

## **Preface**

SAARC is one of the most diverse regions of the world. It is rich both in tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The region possesses a highly influential diasporic community that impacts cultures globally, and we could identify many cultural strands that have been transferred through the migrants from country to country. These cultural strands have tremendous potential to be used strategically for the benefit of the people of the Member States of the SAARC.

Understanding the crucial role played by the diasporic cultures in the region; considering the fact that the South Asian region is highly influenced by the diasporic movements; noting the timely and significant need to initiate dialogue on the diasporic cultures and its impact for human development; and believing in the possibilities of building peace and harmony through intercultural understanding of the diasporic communities, the SAARC Cultural Centre has initiated a series of activities focusing on diasporic cultures of South Asia, including, organising of a SAARC Regional Conference on 'Diasporic Cultures of South Asia during eighteenth to twentieth centuries', at Galle (Sri Lanka) (15-17 March 2012), and commissioning eight research projects by the scholars from the region, for probing different facets of this theme. These initiatives are a new attempt to use the crucial role of culture in bringing people of South Asia closer, to promote people-to-people contact, and cultural cooperation as directed by the SAARC Agenda for Culture.

It is my pleasure to present this volume which covers a period of three centuries which was the most active period of migration of people within and outside the region. I thank all the

contributors of this monograph for their valuable contribution. I am sure that the research findings on the diasporic cultures of the SAARC region presented in this volume would be found useful by the Governments of the Member States in laying out new approaches towards the development strategies that will help them to exchange material and moral benefits and create cultural integration among peoples. The findings will also contribute towards developing dialogue between cultures and interaction amongst civilisations in South Asia.

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