# **SAARC Cultural Centre**

# NEWSLETTER



June 2012

Volume 2 Number 2



#### **Editorial**

SAARC is a region where diverse cultures often overlap and determine strong bonds and friendship. In the second quarter of the year, the SAARC Cultural Centre embarked on a number of activities that highlighted common cultural continuum of the region. The SAARC Film Festival, 2012 and the SAARC Artists Camp added colour to the cultural journey that aims to bring people of South Asia closer and project its distinct identity. The SAARC Cultural Centre also released the second volume of its annual research journal SAARC Culture, Vol. 2.

The highlight of this quarter was the visit of the SAARC Secretary General H.E. Ahmed Saleem to the SAARC Cultural Centre. The newly appointed Secretary General commended the work done by the SAARC Cultural Centre and ensured his full support in developing this centre as the "Centre of Excellence."

We continue to look for contribution from our avid readers to further enrich our Newsletter, so that it can play its role as an effective tool of outreach and sharing of information. Towards this end short notices of new books, cultural events as well as feature articles are welcome from the readers.

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**29** May

## **SAARC Secretary-General Visits the SAARC Cultural Centre**





The SAARC Secretary General, H.E Ahmed Saleem, paid a courtesy call on the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, a Regional Centre established by the SAARC, on the 29th of May 2012. This was the second visit of a Secretary General of the SAARC to the Centre since its inception in 2009. The Secretary General met with the Director of the Centre, Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe and the staff of the centre. The Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre thanked the Secretary General for his visit and his constant support for the Centre and its many activities. A presentation marking out all the activities and programmes conducted by the Centre since its inception was made to the Secretary General, and the Secretary General reviewed the progress of the Centre's work and future plans, including the work in progress of the construction of the Centre's new building complex in Matara. A set of publications and a memento marking the visit was presented to the Secretary General by the Director. The Secretary General indicated that it was an honor to visit the SAARC Cultural Centre and the very cordial discussion that took place between the officials, would indeed be helpful for future relations between the SAARC Cultural Centre and the SAARC. This visit was made with intention of strengthening the role of the Regional Centres so that they could bring together nations of the SAARC as per the mandate given to them.

# **HE Ahmed Saleem, Secretary General of SAARC: A Profile**



HE Ahmed Saleem of Maldives assumed responsibility as the Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) with effect from 12 March 2012. Saleem is the eleventh Secretary-General of the eight-member regional grouping founded in 1985. Born in May 1949 in Malé, Mr. Saleem joined the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1968. He had a distinguished career spanning for over 26 years during which he served as Chief of Protocol and Head of the Multilateral Division at the Ministry, among others. As a career diplomat, Mr. Saleem served at the Maldives' High Commission in Sri Lanka and its Permanent Mission in New York. During his deputation to the Ministry of Finance for one year in 1977, he had the privilege of serving as his Government's first Alternate Governor for the World Bank, International Development Association and Asian Development Bank. From 1990 to 1993, he served as the first Director from Maldives at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.

Mr. Saleem was one of the original nine members when the Human Rights Commission of Maldives was first established by the Presidential decree on 10 December 2003. In 2006, he was appointed as the President of the newly constituted Human Rights Commission, a fully autonomous body under the Maldivian law and in full conformity with the Paris Principles. He served in that capacity until August 2010.



# **SAARC Secretary-General Calls on HE the President**

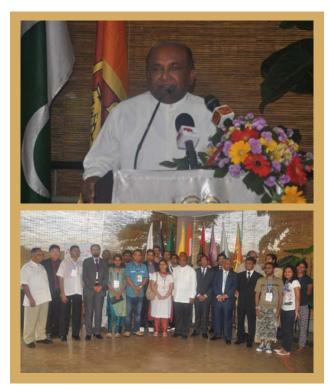
SAARC Secretary General, HE Ahmed Saleem paid a courtesy call on Sri Lankan President, HE Mahinda Rajapaksa on 28 May at the Temple Trees. Discussions at the meeting were focused on ways to implement the decisions made during the SAARC Summit held last year in the Maldives. Secretary General updated the President on the progress made in this regard and also on the work that still needed to be done. Secretary General Saleem stressed that strengthening the SAARC secretariat was one of his top priorities. He also added that SAARC has great potential, especially in strengthening trade ties between member countries.



### Reception in Honour of the Secretary General



A luncheon was hosted by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre at Agra Restaurant, Colombo 7, in honour of the visiting Secretary General on 29 May 2012. High Commissioners of the SAARC Member States and senior officials of the Ministry of Externa Affairs graced the occasion.



# **SAARC** Artist Camp 2012

The SAARC Artist Camp 2012, organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre, took place at the beautiful site of the Water's Edge in Battaramulla with artists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka coming together to not merely paint, but also exchange ideas and put their creative thoughts to canvass.

The artists from the sending Member States of the SAARC Region, came together for the Artist Camp held in Sri Lanka, and worked on paintings on a theme of "Nature and Art at its Best" over three days at the Water's Edge. Running parallel to the camp, was also an exhibition featuring the best of their paintings, held at the J.D.A Perera Art Gallery in Colombo. Interactive sessions were held daily so that Artists could share their experiences on different techniques and the creative thought process that comes into the creation of a particular work. Interpretation and integration of cultures of the different members states, and the role of this cultural influence on their works were very much a part of this discussion.





The Inauguration to the Artist Camp and Exhibition was held on the 7th of June 2012, under the distinguished patronage of the Hon Minister Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, Minister of Agriculture, who congratulated the SAARC Cultural Centre on such initiatives taken to bring together the artists of the region. The Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Mr. G.L.W Samarasinghe welcomed the visiting artists in his address, and reiterated the importance of such events. A unique feature of this Artist Camp included the participation of students of art, from the Department of Painting, University of Visual and Performing Arts, where as student volunteers they were able to not merely assist these renowned artists, but also be a part of a learning process whereby they were able paint side by side with the artist himself.

Paintings worked on site will continue to be exhibited at the different SAARC events organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre with the aim to promote SAARC Art in the region. Private viewings are accepted on request. The SAARC Artist Camp was a truly unique experience, which furthers the mandate of the SAARC Cultural Centre in bringing to together the countries of the SAARC Region through culture and the arts.

## **SAARC Film Festival 2012: A Report**

The SAARC Film Festival concluded yesterday with some of the best films in the region being acknowledged and awarded. The SAARC Film Festival was held for the second year this time, at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall, organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka. This year brought in nominations from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. Documentary and Feature films were screened daily from the 16th – 20th to the general public, and well known film directors from Singapore, Iran and Russia were adjudicators at the Film Festival. Nominations were received for two categories, namely, Feature and Documentary films.



The Award Ceremony was held under the patronage of Honourable W.D.J. Seneviratne, Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs. The Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre- Mr. G.L.W Samarasinghe, welcomed the distinguished gathering and spoke of the importance of such a festival in bring nations together. The Chief Guest Honourable W.D.J. Seneviratne, congratulated the SAARC Cultural Centre in organizing the Film Festival and reiterated his support for such events. Directors of some of the nominated films from Bangladesh, India, and the Maldives were also present at this festival which also included a workshop on "Film Vs Digital -



The Impending Extinction of the celluloid cinema, and the challenges ahead, with panelists, Dr Nihalsingha, Mr Chandran Rutnam, and Mr Vimukthi Jayasundara and Key Note Speaker – Mr Phillip Cheah from Singapore.

The main trophy for Best Documentary Film, at the Festival, 2012, was given the documentary "Saving Face" from Pakistan, Directed by Daniel Junge and Sharmee Obaid Chinoy, for its brave exposition of a deep social problem about violence against women, and it's shocking footage of both victims and perpetrators. The Award was collected by H.E Seema Illai Balloch, the High Commissioner of Pakistan. An honourable mention was made of "The Great School Teacher" from Sri Lanka, Directed by Mayuri Wanaguru.

The Best Feature Film Trophy was given to Akasa Kusum, from Sri Lanka, Directed by Prasanna Vithanage, for its poetic evocation of a golden age of cinema, seen through the memories of love and loss of an ageing actress. Mr Asoka Serasinghe, Chairman, National Film Corporation, accepted the award on behalf of the Director. The Silver Medal for the Best Feature Film was given to Pakistan for Ram Chand Pakistani, Directed by Mehreen Jabbar, and the Bronze Medal for the Best Feature Film, was given to the film Biyari, Directed by Mr. K. P. Suveeran, who was also present at the festival.

Certificates of Recognition were given to Mr Morshedul Islam – Best Director, for the film Khelaghor from Bangladesh, Best Actor to Manzar Sehbai, and Rashid Farooqi for their roles in the film Bol and Ram Chand Pakistani respectively, and Best Actress to Malini Fonseka, for her role in Akasa Kusum. The Special Jury Certificate of Recognition went to Asoka Handagama for the film Vidhu.

The SAARC Film Festival is an initiative of the SAARC Cultural Centre. The SAARC Cultural Centre acknowledges the support from the Iranian Embassy as well as the Embassy of the Russian Federation in facilitating the visit of the adjudicators.





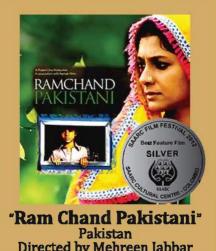




#### The Film Festival will be an annual event, encouraging the arts, and bringing nations together



**Best Feature Film (Trophy)** 

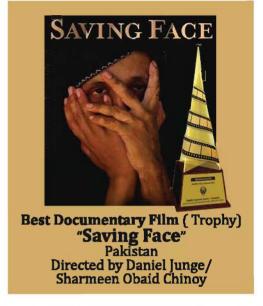


Directed by Mehreen Jabbar
Best Feature Film (Silver)

"By AR India
Directed by K.P. Suveeran

Best Feature Film (Bronze)





#### **Best Documentary Film Honorable Mention:**

"The Great School Teacher" – Sri Lanka Directed by Mayri Wanaguru

The Special Jury Certificate of Recognition: Asoka Handagama/Sri Lanka/"Vidhu"

Certificate of Recognition to the Best Director:
Morshedul Islam/Bangladesh/"Khelaghar"

#### Certificate of Recognition:

Best Actor (Manzar Sehbai/Pakistan – "bol")
Rashid Faroogi/Pakistan: "Ram Chand Pakistani"

#### **Best Actress:**

Malini Fonseka/Sri Lanka/"Akasa Kusum"

# SAARC Workshop on Film Vs Digital: The Impending Extinction of

# the Celluloid Cinema and the Challenges Ahead.

On the occasion of the SAARC Film Festival, 2012, the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo organized a Workshop to address one of the burning topics of the cine industry. Ever since the inception of the motion pictures during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, celluloid films had been the media for creating and experiencing the cine magic. With the advancement of technology, the acetate and polyester based films also came into use, but the basic technology remained the same, i.e. a transparent celluloid, acetate, or polyester base coated with an emulsion containing light-sensitive chemicals (silver halides). It involved the basic concepts of the conventional photography.



Beginning in the late 1980s, Hollywood film-makers started experimenting with a new format which was set to revolutionize the cinema-making and viewing worldwide. This was 'digital cinematography'. In May 2001, Once Upon a Time in Mexico (Dir. Robert Rodriguez) became the first well known movie to be shot in 24 frame-persecond high-definition digital video, and this technology has been advancing at a phenomenal speed ever since. With the coming of the digital technology into play in film-making, a ripple effect followed. Now the conventional – film-based – projection system was no longer suitable to project the digital cinema.

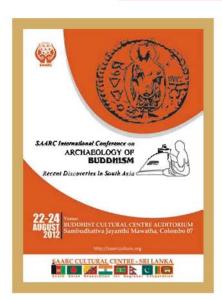
Film vs. Digital is a topic which is being hotly debated in nearly all of the cinema-producing countries. While some take an absolute view in favour of one or another, there are others who feel that neither is better or an absolute technological solution and the choice must depend on the application.

The SAARC Workshop examined this debate with the perspective of the South Asian Cinema and its preparedness to face the challenges posed by the impending extinction of the film-based cinema. The debate was ignited by a Keynote address by Mr. Philip Cheah, (Singapore) and steered by three eminent cine personalities from Sri Lanka: Dr. D.B. Nihalsingha, Mr. Chandran Rutnam and Mr. Vimukthi Jayasundara. The plenary session of the workshop was chaired by Mr. Ashoka Serasinghe, Chairman, National Film Corporation, Sri Lanka.



# **Announcement:** SAARC International Conference on 'Archaeology of

## **Buddhism: Recent Discoveries in South Asia'.**



SAARC International Conference on 'Archaeology of Buddhism: Recent Discoveries in South Asia' would focus on Buddhist sites and remains that have been worked up during the last six decades or so. The proposed conference will greatly facilitate advanced research in the archaeology of the region by the comparison of data from various parts of the Subcontinent.

The Conference is conceived as a platform to assess the present state of the Buddhist archaeological sites and remains in the South Asian region and also draw a road-map for their conservation and management so as to secure them for future generations.

The Conference will be held at International Buddhist Cultural Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka from 22 to 24 August 2012. It will include Paper Reading Sessions, Poster Session, Photographic Exhibition, Book Fair, Screening of Documentaries/ Films and a Post-Conference Tour to Anuradhapura on 25 August 2012.

For more details visit- www.saarcculture.org

#### Paper Reading Session:

Each of the themes will have one Keynote speaker plus at least 5-6 speakers. The selection of the Keynote speakers will be made by the SCC on the basis of the research profile of the participant.



#### **Book Exhibition-cum-sale**

A Special Exhibition-cum-Sale of books related to the broad theme of the Conference would also be organised at the Conference venue, where leading publishers from the region will be invited to display their publications.



# Exhibition of Paintings by the Contemporary Artists

An exhibition of paintings entitled 'The Lord Buddha through Contemporary Eyes', showcasing the creative works of the Contemporary Artists residing in Sri Lanka, will be mounted to coincide with the Conference.



#### Screening of Documentary Films

Screening of a series of documentaries related to the theme of the Conference is being planned as a run-up to the Conference.



#### Photographic Exhibition

An Exhibition of photographs of Buddhist Art (artefacts - sculptures in stone, metal, etc.), Archaeology and Architecture in South Asia will be mounted at the Conference venue.

#### **Post Conference Tour**

A full day Post-Conference tour will be organized on 25 August 2012 to Anuradhapura, for the participants of the Conference.

Anuradhapura is one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka, famous for its well-preserved ruins of ancient Lankan civilization. It lies in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, 205 km north of the current capital Colombo. It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and one of the eight World Heritage Sites of Sri Lanka.



# **Announcement:** Sri Lankan Airlines Appointed 'Official Airline' for the SAARC

# International Conference on Archaeology of Buddhism

Srilankan Airlines, the national carrier of Sri Lanka, has been appointed 'Official Airline' for the SAARC International Conference on Archaeology of Buddhism. As part of this arrangement, SriLankan Airlines would offer all participants and accompanying persons a discount of 15% on economy class airfare and a 10% on business class airfare (on the prevailing market fare at the time of ticketing) for purchase of tickets for registered delegates traveling to Sri Lanka from its online stations which currently are as follows:



Indian Sub-Continent: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Cochin, Bangalore, Trichy, Trivandrum, Pakistan, Maldives

Far East: Singapore, Beijing, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Shanghai, Canton, Tokyo

Middle East: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Dammam, Jeddah, Doha, Muscat, Kuwait, Bahrain

Europe/Eurasia: London, Rome, Milan, Paris, Frankfurt, Moscow, Zurich

To avail these discounts, ticketing will have to be done directly at SriLankan Airlines offices and not through agents and proof of registration (a letter confirming participation by the SAARC Cultural Centre) will be needed. All related taxes must be paid for separately and are not discountable.

For details, please visit: http://www.srilankan.com/en\_uk/coporate/contact

## **Announcement:** Call for Contributions for SAARC Culture, Vol. 3: 2012

SAARC Culture is an annual research journal of the SAARC Cultural Centre Colombo, which seeks to provide a platform to the academics, practitioners and policy makers of culture in the region to present their research findings and to debate on issues of mutual and common interest. The journal is widely disseminated as an on-line publication and also as hard copy to project cultural richness and cultural diversity of the SAARC Region.

The first two issues of the journal were thematic in nature, viz.:

- Vol. 1: 2010: 'Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region', and
- Vol. 2: 2011: 'Diminishing Cultures in the SAARC Region'.

#### **Submissions**

Research articles and book reviews are invited for the next issue of the SAARC Culture (Vol. 3: 2012). Please refer to the Guidelines for Contributors.



# **Last date for submission** 5 September 2012

#### For more details

www.saarcculture.org journal-scc@sltnet.lk sccpublications@gmail.com

# Announcements: SAARC Collections of Contemporary Short Stories and Poems 2012

With the aim of promoting South Asian Literature, the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo has taken steps to publish two collections of Contemporary Short Stories and Poems written by writers in the SAARC Region. All SAARC Member States are requested to select five English translations of best short stories, and poems on any theme originally published in local languages of respective Member States and submit them to the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, for consideration to

publish in its Compilations of Contemporary Short Stories and Poems.

#### Short Stories and Poems Submissions

Only English translations of Short Stories will be accepted for publication. Poems will be published in both original and the English language.



#### **Submission Guidelines**

The following information should be submitted with each short story or poem,

- 1. Author's / poet's name, affiliation, postal address, e-mail address, phone numbers
- Brief biographical entry of the author, not exceeding 100 words (This will be published with the short story/ poem)
- 3. Title and the poem (in native language and the edited version of the English translation)
- 4. Translator's name, to be published
- 5. Editor's name, affiliation and brief bibliographical entry
- 6. Software to open the text in native language

The short stories/ poems should be sent to the SAARC Cultural Centre, 224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka. (or e-mailed to-sccpublications@gmail.com)

All short stories / poems should be submitted as a hard copy and in electronic format. The electronic document could be e-mailed or sent via a CD. The document should be saved in Microsoft word. Rich Text Format.

The copyright in the Compilation of the Short Stories will remain with the SAARC Cultural Centre.

#### **Deadline for Submission**

Edited version of the short story/ poem and all the requested information should be submitted to the SAARC Cultural Centre, on or before 30th June 2012.

# The Wheel of Life: Development of Cultural Industries

The SAARC Cultural Centre will also organize the Development of Cultural Industries Expo in New Delhi, (tentatively from 27 September to 2 October 2012). The SAARC Cultural Centre identifies the need to look into Cultural Industries, as their future seem bleak. Lying at the crossroads of the arts, business and technology, the cultural industries sector is increasingly important for the benefit of the people of the region, especially from an economic point of view.

The SAARC Cultural Centre will embark on three programmes to not merely promote cultural industries in the region, but also provide useful tools that would promote interaction, create a platform for a fading traditional crafts of the region, and provide a data base for interested parties.

The programme on Cultural Industries will consist of two main components, viz.:

- SAARC Exhibition cum Workshop on Traditional Handloom of South Asia titled, "The Wheel of Life" – where nominations will be invited from amongst the Traditional Weaving Organizations or reputed weavers from all parts of the SAARC Member States.
- 2) Mapping of Cultural Industries A project to span over 5 years and starting with a Conference to determine the scope and the methodology of the Project will be launched. The final output would be a report, that will concentrate on cultural, economic, legal, technological and educational aspects of the product of cultural industries. It will also look into data on employment, intellectual property rights, new products and exports. The report will be the main document that will warrant comprehensive research on the identified sectors.
- 3) Publications of Source Books/Directories The Centre will embark on a project to accumulate data on specific sectors of Cultural Industries, starting with Traditional Handloom, which will serve as a tool to promote Cultural Industries in the region and outside.





# **Martin Wickremasinghe Trust Donates Publications to the Resource Centre**

Martin Wickramasinghe Trust donated a set of publications to the SAARC Cultural Centre. They include some of the English Translations of the renowned Sri Lankan author Martin Wickramasinghe who inspired generations by his style of writing. An all-time literary icon, his works are still placed in the forefront of Sinhala literature and are sought by readers, students, and researchers. Among the donates include some of his rare contributions made on literature, art, history, and science.



# Upcoming Programme: Cultural Festival and Symposium on Traditional Drumming (Bhutan)

This cultural festival and symposium on traditional drumming is coming up in Thimphu in November 2012. This festival is geared towards attracting different drums used in the SAARC Member States and will focus on the variety of drums used in all walks of life in the region.

## **Upcoming Programme: SAARC Film Day**

In continuation with the film day series, the SAARC Cultural Centre will screen a film from Maldives to coincide with the National Independence Day of Maldives on 26th July 2012. Further details will be available soon on our website.



# Feature Article: Paththini Worship in Sri Lanka

Paththini worship has been introduced to the island of Lanka by two different kings at two different times and at two different places.

The first instance had been with King Gajabahu I (112-134 A.D.) to the North-Eastern part of the country. At that time the king had to cross the sea to India to rescue 12,000 people taken away by the mighty Pandiyan. The Pandyan king had needed this people to build the embankments of the Kavery river in order to stop the flood waters from destroying the city. These people had been taken away by a Pandiyanarmy, invited by Hathahey, a discontented Sri Lankan farmer, during the reign of King Vanka-Nasika Tissa (109-112A.D.) the father of King Gajabahu. The rescue operation had been without conflict and together with the 12,000 taken away another 12,000 of Indians were brought back and settled down in Sri Lanka.

At this occasion the Paththini Anklet, the book of sacred verses and the bowl that Buddha had used to take his meals in, had been brought to Sri Lanka. Having brought these items, for one week the king had got the Arahath Buddhist monks to chant *Pirith* in Pali and then the following week from the sacred Tamil book, Paththini verses had been chanted. It was subsequently that these verses had been translated into Hela (i.e. Sinhala). Since then these verses are narrated annually at folk rituals of Paththini worship. These verses which came down through the oral tradition were collected, compiled and published in the year 1959 by Hewamadduma and Rev Paravahera Saddhajewa Thero of Kumarakanda Buddhist temple at Dodanduwa, in the southern province of Sri Lanka.

The publication *Panthis Khol Mura Kavi* consists of 35 interconnected chapters of sacred verses



and is divided into numerous narrative sections of the text devoted to stories concerning Paththini. *Panthis* means thirty five and *kavi* means verses, in Sinhalese. *Khol Mura* is adapted from *Khaval Murei* from Tamil.

One part is about what happened between Kannaki (The Tamil name of Paththini, but also a name which indicates that it is Paththini before her deification) and Palanga, the only man she wanted.

The next narrates the story of the desertion of Paththini by Palanga, who orients himself towards Madhavi, the ganika (i.e. high-class prostitute).

This is followed by the story of Gajaba, the rescue of the 12,000 people with the help of the giant Neela, and the introduction of Paththini worship in Sri Lanka.

The next part narrates the story of the seven previous births of Paththini (i.e. hath-Paththini) and another part tells us about the deification of Kannaki, through the eyes of an aborigine Vedda chief who appeals to his people, saying that Paththini is worthy of worship because she had torn off one of her breasts as a protest against the injustice of the king of Madurai who had put to death her husband who was innocent of the accusation of stealing the anklet of the queen.

Another part narrates the story of the Chola King Karikal, including the incident of Agastha Rishi and the ending of seven year famine in the Chola country, and the flooding of the Kavery river.

The next part tells us the story of an incurable head- ache of king Seraman (Cera muni) who had dispatched the queen to Sri Lanka to offer a Golden Mango to Paththini.

The event mentioned in this last chapter took place in the western province of Sri Lanka. The queen had entered Lanka through an ancient port at Wattala and had travelled inland through

Iriyagama to Nava-Gamuwa where the present main Paththini Shrine is situated, and then to Ruwanwella where the golden mango was offered to Paththini at the first *Gam-madu* folk ritual. It is this event that is considered as the second introduction or the re-establishment of the Paththini worship in Sri Lanka.

It is interesting to note that of the 35 chapters, one particular chapter, the *Madu Puraya* is bilingual. In this chapter the verses alternate between Sinhala and Tamil. These bilingual verses of Sinhala and Tamil are sandwiched alternately and had been sung at *Gam-madu* rituals.

Presently the Shrines in Sri Lanka are referred to as Paththini Devale in Singhalese and as Kannaki Amman Kovils in Tamil.

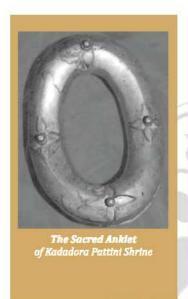
#### Srilal Perera

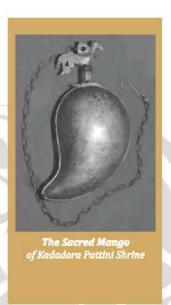
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# **New Publications**

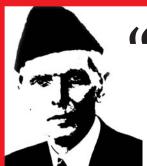








# **Culture** Quote



Character, courage, industry and perseverance are the four pillars on which the whole edifice of human life can be built and failure is a word unknown to me. "

> - Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876 - 1948), **Quaid-e-Azam** (Father Of Nation, Pakistan)

















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