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# SAARC NEWSLETTER

## Editorial

The SAARC Cultural Centre continues to bring people together through culture, and over the past few months, several programmes were conducted successfully, showcasing the rich cultural diversity that is shared among the SAARC countries.

The Royal Government of Bhutan played host to the SAARC Cultural Festival on Folk Dance, which was held in all its cultural extravagance in April this year. Several performances were held at various venues and an exhibition of Folk instruments of the SAARC Region, was also organized as a fringe event. The SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony was held in May in Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, with the attendance of over 50 participants from the SAARC Region. Yet another milestone was achieved, when for the first time, the SAARC Cultural Centre declared as the SAARC Cultural Capital, the historic city of Bamyān in Afghanistan for the year 2015. The Inauguration of the Cultural Capital took place in May 2015, with a cultural show and food festival organized to coincide with the event. The SAARC Film Festival was also held in May for the fifth consecutive year, where films from the SAARC Region were showcased and well received by film enthusiasts and the general public. The SAARC Literary Festival on South Asian Poetry was held in July in Bangalore- this too saw the mingling of poets and novelists, and was organized in collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, the National Academy of Letters, Government of India.

The SAARC Cultural Centre welcomes its New Director, appointed by the Government of Sri Lanka, Mr Wasanthe Kotuwella, who assumed duties in July. The Director and the team at the SAARC Cultural Centre, continues to showcase culture of the SAARC countries at its many programmes, both performance and research oriented. We hope you find the time to visit the website of the Centre [www.saarcculture.org](http://www.saarcculture.org), for more information on upcoming programmes.

- Editor



*New Director- SAARC Cultural Centre Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella assumes duties*

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Dynamics in National Harmony  
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2015

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Poetry: Reflections of a Cultural  
Confluence 2015



## New Director Wasanthe Kotuwella assumes duties at SAARC Cultural Centre

From page 1

“

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies & gentlemen  
Good Morning

It is my great honour to warmly welcome you as the new director of the SAARC Cultural Centre. Thank you for attending this simple reception marking my assumption of duties this morning. Much to my delight, this organization deals with one of the main pillars of social progress and human upliftment - CULTURE.

As the new director of the SAARC Cultural centre, I am keenly aware of my responsibilities. I will do my utmost to fulfill my duties, to pave the way for further cooperation among the SAARC countries. Those countries may be far away geographically, but sincere brotherhood will bridge the gap and bring us together in our common effort to create a better future for our future generations.

I will also do my best to maintain and further enhance the good working and personal relations that my predecessor has established with other organizations and with you all. Cheers !! Thank you !!!

”



Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella welcomes Mr. Saman Ekanayake, Secretary to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe



New Director introduces the staff of the SAARC Cultural Centre to Mr. Saman Ekanayake



# EVENTS-CULTURAL FESTIVAL

## SAARC Cultural Festival on Folk Dance, Bhutan 2015

Folk dances and folklore are those that bring out the true expression of the culture of the people and tells us a story, a background, tracing back to their roots. This is an important part of Culture, and Culture within the region is diverse, and is influenced by many factors. Culture, rich in tradition and diverse in nature, brings together the peoples of nations, in an exchange of art that has no barriers. Seeing and participating in Cultural Festivals is the best way in experiencing culture, traditions, life and people, and to promote cultural cooperation and development.

The SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo organized a three day Cultural Festival on Folk Dance to celebrate the diversity of culture, ethnicities and peoples of the SAARC Region in Thimphu, Bhutan from 8 to 12 April 2015. A variety of folk dances were performed by the participants.

A total of 61 participants participated at the festival from the Member States representing

Bangladesh (10), Bhutan (20), India (16), Nepal (7) and Sri Lanka (7).

The opening parade and event took place at the Clock Tower in Thimphu attended by His Excellency Home Minister Lyonpo Damcho Dorji as Chief Guest. A one day workshop was organized at Hotel Riverview on the second day. The Resource persons and the representative of the Member States had an interesting discussion on the dances of the respective countries and the changes taking place evolving over the years. Musical instruments were also displayed at the Royal Academy of Performing Arts auditorium.

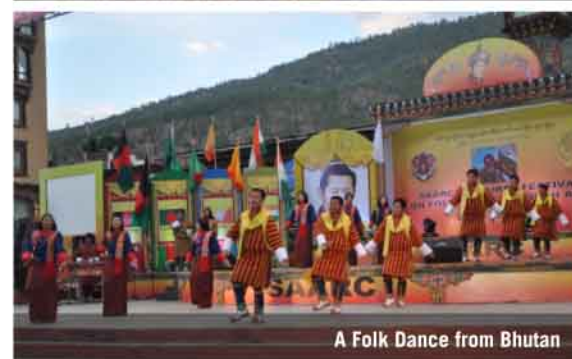
The second day dance performance was staged at Royal Thimphu College auditorium and on the concluding day at the Clock Tower with the awarding of certificates. The field trip to Paro Takstang was enjoyed by all.



A Folk dance performance from India



Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo Addressing the Gathering



A Folk Dance from Bhutan



Nepal Folk Artist is addressing Artists



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre delivering the Welcome Address



Mr. Rinzin Penjor, Director, Department of Culture Bhutan Addressing Artists





# EVENTS-REGIONAL SEMINAR

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

SAARC Cultural Centre is pleased to announce the successful conclusion of the SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia. The Seminar was held from 15-16 May 2015 at the Senate Room, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. It was attended by over 50 participants, from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka.

The Seminar was convened with a view to provide a platform to the academics and experts on the subject to discuss key issues, moot research questions and to identify themes and subthemes of Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony in South Asia that will merit independent and in-depth research.

### Inaugural Session

The Welcome Address was delivered by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Former Director, SAARC Cultural Centre while Prof. Shantha K. Hennayake, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka delivered the Keynote Speech.

### Academic Sessions

A total of twenty two research papers were presented in eight academic sessions spread over two days (15-16 May 2015). The sessions were along the following themes:

*Introductory Session (1 Session),*

*Role of Literature and Arts in Creating a Culture of Peace (1 Session),*

*Role of Popular Culture in Promoting Regional Harmony (Mass Media/ Sports/ Films/ Music etc.) (1 Session),*



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre delivering the Welcome Address



Prof. Hennayake, delivering the Keynote Speech



Deputy Director, Ms. Soundarie Dayid Rodrigo lighting the oil lamp







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*Culture & Identity (1 Session),*

*Education and Peace-building (1 Session),*

*Culture & Identity (Case Studies) (1 Session),*

*Cultural Approaches to Conflict Management (1 Session) and*

*Culture, Development & National Harmony (1 Session)*

### **The Plenary Session**

At the conclusion of the Academic Sessions, a Plenary Session was held on 16 May 2015 as a closed-door event with the participation of all Chairpersons of the Academic Sessions. It was chaired by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Former Director, SAARC Cultural Centre. The objectives of the Plenary Session were to consider all suggestions submitted by the participants in Feedback forms, finalize the Research themes/topics for the purpose of inviting research proposals under the SAARC Research Programme on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony (CDNH) in South Asia (2015-16), and to review the Form/ Guidelines for the submission of the research proposals. The Plenary Committee perused all the Feedback forms received from the participants of the Seminar and various themes suggested therein were discussed in detail.

### **Valedictory Session**

The Valedictory Session of the Seminar was held at the Senate Room, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Former Director, SAARC Cultural Centre and Prof. Shantha K. Hennayake, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of



Prof. Sat Ghosh at the discussion



Valedictory Session



Apsara Karunaratne delivering the vote of thanks

Peradeniya distributed certificates and mementos to all participants, paper presenters and delegates of the Seminar. Ms. Apsara Karunaratne, Research Assistant, SAARC Cultural Centre proposed the Vote of Thanks.

### **Post-Seminar Tour**

A full day post-seminar tour was organized for the participants of the seminar to Yapahuwa on 17 May 2015. King Buvanekabahu IV 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. The transport for the post-seminar tour was facilitated by the University of Peradeniya.



Participants visiting Yapahuwa





# EVENTS-FILM FESTIVAL

## SAARC Film Festival, May 26th - 31st 2015, Colombo, Sri Lanka

The SAARC Cultural Centre hosted the Film Festival from 26 to 31 May 2015 in Colombo. It is one of our most successful popular annual events. The Film Festival gives a chance to showcase some of the best national award winning films from the South Asian Region.

The main objective of the SAARC Film Festival was to promote culture and hold unity amidst diversity of culture that is shared among the SAARC Member States. Films nominated are to promote culture, foster friendship, and cultural harmony among the Member States and not show films that would in any way be prejudicial to another country.

Keeping its mandate of promoting culture in the region through different modes of art, 18 movies comprising of nine feature films and nine short films were received to showcase films as cultural expressions.

The event was also aimed at, providing a platform for exchange of ideas and sharing of views among the film directors in South Asia. Cinema is a form of art which has a powerful medium of expression with easy accessibility of advanced digital knowledge. Information Technology (IT) has made this world a global village.

All Member States nominated Two Feature Films, as well as Two Short Films for the SAARC Film Festival 2015.

The films nominated were given the 'SAARC Best Feature film Award', and the Best Short Film Award. A Silver and a Bronze medal were also awarded in the feature film category followed by Awards for Best Actor/Actress. The SAARC Film Award is an

initiative by the SAARC Cultural Centre to promote films within the region, and to give film directors an incentive to focus on themes within the region.

Best films from the region were judged by an international panel of jury of professionals from Iran, Kazakhstan and Singapore.

### Masoud Djafari Djozani from Iran



Masoud Djafari Djozani is a well known film director, screenwriter and film producer adjudicated the films as one of the Juries. He is world renowned for being an outstanding playwright for the play, "Stories Have Become Sorrows" which he wrote at the age of twenty. He has received many awards in film.

### Philip Cheah from Singapore.

Philip Cheah is a long time champion of little known films from the Southeast Asian region. He is a film critic and is the editor of BigO, Singapore's only independent pop culture publication. He is also on the selection committee of the Locarno International Film Festival and

Founding Member of the Singapore International Film Festival.



### Dr. Gulnara Abikeyeva from Kazakhstan



Dr. Gulnara Abikeyeva is a well known Kazakh film critic and film researcher. Since 2005 to 2013 she was an artistic director for the International Film Festival Eurasia in Almaty. She is the author of ten books about cinema, mostly about Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries.



...



Masoud Jafari Jozani, Adjudicator from Iran addressing the film workshop



Mr. Edwin Ariyadasa, Panelist at the film workshop



Dr. Gulnara Abikeyeva, Adjudicator from Kazakhstan addressing the film workshop



The film directors and artists attended the opening ceremony which was graced by Madam Sumitra Peiries, a well-known Sri Lankan film maker.

The Directors were invited to participate in a workshop intended to promote interaction within the film community of the region, as well as share film making knowledge for young film directors, enthusiasts and film critiques.

The film workshop was held on 29th May 2015 on the topic, *"South Asian Films in the World Cinema"* held at the Indian Cultural Centre Auditorium.

Besides the three Jury Members, distinguished film personalities graced the occasion, Mr. Edwin Ariyadasa, well known founding father of Mass Communication and Media was also present.

All topics related to movie making were deliberated and ideas and opinions shared from budget, to censorship hardships to criticism.



Mr. Karma T. Wangchuk delivering the vote of thanks



Welcome address by Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director SAARC Cultural Centre



## SAARC Film Festival 2015

### Special Jury Certificate of Recognition for New Talent

Ms. Nayani Chandrasinghe "Dreams, Weavers and Viewers" (Sri Lanka)

#### Best Director

Mr. Rabin Chandrasiri "Patibhana" (Sri Lanka)

#### Best Actor

Mr. Dulal Sarkar Film "Choder Chobi" (India)

#### Best Actress

Ms. Farzana Nawabi Film "Mina Walking" (Afghanistan)

#### Best Short Film

"Love ? Lust ? Life ?" which is directed by Utpal Jha from Nepal for "its transcending evocation of poetic reality - both sensual and philosophical"

**Best Feature Film Bronze Medal** was given for the film "Insaana" directed by Ali Seazan from Maldives for "its experimental attempt to capture audience interest through genre and social problems"

**Best Feature Film Silver Medal** was awarded to "Mrittika Maya", a film directed by Gazi Rakayet from Bangladesh for "its careful references to cultural tradition and its strong position on humanitarian values" and the

**Best Feature Film Trophy** was given to "Motor Bicycle", a film directed by Shameera Rangana Naotunna Narath Dharmasiri from Sri Lanka for "being both social and entertaining while pointing to the harsh reality of urban life and the lost hopes of the youth"

# MOTOR



Sameera Naotunna receiving trophy for the Best Film

The closing ceremony was graced by Pandit W.D. Amaradeva, legendary lyricist and singer of Sri Lanka among many film buffs and enthusiasts at the National Film Cinema Hall in Colombo with great fanfare. Many of the upcoming film directors and film lovers returned with a great sense of happiness.





# EVENTS-INAUGURATION-SAARC CULTURAL CAPITAL

## Bamiyan – the SAARC Cultural Capital 2015

Bamiyan in Afghanistan was chosen from amongst the SAARC Member States, as the SAARC Cultural Capital with yearlong events planned to take place in the city of Bamiyan.

The SAARC Cultural Capital would promote cultural activities yearlong with both participatory programs where all member states would participate and non-participatory programs organized by the government of Afghanistan.

Some participatory programmes include SAARC Artist Camp, South Asian Music Festival, South Asian Food Festival and South Asian Handicraft Expo.

Non Participatory Programmes will be conducted by Afghan government which includes SAARC Film Festival, SAARC Film Days, Exhibition of Paintings by South Asian Artists, SAARC Photo Exhibition, SAARC Photo Exhibition on Historical Sites and Decorative Art.

### Main event

Bamiyan was declared as the SAARC Cultural Capital 2015 on 5 June 2015, Friday at a glittering inauguration attended by His Excellency Second Vice President



Mr. Sarvar Danesh, His Excellency Second Vice President & Chief Executive Officer Mr. Mohammad Muhaqqiq and half the cabinet Ministers and many diplomat corps from Kabul at Bamiyan. Other VIPs included Minister for Women Affairs, Chief Justice of Afghanistan and lady Member of Parliament from Bamiyan.

Welcome remarks were made by the Bamiyan Governor followed by His Excellency Deputy Afghan President Sarwar Danish. He was joined by Second Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mohammad Muhaqqiq and Information Minister Abdul Bari

Jahani at inaugurating the ceremony.

Message of the Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat was read out by Ms. Savithri, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu.

The delegates from SAARC Secretariat were also taken to Band-e-Amir and other historical places and warmly received to cultural programs and events organized for the opening ceremony. The delegates were taken to call on His Excellency the President at ARG, the Presidential Palace on 7th June 2015.

## SAARC Literary Festival on South Asian Poetry: Reflections of a Cultural Confluence

The SAARC Literary Festival on South Asian Poetry: Reflections of a Cultural Confluence was held from 2-5 July 2015, at Hotel Lalit Ashok, Bangalore, India. The Festival was held in collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, the National Academy of Letters, Government of India. The Festival was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Mr. Pramod Jain, Joint

Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp. Over 50 delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the Festival.

The Welcome Address was delivered by Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre followed by the

addresses by Mr. Pramod Jain, Joint Secretary Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari, President, Sahitya Akademi, keynote speech by Mr. Malinda Seneviratne, noted poet from Sri Lanka and vote of thanks by Ms. Apsara Karunaratne, Research Assistant, SAARC Cultural Centre.





Mr. Malinda Seneviratne, one of the most eminent poets in Sri Lanka who has authored a number of award winning poetry collections, in his keynote speech titled 'The Quest for Commonality' expounded on the commonalities of human emotions and he mentioned that "we are nothing if not the fraternal citizens of a borderless and free territory of minds and hearts in a region called South Asia, a geographical accident produced by the movement of hidden plates over millennia and a passing specificity made of movement, sharing and exchange in the commerce of art, philosophy, innovation, goods, services and power."

The Literary Festival included six country presentations, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In the country presentation, each delegation presented historical developments and current status of poetry in their respective countries.

The Festival consisted of paper reading sessions and poetry reading sessions. A total of 17 papers were presented over 4 days (2-5 July 2015). The sessions were along the following themes:

- Country Presentations (6 Sessions),
- Colonial and Post-colonial South Asian Poetry: From Agitation to Celebration (1 Session),

- South Asian Poetry: Shared Characteristics and Trends (1 Session),
- Current Developments of South Asian Poetry (1 Session),
- South Asian Poets & their Contributions (Case Studies) (1 Session) and
- The South Asian Poem through the Ages (1 Session)

The Poetry reading Sessions included 4 sessions with 33 participating poets reading their own compositions both in English and their native languages. The purpose of such poetry readings is to make known to the gathering the rich poetry in the South Asian Region as well as bringing Poets together.

At the end of the Festival, a Valedictory Session was held at

the Festival venue. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre distributed certificates and mementos to all the participants of the Festival.



Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre addressing the gathering



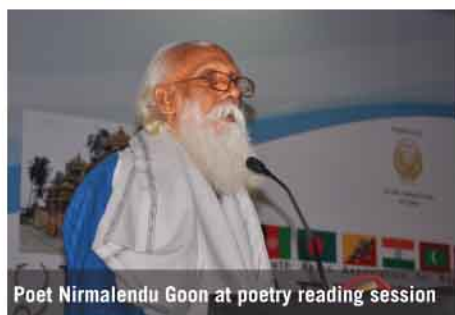
Ms. Apsara Karunaratne, Research Asst. welcomes the Chief Guest



Mr. Malinda Seneviratne delivering keynote speech



Surjit Patar from India at poetry reading session



Poet Nirmalendu Goon at poetry reading session



Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo at Poetry reading session



# ANNOUNCEMENT

## SAARC Photographic Competition 2015



SAARC  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
Competition  
2015

Theme: World Historical Sites

Results out - November 2015  
[www.saarcculture.org](http://www.saarcculture.org) | [sccphotocomp@gmail.com](mailto:sccphotocomp@gmail.com)



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SAARC Cultural Centre has successfully conducted two SAARC Photographic competitions, with the aim of not only promoting young photographers from the region, but also with the goal of showcasing pictures from the SAARC Region. Today,

photography has become an art by itself, with many modern advances to photography. The SAARC Cultural Centre hopes to continue encouraging photographers in the SAARC Region, by having a competition of Photographs. In 2015, the theme selected was 'World Historical

Sites in the SAARC Region". Over 200 applications were received and the results will be announced in November 2015. The best photographs will be on Exhibition at SAARC Charter Day on the 8th of December 2015.

## Call for Contributions for SAARC Culture, Vol. 6: 2015 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.

Research articles and book reviews are invited for the next issue of the SAARC Culture (Vol. 6: 2015). Please refer to the Guidelines for Contributors in our web site.

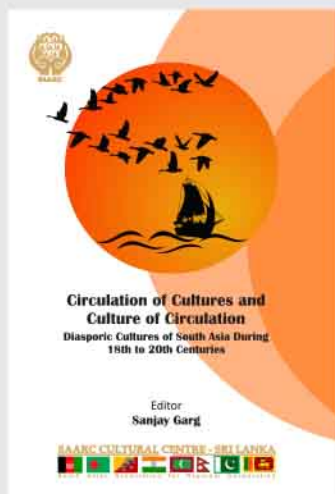
For more details please write us  
[sccpublications@gmail.com](mailto:sccpublications@gmail.com)



Volume 6, 2015



## New Publications

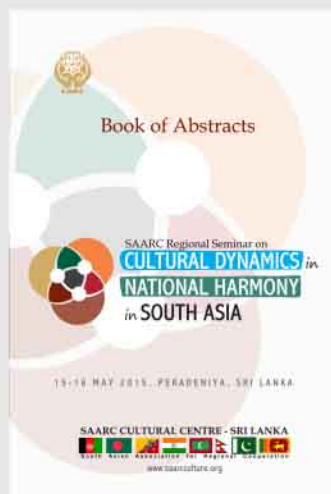


### Monograph

*Circulation of cultures and Culture of Circulation- Diasporic Cultures of South Asia During 18th to 20th Centuries*

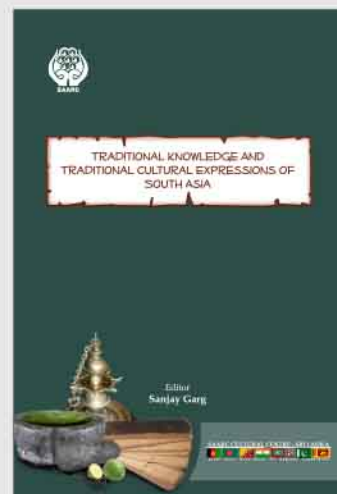


### SAARC Art Magazine



### Book of Abstracts

*SAARC Regional Seminar on Cultural Dynamics in National Harmony in South Asia*



### Monograph

*Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions of South Asia*

All publications are available at the SAARC Cultural Centre free of charge. Contact Mahinda on 0771053008 for more details.

## Culture Quote



“

*A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people*

”

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**  
(2 October 1869 -30 January 1948)

### Editors

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