates intercultural scripts manifested profusely in the popular culture in India. Several events and happenings in media, films, television, sports, social networking sites etc. seem to defy nationalist jingoism and seem to foster a culture-based regional harmony. Many films, TV serials and sporting events create a social cohesion based on shared perceptions that transcend national boundaries. The paper sets out to describe few fragments of popular culture as clusters of variegated and entangled cultural discourses, which Grenblatt (*Marvellous Possessions* 1991) would call an “anecdotal approach”. There is no meta-objective to be sought after, as popular culture, by its very definition, caters to its audience. Popular culture is a “fun house mirror” that not only reflects but in some ways reshapes or alters our image in

doing so. (Nachbar and Lause Popular Culture 1992) Therefore, it may not be well-defined, but the existence of possibilities of shifts in collective consciousness is a significant cultural marker.

India's commercial cinema has a deeply pervasive cultural influence not just in South Asia but worldwide. The spectacles laden with an independent genre of music and dance have charted an interesting trajectory. Not only in content, impact and popularity, an uninhibited cultural exchange is seen in artists as well. Although 'Bollywood' is categorised as mainstream Indian cinema, yet cultural traits and concerns have facilitated its acceptance as a transcultural entity. The artists and art forms of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries have gained immense popularity in mainstream Indian popular culture. The recent trend of popularity of television serials from Pakistan on Indian channels is very interesting. These programmes have garnered a huge fan following. Sporting events, like Indian Premier League for cricket, have redefined the spectacle of sports by creating a common identity beyond nationalities.

The popular culture has its shortcomings and pitfalls of falling into the trap of short-term benefits. In spite of this, these channels have immense potential to promote exchange and interaction. If the diagnosis applies to some extent, "tasks of the future in political and social, scientific and educational, artistic and design-related aspects – ought only to be solved through a decisive turn towards transculturality" (Welsch 1999). The purpose of the study is to juxtapose long-term prospects of emerging regional harmony through cultural modes against strains of historical antipathy of the political realm.

Ms. Antara CHOUDHURY

Identity Crisis for a Section of People for whom Liberty, Equality and Fraternity Remain Words Confined to a Book that is referred to as the Constitution of India

The primary purpose of this investigation is to enable the reader to look beyond untouchability as the only social evil associated with the institution of caste. It seeks to explore various ways in which belonging to a lower caste becomes an identity that an individual is never able to get rid of irrespective of what he may achieve by virtue of his merit. This paper is a humble effort directed at trying to understand how Indian culture that endorses stratification of society on the basis of caste has, by and large accounted for untouchability as the only unpleasant aspect of the caste system. What the perpetrators of the caste system and their subsequent generations failed to see was the institution of caste had evolved from being a “division of labour” to a “division of labourers”. In present day India, caste is not only an issue of widespread discontent, it also poses a threat to national harmony. Caste as an individual’s identity has become so very important that persecution of one person belonging to a particular caste is viewed as injustice inflicted upon the sum total of all the people belonging to that particular caste. This in turn leads to widespread discontent among major sections of the society. Thus, we can clearly see how the *Chaturvarnya* system that had emerged largely with the objective of promoting cooperation among the four *varnas* in order to bring about efficient functioning of the society has in effect failed to serve its purpose. This paper also addresses another problem associated with the caste system i.e. it has led to the birth of a section of society that is marginalised among the marginalised-women hailing from the lower castes. It explores how being born as a woman in a low caste family becomes such an integral part of a person’s existence that try as she might, it is in effect impossible to evade it. Therefore,

the objective of this paper is to see how even after sixty-two years of independence, liberty, equality and fraternity remain privileges and not fundamental rights for these segments of the Indian population.

Ms. Chamika DAHANAYAKE

Cross-Cultural Interactions and Expressions of Identity in the SMS Discourse in Sri Lanka

The advent of SMS (Short Message Service) technology saw large numbers of people swiftly adopting the facilities offered by this medium to engage and to micro-manage their daily interactions. As a result of this, individuals belonging to various cultural groups, communities and social classes received the opportunity to interact in this digital space. Consequently, the SMS environment, at present, is undergoing a ‘functional shift’ in its operation.

This ‘functional shift’ is quite visible within the SMS discourse in Sri Lanka. As more and more individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds and identities are making their presence felt in unique and innovative ways in the medium, SMS is no longer restricted to a technology of exchanging information and micro-managing one’s activities. Instead, it has transformed itself into a medium where various culture-specific digital identities are created, negotiated and maintained.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to uncover the extent to which this ‘shift’ has occurred and to delineate the specific mechanisms employed by the texters in contributing to this ‘shift’. Moreover, it seeks to identify the specific cultural dynamics that propelled this change. Specifically, the study seeks to analyse the construction of various cultural

identities that operate in this virtual environment and to delineate the nature of cross-cultural interaction that occurs within it.

Hence, the paper first discusses and defines concepts i.e. language, culture and identity, looking at previous scholarship on these areas. Then, it outlines specific data collection methods such as the corpus of SMSes and the theories and data analysis methods. Next, it analyses the data by looking at different cultural identities that are visible within the corpus and delineates the specific methods used by texters to bring-out the cultural norms, customs and nuances affiliated to these identities. It also attempts to identify the nature of cross-cultural interactions that occur within the SMS discourse.

Consequently, it is expected that through this study, a notion can be formed on how various communities and cultural identities are interacting with each other. In addition, the paper also highlights the nature of cross-cultural interaction in situations of ‘accommodation’ and situations of ‘segregation’. These discoveries are of particular significance to Sri Lankans, especially as the country is emerging from a thirty-year war scenario and there is much mistrust and suspicion among various communities. Hence, an examination of SMS discourse (especially as it is quite close to real-life speech), may shed light on values and nuances affiliated with various cultural identities and how these interplay in a virtual environment, signaling whether the country is on a path of reconciliation and integration or on a path of separation.

Such examination can be considered a pioneering attempt at identifying the SMS discourse as a potential ground on which many similar studies of cross-cultural interaction can be undertaken. This is quite significant as there is a paucity of such research available within the country and especially within the South Asian region.

Dr. Paromita DAS

Cultural Roots as a Bridge for Communication between Nations

The nations of South Asia have many common cultural roots. When we look back in history we find that Buddhism, the religion of *ahimsa* or non-violence and peace was often the vehicle of regional co-operation and communication. The origin of the Buddha image began in the Gandhara region of present day Afghanistan. This Gandhara School of art had its influence on Indian art in the form of idol worship. Hitherto the Vedic religion worshipped different forms of nature. After the emergence of Buddhism in the sixth century BCE many people of the Indian sub-continent, especially in the Ganga Valley embraced the new creed. Among them were not only commoners but also royalty including Bimbisara of Magadha (present day Bihar region), Ashoka the Great Maurya and Kanishka the Kushana king.

Ashoka after the Kalinga war realised the futility of conflict and embraced Buddhism, the *bheri-ghosa* (kettle-drum) was replaced by the *dharma-ghosa* (call to peace). In the third century BCE, Ashoka sent missionaries to different parts of Asia and was responsible for transforming Buddhism into a world religion. He also sent an embassy to Sri Lanka among whose members were his own son and daughter Mahendra and Sanghamitra respectively, along with a sapling of the original Mahabodhi tree under which the Buddha had attained *nirvana*. The Buddhism preached by Ashoka's missions revered Buddha as a human teacher and is known as the *Hinayana* creed.

Centuries later the Buddhist church split into two and *Mahayanism* was born. The Kushana king Kanishka embraced this new creed and was responsible for spreading this new form of Buddhism in the first century CE. During this time Gandhara became a centre of this new faith and statues of

Buddha began to be manufactured in Gandhara and later on in Mathura and Sarnath also. Idol worship thus began, and the followers of the Brahmannical creed also started making idols of their divinities and there was a Brahmannical revival under the Sungas.

In the Gupta period temple building activities began and the kings of this dynasty were primarily worshippers of the Vedic God Visnu. Yet they also patronised other religions and some of the most beautiful images of the Buddha were produced under their patronage. The Allahabad Pillar inscription of Harisena that details the conquests of Samudragupta records that king Meghavarman of Sri Lanka had sent an embassy to the Gupta monarch requesting permission to build a monastery at Bodh Gaya for Buddhist pilgrims from Sri Lanka and the request had been granted.

During the reign of the next king Chandragupta II Vikramaditya, the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien visited India in search of a better understanding of Buddhism. In the seventh century CE, during the reign of Harsavardhan, two more Chinese pilgrims Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang) and at a later period, I- tsing also visited India. Hiuen Tsang's stay in the Nalanda University, a centre of Buddhist studies along with Takshashila University in present Afghanistan, is well documented in his *Si-yu-ki*. The Buddhist scholar Taranath also writes about India.

The visits of embassies and pilgrims were established along trade routes, some came along the famous Silk Route while others entered into India via Northeast India. Records indicate the existence of an Assam-Myanmar (Burma) route. Thus, Buddhist missionaries and travelers facilitated trade and regional co-operation in South Asia and this has continued to this day.

Archeological remains today stand mute testimony to trade links forged between different parts of South Asia,

especially the Buddhist links between western Assam, Tripura and Bangladesh, as also Tibet, Bhutan, Myanmar and Thailand. The famous Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan may have been destroyed, but the remnants of the Gandhara School are preserved in the museums of Northern India. Common links also exist between the frescos of the Ajanta Caves and those of Sri Lanka.

Thus common cultural roots, especially the Buddhist connection can form a bridge for regional co-operation among the nations of South Asia today.

Ms. Onaiza DRABU

Role of Popular Culture in Promoting Regional Harmony: The Case of Mass and New Media as an Agent of Conflict Management between India and Pakistan

In his 1988 treatise on Public Culture, Arjun Appadurai commented on how the world is increasingly becoming cosmopolitan with people becoming catholic in accepting their tastes. Over 20 years hence, borders have changed and since the arrival of the Internet a new, virtual and constantly connected world has emerged reducing distances both in form and communication in a way previously not imaginable.

The advent of mass media and now new media has revolutionised popular culture. Apart from the traditional modes of movies and popular music, you now see a range of new content including short online videos, digital forums and easily sharable content on the Internet.

The Indian entertainment industry produces an average of over 1500 movies a year and these travel across borders becoming strong examples of the soft power India commands throughout the world. Bollywood forms a big part

of the cultural exchange within the Indian subcontinent, specifically between India and Pakistan. With easy accessibility of entertainment content on the Internet, cultural exchange between these two countries is increasingly popular.

With the launch of the Indian channel Zindagi, TV shows from Pakistan are making way into the homes of urban middle class Indians. Bollywood films have been extremely popular among Pakistani audience for long but over the last decade, Pakistani music is entering Indian households through series like the Coke Studio. Youth interaction through exchange programmes has sparked conversations leading youngsters on this path of discovering their shared yet contested historic narratives.

Movies, soap operas and interaction with people from across the border humanises the ‘other’ for us creating an empathetic understanding between two conflicting cultures. Analyses of collective virtual conversations about these mediums are a witness to this gradual change brought about by this exchange of cultural content.

Despite linguistic sectarian and regional differences, there are similarities between Indians and Pakistanis that cannot be ignored. Ethnically the same clan, exchange between them is aided by an almost common language (Hindi and Urdu) that further helps identify and relate with the ‘other’.

Through this paper the author seeks to examine how modern tools of interaction between two conflicting cultures have made an attempt at humanising individuals through cultural exchange. The author wishes to examine the impact of this humanising of a conflict to the level of individuals through music, movies and other forms of mass media and entertainment. The paper would examine if the approach of engaging popular culture helps modify general sentiment between India and Pakistan, to promote regional harmony.

The author would study four cases; the influence of Bollywood in Pakistan, that of Zindagi Channel in India, Coke Studio as a cross border musical connect and youth interaction over shared histories in an initiative called ‘The History Project’.

Prof. S. GHOSH

Vernacular Architecture as an Idiom for Promoting Cultural Continuity in South Asia

Architectural styles are a medium for the promotion of cultural identities and cohesion. SAARC nations provide a prism through which all forms of vernacular architecture can be viewed. In my talk this viewing will be through the lens of the soul of the eye coupled with the power of technological probing. This synthesis affords a most appealing and lyrical exploration of the course of the development of cities within the SAARC nations. I shall showcase research results combining the above stated synergy – starting from some of SAARC’s sophisticated historic cultures, cultures that ebbed and flowed along its shores and valleys. I shall touch upon unique cultural roots stretching back to the Dravidian civilisation that flourished over 3500 years ago and also look at the groupings of houses within the Indus Valley Civilisation in Lothal, Sarasvati Valley Civilisation in Kalibangan and Rakhigarhi.

The sensitivity underlying SAARC architecture and its traditions are seen in many communal settlements, profoundly so in the Indian subcontinent and in Sri Lanka. I shall thence showcase two specific, but nevertheless, distinct styles of communal functioning within unique architectural strongholds in the ancient Ratnagiri University in Odisha,

India, and also touch upon a unique blend of Stupa and Vihara styles of architecture in Sri Lanka.

The overarching emphasis of my paper will showcase that throughout SAARC's history, architecture has been creatively adopted to the needs of its users and the characteristics of its climate and location. It has always, and still does, fulfill the needs and nourish the spirit of its people, promoting cultural cohesion even today. In this context, I shall be exploring traditional techniques of vernacular architecture in Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala houses and finally show the adaptation of traditional practices in modern high-tech design.

Dr. Ramani HETTIARCHCHI

The Religion, Heritage and Cultural Aspects of Indian Plantation Labourers in Sri Lanka: A Comparative Study with Burma and Malaysia

Indians from South India emigrated in large numbers to Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Fiji Islands, and Trinidad since about the middle of the nineteenth century to work mostly as labourers in the coffee, tea and rubber plantations. A majority of them were Hindu and belonged to the Non-Brahman and Adi-Dravidian castes of South India. They carried along with them their religious beliefs and traditional customs and practices to the new countries of domicile. Even to the present day these caste affiliations and cultural practices govern the life of these labourers to a great extent. Anthropologists and historians have extensively examined many aspects of the socio-economic life of Indian plantation labourers of Sri Lanka. But they have paid little attention to religious and cultural aspects of this society. This research project focuses on this angle

from historical perspectives and questions the theoretical approaches of several researchers.

The main focus of this research is on the extent to which religious practices, rituals and ceremonial functions have contributed in creating structures of subservience in their original setting and how these practices have been transplanted in Sri Lanka, Burma and Malaysia. In addition, this investigation attempts to compare the developments in Sri Lanka with that of the other countries. This research will also investigate the rituals and forms of worship the immigrants perpetuate in their new locations. In relation to this, I will also examine the Agamic and Non-Agamic practices that they continue to follow in their new locations in order to understand the factors that persuaded these labourers to continue and protect their own religion and culture as their own heritage in the new locations. This research is conducted according to the historical methodology and based on field research in the plantation sector in Sri Lanka.

Ms. Ramesha JAYANETHTHI

Religious Activities and Ethnic Harmony in the Kandyan Kingdom

Religion and ethnicity are important factors in a society. Religion is the relationship humans share with God/s or whatever they consider sacred. There are routines of worship and practices related to a sacred object or place. Religion also helps to develop relationships between members of the community. In Sri Lanka, the Kandyan Kingdom was a remarkable era in terms of outstanding cultural and religious heritage of the Sinhalese. It was the last kingdom of Sri Lankan pre modern history and collapsed due to the British invasion in 1815 CE. Two major dynasties ruled the kingdom.

They were the Sinhalese Dynasty and the Nayakkar Dynasty. This period of two hundred years showed diverse religious and cultural activities. Both Buddhism and Hinduism were eminent in the kingdom and kings gave patronage to those religions. Such patronage often had political connotations. When considering the royal family especially Sinhalese kings married Nayakkar princess in South India since Rajasinha II. Such marriages resulted in the promotion of Hinduism and its culture. The royal palace was thus a great example of religious diversity and harmony. Apart from Hinduism, Catholicism too was promoted by the Sinhalese kings. When Kandy was developed as a regional kingdom, king Karalliyadde promoted Catholicism and requested assistance from the Portuguese for such promotions. Later on when Kandy shed its regional status and became a major kingdom, Wimaldarmasooriya I married princess Dona Katrina who was a devoted Catholic. The last Sinhalese king Sri Vira Parakrama Narendrasinha protected Catholics and their priests from the suppression of Dutch colonial masters. Father Giacome Gonsalve was a distinguished person who developed Catholicism and its culture in the Kandyan kingdom with this king's patronage. Fr. Blessed Joseph Vaz came to Kandy and developed Catholicism in the area. After a long mission carried out with much sacrifice and dedication, Joseph Vaz died in Kandy in 1711 and was laid to rest in the church he had built in Kandy. With the beginning of the Nayakkar era, a South Indian dynasty was established in the Sinhalese kingdom. The power of the relatives belonging to Nayakkar family was significant in the King's court and was reflected in other bureaucratic systems too. With spreading influence of the Nayakkar family, Hindu religious activities were adjoined with Buddhist sacred places. Many Buddhist temples including Dalada Maligawa promoted Hindu shrines in their temple premises. Kings like Kritri Sri Rajasinha continually promoted Buddhist temples and Hindu shrines by granting lands and other assets. With this multi religious and

multi cultural activities, general public was motivated to safeguard ethnic harmony in the society. The Temple Land Tenure System is one of the great examples of religious harmony in the Kandyan kingdom. Many Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims sacrificed their services to continue the Temple land tenure system and its service tenure.

Dr. Nikhil JOSHI

Multivalent Bodhgayā: Boundaries, Identity, and Shared Heritage

In this paper, I would highlight on how our religious attention and gaze on historic structures and events of a particular cultural group often limit our understanding of heritage as a shared resource. Using the sacred site of Bodhgayā, I would illustrate how this narrow consideration creates a boundary that often excludes other communities from being a part of a diverse and larger cultural community, thus, forming a wide gap and disputes among various stakeholders. First, I would emphasise that although the multivalent sacred site of the Mahābodhi Temple seem to be peaceful and harmonious on the surface, tensions and conflicts simmer beneath this outer layer between the local and foreign Buddhists concerning divergent ritual practices that are sometimes deemed incompatible with the prevalent conservation values. The unrest and conflict surrounding the sacred Mahābodhi Temple took a drastic new turn on 7 July 2013 when a series of ten bombs exploded in and around the Temple complex during the early hours of morning concurrently with the meditation and *sūtras* chanting at the Temple's sanctum. As if all this was not enough, a sense of apprehension, which could be easily felt between the Hindus and Buddhists while performing their respective religious rituals inside the

Mahābodhi Temple complex, makes it even more important to understand the sacred as more than stones and bricks.

Second, I would focus on an issue that stems from the World Heritage nomination dossier for the Mahābodhi Temple prepared by the Government of India. This dossier only highlighted this site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as the hallowed spot where the ascetic prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment to become the Buddha. Not just the nomination dossier and inscriptions on site, but also the subsequent city development plan, site management plan, and other official heritage discourses, too failed to mention the shared aspect of sacred Bodhgayā. Although, all the above-mentioned plans often refer Bodhgayā as a 'living' religious site, nevertheless they all failed to acknowledge that its vitality is also due to the overlapping religious interests of the Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists, which may or may not be the same as stated in the statement of OUV. It would be argued that the interaction of the Mahābodhi Temple with the ongoing diverse ritual practices and the prevalent social activities that happen in and around it have created a dynamic environment, which have to be understood in order to maintain harmony. I develop these insights based on my fieldwork in Bodhgayā with various users, who are continually engaged in diverse activities directly or indirectly related to the main Temple. In the end, it is argued that in order to preserve the soul of the Mahābodhi Temple complex and its immediate sacredscape, it is pivotal to preserve the built form of the Temple and its surrounding structures as well as to maintain the dynamics of diverse rituals that occur around it, which provide it with the distinctive vibrant character that does not require unsolicited safeguarding.

Ms. Anjali KORALA

School History Curriculum and its Impact on Sri Lanka's Reconciliation Process

The three decades-long war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan state devastated the country's economic and human resources. This protracted war also contributed to polarising ethnic communities who once enjoyed greater coexistence. The war has not only been a result, but also a cause of the ethnic conflict. Hence, it is in this context, that the ending of the war has become a necessity. However, even though, the violence and destruction came to an end since the ending of the war, the challenges of reconciling the polarised communities continue to exist. Therefore, since May 2009, reconciliation has become the main political agenda of the country. The former regime spearheaded large development programmes in order to reconcile the war-affected communities. The LLRC appointed by the government recommended many initiatives that could address the differences and a pernicious trend leading to irrevocable grievances of the different ethnic communities in the country. Although, many initiatives have been taken by various stakeholders, recent ethnic tensions clearly indicate that ethnic reconciliation among communities is far from being achieved in this context of polarisation among communities.

This paper inquires how school curriculum can be instrumental in constructing ethnic stereotypes among the Sinhalese students. This paper is developed based on findings of the research that I have conducted for my Bachelors degree programme in Political Science. The research examined how school history curriculum has contributed to students' attitude towards minority communities. The paper examines the impact text books make on the country's reconciliation process. This research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods to inquire the attitudes, perceptions and

knowledge of the male and female students of upper middle class families. Two exclusively Sinhala Buddhist schools were selected while the balance two were selected from schools where students from mixed ethnicities attended.

This paper questions: i) Do school curriculum and text books on history facilitate or undermine the reconciliation project of the country? and ii) How do the text books and the history curriculum shape the opinion of students who study in mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic school environments? Thereby, this paper argues for the importance of re-examination and review of the current history text books in order to support the government's quest for reconciliation that would bring about lasting and just peace in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Deepi Rekha KOULI

Art as a Cultural Medium of Peace in South Asian Countries

Art is the living heritage of the people of a society. Art represents socio-cultural as well as religious aspects of a society of a particular period or a region. The origin of the art can be traced to the religious and cultural background of a society. India as a South Asian country represents similar art traditions from the earliest time till date, thereby playing an important role in the peace process between South Asian countries. The region of Assam situated in eastern-most corner of India is an integral part of Indian art tradition. Like the rest of India, religion played a vital role in the evolution of art tradition in Assam. Archaeological evidences in stone, metal, terracotta, wood and ivory as well as literary evidences signify rich cultural heritage of the region and exhibits cultural bonding with neighbouring countries.

Religion played a prominent role in the artistic traditions of different nations of South Asia. Archaeological remains from different nations of the region exhibit religious themes in the form of cave paintings, sculptures and temple remains. The majority of the cave paintings in the Ajanta caves in Aurangabad in India and Sigiriya in Sri Lanka depict themes drawn from religious beliefs and events. The structure and form of some temples of Assam and the temples at Paharpur in Bangladesh exhibit great similarities. Metal images of tantric Buddhism found in Assam appear to be similar with metal images from Chitagong District of Bangladesh. Epigraphic records like Nidhanpur Copper plate Grant in Sylhet District of Bangladesh indicates that the ancient kingdom of *Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa* of North-East India included some parts of Bangladesh. Figurines of Mother Goddess at Mohenjodaro in Pakistan and from other Indus sites indicate the existence of a fertility cult in the region. The Kamakhya temple of Assam in North-East India represents the fertility cult and even today the terracotta figurines of Hatima dolls in western Assam represent the continuity of this fertility cult. The Buddhist architecture and sculptures of Bhutan exhibit similarities with those of Tawang monastery in Arunachal Pradesh in North-East India. The Himalayan kingdom of Nepal shares rich social, religious and cultural traditions with India by following both Brahmanical and Buddhist religions. The Pasupatinath temple of Nepal also exhibits similarities with temple architecture of India. Afghanistan has considerable Buddhist remains and exhibits roots of ancient cultural links with north western India. Reports of Chinese travellers also prove trade links existed from Southern China to Afghanistan through ancient *Kamarupa*, the North Eastern part of India. Maldives, the neighbouring country of Sri Lanka, also had both Buddhist and Islamic art and architecture.

Thus it is found that art acts as a medium of spiritual and aesthetic expression of human kind, thereby promoting peace and harmony among the people of different nations of South Asia. Hence, this paper discusses the role of art in creating a culture of peace among culturally diverse nations of South Asia.

Ms. Hasini LECAMWASAM

Recipe for Assimilation: National Integration, Ethnic Other and the Evolution of Kandyan Consciousness in Sri Lanka

The Kandyan Sinhalese of Sri Lanka (previously Ceylon) occupy the central highlands of the island, and are believed to have a disposition that is ‘culturally’ different from that of their counterparts in the lowlands. This difference, real or perceived, was most strongly emphasised during the colonial era when the low-country Sinhalese settled in Kandyan areas in large numbers, and started benefiting from the British-introduced plantation economy that thrived on Kandyan soil, thus creating a competition of sorts between the Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese. Such competition subsequently prompted a federal demand by the Kandyans. Interestingly, they currently seem to have harmonised perfectly with the unitary model of the state, their erstwhile demands apparently forgotten.

This study explores the reasons behind this evolution of the Kandyan consciousness by studying the function of integrative forces in the nation-building process of post-colonial Ceylon that expedited the absorption of Kandyans into the larger Ceylonese nation. Specifically, it examines the context in which the Kandyan demand for federalism emerged, how the ethnic conflict shaped the Sinhalese perception of power-sharing and how that in turn impacted the

Kandyan understanding of same, and the parallels between Kandyan and Tamil bids for autonomy. Towards this end, the study has made use of the Integrated Threat Theory, National Identity Theory, Ethnic Nation Theory, and Typology of Integration.

Surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews have been employed in building the analysis of this research. It contends that the rise of Tamil nationalism effectively paled all intra-Sinhalese divisions, synonymised the Ceylonese/Sri Lankan nation with the Sinhalese ethnicity, and thus provided a very potent incentive for the Kandyans to accept the project of the unitary state, their previous grievances and the resultant demand for federal autonomy notwithstanding.

Prof. Susannah MALKAN

Promoting Peace in India through Education: The Gender Dimension

This research paper looks into the ways in which peace education would enable the girl child to have an equal platform in contributing to addressing forms of structural and cultural violence, and actively participating in seeking effective and sustainable ways of resolving the situation and enhancing peace in its most encompassing sense.

Recent research by Amnesty International shows that women are very active in most peace building activities and take the initiative to find new ways of passing on the message of peace to their local communities. However, they may also sometimes function to serve the exact opposite end of perpetuating social segregations.

Peace education for both girls and women would be instrumental in shaping women's role in and attitudes towards peace. Such education would make them aware of their part in breaking the cycle of violent conflict that eventually leads to their own suffering and the suffering of their communities.

The absence of women from formal peace negotiations is astonishing given that women have always been key stakeholders in conflicts. In addition to being recruited for regular and irregular armed forces, they have also become powerful voices opposing conflict, constant victims of conflict, as well as advocates of it in some instances. Any peace education programme for women should highlight the positive contribution they can make towards peace and also the detrimental consequences of them doing otherwise.

At the local and community levels, we need better and more creative outreach and educational strategies to highlight instances where women have played roles as problem-solvers, entrepreneurs and leaders. There is also a need for avenues beyond newspapers, policy briefs or academic studies to illustrate the roles women have played to bring peace to their community, state and region.

Especially as educators, women are well equipped to make a decisive contribution to peace. As women are the epitome of care, nourishment and nurturing, their involvement in transmitting peace education would surely be well received and effective. Towards this end, a well-designed curriculum is crucial.

While there are strikingly distinct approaches to peace organisations have chosen to adopt, all of them face several common challenges, most of all that of sustainability. On the one hand, there is the question of organisations facing a constant resource crunch and having to depend on external funding. This means that programmes are inevitably

interrupted just as they are gathering momentum or, worse, forced to shut down at least temporarily. One possible way to circumvent this problem is to continue to focus on teacher training, thereby initiating a process of transferring ownership of peace education to the teaching community.

What is evident is that peace education programmes in India are not, and cannot be independent, stand-alone entities that a well-meaning organisation introduces to a community. In each case, peace educators have had to and will continue to fight for space within the mainstream education system that educates the vast majority of young people in the region.

Since women are the most affected in conflict stricken zones, especially in countries like India, women must also play a crucial role in peace building. As explained previously, since they are naturally disposed towards caring and nurturing, such an initiative would strengthen hope for peace.

Dr. Biswajit MOHAPATRA

Peace Education and the Challenges of Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation in North Eastern India

The ongoing peace process and ceasefire in Nagaland and other parts of North eastern India has been welcomed in various quarters either as a successful attempt at resolving one of the region's most intractable conflicts, or as a failed attempt to reconcile the conflicting claims of the main ethno nationalist communities. This is so because on both the sides of spectrum and at several other ends of public initiatives, it is being said that we have failed to accord due recognition to the centrality of peace education as a viable and self sustaining

tool for the establishment of a durable peace in the region along the side of the continuing political process.

It's well known about the power of knowledge in dispelling prejudices which run along with the attempts to create a world of shared values and create right enlightenment by promoting acceptance of different cultures among the involved communities in the conflict. A self sustaining peace process has but to accompany a simultaneous process of peace education that's all inclusive rather than the present one that builds upon ethnic distinctions.

It would be quite interesting to examine as to how the tribal communities in Nagaland can be helped in encountering the existing cultural, contextual, and other forms of diversity so as to face the challenge of sustaining the peace process in the region.

In my paper, I propose to examine these challenges and analyse the prevailing social and political ideas so as to be able to draw up a strategy for building strong, multifarious learning communities and inter community relations, which can encourage promotion of international conflict resolution education not only in the communities but also in the educational curriculum colleges and universities focusing on national and international peace and conflict resolution techniques.

Mr. U Saw NUE

The Role of the Small Ethnic Cultural Institute of Bandarban in Promoting National Harmony in Bangladesh

Bandarban is a district in South-Eastern Bangladesh, and is regarded as one of the most attractive travel destinations in Bangladesh. Bandarban (meaning the dam of monkeys), is

also known as the Bohmong Circle. The attraction is primarily because of the rugged and hilly landscape. A population of about 300000 and 11 different cultures and languages flourishing since time immemorial have made the district a unique entity. However, the diversity also poses a lot of challenges in mainstreaming the diverse population. This paper explains the role of the Small Ethnic Cultural Institute of Bandarban in promoting harmony among diverse ethnic groups in the region.

The role of the institute, though very limited, has immense influence on the lives and livelihoods of the 11 indigenous communities in the district. The diversity in languages and culture has been well understood by the institute and has taken proactive actions wherever and whenever possible to preserve such diversity.

Mr. Asitha G. PUNCHIHEWA

Transformation of Culture and Transformation of Development

Sri Lanka is a country that has a documented history spanning for over two and half millennia and evidence of civilisation for tens of thousands of years. Sri Lanka being a tropical island nation with high biodiversity, abundant natural resources including water and fertile soil, predictable rainfall and stable temperature across the island provided ideal conditions for a subsistence agriculture based civilisation to flourish. Judging by the extent of paddy lands that have been cultivated and the unique tank-cascade canal system compared to the national population prior to European colonisation, it is evident that Sri Lankans enjoyed an excess of staple food grain, indicating universal food security. Various references from pre-colonial Sri Lanka suggest that

water security and food security could have afforded the Sri Lankans the ability of pursuing intellectual and spiritual development. Development indicators during this era were based on those of Buddhism: *Arogya* (health), *Santutthi* (happiness), *Vishwasa* (trust) and *Nibbana* (emancipation).

It was during around 1500 CE that Sri Lankans adopted industrial agriculture. Later during latter part of colonialism and into the post-colonial and present day, Sri Lanka's culture has transformed from the agro-centric one that prevailed for a substantially long time to a mixed one within a relatively short period of 500 years. The transition made some irreplaceable impacts on the island's natural resources. However, this rapid transformation of the culture meant that a perfect breeding ground was in place for an untamed free market economy to flourish.

Nearly four decades after the initiation of a free market economy many cultural practices and age old traditions have ceased to exist and sustainable systems have been discontinued, hence paving the way for an unsustainable economic culture.

Therefore, there is a need to rethink the possibility of transforming the service oriented culture to an agro centric one by which the politico-economic and cultural landscape of the country could become more sustainable, hence providing ground for a meaningful reconciliation programme to evolve so that all ethnic groups live in harmony.

Dr. M. Waseem RAJA

Cultural Diversity, Religious Syncretism and Growth of Indianness: Perspectives on Syncretism and National Harmony

The concept of culture is among the most widely used notions in sociology. Normally, one can presume culture to be equivalent to higher things of the mind such as art, literature, music and painting. However, from the perspective of sociologists it goes beyond such activities. Culture refers to the ways of life of the members of society, or of groups within a society. It includes how they dress, their marriage customs, language and family life. In the Indian context we have a history of thousands of years of amalgamation and intermixtures which has provided us with a unique culture.

India has seen wave after wave of invaders since time immemorial. Though it is difficult to determine the original inhabitants, it is assumed that the *adivasis* or aboriginals and Dravidians are the original inhabitants of India. The Dravidian culture did not have a composite character, much the same as the aboriginal one which was essentially a folk culture. Since this article deals with composite cultures which came into existence with the invasion of various Muslim dynasties such as the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, it does not discuss the Dravidian and aboriginal cultures.

What we call 'Hindu' culture or Buddhist culture came into existence within the framework of pre-existent Dravidian and Aryan cultures and the Hindu or Buddhist cultures cannot be imagined without their pre-existent cultures. Also, when these religions spread to areas other than that of their origin, they absorbed elements of the cultures already existing in those areas. Examples include Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Tibet, Cambodia, Vietnam and Japan.

If religion were the only determinant of culture all these cultures would not differ. But this is not the case. In India, co-existence for almost thousand years gave rise to an Indo-Islamic culture which in northern India is called by various names like *Ganga-Jamni tehzib* (culture of the region between the rivers Ganga and Jamuna), or *Mili-juli tahzib* (syncretic culture), or *Sanjhi virasat* (composite heritage). Though these terms mainly refer to north Indian culture, composite culture is not essentially restricted to north India. India is a land of many cultures and all regional cultures from north to south and east to west constitute the overarching culture of India.

While it is true that commonality is a political need, one should not emphasise on the syncretic nature of our heritage at the cost of our authentic history. History should not be distorted either to divide people or unite them. Distortion of history, even for a positive purpose, is a dangerous thing. History should remain aloof from religious, political or cultural concerns because there is a possibility that those who temper with their past would temper with their future as well. Hence the role of various cultural elements in moulding what is today known as 'Indian culture' should be brought into light.

Indian history shows that there has been a fusion of religious and spiritual practices between Hindu and Islam religions through time. Islamic ritual practices have influenced indigenous Hindu practices and several Sufi rituals, practices and beliefs, have deeply marked their presence on other indigenous practices as well. The noted German scholar Gruhnbalm thinks that the Sufi doctrine of *fana' fi Allah* (annihilation in Allah) is a result of Hindu doctrine of *smadhi* in which a person annihilates himself in Ishwara, the ultimate being.

Urdu language itself is a great symbol of our composite culture. It was born in the *bazaar* (market place) through the mixing of different communities like Turks, Hindus, Indian Muslims and others. It was always spoken by people in the Bazaar and never became a court language except towards the end of the Moghul period. Urdu is a mixture of local Indian dialects like Brijhasha, Haryanvi, Maithili, Purbi, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, etc.

Muslims and Hindus made rich contributions in the field of music, paintings and architecture also. We evolved a composite architecture which can be seen in Hindu temples as well as in structures constructed by Muslim kings, emperors and nawabs. Adilshahi structures are an excellent example of composite architecture in Bijapur which was the centre of Adilshahi rule.

Thus we see that India has great and rich tradition of composite culture which our communal politics has completely ignored today, raising slogans that champion either a pure Hindu or pure Muslim culture, thus widening the already deep divide between the two religious communities. Unfortunately our textbooks also downplay our syncretic culture. Hence it is time we do away with this divide by highlighting this rich culture and enthroning it with its original *sanjhi wirasat* title.

Mr. W.H.M.S. SAMARATHUNGA

Identifying Domestic Tourism as a Tool to Establish National Harmony in Sri Lanka

Even after emerging victorious from the three decades long war, the Sri Lankan state is still struggling to establish national harmony and reconciliation among groups with

different political agendas and aspirations. A promising aspect in this regard seems to be the domestic tourism sector. Millions of Southerners in Sri Lanka are now travelling to Northern and Eastern parts of the country which was inaccessible during the war period, and the North-Eastern community takes pleasure in visiting the Southern part of the country. However, such visits should not be limited to pleasure, shopping and sightseeing only. Sri Lanka should now focus on using such domestic travels to both Northern and Southern parts as a pillar to establish national harmony. This study explores the answer to a strategic question in this regard: How to establish national harmony in Sri Lanka through domestic tourism?

To find answers to the above question the researcher carried out comprehensive desk researches, made visits to war affected areas, and interviewed domestic tourists visiting Northern, Eastern and Southern parts of the country. The main findings of this research indicate that all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are willing to mingle with people from other ethnic groups visiting their townships, but find it difficult to reach out to such groups. It was further observed that the scattered natural and multi-cultural attractions around the country will keep the domestic tourists busy visiting around the country in the future as well. This research subsequently analyses the prospects and challenges of promoting community based tourism typologies including home stay tourism, agro tourism, spiritual tourism, food and culinary tourism and cultural tourism that bring different ethnic groups of the country together with their mutual interests to establish national harmony in Sri Lanka. Finally, suitable suggestions are made for the practitioners' attention.

Prof. Kalinga Tudor SILVA

Bilingualism as a Socio-cultural Adaptation and its Implications for Social Harmony in Sri Lanka

Language barrier is a significant obstacle for effective social interaction between Sinhalese and Tamils who do not speak each other's language or who do not speak English as a link language. Against this background, bilingualism may be seen as a laudable social and cultural means of facilitating smooth interpersonal relations across ethnic divides. Sinhala-English bilingualism and Tamil-English bilingualism are elite level adaptations where English is used as a passport to social privilege on the one hand and as a means of communication between Sinhala and Non-Sinhala elite on the other, while Tamil or Sinhala is used for communication with their co-ethnics. Based on recent surveys, this paper examines bilingual adaptations among native Sinhala and Tamil speakers from non-elite backgrounds in selected regions in Sri Lanka, officially designated as bilingual administrative divisions, and explores their implications for social harmony. On the whole Tamil-Sinhala bilingualism, where native Tamil speakers (including ethnic Muslims) speak Sinhala as a second language, is more common than Sinhala-Tamil bilingualism, where native Sinhala speakers adopt Tamil as a second language. This is not always in keeping with the political demand for parity of status between the two languages and the language rights campaigns. However it shows that cultural adaptations are based on the situational needs of the respective speech community rather than on ideological or group rights concerns as such.

Sinhala-Tamil bilingualism is found in certain geographical pockets such as the North-Eastern regions of Sri Lanka and plantation areas where Tamil is more widely spoken. The Sinhalese residents or workers who form a minority in these localities are compelled to learn Tamil for

their own survival. The official language policies of the state, including the policy towards a trilingual Sri Lanka and efforts to promote bilingual capabilities among public servants employed in government agencies clearly recognize that bilingualism or trilingualism would be desirable from the angle of promoting social harmony and administrative efficiency. These policies, however, have had limited success so far largely because they have overlooked the socio-cultural, economic and political processes underpinning the language acquisition process in Sri Lanka. State policies are more likely to be successful if they build on existing practices of bilingualism well-adapted to local needs and expand their usage rather than trying to promote bilingualism or trilingualism as a universal policy package applicable to all situations. This is yet another instance that shows that social harmony policies can only be effective if they are both politically acceptable and culturally attuned.

Dr. Anuththaradevi WIDYALANKARA

Seeking Cultural Equilibrium through Historical Experiences of the Kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy

There is a history of peace and harmony among peoples of different denominations and different ethnic origins in the pre modern kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy. The Kotte Kingdom traces its origins to the entrepreneurial skills of Alagakkonara, a provincial satrap of Indian origin who wished to develop the nearby port of Kolomthota alternative to that of Yalpatnum. In the Kandyan kingdom Nayakkar kings from Malabar in South India who ruled since 1739, for seventy six years did their best to restore the Sinhalese Buddhist priesthood and promote Buddhist art and architecture. Among them the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinhe (1747-1782), proved to be one of the most

inspiring periods for Buddhism and the revival in temple murals.

The social cohesion in the Kotte and Kandyan kingdoms of 15th and 18th centuries provide robust examples of cross cultural hybridity of a plural polity. Art, architecture, music, poetry, dance and literature of the two periods provide evidence of cultural diversity and hybridity. Although Buddhism defined the overriding cultural identity of the state through its monarchical order, the ruler ensured adequate space for ‘multiple cultural loyalties’ in the polity. The epistle poetry and ballads demonstrate the overwhelming Hindu influence on those societies. The worship of Hindu deities was an essential component of day to day religious practices of the Monarch and the subjects.

While the Polonnaruwa kingdom acquired its cosmopolitan character as a result of South Indian invasions and coerced conversion, the cultural hybridity during the Kotte and Kandy periods that preceded the Western Colonial conquest was essentially assimilative and absorptive. Ethnicity was not a social or identity marker during those eras. Political conflict if any were essentially confined to disputes of succession and ambitions of the rulers and were far removed from ethnic or religious differences. There are numerous instances of warriors of Tamil antecedents gaining fame and office through demonstrated valor in battle. The advent of the Portuguese intercepted the progress of this cosmopolitan kingdom which was home to a number of great seats of learning – *pirivenas* which attracted scholars who excelled in Sinhala and Tamil literature in addition to Pali Sanskrit and Prakrit.

The study seeks to explore historical precedents and processes that have promoted cultural coexistence by identifying common denominators that established kinship in religion, language and primordial customs in the region. The

study of history in identifying common regional denominators will allow us to explain how the Westphalian frame of sovereignty in the post-colonial age introduced the ‘others’ and ‘ours’ dichotomy into our belief systems. The present study is a descriptive research and it adopts qualitative research methods.

The study proposes that inter cultural discourse should be promoted at a macro level as a means of strengthening reconciliation in a plural setting diminishing the incompatibilities between ‘us’ and ‘others’.

Mr. Nandana WIJESINGHE

Reconciliation through Art and Dancing

Art and dancing, as modes of aesthetic expression, have universal appeal. This potential of aesthetics to undermine socially constructed divisions along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines has made them very potent and desirable means through which to address social cleavages effectively. This paper aims to empirically demonstrate the viability of appealing to the aesthetic sensitivities of people through a case study. The programme chosen for this purpose is called ‘Enhancing Knowledge and Virtues: Student Empowerment’ (*Nena Guna Weduma: Sisu Diriya*). It is a national programme organised by the World University Friends (WUF) organization, in collaboration with various state and non-state institutions as well as individual resource persons.

Sisu Diriya has been in existence for ten years, and its main objective has been to achieve sustainable peace and social development through ethnic and religious integration and the resultant harmonious community. Towards this end, it has organised a number of dance performances and art

exhibitions among other things, with the hope that these universally appreciated forms of expression would bring together its beneficiaries for moments of shared joy, celebration, and even grief and anguish. The target group of the programme consists of students of former combat zones who have lived in trauma for nearly three decades because of the conflict. They have been chosen primarily because there is a need to address the fear, anxiety, suspicion and constant paranoia that constantly condition their minds.

This paper explains the main aesthetic activities of the programme under specific annual themes focusing on national integration, ethnic harmony, and social reconciliation. It notes that the workshops and other related activities on art, dancing performances, and exhibitions provided ample opportunities for the youth to experience and share each other's feelings and sufferings. It also illustrates how the various cultural performances made these students realise that there are many commonalities in all the cultures and hence it is important to respect and value everyone's norms, values, customs and traditions.

This paper acquires much significance especially in light of Sri Lanka's post-conflict transition period where the importance of the search for points of convergence between various identity groups could not be emphasised enough. Hence the case study discussed here will shed light not only on how such a scheme could be devised and operationalised, but also on the feasibility of this idea based on actual evidence.

Post-Seminar Tour

Yapahuwa



King Buvanekabahu I built Yapahuwa to be both a capital city and fortress. As such, the site is located on a rock 30 meters high affording panoramic (and strategically important) views of the surrounding area. The flagship feature of Yapahuwa today is, however, its ornamental staircase that takes the traveler to the scenic heights of the rock. Following abandonment of the city as the capital, Buddhist monks inhabited it until a Pandyan attack caused the Buddhist relics to be taken to India. At the foot of the rock one can still see remnants of the city's luxurious past crystallised in the form of stone structures that resemble ponds, buildings, and ramparts.

Panduwasnuwara

Considered the capital city of Panduwasadeva, the second king of Sri Lanka, Panduwannuwara is home to many legendary ruins in the country's history including the windowless tower where princess Unmada Chitra (famed for her beauty that was believed to drive men to insanity) was imprisoned, and a mound that is considered as the tomb of king Vijaya, the first king of Sri Lanka. Additionally, the city boasts many other ruins that testify to a once thriving royal and religious life. Panduwasnuwara is also considered the

place from which Parakramabahu I operated before taking Polonnaruwa on as his capital.

Dambadeniya

Dambadeniya is an impressive complex of a Buddhist pilgrimage site housed along with the palatial remains of a royal past. Though little remains of the palace today, the temple is fully functional to date and features frescoes renowned throughout the country for their artistic elegance. The ruins in the site indicate the existences of ponds, city walls, as well as eloquent gardens in addition to the palace. The capital of Sri Lanka was shifted to Dambadeniya in mid 13th century under King Vijayabahu, and reached heights of glory during the days of King Parakramabahu IV.

Ridi Viharaya

The fourth imperial capital of ancient Sri Lanka, Kurunegala is currently the capital city of the North-Western Province. Nestled in the central highlands of the country, this city is characterised by many captivating Buddhist sites, the most notable being the *Ridi Viharaya* (Silver Temple). The site gets its name from the discovery of silver in the second century BCE. The temple primarily served the function of a hermitage, in addition to housing an image gallery with paintings inspired by Kandyan tradition. The site also boasts numerous Buddha statues, an artificial lake, and an ivory-imbibed door frame among other things.

Programme

Venue: Senate Room, Senate Building, University of
Peradeniya
(15 and 16 May 2015)

Day 1 – Friday, 15 May 2015	
08:30 –09:45	Inaugural Session
08:30 – 09:00	Registration of the Delegates
09:00	Lighting of the Oil Lamp
09:05 – 09:15	Welcome address by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre.
09:15 – 09:45	Keynote Address: Prof. Shantha K. Hennayake, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Peradeniya
09:45	Group Photograph
09:45- 10:00	Tea
10:00 – 11:40	Academic Session – 1: Introduction Chaired by: Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe
10:00–10:20	Introduction of the Seminar Theme and Research Project
10: 20–10:40	Paper 1: Dr. Paromita Das (India) <i>Cultural Roots as a Bridge for Communication between Nations</i>
10:40- 11:00	Paper 2: Prof. Satyajit Ghosh (India) <i>Vernacular architecture as an idiom for promoting cultural continuity in South Asia</i>
11:00-11:20	Paper 3: Dr. Deepi Rekha Kouli (India) <i>Art as a Cultural Medium of Peace in South Asian Countries</i>
11:20–11:40	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
11:40–13:20	Academic Session- 2: Role of literature and arts in creating a culture of peace Chaired by: Prof. Shantha K. Hennayake
11:40–12:00	Paper 4: Dr. Liyanage Amarakeerthi (Sri Lanka)

	<i>Literary Arts and Intercultural Understanding: A Reading of Contemporary Sinhala and Tamil Literature</i>
12:00- 12:20	Paper 5: Nandana Wijesinghe (Sri Lanka) <i>Reconciliation through Art and Dancing</i>
12:20-12:40	Paper 6: U Saw Nue (Bangladesh) <i>The Role of the Small Ethnic Cultural Institute of Bandarban in Promoting National Harmony in Bangladesh</i>
12:40-13:00	Paper 7: Dr. Mokammal H. Bhuiyan (Bangladesh) <i>Lalon Song is a tool of cultural harmony</i>
13:00- 13:20	Discussion & Chairperson's Remarks
13:20- 14:20	Lunch at Lunch at Post Graduate Institute of Science (PGIS)- Roof Top
14:20–15:20	Academic Session- 3: Role of popular culture in promoting regional harmony (mass media/ sports/ films/ music etc.) Chaired by: TBA
14:20–14:40	Paper 8: Dr. Neekee Chaturvedi & Mr. Karthikeya Misra (India) <i>Popular Culture: Oases of Intercultural Scripts</i>
14:40- 15:00	Paper 9: Onaiza Drabu (India) <i>Role of Popular Culture in Promoting Regional Harmony: The Case of Mass and New Media as an Agent of Conflict Management between India and Pakistan</i>
15:00- 15:20	Discussion & Chairperson's Remarks
15:20 – 16:20	Academic Session – 4 : Culture & Identity Chaired by: TBA
15:20–15:40	Paper 10: Chamika Dahanayake (Sri Lanka) <i>Cross-Cultural Interactions and Expressions of Identity in the SMS Discourse in Sri Lanka</i>
15:40–16:00	Paper 11: Antara Choudhury (India) <i>Identity crisis for a section of people for whom Liberty, Equality and Fraternity remain words confined to a book referred to the Constitution of India</i>

16:00–16:20	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
16:20 – 16:35	Tea
16:35-17:50	Academic Session- 5: Education and Peace-building Chaired by: Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva
16:35- 16:55	Paper 12: Prof. Sussanah Malkan (India) <i>Promoting Peace in India through Education: The Gender Dimension</i>
16:55- 17:15	Paper 13: Dr. Biswajit Mohapatra (India) <i>Peace Education and the Challenges of Sustainable Peace and Reconciliation in North Eastern India</i>
17:15- 17:35	Paper 14: Anjalie Korala (Sri Lanka) <i>School History Curriculum and its Impact on Sri Lanka’s Reconciliation Process</i>
17:35- 17:50	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
17:50–18:50	Book Launch: <i>Idioms of Sustainability in Ancient Anuradhapura</i>
End of Academic Sessions for Day 1	

	Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy
19:30–21:30	Dinner Hosted by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

Day 2 – Saturday, 16 May 2015	
8:30 – 10:10	Academic Session – 6: Culture & Identity (Case Studies) Chaired by: Prof. K.D. Paranavitana
8:30–8:50	Paper 15: Ramesha Jayaneththi (Sri Lanka) <i>Religious Activities and Ethnic Harmony in the Kandyan Kingdom</i>
8:50–9:10	Paper 16: Hasini Lecamwasam (Sri Lanka) <i>Recipe for Assimilation: National Integration, Ethnic Other and the Evolution of Kandyan Consciousness in Sri Lanka</i>
9:10–9:30	Paper 17: Dr. Nikhil Joshi (India)

	<i>Multivalent Bodhgayā: Boundaries, Identity, and Shared Heritage</i>
9:30–9:50	Paper 18: Dr. Ramani Hettiarachchi (Sri Lanka) <i>The Religion, Heritage and Cultural Aspects of Indian Plantation Labourers in Sri Lanka; A Comparative study with Burma and Malaysia</i>
9:50 - 10:10	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
10:10 – 10:25	Tea
10:25-11:25	Academic Session- 7: Cultural approaches to conflict management Chaired by: TBA
10:25- 10:45	Paper 19: Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva (Sri Lanka) <i>Bilingualism as a Socio-cultural Adaptation and its Implications for Social Harmony in Sri Lanka</i>
10:45-11:05	Paper 20: Mr. W.H.M.S. Samarathunga (Sri Lanka) <i>Identifying Domestic Tourism as a Tool to Establish National Harmony in Sri Lanka</i>
11:05- 11:25	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
11:25- 12:25	Academic Session- 8: Culture, Development & National Harmony Chaired by: TBA
11:25-11:45	Paper 21: Asitha Punchihewa (Sri Lanka) <i>Transformation of Culture and Transformation of Development</i>
11:45-12:05	Paper 22: Dr. Waseem Raja (India) <i>Cultural Diversity, Religious Syncretism and growth of Indianness: perspectives on Syncretism and National harmony</i>
12:05-12:25	Discussion & Chairperson’s Remarks
12:25-13:00	Valedictory Session and Certificate Award Ceremony
13:00- 14:00	Lunch at Post Graduate Institute of Science (PGIS)- Roof Top

13:00 – 14:00	Plenary Session (Close Door Session only for Plenary Committee Members) Committee Room, University of Peradeniya Chaired by: Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre (Finalization of Research Themes/ Topics)
End of Academic Sessions for Day 2	

	Vice Chancellor’s Lodge, University of Peradeniya
19:00–21:00	Dinner Hosted by the Vice Chancellor, University of Peradeniya

Day 3 – Sunday, 17 May 2015	
8:00 – 17:00	Field Trip, Yapahuwa
7:00	Breakfast at Queens Hotel, Kandy
8:00–12:00	Climb Yapahuwa
12:00-13:30	Lunch
17:00	Return to Peradeniya

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Kandy: The Host City

Nestled in the central hills of Sri Lanka, Kandy is the island's second largest city boasting a history of tradition so rich that it is even called the cultural capital of the country. The last stronghold of native rule, Kandy is also the current administrative hub of the Central Province. The Sinhalese name that goes 'Mahanuwara' literally translates into 'The Great City'. This crown jewel of upland Sri Lankan heritage is most widely renowned for housing the Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha, a fact that has transported it to the heights of fame in the Buddhist world. The UNESCO declared it a world heritage site in 1988.



Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Kandy is defined by the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic that houses a tooth of the Buddha. The Temple is at once a hallowed site of Buddhists across the globe and the flagship tourist attraction of the city. It is a palatial complex whose grandeur has been effectively checked by the religion it was built to house. Hence though sprawling, the building does not feature excessive luxuries like gold, silks, and diamonds. What luxury

it does accommodate is a reflection of the royal life that shared the premises since it was first built. The Temple was first built in 1603 and has sustained a multitude of disruptions at the hands of European powers and, later, the LTTE. Thus, what survives today is a substantially modified version of the original Temple. As a gesture of respect to this World Heritage site and the religion it represents, no building in Kandy is permitted to be taller than the highest roof of the Temple.

Kandy Lake

An artificial body of water built by King Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe in 1807, the Kandy Lake was originally called the Milky Ocean. It is believed that the King wanted the lake to resemble a legendary lake in heaven that is frequently referred to in Buddhist literature. Accordingly, the wall surrounding the lake is built in the shape of clouds. The central island in the lake is believed to have been used as the King's harem. The lake is overlooked by both the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic and the Malwatte Temple, a venerated temple heading a fraternity of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which has added to the religious mystique of the lake. This place is used by people for strolls as well as relaxation in the peaceful ambience of early morning or late evening air.

Peradeniya Botanical Gardens

The Royal Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya is a lush landscape of approximately 150 acres that sprawls at the entrance to the city of Kandy, greeting visitors with a burst of colour and nature's abundance. The Gardens attract about 2 million visitors annually, and is renowned for its outstanding array of orchids among other things. The rolling grounds and generously wide trees offer an ambience of playfulness, of which many schools take advantage by organizing excursions to the Gardens. This landscape is believed to have been

originally created for extra-palatial court assemblies of King Wickramabahu III back in 1371 and was formally named as the Botanical Gardens in 1843 by the British.

University of Peradeniya

The University of Peradeniya was established as a branch of the University of Ceylon in 1942 and currently hosts eight faculties. Punctuating its 700-hectare landscape are bodies of water, feet of mountains, and portions of forests. Arguably the most aesthetically pleasing university in South Asia, this academic institute is situated right opposite the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens, both of which flank the entrance point to Kandy. It is the largest residential university in Sri Lanka, and has a number of partnerships with leading universities across the world. The unique traditions of this university have encouraged many works of art in Sri Lankan literature.

