







RITUALS, ETHICS & SOCIETAL STABILITY IN THE SAARC REGION

SEMINAR REPORT



SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION









RITUALS, ETHICS AND SOCIETAL STABILITY IN THE SAARC REGION

REPORT



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23-25 September 2010 Ceylon Continental Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka

SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE COLOMBO SRI LANKA

Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region

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Published in December 2010

By SAARC Cultural Centre

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Printed by M. D. Gunasena Co. (Printers) Ltd.

ISBN 978 - 955 - 0567 - 00 - 3

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I. Introduction

I.I Background

The SAARC Agenda for Culture, launched at the Fourteenth SAARC Summit held in New Delhi in 2007, stressed on the crucial role of culture in bringing the people of South Asia closer. Culture plays a major role in further promoting relations and understanding among South Asian countries and it is recognised that the plurality of traditions and practices of South Asia must be respected, appreciated and protected throughout the region.

South Asian countries represent one of the most diverse regions of the world, rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It has age old rich traditions and indigenous knowledge which directs people and binds them together to live in peace and harmony for generations to come.

Most of the components of tangible traditional culture in the region has been given due attention in many forums throughout the world. But there has been very little discussion with regard to the intangible cultural heritage of South Asian countries which could be very effective for socio-economic development initiatives in the region. Most rituals and ethics belonging to intangible culture derived from ancestors of South Asian countries are strongly based on human development. The purposes of rituals are varied; with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of

spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, social and moral education, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event. Whatever the purpose is, there is no doubt that it stabilizes society. Alongside the personal dimensions of worship and reverence, rituals also have a more basic social function in expressing, fixing and reinforcing the shared values and beliefs of a society. Social rituals have formed a part of human culture for tens of thousands of years.

Ethics and rituals related to living habits and behavioral patterns of the people of South Asian countries are very effective in making their livelihood peaceful and economical. It is believed that these ethics and rituals lead people towards a simple and happy life with good discipline. These characteristics are almost identical for all South Asian countries. During the past three-four decades, some of the effective components of ethics and rituals have disappeared with new economical and social forces of the globalised world overtaking. That is why we, the people of South Asian countries need to introduce new attempts to identify the positive effectiveness of ethics and rituals and to ensure that these remain among the people of SAARC region. We need to create opportunities to discuss, review and find strategies to use them for societal stability which will lead towards socio-economic development in the SAARC member states.

1.2 Objectives

Objectives of the seminar were:

- To identify the positive effectiveness of ethics and rituals of the people of South Asian countries for their development strategies;
- 2. To find a strategic approach to preserve ethics and rituals from negative economic and social forces;
- To find ways and means to ensure the maximum use of effective ethics and rituals by the people of SAARC Member States;
- To give due attention to the important aspects of ethics and rituals for societal stability of SAARC Member States;
- To prepare a strategic plan to popularize ethics and rituals that could be useful for improving societal impact for livelihood development of people of Member States.

The seminar specifically looked into the following topics:

- Country situation in using ethics and rituals from ancient stages;
- ii. New approachs using ethics and rituals for societal stability in the global line up.

1.3 Programme

A three-day Seminar was organized at the Ceylon Continental Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka for experts of the SAARC member states to provide an open forum to analyse and identify the impact of ethics and rituals in their own countries. Each country was requested to nominate 2 experts for the Seminar. Selected experts from each Member State were invited to present an article that analyzed the country's position with reference to the use of ethics and rituals. All experts were invited to make a presentation on the subject at the forum to create a discussion and to review articles.

The programme for the Seminar included an Inaugural ceremony and six working sessions. It also included a dinner hosted by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre in a traditional Sri Lankan village atmosphere, a Cultural show and a field visit to Kandy which made the entire seminar more interesting and significant, giving a chance for participants of the Seminar to also enjoy the rich culture of Sri Lanka.

1.4 Participants/Resource Persons



Participants included delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Hon. Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs, Sri Lanka was the Chief Guest for the event. Hon. Githanjana Gunawardena, Acting Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka was the Guest of Honour.

2. The Plan of Action

We, the representatives from Member States of the SAARC countries, having met at the Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability, organised by the SAARC Cultural Centre, in Colombo 2010, agree on the following:

- a) That rituals and ethics that are practiced in the regional cultures bind us together;
- b) That there are similarities shared among Member States;
- That we need to maximize the effective use of rituals and ethics among Member States;
- d) The importance of the role of the media in preserving the practice of rituals and ethics;
- e) The role of the education system, and the need to educate the younger generation not merely on what the rituals are, but also on the knowledge/reasons behind such practices;
- f) That Rituals and Ethics could be also understood with reference to 3 aspects, them being entertainment, morals and religion;
- g) The importance of using rituals and ethics as a tool to promote societal stability, peace and corporation among Member States;
- h) That the SAARC Member States share common cultural affinities and to respect each other's distinct religious and cultural identities.

We, the representatives of the Member States also identify that there are challenges that as a region we face in order to preserve these deep rooted rituals and ethical values.

These challenges being:

- Impact of globalisation on culture through the noneffective portrayal of the essence of culture and rituals by the media;
- The Educational System transmits only knowledge not wisdom, humanism and emotional development for the betterment of society;
- 3) Misinterpretation of rituals and ethics owing to the commercialisation of culture;
- Endangered and deprived cultures not getting proper protection;
- 5) Oral traditions and intangible cultural traditions are not well documented;
- 6) Non-sensitivity towards the religious and cultural ethics of the SAARC region.

We propose the following strategies/recommendations that could be adopted by the Member States, in order to preserve and popularize rituals and ethics, which in turn will lead to societal stability and strengthen societies.

 The importance of recognizing and implementing the SAARC Agenda for Culture, which in turn would promote more understanding among the SAARC Member States:

- 2) To filter the media as much as possible, and thereby promote an understanding of rituals and ethics of the SAARC Member States, through the media;
- To foster intercultural heritage, ethics and values of the SAARC region through the educational system, especially through the newly formed South Asian University;
- 4) The need to document, create a database, archive and revive the rituals and ethics of the SAARC region, especially the extinct and endangered rituals and ethics of the SAARC region;
- To explore the possibility of establishing a SAARC channel within Member States, which would contribute towards promoting and educating country values and ethics;
- 6) Member States to use rituals and ethics in their development plans as a source for achieving happiness among the people;
- 7) To create awareness among the young generation about the rituals and ethics of the Member States through primary education onwards;
- 8) Member States can sponsor the scholars for the research on the rituals and ethics of the region;
- 9) To promote the ethics and rituals, they are to be made an integral part of cultural festivals i.e. seminars, celebrations, competitions, exhibitions;
- 10) To create a SAARC Chair in all the prominent universities of the world through negotiations with the host governments.

3. The Inauguration







To Inaugurate the seminar and proceedings, the Hon. Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs was called upon as the Chief Guest. Hon. Githanjana Gunawardena, Acting Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka, representatives from the Ministries and High Commissions of the SAARC Member States, Senior academics and policy makers working on protecting culture also participated in the inauguration together with the distinguished participants for the seminar from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The Inauguration to the seminar started with auspicious traditional drumming by the State dancing troupe of Sri Lanka. It was followed by a welcome address by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre. Following this, Hon. Githanjana Gunawardena, Acting Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka addressed the gathering. The ritual dance named 'Thelme Shanthi Karma' was the next item on the agenda which was entertaining and colourful. This Shanthi Karma is usually performed to obtain blessings for a new venture. The Chief Guest, Hon. Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs then addressed the gathering. At the end of the Inauguration session Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre delivered the vote of thanks.

3.1 Welcome Address

Mr. G.L.W.Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



It is a great honour and privilege for me to welcome you all here today, including all the distinguished delegates of the SAARC Member States to this Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC region.

Since this is the auspicious event of the SAARC Cultural Centre after its establishment in 2009, this has a historical importance in the SAARC region. Establishment of the SAARC Cultural Centre itself has a history because it was first proposed in 1987 at the Tenth SAARC Summit held in Colombo, with the objective of promoting distinctive arts in South Asia. Finally, the Heads of State or Governments, at their Twelfth SAARC Summit held in Islamabad in 2004, welcomed the proposal of establishment of SAARC Cultural

Centre in Sri Lanka with a view to serve as a symbol of South Asian shared cultural heritage. Although the decision was there, the establishment of the SAARC Cultural Centre was delayed until 2008 which was the year H.E. the President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapakse became the Chairman of the SAARC. Under his guidance Sri Lanka Government was able to establish the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo in 2009 until the permanent Centre will be constructed in Matara, down South Sri Lanka. First programme of proposals of the SAARC Cultural Centre has been approved by the Standing Committee which met in Bhutan last April 2010 and Centre was authorized to commence the implementation of programmes. At the time we inaugurated this first programme of the SAARC Cultural Centre today we believe it is relevant to recall the history of the establishment of the Centre.

SAARC Cultural Centre has the responsibility to implement the SAARC Agenda for Culture which was accepted by the Heads of State or Government at the Fourteenth SAARC Summit. In the SAARC Agenda for Culture, the Heads of State or Government have emphasized the idea of "the crucial role of culture in bringing the people of South Asia closer." Centre has organized this Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability to reflect that idea emphasized by the Heads of State or Government at the Summit.

SAARC Cultural Centre has invited experts from all Member States to participate in this Seminar and except Afghanistan,

all other Member States responded and has taken steps to send their delegates here. This Seminar on rituals, ethics and societal stability was proposed because the SAARC countries represent one of the most diverse regions of the world, rich in both tangible and intangible heritage. It has age-old rich traditions and indigenous knowledge which directed people to bind together to live in peace and harmony for generations. These traditions and knowledge have delighted people all over the world through generations. Most of the components of the tangible culture in the region have been given attention in so many forums to discuss with experts of the world. But opportunities are not that many in organizing forums to discuss and review some of the important aspects of the intangible heritage of SAARC countries which is very effective in socio-economic development in the region.

In view of this, SAARC Cultural Centre has organized this Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in Member States of the SAARC region. Delegates of the Member States including Ms. Ajeet Cour, a prominent cultural activist in Asia who are gathered here are all eminent experts in the subject and the SAARC Cultural Centre believes that it is possible through this Seminar to develop a very effective attitude that people of the SAARC region could be benefitted by rituals and ethics practiced by them. Most of the rituals and ethics practiced in the SAARC region have a very good potential in improving human values among people. In that way those could be used as a tool for development strategies to create

social stability in their states. This is the final objective we are going to achieve by conducting this Seminar.

I believe all of the experts gathered here for the Seminar are competent to review rituals and ethics in their own countries and develop an implementation strategy to use them in an effective way in development activities to create social stability among the SAARC region.

I invite all the experts here to contribute their valuable thinking on the subject and wish the Seminar all success.

While welcoming you again, finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all distinguished delegates for kindly taking off time from your busy schedule and travelling across the region to attend this Seminar in Colombo and I wish you a very happy and pleasant stay in Colombo.

3.2 Inaugural Address by the Guest of Honour

Hon. Githanjana Gunawardena, Acting Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka



I value this opportunity to be here today at the inaugural event of the SAARC Cultural Centre. I thank the Director of the SARC Cultural Centre for inviting me and I also thank the staff of the Cultural Centre for their efforts in organizing this important event.

Ours is a region that reflects a rich and varied plurality of cultural, linguistic, philosophical and spiritual traditions. We are, heir to a common civilizational continuum of great antiquity. Our heritage is embedded in spiritual values and ethics representative of the major religions of the world. We have also given forth to the world, a large number

of its greatest philosophers, political visionaries, writers, poets and artists.

As pointed out by His Excellency, Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka in his address inaugurating the fifteenth SAARC Summit in Colombo in July 2008, "We, in South Asia share a rich and common heritage, a heritage of understanding and of tolerance, a heritage that respects learning and wisdom, and takes pride in sharing the bounties of nature. But for this great heritage that transcends differences and upholds the value of a shared purpose and existence, our diverse cultures, languages and religious traditions, could have made us the most divided region in the world. Instead, by and large we see a great harmony among our peoples."

The heads of States or Governments of SAARC at the Colombo Summit in 1998 were unanimous in their recognition that SAARC should draw more deeply on the strength of our shared cultural heritage as a means of harnessing our collective strengths. The SAARC Ministers of Culture at their meeting in Islamabad in 2004 decided to establish the SAARC Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka.

In this context, it is significant and timely that following the fifteenth Summit of the SAARC in Colombo in August 2008 under the Chairmanship of His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa, the SAARC Cultural Centre was established in Colombo on 25 March 2009.

The dedicated efforts of the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature which has been working under the SAARC banner for well over a decade to strengthen cultural connectivity through literary and cultural interactions and dialogue will be further strengthened with the SAARC Cultural Centre. The advances of the Information and Communication Technology provide a strong imputes for the Centre to further the SAARC dialog and interact with the global village.

The theme of the Seminar relates very closely to the main intention of establishing the Centre, namely to draw more deeply on the strength of our shared cultural heritage as a means of harnessing our collective strengths. For this purpose, it is essential that we draw from our rich cultural heritage and traditional value systems nourished by the three main faiths of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and other faiths.

The Ashokan edicts, as far back as 269 BC relate to moral percepts based on the doing of good deeds, respect for others, generosity, fairness in the exercise of justice, respect for all religions and views, caution and tolerance, as well as the protection of fauna and conservation of wildlife.

Our traditional value system based on ancient wisdom also recognized the delicate relationship between man and his environment and thus the necessity to protect and nurture the environment.

We believe, as stated in the Mahinda Chinthanaya – vision for the future, that a "person with high sense of art and culture will see the world with a serene mind" and that "art and culture in a country should be able to reflect its past glory as well as focus on the future of the society."

Due to constraints of time, I am compelled to be brief, but I am sure that the learned scholars from our region who are gathered here today will delve deep into our traditional and timeless value systems that can help us find solutions to our modern day problems and heal our fractured societies.

Based on such value systems, we in Sri Lanka have been able to completely redeem a section of our people from agonies they have suffered for over three decades of subjugation by terrorism, through the successfully concluded humanitarian operation carried out by our valiant forces with dedication and patience, under the guidance of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka.

I wish your deliberations all success and our guest from overseas, a pleasant stay in the peace and tranquility of Sri Lanka.

May the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be with you.

Thank you.

3.3 Inaugural Address by the Chief Guest

Hon. Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs



On behalf of the Sri Lankan Government, it is a great honour and privilege to address this gathering and extend a very warm appreciation to all the distinguished delegates of the Member States of the SAARC, to the Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region.

This Seminar is an auspicious event for the SAARC Cultural Centre as well as Sri Lanka, as this is the first event organized by the Centre, which is the first SAARC regional centre established in Sri Lanka. We are proud to host the SAARC Cultural Centre in our country as it is a centre that could greatly contribute towards protecting the cultural heritage of each country and our distinguish South Asian identity.

This distinguish forum is gathered here today for an important cause. As the members of the SAARC region we are the inherents of the most diverse region in this earth. We practice various forms of rituals in various ways, depending on our cultural background. This age-old traditions and indigenous knowledge has directed people to bind together to live in peace and harmony for generations. Yet, these rituals are not properly recognized nor promoted as a regional heritage. Recognizing and promoting the contribution of rituals and ethics towards societal stability is extremely important not only to protect our heritage but also to achieve sustainable, holistic socio-economic development in the region.

All over the world, past and present, cultures or societies have rituals directing the journey of a community or an individual through their daily life or significant events. Rituals are practiced for varied reasons. These reasons include, religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, social and moral education, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event — or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

Rituals also support transition from one stage to another. It guides our presence and participation in all social spheres and provide substance and meaning to life at both the individual and social level.

Ritual and its symbols act as a means by which values and structures of society could be reproduced and transmitted from one generation to the next and maintained over time. So we could call rituals, the basis of traditions.

Rituals can be valuable instruments to enrich one's own life and contribute towards creating a firm sense of group identity. Rituals have been used to create social bonds and even to nourish interpersonal relationships. Thus, numerous aspects of ritual and ritualistic proceedings are engrained into the workings of those societies. Disowning rituals operates to disassociate one from one's self and from other people.

Understanding and respecting each other's rituals and ethics could further promote relations among people in South Asian countries. Promoting rituals and ethics practiced by the diverse communities in our region is a great way to promote diversity in culture and bring people together to live with understanding and in harmony. This seminar is a way of sharing and reviewing rituals practiced in the South Asian countries.

This is also an opportunity to identify identical components of rituals and ethics in the member countries and promote the regional spirit among countries as well as globally. This will help Member States of the SAARC region to reflect the highly positive impact of rituals, ethics and societal stability of our countries for the socio-economic development in the region.

3.4 Vote of Thanks

Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre it gives me great pleasure to propose the vote of thanks at the Inaugural Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region. As this is also the first event on the calendar of events for the SAARC Cultural Centre, I cannot but stress the significance of this seminar. Culture plays an important role in bringing nations together. However, in this era of globalization with all its advantages, it is inevitable that traditions, rituals and ethical values get lost, ignored and are denigrated. Hence, we experience a sense of social disconnectedness. Countries in the SAARC region with its people from different religions and cultures living side by side is often

highlighted for its age-old rich traditions, cultures and values. Therefore, it is apt that this inaugural seminar focuses on identifying these rich traditions of culture, the deep-rooted rituals and ethics that help maintain social stability within the region.

The SAARC Cultural Centre is grateful for the support extended by Honourable Mrs. Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs and Honourable Geethanjana Gajanayake, the Acting Minister of External Affairs. Honourable Ministers your presence and addresses at this plenary session has set the tone and assures the commitment of the Sri Lankan government towards this endeavor.

As this seminar progresses it is our hope that the working group sessions bring about a greater understanding of Member States. This would of course not be possible if not for the learned and distinguished invitees in our midst today who will be chairing the sessions and making presentations. We thank you for accepting our invitations and making the effort to be a part of this seminar. The SAARC Cultural Centre is confident that your valuable insights and knowledge will make the bonds among member states closer and tighter.

We would also like to express our deep sense of appreciation to the SAARC Secretariat, the Secretary General, and the Director Ms. Rajapakse and the Ministry of External Affairs of Sri Lanka for their continuing support, especially in the coordination with Member States.

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I would be failing in my duty to thank the media for their support in spreading the message of this seminar.

Last but not in the least, we would like to say thank you to all those present here today for your participation and wish you all a pleasant, successful and insightful session. We hope you take back with you memories, friendship and above all a revived commitment to promote the message of the role of the ethics and rituals of the people of South Asian countries for their own development.

Thank you.

4. First Working Session

The First Working Session of the seminar started with the key note speech delivered on "The Asian Concepts and Practices of Mental Culture as an Approach to Global Recovery through Mental Well-being" by Prof. Sumanapala Galmangoda, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. The session was chaired by Prof. Nimal De Silva, Director General, Central Cultural Fund of Sri Lanka.

Prof. De Silva set the stage for the first session, emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting our intangible heritage in the SAARC region. He pointed out that all tangible material produced are to perform duties for intangible heritage.

4.1 The Asian Concepts and Practices of Mental Culture as an Approach to Global Recovery through Mental well-being

Prof. Sumanapala Galmangoda, Senior Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Prof. Galmangoda analyzed how one could use rituals to promote the well being of humans, by examining various aspects of the mind; and the relationship between human feelings, performance of rituals and their wellbeing. In conclusion, he reasoned out as to why we should protect

rituals and suggested different means by which one could protect such rituals.

Some of the key issues highlighted in his presentation were as follows: The two aspects of the mind according tradition are intellectual and Asian The modern education system focuses on developing the intellect not the heart. Ethics and rituals stems from the heart not the intellect. What is closely related to the heart cannot be measured. Measurement comes from intellect. should not try to investigate the scientific foundation of rituals and ethics. Ethics has no religion. It is related to religious tradition. Promoting ethics is a way of protecting societal stability. By promoting rituals and ethics, we are trying to introduce the culture which humanity has destroyed in the name of development.

Discussion-

Following are the main issues that were discussed,

• We should re-interpret the meaning of rituals from time to time by intellectually analyzing the purpose and outcome of life sacrificing rituals performed by humans. Examples for rituals that need re-interpretation include, butchering of animals in certain Hindu Temples; 'Bakr Id' or 'Id uz-zuha' where goats and other animals are sacrificed in the name of Allah. This is performed through rituals as a result of the failure of scholars in a particular country in interpreting rituals in a new way.

- When interpreting rituals, compassion should be considered as the basis for the ritual.
- The intellect is harmful. It is necessary to develop the wellbeing of the people, rather than only concentrating on intellectual development.
- We should interpret rituals not destroy them.
 Destroying one concept and creating another will
 take thousands of years. Lord Buddha too, tried to
 reinterpret concepts rather than introducing new
 ones.
- Today we are giving knowledge to our young generation without wisdom. Wisdom comes with practice. A knowledgeable person without wisdom will not be able to contribute towards humanity.
- Can culture be treated as an industry? You can order crafts, but how can you make culture for an order?



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- Tourism is the fastest growing industry. In some cases it swollows culture. Culture has to be used not sold.
- Aboriginal tribes of Sri Lanka are showcased for tourism. This is a threat to their life style which is fragile and sensitive to the nature. We have to consider ways of protecting the rituals and ethics of deprived cultures.

5. Second Working Session

The Second session was chaired by Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam. Dr. Shikha Noor Munshi, Deputy Keeper, Department of Natural History, Bangladesh National Museum and delegate of Bangladesh; Dr. Yonten Dargye, Deputy Chief Research officer, National Library & Archives, Department of Culture, delegate of Bhutan and Ms. Ajeet Cour, Writer & President of the Foundation of SAARC Writers & Literature and delegate of India were the panelists for the second working session. Dr. Munshi and Dr. Dargye presented papers on their respective country situation in protecting and promoting rituals and ethics for societal stability. Ms. Cour delivered a paper on SAARC Identity.

5.1 Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region with Special Reference to Bangladesh

Dr. Shikha Noor Munshi, Deputy Keeper, Department of Natural History, Bangladesh National Museum and Delegate of Bangladesh

Dr. Munshi's paper was a correlated study of cultural harmony owing to rituals, ethics and societal stability in the SAARC region with specific reference to Bangladesh. In her presentation, she attempted to understand the strength of SAARC to confront the past in a meaningful way, linking history with contemporary reality.



Dr. Munshi, introduced Bangladesh as a land of cultural diversity, heritage and festivities, where different religions, communities and tribes live together in peace and harmony for many years. The absorption and fusion of different religious cultures in Bangladesh affect the nature of Bangladeshi identity and civilization as a vibrant culture. Over the past centuries, all religions in Bangladesh had integrated stability, including public and state security.

Dr. Munshi examined the effects of powerful social movements such as, the civil rights, free speech, anti-war, women's movements, students' movements, rise of religious fundamentalism and lastly how terrorism altered the nature of citizenship globally and gave rise to policies of multiculturalism. With all of these characteristics she concluded that the people of Bangladesh are considered as the proprietors of a distinctive cultural identity.

Discussion

- In Bangaladesh it is interesting to learn that there are many festivals that are more cultural than religious by nature.
- India, Sri Lanka like many other countries in the world fought for independence from the colonizers; but no country in the world has fought and liberated their language, like Bangladesh. This is the only country in the world which fought the war to liberate their language and literature.
- In the post-independence era, the language movement arose in most colonial countries of South Asia, demanding constitutional change or resorting to terrorism. Battle between the LTTE terrorists and the Sri Lankan Government could be identified as such a battle that lasted for 30 years. The President of Sri Lanka H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa was able to bring a lasting solution to this problem.

5.2 An Overview of the Practice of Rituals and Ethics in Bhutan

Dr. Yonten Dargye, Deputy Chief Research officer, National Library & Archives, Department of Culture and Delegate of Bhutan



Dr. Yonten Dargye's paper was an elaborative presentation of various forms of rituals performed in Bhutan (i.e. rituals for the living, rituals for the dead, rituals for the seasons and rituals for success and achievement); ethical concepts and guidelines; challenges in protecting rituals and ethics; policy measures already adopted and how rituals and ethics contribute towards societal stability. Concluding remarks made by Dr. Dargye, considering that rituals and ethics form the core of social, economic, political and religious ideals; and that the entire heritage of a nation would culminate in ethics and rituals, served as a basis for discussion at the seminar. The concluding remarks were as follows,

- a. As we move further into our socio-economic development, we need to take a closer look at the challenges facing each other's nation today and how ethics and values can be used to promote societal stability. We should seriously reconsider how to interpret the values in terms of contemporary needs. The time has come for us to transcend our narrow social views and look forward to developing an understanding of what has been best described as 'universal ethics.' In this way, we will be in a better position to work for the happiness and welfare of nation states.
- b. It was reiterated that ones society can live in peace as long as every member of society adheres to ethical norms of a society. It should not be taken to apply only at a personal level, but at a systematic level to be practiced by all members of society. Only then can peace and happiness prevail, as a result of the shared interests and common paths, or value systems of the society and the nation.
- c. While extensive studies have been conducted worldwide in the area of bio-deterioration, there seems to be a lack of studies on mind-degradation of cultural value. The reason being that in today's world there is much hue and cry over cultural values, moral values and value education for children in schools and higher institutions of learning geared to make the younger generation of today a better citizen tomorrow. All parents, policy makers, researchers and educationists are greatly concerned over this crucial issue. In this regard, the study on "mind degradation of cultural value and its control" is very important.

- d. Buddhism abounds in noble teachings encompassing every aspect of human life; with a great deal of practical advice on how to live with integrity, wisdom and peace, in the midst of a confusing world. Perhaps it is time for such teachings to be more widely disseminated.
- e. Efforts need to be made to convince leaders on the relevance of rituals and ethics in our society, and how effective they are in bringing social harmony; We hope that our leaders and policy makers come to a common understanding of values of rituals and ethics and then incorporate it in developmental policies to enable a greater societal impact.
- f. The implementation of a ritual and ethical value system involves making each individual understand his/her responsibility towards society, to understand the interrelatedness of all rituals and ethics of all character although they are of different forms.
- g. People must consciously make an effort to understand the importance of practicing rituals and ethical values, endeavour to practice them earnestly, and then explain them to others. Our education system and our media network must spread these values through every means possible so that our daily thinking is affected by them. A greater awareness of, and an abiding faith in, the continued relevance of moral values and the country's unique cultural heritage needs to be inculcated specially among youth. If our culture is to survive and flourish for future generations, our youths must understand and accept their role as custodians

- of a distinct culture; and the values and principles on which our country is founded.
- h. Institutional linkage must be established by exchanging expertise from member countries from time to time and sharing each other's knowledge and experiences; periodic inter-cultural meetings be convened to promote greater understanding and harmony among SAARC nations.
- i. Networking and resource centre must be established for SAARC cultural activities with the objective to maintain a database of cultural centres and of each other's programmes; and the centre must bring out publications/journals to educate the people on rituals and ethics

Discussion

- What is GNH? GNH is the abbreviation for Gross National Happiness. It is a holistic approach that emphasizes every aspect of government policy of Bhutan. GNH, concentrates on individual happiness.
- What action has been initiated to preserve cultural heritage? Action to preserve cultural heritage was initiated in 1960's in the 5 year plan. Since then Bhutan have emphasized in cultural preservation and promotion.

5.3 The SAARC Identity

Ms. Ajeet Cour, Writer & President, Foundation of SAARC Writers & Literature, and Delegate of India



In her presentation, Ms. Cour, stated that the whole universe of folklore underlines our SAARC Cultural Identity and collective consciousness. If we were seriously endeavoring for cultural connectivity in the region, we must explore the cultural roots, lying intertwined connectively of the entire SAARC region, right from the Indus Valley Civilization.

She emphasized the need to create sensitivity among younger generation towards ancient knowledge systems, innocent rituals and grandmother's tales which establish and reaffirm man's relation with nature.

The differential value systems of the Western world and SAARC region were also analyzed in her paper. The beauty of the value system in the SAARC region was attributed to the rituals in the region that are intertwined with ethics in a very subtle, way.

In Ms. Cour's concluding words, she said, "this conference is once again reminding us of our duty to save the dreams and hopes of humanity."

Discussion

- Today rituals are the most vulnerable part in our culture.
 This is an opportune moment for us to inquire about the current status of rituals in the SAARC region.
- Something that is fascinating within the SAARC region is that we sing at every occasion, i.e., when women get pregnant, child-birth, songs for children when they play, We are the only part of the region that sings where a dead body is lying. We people very emotionally, vehemently express our emotions. It is amazing how intertwined our births and deaths are all over the SAARC region.
- Coming from Pakistan, we don't share the same sort of cultural heritage. That is why the SAARC region is very diverse. In births and deaths we do not sing. In Pakistan there is cultural diversity but we don't

make it a ritual. For births and deaths we don't sing. Identity of Pakistan, is on ideological basis. The religious practices have become rituals in Pakistan. In singing we have folk dancing and folk music but we don't make it a ritual as much as other countries in the region.

 What is Qawwali? Qawwali is a cultural improvision. It has nothing to do with religion. Cultural improvision of the then religious teachers of the Indian subcontinent. In order to spread the message of Islam, they used Qawwali as the medium.

6. Third Working Session

The third working session was chaired by Dr. Yonten Dargye of Bhutan. Prof. Chandrasiri Palliyaguru, Retired Professor in Sinhala, University of Kelaniya and Dr. Yasanjali Devika Jayatilleke, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Sri Jayawardenapura were the panelists in the third working session. The first paper was a general paper on the country situation pertaining to rituals and ethics in Sri Lanka. The second panelist concentrated on a specific disappearing ritual performed by Sinhalese, Sri Lankans pertaining to puberty rites.

6.1 Country Situation in Using Ethics and Rituals from Ancient Stages: Observances and Practices in Sri Lankan Context

Prof. Chandrasiri Palliyaguru, Retired Professor in Sinhala, University of Kelaniya

Prof. Palliyaguru's paper focused mainly on evolution and observance of rituals by Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka. He pointed out, Sinhalese Buddhism has minor differences with regard to practices from earlier or Canonical Buddhism and it has some special features relevant only to Sri Lanka. Acquiring merit by doing good is the base of Sinhalese Buddhism. There are three major concepts of it, namely, *karumaya*, *melova* and *paralova*.

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The ritual observances of the Sinhalese can be divided into two as calendarical and non-calendarical. The majority of Sinhalese rituals are based on the lunar calendar. All the annual cyclical rituals are closely tied to the agricultural calendar and some of them do not show Buddhist elements.



Rituals of the Sinhalese Buddhists is a complex whole comprising of three units which are called pinkama, magula and sethsanthiya. This ritual complex embraces every thought and action of the Sinhalese masses based on ritual concepts of Killa and Tahanciya.

All these beliefs and observances were natured and protected by them as their economy was based on agriculture. They had leisure time to spare to observe rites and rituals

as a part of their life. The rituals made them happy as well as secure in society.

The effectiveness of rituals, beliefs and behavior of the Sinhalese masses had been gradually disappearing in modern times, due to modernization and urbanization along with the new economic and social forces. They still value ritual practices and observances as they give solace to their life.

6.2 Kotahaluyaagaya: The Ritual Pertaining to Sinhalese Puberty Rites in Sri Lanka

Dr. Yasanjali Devika Jayatilleke, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Sri Jayawardenapura

Dr. Jayatilleke's paper focused on a disappearing ritual called 'Kotahaluyaagaya' which is performed after a girl attains puberty in Sri Lanka. The last kotahaluyaagaya was performed in 1960 in a village in Anuradhapura. The objective of the ritual is to enable grown up girls to be in control of their lives. This ritual is performed only when the astrologer goes through the horoscope when a girl attains puberty and suggests to perform the kotahaluyagaya at time of puberty. Through ritual they educate the girl how to have babies. After the ritual is performed the girls are not prohibited to have close association with men.



Discussion

- Why isn't the ritual of kotahluyaagaya implemented for boys? Is it discrimination?
 - It is not discrimination because it is said if the girl is socialized in a proper manner the whole society will automatically get organized.
- This ritual seems to be very primitive.
- Pakistanis have a ritual where the girl is not supposed to have her nose pierced until she is married. In the past, wearing gold jewelry also symbolized that a woman is married, unmarried girls were banned to wear gold jewelry. With the awareness on feminist ideology, people are conscious of these symbolisms. They don't see the symbols as means of emancipating women but as subjugation of women.

7. Fourth Working Session

The Fourth Working Session was chaired by Ms. Ajeet Cour, Ms. Mariam Saeed, Chargé de Affairs, Pakistan Embassy in Colombo presented a paper on the country situation of rituals and ethics. The paper presented by Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam, delegate from Sri Lanka was on new approaches to use rituals and ethics for societal stability.

7.1 From Cultural and Linguistic Diversity to Ideological Ritualistic and Ethical unity: The Pakistan Experience

Dr. Mariam Saeed, Chargé de Affairs, High Commission of Pakistan, Colombo

Dr. Saeed's presentation clearly portrayed the Pakistan experience of cultural and linguistic diversity to ideological, ritualistic and ethical unity. She presented the Identities of Pakistan including a short description of the evolution of Pakistan nation state. It was followed by an introduction to the diversity of the cultural and linguistic identities in the country. She also showcased the cultural and social festivals celebrated in Pakistan through elaborative photographs. Afterwards the cultural distinctness of Punjab, Khber-Pakhtoonkhawa, Sindh and Baluchistan was analyzed. Ideological identity in Pakistan was presented with details of festivals, rituals and

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ethics related to Islam. Next was an analysis of the overlapping cultural and linguistic identities and the larger religious identity. Finally, problems and positive aspects were discussed.

The problems discussed include, some non-Islamic practices being followed due to cultural ethics (like honour-killing, marrying daughters with quran, giving the daughter to compensate killing of a male member of rival tribe, etc.); counter-cultures; clashing identities; and interpretation of religious teachings on cultural ethics like dressing up. The positive aspects are the contribution towards societal stability within the region and across the globe.

7.2 New Approach to use Ethics and Rituals for Societal Stability in the Global Line-up

Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam, Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Sri Jayawardenapura



Prof. Kariyawasam stated that culture constitutes the religious and social structures and the intellectual and artistic manifestations that characterize a society, and therefore in the modern day Sri Lanka, the Government and policy makers have to prepare the ground for that mechanism to be modernized on par with present trends of the globe to reach the goal.

He argued against the development of single homogeneous world culture with the impact of globalization, yet acknowledges the fact that the global process of change, traditional and non-industrial societies in South Asia makes attempts to acquire features of advanced societies.

Rituals are the symbolic interpretation of the society, national harmony and collectiveness. In a hedonistic world it is necessary to discuss how a new approach can be culled through the rituals and ethics, for national development which will pave the way for societal stability. The paper also stresses that economic development of a country has to move in par with that of its cultural development.

As a result of these deliberations he anticipates that society should first realize the symbolic meaning of rituals and adopt them in order to bring about a prosperous economic future.

8. Fifth Working Session

The Fifth Working Session was chaired by Ms. Mariam Saeed, delegate of Pakistan. Dr. Sriyani Rajapakse's paper on ritual towards God Saman in the Sabaragamuwa Province of Sri Lanka was presented by Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam at this session.

8.1 Social Organization in the Sabaragamuwa Province, Sri Lanka and the God Saman

Dr. Sriyani Rajapakse, Head, Department of History & Theory of Dance & Drama, University of Visual & Performing Arts, Colombo

Dr. Rajapakse's paper elaborated the rituals performed for God Saman in the Sabaragamuwa Province of Sri Lanka. Saman is considered to be the guardian deity to the Sabaragamuwa Province. The paper discusses the evolution of the procession ritual, roles of officials appointed to be in charge of the 'Devala' or the shine of God Saman, services rendered by people living in the area and rituals performed for God Saman.

It is the Head of the Country, (presently the Hon. President and in the past the King) who appoints officials to conduct the ritual of the shrine in the name of God Saman. The lay leader of the shine is the Basnayake Nilame.

The procession for God Saman is conducted annually in the month of 'Asela' (July- August). People living in nearby

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villages 'Nindagam' render there services by personal participation, supplying essentials and working manually. The traditional caste system plays a significant role in assigning duties for the procession. The completion of the procession ritual is informed to the Head of the Country by the Basnayake Nilame.

Rituals performed for God Saman reinforces traditional ethics and values of the villagers. The meaning of the rituals should be further explored and adopted for the betterment of the society.

9. Sixth Working Session - Plenary Discussion/ Developing An Action Plan

Following the presentations, the forum focused on a session to review the seminar and issues discussed therein in order to gain societal stability. The delegates worked together collectively to come up with a Plan of Action based on the following guidelines:

- 1. Positive aspects of Rituals & Ethics
- 2. Difficulties in protecting the effective use of Rituals and Ethics: analyze negative forces
- 3 Identify similarities among rituals that bind the SAARC Member States
- 4. Maximizing the effective use of Rituals and Ethics in globalized world.
- The Way Forward: Attaining Societal Stability through continued use of Rituals and Ethics – PLAN OF ACTION.

The following strategies/recommendations were proposed by the delegates to be adopted by the Member States in order to preserve and popularize rituals and ethics which in turn will lead to societal stability.

 The importance of recognizing and implementing the SAARC Agenda for Culture, which in turn would promote more understanding among the SAARC Member States:

- 2. To filter the media as much as possible, and thereby promote an understanding of rituals and ethics of the SAARC Member States, through the media;
- To foster intercultural heritage, ethics and values of the SAARC region through the educational system, especially through the newly formed South Asian University;
- 4. The need to document, create a database, archive and revive the rituals and ethics of the SAARC region, especially the extinct and endangered rituals and ethics of the SAARC region;
- 5. To explore the possibility of establishing a SAARC channel within Member States, which would contribute towards promoting and educating country values and ethics:
- Member States to use rituals and ethics in their development plans as a source for achieving happiness among the people;
- 7. To create awareness among the young generation about the rituals and ethics of the Member States through primary education onwards;
- 8. Member States can sponsor the scholars for the research on the rituals and ethics of the region;
- 9. To promote the ethics and rituals, they are to be made an integral part of cultural festivals i.e. seminars, celebrations, competitions, exhibitions etc.;
- 10. To create a SAARC Chair in all the prominent universities of the world through negotiations with the host governments;

10. Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks

By Nirekha De Silva, Research Officer, SAARC Cultural Centre



It is with great pleasure that I address you at the concluding session of the first event organized by the SCC.

After two days of deliberate and insightful presentation of papers, discussions and group work, the working session of Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societial Stability has come to a successful closure.

I would like to recap the objectives and proceedings of the seminar. The objectives in brief were to identify the positive effects of ethics and rituals for the development of strategies for South Asian countries; to explore ways of mitigating the negative impact of social and economic forces; to find strategic approaches to protect and enhance rituals and ethics, and to prepare a strategic plan. We were able to

achieve our objectives to a great extent during the proceedings of the seminar.

The key note address by Prof. Sumanapala Galmangoda on 'Asian Concepts and practices of mental culture as an approach to global recovery through mental well-being' emphasized the fact that in a globalized world, prominence is given to only intellectual development as opposed to the emotional development of a human being which is very often neglected.

Papers on the relevant country situation in performing and protecting rituals and ethics were presented by Dr. Shikha Noor Munshi from Bangladesh; Dr. Yonten Dargey from Bhutan and Ms. Mariam Saeed of Pakistan. Prof. Chandrasiri Palliyaguru of Sri Lanka presented the rituals of Sinhala Buddhists of the country. Dr. Yasanjali Devika Jayathilaka of Sri Lanka's presentation concentrated on an ancient ritual of puberty rites of Sri Lanka. These presentations enabled us to share and review the rituals and ethics practiced in South Asian countries and discuss its impact of it towards human beings.

Ms. Ajeet Cour's paper on SAARC identity gave us a regional picture by analyzing how rituals and ethics in the region contribute towards promoting SAARC cultural identity and how SAARC countries share civilizational roots.

The paper presented by Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka and the second paper presented by Dr. Yonten Dargey of

Bhutan concentrated on new approaches in the usage of ethics and rituals for societal stability in the global line up. The presentations provided us with insight and guidelines to plan on preserving rituals and ethics.

Some of the interesting ideas presented by the delegates during their presentations that could be considered for future work of SAARC Cultural Centre or Cultural activists in the region include,

- I. Promoting a course on counseling using all good elements of culture in the region
- 2. Protecting deprived cultures
- 3. Promoting culturally sensitive tourism
- 4. Interpretation of rituals for human wellbeing
- 5. Possibilities of using GNH index in monitoring cultural progress in the region.

The Group work that took place towards the end of the seminar enabled us to come up with effective recommendations on strategic approaches to protect rituals and ethics for societal stability. These recommendations could be utilized by the Governments of South Asian Countries in future strategic planning.

The seminar was a success thanks to the active and committed participation of distinctive delegates representing Bangladesh, Buthan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We appreciate the deliberate efforts of the delegates in

presenting insightful papers. We are also grateful to all the delegates who chaired the sessions and made the sessions interactive and interesting. This would not have been a possibility without the support of SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu and respective Governments of South Asian Countries. At this moment I would also like to thank all the efforts of the Director and on behalf of the Director, the staff of SAARC Cultural Centre for making this Seminar a reality.

All the papers presented by the participants will be reviewed and published in our first Journal on SAARC Culture. Abstracts of papers and recommendations will be published as the workshop report.

We hope the findings of the Seminar will be effectively utilized in promoting societal stability through rituals and ethics in South Asian Countries.

11. The Field Trip

A one day field trip was organized to Kandy and Pinnawela, in order to share Sri Lankan cultural heritage with the visiting delegates and to enhance interaction among participants. The participants visited the Elephant orphanage in Pinnawela, Royal Botanical Gardens in Peradeniya and Dalada Maligawa in Kandy.

12. Dinner/Cultural Show

A cultural show and dinner was hosted by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, at Nuga Gama at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo. Nuga Gama was the ideal setting as dinner is served under the backdrop of an ideal rural village setting ambience. It processes the ambience of traditional rural life of Sri Lanka. The delegates were able to enjoy a traditional Sri Lankan meal in a rural atmosphere, as well as soothing Sri

Lankan flute music.

The Cultural Show was performed by the Ruhunu Cultural Centre dancing troupe from Matara. They performed 'Gini Sisila,' a low-country dance.



Annexes

Annex I: Agenda of the Seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability

23 **SEPTEMBER 2010 (DAY 1)**

Inaugural Session

8.30 am	Registration of Participants	
8.45 am	Arrival of Invitees	
8.55 am	Arrival of Guests	
9.00 am	Lighting of traditional oil lamp	
9.10 am	Welcome address – G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre	
9.25 am	Address by Hon. Githanjana Gunawardena, Acting Minister of External Affairs of Sri Lanka	
9.40 am	Ritual Dance, performed by State Dancing Troupe of Sri Lanka	
9.50 am	Address by Hon. Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, Minister of National Heritage and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka	
10.10am	Vote of Thanks – Ms. Soundarie David, Deputy Director (Programming), SAARC Cultural Centre	
10.20 am	Group Photo Session	
10.30 am	Tea Break	

Working Session I Chairperson - Prof Nimal De Silva, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Archeology, Sri Lanka

11.00 am	Introduction of Delegates
11.10 am	"How effective are rituals and ethics for societal stability in South Asia" – by Guest Speaker – Prof Sumanapala Galmangoda, Senior Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya
11.40 am	Discussion
12.00pm	Video Show on Rituals and Ethics
12.30 pm	Lunch Break

Working Session 2 Chairperson – Prof. Tissa Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka)

1.30 pm	Presentation on Country Situation of Rituals and Ethics in Bangladesh – Dr. Shika Noor Mounshi, Deputy Keeper, Department of Natural History, Bangladesh Natural Museum
1.50 pm	Presentation on Country Situation of Rituals and Ethics in Bhutan – Dr. Yonten Dargye, Deputy Chief Research Officer, National Library and Archives, Bhutan
2.10 pm	The SAARC Identity - Ms. Ajeet Cour, Writer and President, Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature, India
2.30 pm	Discussion
3.00pm	Tea Break

Working Session 3 Chairperson Dr. Yonten Dargye (Bhutan)

3.30 pm Presentation on Country Situation of Rituals and Ethics in Sri Lanka- Prof Chandrasiri Palliyaguru, Retired Professor in Sinhala,

University of Kelaniya

3.50pm Kotahaluyagaya: The Ritual Pertaining to

Sinhalese Puberty Rites in Sri Lanka – Dr. Yasanjali Devika Jayatilleke, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Sri

Jayawardenapura

4.10pm Discussion

4.40 pm Conclusion of Day I

7.00 pm Dinner Hosted by the Director of SAARC

Cultural Centre at "Nuga Gama", Cinnamon

Grand, Colombo.

24 SEPTEMBER 2010 (DAY 2)

Working Session 4 Chairperson – Ms. Ajeet Cour (India)

9.00 am Presentation on Country Situation of Rituals

and Ethics in Pakistan— Ms. Mariam Saeed, Chargé de Affairs, High Commission of Pakistan,

Sri Lanka

9.20 am New Approaches to Use Rituals and Ethics for

Societal Stability in the Global Lineup - Prof Tissa Kariyawasam, Former Dean of Faculty of

Arts, University of Sri Jayawardenapura

9.40am Discussion10.10am Tea Break

Working Session 5 Chairperson - Ms. Mariam Saeed (Pakistan)

10.40am Social Organization in the Sabaragamuwa

Province of Sri Lanka and the God Saman-Dr. Sriyani Rajapakse, Head, Department of History & Theory of Dance & Drama, University

of Visual & Performing Arts

11.00 am Discussion

Working Session 6 Chairperson - Ms. Mariam Saeed (Pakistan)

11.50pm Plenary discussion on a Common Plan for

SAARC Member States to promote rituals and ethics for societal stability (Groups 1, & 2)

I.00pm Lunch Break

2.00 pm (Contd) Plenary discussion

4.00 pm Final Discussion

4.15 pm Concluding Remarks/Vote of Thanks – Nirekha

De Silva, Research Officer, SAARC Cultural

Centre

4.30pm Tea Break

25 **SEPTEMBER** 2010 (DAY 3)

Field Visit

Annex 2: List of Participants

Name of Country	Names of Participants	Contact Details
Bangladesh	Dr. Shikha Noor Munshi Deputy Keeper, Department of Natural History, Bangladesh National Museum.	shikhanmunshi@ yahoo.com
Bhutan	Dr. Yonten Dargye Deputy Chief Research Officer, Research Division, National Library & Archives.	yondars@gmail. com
India	Mrs. Ajeet Cour Writer & President, Foundation of SAARC Writers & Literature (FOSWAL).	ajeetcourwriter@ yahoo.co.in
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Pakistan	Dr. Mariam Saeed Chargé de Affairs, High Commission of Pakistan, Colombo.	+94-77-8020154 +94-11-2696301-2
Sri Lanka	Prof. Sumanapala Galmangoda, Senior Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Director, Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya.	+94-11-2970931 +94-11-2925679

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Name of Country	Names of Participants	Contact Details
	Dr. Sriyani Rajapakse Head, Department of History & Theory of Dance & Drama, University of Visual & Performing Arts, Colombo	
	Prof. Ariyarathne Kaluarachchi Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Dance, University of Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo	
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