

## Preface

South Asia, a region renowned for its rich cultural and linguistic heritage, expansive natural and archaeological landscapes and interestingly diverse lifestyles, is also home to a generous body of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. From the Hindu Kush to the blue waters of the Maldives, from the lush greenery of Sri Lanka to the bustling urban hub of Delhi, from the regal capitals of Nepal and Bhutan to pulsating Dhaka, South Asian societies have sustained their traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions through the sometimes taxing process of industrialisation and modernisation that is taking place in the region. Notwithstanding this general tendency, some components of this heritage today face the threat of extinction while yet others are patented and copyrighted not by the actual owners of such knowledge and expressions but by outside parties.

Against such a backdrop, the SAARC Cultural Centre as per its mandate for the protection of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage of South Asia organised a regional seminar entitled ‘SAARC Regional Seminar on Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions of South Asia’ (TK & TCE) in April 2013 with the participation of many South Asian academics and practitioners working for the preservation of traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. The seminar was a great success where a number of papers that dealt with various themes of TK & TCE were presented and debated, paving way for a learned and informative discussion pertaining to the preservation and protection of TK & TCE, in the region.

This volume includes sixteen research papers presented at the seminar. Spanning over a range of themes including traditional healing and wellbeing, traditional living and livelihood, traditional art and design, traditional music and art, legal safeguards for TK & TCE, and traditional costumes and handicrafts, these studies bring to fore many important aspects of the cultural dimension of South Asia.

I sincerely thank all contributors of this volume for lending their expertise to bring into light the cultural heritage of South Asia and in particular the challenges it faces in an increasingly ‘modernising’ world. I also thank all my colleagues at the SAARC Cultural Center without whom this publication would not have been possible. In this connection, I would like to place my appreciation on record for

the hard work done by Ms. Apsara Karunaratne and Ms. Nipunika O. Lecamwasam, for coordinating with the authors and also giving their unstinted support in editing this volume. I sincerely hope that this volume will generate a useful debate and some well-deserved actions by various stakeholders.

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