



# **Diasporic Cultures of South Asia** **During 18th to 20th Centuries**

## **Conference Report**

**SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA**



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation



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SAARC REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
DIASPORIC CULTURES OF  
SOUTH ASIA DURING 18<sup>TH</sup> TO 20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURIES  
CIRCULATION OF CULTURES AND  
CULTURE OF CIRCULATION  
CONFERENCE REPORT

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15 – 18 MARCH 2012  
GALLE, SRI LANKA

Organized by  
SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE - SRI LANKA

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

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Historically, the South Asian region constitutes an extended cultural zone which has contributed tremendously in practically all fields of human endeavor. Its pluralistic, multi-layered and often overlapping ethos is manifested in the region's dresses, cuisine, customs, religions, traditions, rituals, languages, scripts and many other socio-cultural spheres, all unfolding within a greater cultural space. The region has served both as a melting pot as well as a fulcrum for the circulation of human beings and goods, ideas and cultures, money and material across the globe and today it boasts of the largest share in world's diasporic population. This itinerant populace of South Asia has also served as the unnamed and unsung cultural ambassadors, not only within the region but also across the globe.

The SAARC Regional Conference on *Diasporic Cultures of South Asia during 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation* was conceived as a brainstorming session to discuss the key issues and moot research questions and identify themes and sub-themes of diasporic cultures of South Asia that merit independent and in-depth research. On the basis of the themes identified in this conference research projects are to be conducted in the eight countries of the SAARC region. The outcome of these projects will be shared with all concerned in the form of a research



publication. It is expected that the recommendations enshrined in these reports will pave the way for researchers, advocates and policy makers to actively engage in various questions and issues related to the diasporic cultures.

## OBJECTIVES

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To identify the diasporic cultures in and of South Asia;

- To discuss the country situation (of the SAARC Member States) related to diasporic cultures;
- To identify research topics and questions related to diasporic cultures in the region that need further investigation; and
- To recognize research approaches and methods for further research in diasporic cultures of the region.

## DATES AND VENUE

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The academic sessions of the SAARC Regional Conference on *Diasporic Cultures of South Asia during 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation* were held from the 15 – 18 March 2012 at the Tamarind Hill Hotel, in the historic city of Galle.

The chosen locale for the conference was an idyllic sprawling colonial mansion (*walauwa*). In a refreshing contrast to other conference venues, the *walauwa* of Tamarind Hill Hotel was built by a Sinhalese landowner, Don Johannes Amarasiri, in the old city of

Galle. Strongly Dutch character of Galle belies its history as an ancient global entrepot. It was a meeting place for the Arabs, Chinese, Greeks, Persians and South Indians and was identified by the Victorian scholars with the Biblical port of Tarshish.

The mansion later became the residence of the official representative of the Peninsular and Orient Steam Navigation Company – the famous P & O line – around whose sailings all social and commercial life in British-era Galle revolved. A tall flagpole on the front lawn is a relic of a bygone era and the self-important times. Later, still known as Tamarind Hill, it became the judge's residence. The Tamarind Hill Hotel has 11 rooms and 2 suites replete with twenty-first century facilities that never obtrude on the traditional elegance and charm of the surroundings. The food and drink is modern and of the finest quality. The gentle whispering of the Tamarind trees in the lawn enhanced the ambience of the place and made it an ideal venue for the SAARC Regional Conference.



## PARTICIPANTS

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**Participants of the conference with the Chief Guest and Officials of the SAARC Cultural Centre**

The Conference was attended by 20 Delegates from the SAARC Member States representing Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A total of four Resource Persons, 24 Paper Presenters from these countries and 13 other participants that attended the SAARC Regional Conference.

The complete list of all delegates, resource persons and other participants are found in the Annexures.

## PROGRAMME

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### **DAY 1 – 15 MARCH 2012**

The Conference was inaugurated with the beating of drums and dancers who welcomed the Chief Guest Honourable Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka. In his address Honourable Weerakkody emphasized the importance of bringing together academic brilliance from the South Asian region to discuss the topic of *Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation*. He added that the significance of ethical and cultural values are distinctive to the South Asian region as these are on par with the circulation of monetary and technological culture stemming from the other regions.

**Academic Session 1** was the Introductory Session chaired by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre. He welcomed all delegates, resource persons and participants to the Conference emphasizing the importance of such a conference.

The delegates and participants introduced themselves and thereafter Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director (Research), set the conference in motion by introducing the Conference Theme and the Research Project. He emphasized the fact that the SAARC Cultural Centre does not operate on the idea of 'Research for Research's sake' but is concerned with the applied side of the research. Based on this ideal the SAARC Cultural

Centre provides research opportunities for professionals, practitioners, administrators and other stakeholders of culture to share their expertise, debate issues of mutual and regional importance and discuss strategies and plan perspectives to foster and strengthen the cultural ties among the people of the region.

The Session proceeded with the Keynote Address by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana, Consultant, National Archives of Sri Lanka, who commended on the timely initiative of the SAARC Cultural Centre to organize this conference. He provided the conceptual framework for concepts of culture and diaspora anchoring it in the historical setting and providing a strong framework for further discussion.

**Academic Session 2** was chaired by Mr. Ali Waheed, Director, Department of Heritage, Government of Maldives. During this session Prof. K.N.O Dharmadasa, Chief Editor, Sinhala Encyclopedia Project presented his paper on 'Diasporic Culture of South Asia during 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.' Prof. Karunamaya Goswami, Principal, Cambrian College, Bangladesh presented his paper on 'Diasporic Impact on South Asian Cultures during 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' based on the development of Bengali culture. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir, Manager (Research)/Research Fellow, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), Bangladesh presented a paper on

‘Circulation of South Asian Peoples and Commodities: An Overview.’

**Academic Session 3** was chaired by Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa. The session began with a country presentation from Afghanistan by Mr. Mohamad Umar Marufi Kaleem and Mr. Ahmad Samim Ahmadi. This was a significant moment as Afghanistan was represented for the first time at a SAARC Cultural Centre’s event. This was followed by a presentation by Prof. Minhaj ul-Hassan, Scholar, Quaid-i-Azam Chair, Department of Government and International Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, on the ‘Changing Pattern of Pakhtun Culture under the influence of Diaspora’ which supplemented the discussion on the Pakhtun culture initiated by Mr. Kaleem. The session ended with a PowerPoint presentation on the Galle Fort by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana which gave the participants the background for their ensuing visit to the Galle Fort and the Maritime Museum. The participants visited the Galle Maritime Museum and were able to enjoy the scenic view from the safety of the ramparts as rough ocean waves tumbled upon the shore.

## **DAY 2 – 16 MARCH 2012**

The second day of the conference dawned with good weather despite the rains of the previous day. The delegates and participants congregated in the Conference Room and the day began with Dr. Sanjay Garg introducing the day’s proceedings. During the day,

presentations were made by the delegates from Maldives, Singapore, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. **Academic Session 4** was chaired by Mr. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir from Bangladesh. Ms. Asiyath Mohamed, Project Officer, Department of Heritage, Republic of Maldives and Mr. Ali Waheed, Director, Department of Heritage, Republic of Maldives, presented a paper on 'The Maldivian Cultural Evolution from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.' Subsequently, Ms. Hema Kriuppalini, Research Associate, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore spoke on 'Circulation of Ideas and Cultural Expressions vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan and Nepali Diaspora in Singapore.' Thereafter, Mr. Harka B. Gurung, Director, National Library and Archives, Bhutan and Ms Tshering Choki, Assistant Archivist, National Library and Archives, Bhutan, spoke on the 'Diasporic Culture of Bhutan – 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century.'

The post-tea session (**Academic Session 5**) brought out interesting features of Bangladeshis living in other countries. The focus on the Bangla diaspora originating from the mid-eighteenth century was introduced by Prof. Sharif Uddin Ahmed, Professor of History, University of Dhaka who spoke on the 'Diasporic Culture of Bangladesh during 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.' Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan, Director General, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh contributed with his paper on 'Diasporic Cultures of South Asia: Bangladesh Perspective.' Dr. Waseem Raja, Assistant Professor in

History, Department of History Aligarh Muslim University, India spoke on 'Assessing South Asian Internal Diaspora in the Twentieth Century: Identifying Transnationalism, Cultural Exchange and Newer Cultural Hubs in India.'

**Academic Session 6** chaired by Mr. Harka B. Gurung, Director, National Library and Archives, Bhutan centered on Sri Lankan based presentations. The first paper entitled 'Cultural Interactions and Space: Diasporic Communities in Sri Lanka from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries' a study on the cultural space by Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, Head, Department of History, University of Colombo and Dr. Janaki Jayawardena, Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Colombo. This paper was followed by two presentations on the Indian Tamil plantation community, viz. by Dr. A.S. Chandrabose, Senior Lecturer in Social Studies, Department of Social Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka, on the 'Transformation of Cultural Identity of Indian Tamils: with Special Reference to the Tea Workers of the Southern Provinces of Sri Lanka' and other one on the attire of the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka by Ms. Ramesha Dulani Jayaneththi, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Peradeniya on 'Dress Code of the Indian Plantation Labourers in Sri Lanka.'

**Academic Session 7** was chaired by Prof. Sharif Uddin Ahmed in which Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte, Independent



Researcher, Sri Lanka, discussed 'Circulation of Cultural Expressions from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century European Diaspora on Sri Lankan Buddhist Art.' It was followed by another paper by Mr. Muhammad Daud Ehtisham, Press Attaché, High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka, 'Circulation of Ideas in the Circulation of Cultures' who stressed that circulation of ideas was the way to free individuals from encumbrances of conflict and suspicion. The session ended with a presentation by Ambassador Sumith Nakandala, Director-General, Economic Affairs Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Sri Lanka, who discussed 'Diasporic Cultures and Interstate Relations.'

Following the second day's deliberations, the participants and delegates toured different places in the Galle District. They visited the Kathaluwa temple renowned for its colourful murals while others relaxed by the golden beaches of Unawatuna.

### **DAY 3 – 17 MARCH 2012**

**Academic Session 8** was jointly chaired by Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan and Prof. Karunamaya Goswami. It included the presentation by Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra, Assistant Professor, Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, India on 'The Cultural Continuum of Indian Diaspora: Issues and Experiences.' This paper was followed by Mr. Sudesh Mantillake's presentation on 'Intellectuality,

Sharing Expressions and Kandyan Dance,’ which discussed the impact of diaspora on the Kandyan dance form. The last paper of the session was by Prof. S.T. Hettige, Senior Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka who spoke on ‘Cultural Diversity and the Rise of National Cultures in South Asia.’

**Academic Session 9** was chaired by Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra and had the presentation of final paper by Mr. Sanmugeswaran Pathmanesan, Lecturer, Department of Social Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Open University of Sri Lanka, on ‘Indian Tamil Diasporic Culture in Sri Lanka: Mānika Vināyarak Kōvil as a Centre for Cultural Circulation.’ Following the final paper, in an open discussion feedback forms were evaluated, so as to identify key research themes on diasporic cultures that merit independent and in-depth research. With the help of live interaction with the participants, various research questions and issues were thrashed out and a set of themes were identified to be submitted to the Plenary Committee for its final approval. With this session ended the academic programme of the Conference, and the venue for the subsequent activities of the conference shifted to the River View Hotel at Balapitiya, about 35 kms from Galle. Seenigama Devale where the group travelled by boat to the island-temple renowned to possess miraculous powers. The group then arrived at Balapitiya, River View Hotel for lunch and informal discussions. **Plenary**

**Session** took into consideration the themes recommended in the final academic session of the Conference and after an extensive discussion, the Plenary Committee of the Conference finalized its recommendations for future research topics.

The **Valedictory Session** concluded the official proceedings of the Conference. The participants articulated their commendation of the Conference and overall it was a heartwarming time for all present. Thereafter, the Director distributed Certificates of Participation to all delegates from the Members States, Resource Persons and the other Participants. Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director (Research) SAARC Cultural Centre conveyed the Concluding Remarks and the Vote of Thanks. This was followed by a Cultural Evening where a dance troupe showcasing traditional dance forms of Sri Lanka, together with a calypso band who kept the participants entertained.

#### **DAY 4 – 18 MARCH 2012**

On the 18 March 2011 all participants were taken on a Field trip to Katharagama, one of the leading historical places in Sri Lanka, where multi-ethnic and multi-religious involvement could be seen. The participants visited the Kiri Vehera and Katharagama Museum and were able to enjoy the multicultural ambiance of Katharagama.

## INAUGURAL SESSION

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The SAARC Regional Conference on Diasporic Cultures in South Asia was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Hon. Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka amidst beating of the traditional drums. The Conference was declared open with the traditional lighting of the oil lamp. Delegates from the member states and resource persons were also invited to light the oil lamp.

Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC, Cultural Affairs welcomed the Chief Guest, the distinguished delegates of SAARC member states, resource persons and the participants and outlined the objectives of the Conference. Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director presented the Vote of Thanks and the Inaugural Session was concluded.

## **WELCOME ADDRESS**

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**MR. G.L.W. SAMARASINGHE**  
**DIRECTOR, SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE, COLOMBO**



Honourable Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka, Distinguished Delegates who are representing SAARC Member States, Other Distinguished participants, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you this morning today for this important Conference organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre on the Research Project on Diasporic Cultures in South Asia between 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. This Conference, as you know, is the first part of the Research Project scheduled to be

conducted this year with the participation of scholars of South Asian countries by the SAARC Cultural Centre. Last year we have been able to introduce and conduct a research project on Diminishing Cultures of South Asia and now it is in progress with eight researchers selected from Member States of SAARC. Hopefully we will be able to complete that research project by the end of this year with eight successful research reports on diminishing cultures of the South Asian region. That might be a great achievement when we publish eight research reports at once under the previous research project initiated by the SAARC Cultural Centre for the region. In the same way, this year we are going to introduce this research project on Diasporic cultures in South Asia and award grants for another eight researchers of Member States to conduct research based on the proposals prepared on the selected topics or the areas finalized by you as the outcome of this Conference. Successful completion of eight researches is the final outcome of this project. So this Conference is the most important part of the research project that we are going to implement, because we will be able to determine the scope of the research work at the end of this Conference.

The subject that we have selected to be covered in the research project is currently very crucial for the region, as we think about new approaches for human development in the Member States of the region. Considering the fact that the South Asian region is one

of the most diverse regions of the world, rich in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, we could identify some potential factors among cultures that can be used strategically for the benefit of the people of the Member States of the SAARC. Some of these potential factors have been transferred through the migrants from country to country. The period we have selected for the research is the most active period of migration of people within and outside the region. With these migrations, cultures of the people who migrated were also transferred and settled among different communities with some changes. India has one of the largest diasporic cultures in the world as well as in South Asia as a single country except the Arab world. Even other South Asian countries also have their own experience in transferring their cultures to other countries. Western nations who invaded Asian countries have planted their cultures in Asia. So there are so many aspects to consider when we finalize the scope of this research project. In this context, this is a new area for the Member States to make an in-depth study of the diasporic cultures experienced in the region through such research. Findings of this research would be useful for the governments of Member States to lay out new approaches towards the development strategies of the Member countries that will help them to exchange material and moral benefits and create cultural integration among peoples.

This will directly help Member States to develop a dialogue between cultures and would help interaction amongst the civilizations in South Asia. This would be a major issue for intellectuals of a harmonious human approach in the region.

Creating a dialogue by this sort of Conference on diasporic cultures and its impact for human development is timely and significant event for South Asia that could be helpful in a long-term process of building peace and harmony through intercultural understanding.

In this respect, this Conference is very crucial in finalizing specific areas and topics on the subject that have to be addressed when we conduct the research through the researchers selected from different Member States. So the responsibility you are bound with during these three days is your maximum contribution towards the outcome of the project for the benefit of the people of the region.

I believe you all are leading scholars in your countries and are able to develop a sound dialogue on this subject to generate ideas that could help researchers to widen their scope of the research and I appreciate your contribution in this respect.

The SAARC Cultural Centre has organized this Conference to create a new attempt to use the crucial



role of culture in bringing people of South Asia closer, to promote people-to-people contact, and cultural cooperation as directed by the SAARC Agenda for Culture, which was the base document for establishment of the SAARC Cultural Centre for the region. We can identify the positive effectiveness for distinctive cultural characteristics of the people of South Asian countries that are prevalent in other countries too.

In this context, it is very important for the SAARC countries to conduct this sort of Conference on the subject of diasporic cultures in the region to touch upon a new area which has never been touched by SAARC countries although there have been many studies conducted by other regions.

I am happy that the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have sent their scholars as delegates and I express my deepest gratitude for the governments of these countries for their cooperation given in organizing this Conference to achieve the expected results.

And today, Hon. Chandima Weerakkody, resident politician of this area and Deputy Speaker of the Sri Lanka Parliament, is with us as the Chief Guest to grace this occasion and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to him on behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre and the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, and it is

my responsibility to pay my highest gratitude to His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksha, President of Sri Lanka and his government for the cooperation given to us on this occasion.

My sincere thanks goes to the SAARC Secretariat, all High Commissions and Embassies of all SAARC Member States in Colombo, and the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka and the Central Cultural Fund for the cooperation given for organizing this Conference.

Finally, while welcoming you again, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all distinguished members of the delegations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and all other distinguished participants from Sri Lanka and abroad for kindly taking time off from their busy schedule and travelling across the region to attend this Conference here in Galle. I wish you a very happy and pleasant stay in this beautiful ancient city of Galle.

## ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF GUEST

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**HON. CHANDIMA WEERAKKODY**  
**DEPUTY SPEAKER, PARLIAMENT OF SRI LANKA**



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre and the distinguished representatives of the SAARC regional conference. First of all I feel privileged to grace this grand event in the historic city of Galle, which has a mixture of all cultures, experiences and represents a diversity of cultures. I am thankful to the SAARC Cultural Centre for this timely intervention and bringing in all this brilliance at this particular time. I believe all the SAARC member states are blessed to have inherited their own proud culture and history.

All of us agree that India is very important as it is a large country which is a breeding ground for many sub-cultures. Similarly other countries too are rich in culture. Also the period that we have given special attention to is very important especially to our country and to the other countries of the region. As all of us are aware Sri Lanka underwent a difficult period during the past three decades, which some may explain as a result of the breakdown of cultural harmony. We who have lived in Sri Lanka have suffered due to terrorism but with the greatest efforts of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapakse, President of Sri Lanka, we have come out of this situation. We are a country that is concerned to bring about national reconciliation. Our efforts to live together as a multicultural nation are being fulfilled. I believe it is important to get an opportunity to share and debate various points of our cultures at a forum of this nature, where people who have gained knowledge, experience and exposure in this field have gathered in my city for the first time in the recent past. This is a remarkable achievement in the SAARC region.

The topic of the Conference is also interesting, Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation. To me, I believe this is an opening point of discussion. We in the South Asian region may classify circulation but we talk of a cultural orientation. Culture of circulation and circulation of cultures in the European sense pays more attention to the circulation of monetary culture and the technological culture. However, the attention paid to

circulation of ethics and humanitarian issues is rapidly diminishing. It is of great importance that we as South Asian countries circulate all types of cultures that can benefit the world as a whole. We are not limited to certain areas. Although I am elected from the Galle district, the action that I propagate should not be limited to my district, and to those who elected me or to Sri Lanka. As a global community we have a lot to learn from each other. We have a lot of experience yet to gain, all for the betterment and benefit of our children.

Sri Lanka is currently going through a challenging period, but we as a nation, are committed to eradicate terrorism and in the same way we as a nation, under the able leadership of his Excellency Honourable Mahinda Rajapakse, are committed to national reconciliation and to emerge as a developed country, in every aspect and not being limited to financial development.

Once again I stress the importance of this event. You have much brilliance gathered here to express opinions, share experiences and come to conclusions at the end of this conference. I would like thank Mr. Samarsinghe and the SAARC Cultural Centre for extending this invitation for me to come and speak at this conference. I wish you the best of luck and hope that the outcome of this conference will be the paving way for great achievements in our society.

## VOTE OF THANKS

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**MS. SOUNDARIE DAVID RODRIGO**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR – PROGRAMMES**



Our Chief Guest, Honourable Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka, all state nominees of the SAARC Member States, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, other participants, our respected resource persons, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre it gives me great pleasure to propose the vote of thanks at this inaugural session of the Diasporic Cultures of South Asia during the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation.

The SAARC Cultural Centre, which officially started functioning in 2009, had coincidentally organized its first seminar on Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in 2010.

This was the first event of a calendar of events held by the SAARC Cultural Centre since its very inception. Since then the Center has come a long way and played an important role in bringing together the countries of the SAARC region. Research conferences, cultural festivals, artists camps, and film festivals are held almost every month to further tighten the bonds of the SAARC countries.

We thank very specially our Chief Guest, Honourable Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka for being with us today and setting the stage for this important Conference which will pose some important questions at the session. Thank you, Sir for your support and words of encouragement and for reiterating the importance of such a conference.

This would not be possible without the participation of nearly all our member states. We warmly welcome state nominees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to this Conference and we thank you for your contribution to this conference. We are convinced that your presentations and interactive dialogue would

further enhance intellectual discourse and draw us closer towards the objectives of the conference. As this Conference progresses it is our hope that the working group sessions will bring about a greater understanding about the member states. This will not be possible without our distinguished resource persons who will be chairing the sessions and participating in our Conference. We thank you again for accepting our invitation and making the effort to be a part of this Conference.

The SAARC Cultural Centre is confident that your valuable resources and knowledge will make the bonds between the member states tighter. We also welcome and thank all other participants who are with us. We would also like to express our deep sense of appreciation to the SAARC Secretariat and the Director Mrs. Rajapakse for their continuing support especially in the coordination with member states. We also owe our gratitude to the SAARC Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, Sri Lanka for their support extended towards this Conference.

I take this opportunity to thank all embassies and high commissions for their support in securing nominations. I thank the media for covering this conference and their continued support. A special mention of the Research Division headed by himself an academic and a scholar, Dr. Sanjay Garg, for not only coordinating this conference but for their academic



input into the selection of the topic as well as the concept of it. This is also the first time that the Centre has been able to secure seven out of eight member state nominations from the SAARC region. This is thanks to the tireless efforts of Dr. Garg and the Research Division. I am sure the conference will be a success. I thank the entire staff for their hard work.

Finally to our Director, Mr. Samarasinghe, whose patience, wisdom and experience has kept the Centre on track towards reaching its objectives. Thank you, Sir for your support.

We would like to thank all those present here for your participation and we wish you all a pleasant, successful and insightful experience. We hope you take back memories, friendship and above all a revived commitment to discuss and identify key issues on this subject.



## DIASPORIC CULTURES OF SOUTH ASIA: A PERSPECTIVE

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**DR. SANJAY GARG**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR, RESEARCH**



We at the SAARC Cultural Centre do not entirely subscribe to the paradigm - 'research for research's sake'- but feel that the applied side of any research is equally, if not more, important. Therefore, in the choice of our research themes we are guided by our aim to share the benefits of these in-depth studies with over one fifth (22 percent) of humankind that inhabit this region and many more of its natives who have fanned out across the globe. For this we aim to produce project reports which do not sit idly on the shelves of a library,

but which can serve as a roadmap for the Member States in their journey towards a robust cultural cohesion and in their endeavors to preserve, conserve and protect South Asia's cultural heritage.

The research activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre, are, therefore, aimed at providing a platform to the professionals, practitioners, administrators, and other stakeholders of culture to share their expertise, debate the issues of mutual and regional importance and discuss the strategies and plan-perspectives to foster and strengthen the cultural ties amongst the people of the region. The SAARC Cultural Centre also endeavors to play an active role in capacity building activities of the professionals employed in various cultural sectors in the region.

The Research Agenda of the SAARC Cultural Centre is based on a three-step methodology, viz.:

- Needs Assessment
- Development of Objectives, Outputs and Target Audiences
- Development of activities to Achieve the Stated Objectives and Outputs

Based on this Agenda, the SAARC Cultural Centre has identified a number of topics which merit research support. Last year, in 2011, the SAARC Cultural Centre launched its first research project which was entitled

‘Diminishing Cultures of South Asia’. This project focuses on promoting cultural diversity in South Asia by recognizing and protecting diminishing cultures.

There are representatives who were present at last year’s Conference, I am happy to inform that Mr. Shammuszzaman Khan, Director-General of Bangla Academy and Prof. K.N.O Dharmadasa who participated in our last Conference are present with us today. The objectives of that Regional Conference were:

- a. To identify the diminishing cultures in the Region;
- b. To discuss the country situation related to diminishing cultures in SAARC member states;
- c. To identify research topics and questions related to diminishing cultures in the region that need further investigation; and
- d. To recognize research approaches and methods for further research on diminishing cultures.

Based on the findings of this Conference, the SAARC Cultural Centre invited research proposals from the member states and it approved eight research projects for the year 2011-12. Two of these projects are from Bhutan, and three each from India and Sri Lanka. Two weeks from now there will be a research review meeting and it is heartening to note that two of our research fellows, Dr. Charmalie Nahallage and Mr. Prasad Dharmasena are present with us today. All these research reports will be published by the SAARC Cultural

Centre for wide dissemination. It is expected that the recommendations enshrined in these reports would be utilized for protecting diminishing cultures in South Asia.

Coming to the theme chosen for our present project, namely the Diasporic Cultures of South Asia, let me confess that this topic was not an easy choice in view of the undue politicization of the term.

The term 'diaspora' emanates from the root 'to disperse.' Etymologically this word is of Greek origin and is derived from two Greek words *dia* (through or over) and *speiro* (dispersal or sow) which means 'scattering or sowing of seeds.' When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the word diaspora was used specifically to refer to the Jewish diaspora exiled from Judea in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and from Jerusalem in 136 AD by the Roman Empire. The term has been used in its modern sense since the late twentieth century. Since the 1960s the word diaspora has come to represent various kinds of population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic cultures. From about this time it has been established as branch of academic studies cutting across several disciplines and the knowledge systems such as sociology, political science, ethnography, literature, anthropology, geography history, international relations, women's studies and so forth.

Another consideration in our selection of this theme was the fact that right from the earliest times humans have been avid itinerants. It was, therefore, crucial for us to give a chronological bracket to this theme so as to adjust the focal length of our research endeavor. The entire orientation of this research project is to examine various cultural paradigms of South Asian diaspora in their historical setting. For the purpose of historicizing our debate we have chosen a period of three centuries immediately preceding our own times, which was also the period of mass circulation of man, commodities, and ideas.

At this point a few words about the title of the Conference, that is 'Circulation of Cultures and Cultures of Circulation' seem rather necessary. Circulation is not a simple change of geographical place; it involves social, economic, cultural, material and ideological changes which result from crossing of cultural and political boundaries. Circulation of ideas, theories, methods, practices, and cultural expressions, together with circulation of both material and cultural objects such as instruments, devices, implements, machines, artefacts, seeds, plants, minerals, animals, textiles, pottery, spices etc. (the list goes on), and carriers of knowledge — manuscripts, records, books, inscriptions, drawings, maps, paintings etc. have, for a long time enriched our culture and it continues to do so. Circulation of human beings — from hapless victims of catastrophes to merchants and traders, and from religious preachers, pilgrims and mendicants to intellectuals, scientists and

philosophers, has likewise played a very important role in our cultural development and it continues to do so.

Similarly, monetary and trade networks which stemmed out of this circulation of man, material, ideas and cultural expressions, especially the networks of coins and currency systems as well as credit instruments, both proto and post-colonization and also after the fall of colonial regime also deserve much greater attention than it has received so far. Wider issues of intra-regional circulation and cross-fertilization of the monetary and trade practices; the role of the imperial financial administration in the monetization of colonial economies resulting in the emergence of some sort of monetary unions within these regions; the issue of international trade in precious metals and the effect of metal-price disparity between the 'global north' and the 'global south' and its effect on the monetary policies of the imperial governments, are some of the issues that need to be addressed so as to build an informed base for future dialogue between different communities of the region and of the world.

The theme of the Conference, as also of the ensuing research project is, therefore, organized on three broad parameters, viz:

- Circulation of South Asian Peoples and Commodities;



- Circulation of Ideas and Cultural Expressions and,
- Monetary and Trade Networks.

This research project will focus on the history of circulation of the South Asian cultures. This was a period that saw the consolidation and collapse of colonial powers and also the surge of migration of South Asian workers to other colonial settlements across the globe. During the colonial period, a large populace of South Asians were traded as slaves by Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British imperialists. They were taken to various countries as indentured labourers, construction workers and soldiers. Furthermore, after the independence of many South Asian countries, the first set of scholars and academics that graduated from South Asian universities also migrated to western countries for advanced studies and research.

The ethos of diaspora has been very aptly captured in a book called *A Part, Yet Apart* (Shankar and Shrikanth: 1998). This reflects the societal divergences and cultural differences of the South Asian American Diaspora which is a part of the new geo-spatial surroundings, but yet remains apart from it, being deeply rooted in the cultural soil of their country of origin. On the other hand, there is perhaps no phenomenon as complex as 'culture'. In a manner of speaking, culture incorporates everything in a particular society. It is not only a matter of music, dance, art, and

cinema, but also marriage customs, death rites, patterns of pilgrimage to holy cities, modes of raising children, treatment of elders, and innumerable other aspects of everyday life that are stitched into the meaning of culture.

The diasporic cultures of South Asia, therefore, incorporate many layers of human life and there are various factors that have influenced and shaped the diasporic cultures of this region. This is what we are going to discuss for over next two days and try to form a research approach for advanced and in-depth studies on this theme.

In conclusion, let me share some figures, which will give you all some food for thought.

- The World Migration Report, published by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) states there are 214 million international migrants worldwide.
- Migrants constitute 3.1 of the world's population.
- If migrants were to constitute a country it would be the fifth most populous country in the world.
- As per a UNDP 2010 report, after China, India has the largest Diaspora (estimated at 25 million though the Government of India website estimates this figure as 30 million). This is larger

than the entire population of Sri Lanka, which is around 2 million.

- An Indian colony was established as early as the 1610s in Astrakhan, Russia.
- There are 4.2 million Pakistani people living abroad with a vast majority residing in the Middle East and Europe.
- Pakistan ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the world for remittances sent home (in 2010 it was estimated at \$ 9.4 billion).
- The world's largest Bangladeshi Diaspora population is in Saudi Arabia (2.5 million) and Pakistan (3 million).

These are just a few snippets of the volume of the Diaspora in the South Asian region.

**Reference:**

Shankar, Lavina Dhingra and Rajini Srikanth, *A Part, Yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America*, (Philadelphia, 1998).

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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**PROF. K.D. PARANAVITANA**  
**CONSULTANT, NATIONAL ARCHIVES, SRI LANKA**



Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka, in the Chair, Delegates representing the SAARC Countries, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I consider it as great honour for me to have been invited for the Keynote Address of this important and timely SAARC Conference on 'Circulation of Cultures and Culture of Circulation'. When the invitation was extended to me, I delved into much of the research done so far. The quantum of recent research amazed me. A considerable number of the published material

on the subject have been acquired into the library of the SAARC Cultural Centre.

At the onset I would like to examine, what does it mean by the term, 'culture'?

The word culture distinguishes the man-made identity embodying his ideas, customs and social behaviour associated with particular people or society. It is enriched with knowledge, beliefs, art, law and many more accepted legacies left behind by successive generations of human beings. Man not only created culture, but also played the role as its carrier from one generation to another.

The examples that I shall quote are based on from Sri Lankan experience but are applicable to other SAARC countries as well. Sri Lanka, although proud of a culture extant over twenty-five centuries, has no Sinhala word equivalent to the English word 'culture'. After Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, the English educated Sinhalese scholars around 1952, looked for a meaningful word to supplement the word. They created the word *sanskriti* to fill the lacunae. Before long this word was deep-rooted in Sinhalese writing to denote the culture *en masse* and even before the end of the decade a separate institution called the Department of Cultural Affairs was added to the state administrative machinery. Similarly in the case of diaspora there was

no such word in the Sinhalese vocabulary so the writers adopted the English word diaspora for common usage.

The long term expatriates in significant numbers from a particular country or region may form a 'diaspora'. In wider sense this means displacement, separation from one's own native territory having a hope or desire to return to homeland at some point of time. The diaspora also means people displaced in space, chronologically or geographically. Thus the circulation of ideas and expressions is an integral part of human mobility. The change of place is bound to affect the physical existence of people and to generate a defensive mechanism to circulate its creations referred to as 'cultural expressions'.

The diasporic cultures in the Asian region historically, caused a nucleus of mobility that began with the western colonial encounters. The South Asian region was exposed to the West with Vasco Da Gama's epoch making rounding up of the Cape of Good Hope and reaching the west coast of India in 1498. The arrival of Lorenzo de Almeida has been vividly recorded in the Sri Lankan chronicle *Rajavaliya*:

*They eat hunks of stone and drink blood; they  
give two or three pieces of gold and silver for  
one fish or lime; the report of their cannon is  
louder than the thunder when it bursts upon the  
rock of Yugandhara.*

The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and then succeeded by the British. Several SAARC countries experienced this sort of colonial encounters.

In the historical context, Western colonialism contributed much in diaspora formation and circulation of ideas and cultural expressions and even cross fertilization. The European expansion formed space for accumulation of migrants into settled communities far away from their homelands, e.g. the Portuguese Burghers, (Batticaloa and Puttalam) and the Dutch Burghers throughout the island.

The Portuguese Burghers were of three types of origin: firstly, the Portuguese soldiers who were unmarried, *soldados*; secondly those married, *casados*, and; thirdly the clergy, *padres*. These depicted a social value. These generic terms generated cultural circulation.

Furthermore, there were the Malay population and which the diverse populations from the archipelago subsumed. However, we fail to realize the heterogeneity of the Malay population.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the colonial masters made diaspora a political instrument, electing their representatives to the legislature and thereby building confidence in their own identity.

However, during post-colonial times they were at crossroads producing variable cultural effects.

Several features of post-colonial diaspora formation can be identified:

- As a part of the end of colonial rule
- Partitioning of states
- Unskilled/ skilled work force
- Movement of refugees
- Conflict migrants
- Exodus due to upheavals/ revolutions/ genocides
- Religious discrimination

There were certain factors that restricted the circulation of culture:

- Religion
- Geography
- Eclecticality / Selectivity
- Partition
- Conflicts

Diaspora exists as a result of dispersion of communities. It could be dynamically absorbed into the main entity.

1. It would be the instrument to maintain strong ties between the host country and the country of origin.
2. Both parties benefit and promote skilled labour
3. Diaspora constitutes valuable network of intellectual cultural and educational exchange
4. Create intercultural understanding and tolerance



## **Challenges**

In the aftermath of the Second World War there was a paradigmatic shift.

- This was the age of transnational migration, border crossing, human trafficking;
- Human rights, class, gender, race, and ethnicity played a considerable role;
- The emergence of transnational Diasporic communities;
- Strategically reconstructed Diasporic practices; and
- Promotion of transnational space, colonial histories, racial formations, ancestral genealogies, common and mutual heritage.

## **Strengthening, subsuming and metamorphosing**

How does the circulation of cultures contribute to the strengthening, subsuming and metamorphosing of cultures and traditions?

1. The diaspora formed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been subsumed and in some cases metamorphosed within the concept of nation. Their social behaviours, art forms and language were retained in lien with the concept of survival of the fittest. The culture they inherited has harmonized with the mainstream.
2. The complete connectivity between cultures has constructed new margins, bridging symmetrical and asymmetrical identities. Instead of fragmentation the cultural practices have been integrated and

relocated in new spaces, e.g. those who have migrated to Australia come here for weddings.

3. Need of a counter force for cosmopolitan global modernity is imminent. The diasporic culture would provide material for shaping identity and one's consciousness about the world and to formulate definition for hybridity in order to devoid difficult questions like race, class, caste and colonialism. Culture has to be inserted with new contexts, new configurations that create a new identity for the local – global nexus.



## ACADEMIC SESSION - 2

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**CHAired BY MR. ALI WAHEED**



## DIASPORIC CULTURES OF SOUTH ASIA DURING 18TH TO 20TH CENTURIES

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**PROF. K.N.O. DHARMADASA**  
CHIEF EDITOR, SINHALA ENCYCLOPEDIA OFFICE, SRI LANKA



There are certain misgivings about the word ‘diaspora’ in contemporary times. Therefore, the overview the concept of diaspora and its constructive use given by Dr. Garg is essential for academic and scholarly discussion. One must view the phenomena of diaspora and its relevance in the SAARC region from a broad perspective. Certain thoughts arise when considering diaspora from a South Asian perspective. Furthermore, it is important to absorb socio-economic, cultural, political and linguistic factors into the diasporic discourse.

In relation to diaspora there are people who come from outside and settle as diasporic communities and there are those who leave a particular country e.g. the Eurasians and the Burghers in Sri Lanka. It is crucial that diaspora has been limited to a time period, or diaspora of many centuries like the Aryan migration and migration from South of India would have to be discussed. The time period chosen for this Conference is characterized as one of great disorganization. The South Asian region had a culture of arts, literature, crafts and spiritual heritage and this was predominant for thousands of years, until the great disruption occurred with the Europeans and their guns. This disruption caused the local population to think that the Europeans were stone eating, blood drinking mortals who posed a challenge to their cultural heritage. Therefore, this created a disruption in the social ethos and the historical passage. Furthermore, the advent of the imperial powers created an unprecedented surge of diaspora. Indentured labour was absorbed into countries with communities like the Indian Tamils from South India coming to Sri Lanka and other communities taken to Trinidad, Guyana and West Indies.

Secondly, there was the sending out of the local population of one region to another region. Anagarika Dharmapala, a social reformer, who was anti-British and a Buddhist revivalist, encouraged others to go to other lands, earn money, be educated in other lands and bring back knowledge to Sri Lanka to assist one's own

country. This was one aspect of the nationalists using diasporic opportunities to nurture nationalist ends to emulate colonialist leaders. However, this was not as successful as Dharmapala envisioned.

Another interesting aspect of the diasporic culture is the dialectic created when one settles in another land. This is seen either in one recognizing the need to assert one's identity or being immersed with culture. In relation to asserting one's identity when a man goes to England and lives there he becomes more Sinhala than the Sinhala man. This is due to the pathos of the borderland. Therefore, people in the borderland are more assertive of their identity. Furthermore, Naipaul asserts, "When my grandfather went to Trinidad as an indentured labourer, he carried his village with him." There was a conscious effort to assert his Brahmin identity. Therefore, these are the cultural aspects created within Diasporic conditions.

## **QUESTION AND ANSWER**

- 1. When using Naipaul as an example, we must realize that when he uses the concept of home in his discourse, he portrays it as an ideal land, but still he is contemptuous of India. Is it possible to use Naipaul as the dialectic for diaspora?**

Literary figures are complex and portray subject matter in different ways. He presents the diaspora and I cannot argue about his personal feelings about India.

## **IMPACT OF DIASPORA ON SOUTH ASIAN CULTURES DURING 18TH TO 20TH CENTURIES**

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**PROF. KARUNAMAYA GOSWAMI**  
**PRINCIPAL, CAMBRIAN COLLEGE, BANGLADESH**



Diaspora as defined in the dictionary “is the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country” or more comfortably, to serve our present purpose, the movement of people from one place to the other and impact on cultures it creates in matter of shaping and reshaping their forms.

The diasporic impact on South Asian cultures has always been immense. The Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent and changed the tone of the culture. However, during the period signifying eighteenth to



twentieth centuries it has been very keenly felt since the East India Company started consolidating their power in the Indian Subcontinent from the second half of the eighteenth century.

South Asia came under tremendous diasporic influence of the Western culture and was affected in the major dimensions of living from education to hospitalization. There was also an impact of movement of people from one region to the other within South Asia itself. For instance, music and dance forms travelled to Bengal from far outside the Bengal region. In addition, cultural ideas from Bengal travelled to some other regions in the South Asia to create an impact there. Tagore, himself influenced by the Western idea of composed music, travelled to Sri Lanka and with him travelled the culture of Bengal which left a far reaching impact on Sri Lankan culture. Camel drivers from Punjab came to Lucknow and with their songs they contributed to shaping a new form of Hindustani songs known as *Tappa* which soon travelled to Bengal and created a great impact on the musical developments there. The Bengali folk song, *Ghatu* is also found in Nepal. It may have so happened that *Ghatu* songs have either travelled from Bengal to Nepal or from Nepal to Bengal.

Bengalis from Bangladesh are found to live in a huge number in all the major cities of the world. They take elements of Bengali culture with them and accept elements of culture of their host country. Therefore, a

chemistry of change is created in their mind-sets which they send back home in the form of various cultural expressions thus creating a bridge between Bangladesh and the places they live in. Today Bangladesh plays a significant role in building up the global spirit by being a big partner in the global diaspora.

Therefore, the people of South Asia should strive to ensure peace in the region which is the precondition for development. Furthermore, there should be a united fight against our common enemy, poverty. This can be achieved through creating a strong environment of unity between the SAARC member states. Through investigation we would discover that at the root we are not very different. South Asia is like a huge tree and the member states are like fruits of different shapes and colours. This sense of regional belonging must be built at the grassroot level. Once this is done, political differences could be minimized. In addition, this has to be achieved for the sake of countless South Asian people who are yet to enjoy the fruits of education, health, food and home. Seminars and conferences such as these facilitate the building of a SAARC regional entity.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- 1. Is there a need to clarify the historical fact regarding the banishment by Wazid Ali Shah? What was the impact of this banishment on the Lucknow family of court musicians?**

He was a very influential person and this banishment invaded cultural space, creating a big impact. Tagore's influence and the courses of Visva Bharati are worthy of mention.

**2. What was the impression created with regard to the music?**

People were tired of listening to *Kirtana* and constant repetition. People were listening to it in the name of Krishna and Kali. However, this was a completely new song; it was a love song. This was a love element given to Radha and Krishna. This was a time when the ladies did not have a choice but to marry. This was a democratic revolution and it was a humanist's song. This is the Bengal's Renaissance.

**3. What is the relationship between Baul songs and Sufuism?**

Tagore was greatly influenced by Baul songs. The 'guru-shishya parampara' was there. Tagore was a singer and actor and he sang Baul songs. Although he descended from a royal family, he became a Baul, wearing a beggar's attire. Baul is the meeting point for Sufusim and there is no ethnic, religious, or gender based discrimination in these songs.

## **CIRCULATION OF SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLES AND COMMODITIES: AN OVERVIEW**

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**Mr. SHAH MUHAMMAD IKHTIAR JAHAN KABIR  
RESEARCH FELLOW, PALLI KARMA - SAHAYAK  
FOUNDATION, BANGLADESH.**



The circulation of peoples and commodities of South Asia during the eighteenth to the first half of the twentieth century was greater than any earlier period. The colonial masters valued the region as a source for raw materials and more amenable for trade relationships. Among them, the British compelled the region to produce commodities, as they needed. In line with that, the five major commodities of the region – indigo, raw silk, raw cotton, opium and sugar, became the chief export to Europe. The end of British rule in

1947, paved the freedom of production for the region, and resulted in many conflicts. It led to a mass exodus of 35 to 40 million peoples in the region. After 1971, a relative calm prevailed in the region. During this time, nations strove to promote trade and economy, and utilize their human resources. As a result, segments of the population became 'commodities.'

Millions of the South Asian diaspora travelled across the world to earn money through blue collar and white collar jobs. There were also many who left their countries to gain knowledge and remained in their host countries, then creating a brain drain from South Asia. The statistics for the South Asian diaspora are voluminous. Other trends noted are diaspora who return to their home cultures and the unwarranted trafficking of children and women. There is an intra-regional circulation of peoples and commodities that has been observed in recent times. However, this is greater in contrast with the inter-regional circulation of people.

The nations, meanwhile, have forged various bilateral and multilateral frameworks to promote trade, culture and other aspects. Informal and formal trade is seen within the South Asian region. SAARC, SAFTA and other agreements have materialized in response to these trends and the contribution of SAARC should be recognized.

## ACADEMIC SESSION - 3

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CHAired BY PROF. K.N.O. DHARMADASA



## **AFGHAN DIASPORA**

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**Mr. MOHAMMAD UMAR MARUFI KALEEM and Mr.  
AHMAD SAMIM AHMADI  
MINISTRY OF REFUGEES AND REPATRIATIONS,  
AFGHANISTAN**



This is the first time we have had the opportunity to represent Afghanistan at such a Conference of the SAARC Cultural Centre. Afghanistan is shaped through different diasporic groups and the present Afghan society is comprised of diasporic groups. The biggest ethnic groups are the Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Aimaks, Hazaras and Hindus. Therefore, Afghanistan is a multicultural and multiethnic nation. Diverse diasporic groups have come to Afghanistan over the last 300 to 400 years since the establishment of Afghanistan as a nation. This was created by Ahmad Shah Durrani's rise to power. The distinctive factor about Afghanistan as

portrayed by the census is that the Pashtun are the largest ethnicity. However, the official language in Afghanistan is the language called Dari, a part of the Persian language. All these diverse ethnicities speak different languages like Pashto, Dari and Uzbek. Uzbek is particularly spoken in the North of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the identity of ethnicities is depicted in their attire. For example the wedding attire would differ according to ethnic culture. The Pashtuns have songs like *Hazal*, the *Tappa*. There are different culinary styles distinctive to the cultures. This presents the circulation of cultures among the Pashtuns.

An example is related to a Hindu who lived in Kandahar and moves to Delhi but prepares dried meat (*lahndi*), specific to the Pashtun culture which originated as food that would protect one's body from the cold and produce heat. He remains faithful to culinary traditions which were transmitted over generations. This is part of being in one nation but transmitting one's culture in another nation. Therefore, the Afghan Diaspora has a strong sense of the homeland.

As a nation, Afghanistan has had many migrants as a result of the conquests. Conquerors from different directions conquered different areas in Afghanistan. Alexander the Great invaded from the North, the Russians from the South and the British from the East. The conquests precipitated migration within the



last three to four centuries. In Afghanistan, different ethnic diasporic groups live together and are united by the Dari language. Although there are different ethnic groups they still assert that they are derived from one origin.

Therefore, in Afghanistan, different ethnic groups desire to be integrated and consolidated within one nation. Some scholars follow the philosophy of assimilation and operate on the principle of ignoring the ethnic differences of the indigenous groups. They feel they need to recognize the cultures of the majority without taking into account the indigenous ethnicities. However, this is problematic. Therefore, we need to encourage and support the diaspora to follow their rituals, languages and cultures of the country.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. How many non-Muslims have returned to Afghanistan?**

A large number of non-Muslims have returned to Afghanistan. One female returnee has even been appointed as a Senator by the President. Contributory factors for returning were the compensation for land and legal assistance for the returnees.

### **2. There is a need to highlight more on Southern Afghanistan which was more affected than Northern Afghanistan. Also is there still a strong**

### **Pashtun domination or are there other tribes in control?**

The North of Afghanistan was affected during the the Taliban regime who were controlling the North and the South. However, it is possible that the South was affected more.

There has been no dominating ethnicity during the last ten years. In the Central Government, the President is Pashtun; his first Vice President is of the Tajik ethnicity, the Second Vice President is Hazara. There are no Prime Ministers in Afghanistan. The Vice President is equivalent to the Prime Minister. So there is equality. There are also Uzbek representatives. Therefore, ethnic groups are given equal standing.

### **3. Are there any Buddhist communities left in Afghanistan?**

The Bamiyan Buddhist statues were destroyed but it is currently being rehabilitated. There is a very small group of Buddhists in Kabul.

## THE CHANGING PATTERN OF PAKHTUN CULTURE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DIASPORA

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**PROF. SYED MINHAJ UL HASSAN**  
**DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND INTERNATIONAL  
STUDIES, HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY, HONG KONG.**



This presentation is divided into the aspects of the definition of culture, factors that cause cultural change and changes in the Pakhtun culture in relation to Pakhtun diaspora. Culture is defined in different ways by different theorists. E.B. Tylor (1871) states that:

*Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*

Culture is a fragile phenomenon susceptible to change. There are three general sources for cultural change. These are: forces at work within a society, contacts between societies and change in the natural environment. Globalization is also recognized as a factor for cultural change.

The Pakhtun society of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan is a tribal society with little sources of local income. This is the reason that Pakhtuns are spread all over the world in search of jobs and livelihood. The most recent figures given for the concentration of the Pakistani and Pakhtun diaspora is stated in the official government website of Pakistan that the Pakistani diaspora is 5.5 million though a larger diaspora of 7 million is estimated.

In Pakistan, Pakhtuns constitute 11.5 percent of the entire population, but Pakhtuns are 33.5 percent of the entire Pakistani diasporic population. As stated in the past session, China and India have large diasporic communities because of their large population, but in relation to the percentage of the total population, the Pakistani diaspora may be seen as the largest diaspora in the world.

In the early 1970s, there was an influx of Pakhtuns in the Gulf States. Although early migrants faced lot of difficulties, they earned large amounts of money and punctually sent these to their families in

Pakistan. This money from the Gulf States brought many cultural changes in the Pakhtun society. These changes affected the tribal structure of the Pakhtun society and changed their lifestyle and traditions. Although the Pakhtuns had an egalitarian society, the chiefs still maintained power. However, as the lower classes started to move out to greener pastures the dependence on the higher classes became lesser. This was also based on the sense of competition in the Pakhtun culture. Therefore, the traditional leaders of the society slowly and gradually lost power to the emerging wealthy class. This change disturbed the law and order in the Pakhtun society.

Another important change that affected the Pakhtun society was their way of living. Earlier most Pakhtuns lived simple lives. They used to live in mud houses but with the money from the diaspora, the Pakhtuns started constructing cement and brick houses. Although earlier they had only a few rooms, with modernization everyone had their own rooms and entertainment. Therefore, the shared room concept diminished, even creating a breakdown of traditions like storytelling by the elderly as children congregated in front of TVs.

Concepts like the *guthar*, a space exclusively for women were affected by modernization, as people constructed their own wells and facilities. A famous lament thus explains the impact of modernization:

*People have changed, other times have  
changed  
Girls are no more coming to the Guther.*

They also constructed private guest houses for guests which negatively affected the Hujra culture. Pakhtuns used to celebrate their festivals in a very simple manner but with the arrival of new wealth, their simple living changed to a more cosmetic lifestyle where thousands of rupees were spent on marriages. Even the value of dowries increased and hundreds of thousands of rupees were spent.

The diaspora money also brought positive changes in the lives of the Pakhtuns. With the availability of resources more Pakhtun children were able to go to better schools as well as gain higher education. With education, their behavior towards women has seen dramatic changes. Furthermore, economic betterment reduced hardships of the Pakhtun women. Earlier they used to help men folk in the agricultural fields or outside labour. Besides that they also used to collect firewood from the mountains. With the newly-earned money most of the people have replaced firewood with natural gas, while for agricultural purposes tractors and thrashers etc. are used. This change relieved the women from hard labour. The availability of economic resources also changed the attitude of the Pakhtuns towards girls' education. Now an increasing number of girls attend schools, colleges and universities. However, this new

economic prosperity also saw some infringements on the movement of the lower class women. Women who used to walk around in the fields, streets and other places freely were not allowed to move out of the houses.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- 1. Is the story of the Pakhtuns confined only to the Pakistani side? What about other factors such as modernization? Is there a correlation between modernization and diaspora or is it a common trend?**

The main focus of this paper was the Pakistani Pakhtuns. The research was not carried out in Afghanistan. This is a common trend and modernization did have an effect, but the diaspora played a major role. First it came with the diaspora. They brought tape recorders, televisions etc. In addition, the sense of competition created a snowball effect on the Pakhtuns. Furthermore, the Pakhtun rural areas were very poor and the ability to afford education was due to the diasporic influence and the diaspora remittances.

- 2. The British Empire tried to break the pride of the Pakhtuns. They demarcated Pakhtun tribes and this resulted in cultural breakdown. What about the cultural breakdown that occurred in the Indian context?**

Although there was division of the Pakhtun tribes, culturally there was no difference as culture

pervades beyond boundaries. This was an administrative and protocol decision to share the resources. Although Pakhtuns are divided politically they cannot be divided culturally.

**Reference:**

Tylor, E.B., *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom*, 2 vols. (London, 1871).



## **GALLE FORT – THE HERITAGE CITY**

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**PROF. K.D. PARANAVITANA**  
**CONSULTANT, DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES, SRI**  
**LANKA**



The Galle Fort is the capital city of the Southern province of Sri Lanka and has been declared a World Heritage Site. The Dutch planned the streets in a grid pattern as in Colombo Fort which follows the European way of urban planning.

The main entrance to the Galle fort still retains the British emblem on the arch. This is symbolic of the power of the British. However, a small monogram of the Dutch also remains visible. The Portuguese, Dutch and the British used the Galle fort as their stronghold. Streets like Lineban Street, Governor's Residencies,

bastions like the Black bastion, Star Bastion, the Dutch Reformed Church, the iconic Clock Tower are significant places in Galle.

The Racecourse is now transformed into the International Cricket Stadium. Many residences have been transformed into hotels. Galle City also suffered due to the tsunami and underwent restructuring. Galle boasts of quadruple parentage where the Sinhala, the Portuguese, Dutch and British have contributed to its present structure.



## DAY 2

### ACADEMIC SESSION 4

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**CHAired BY MR. SHAH MUHAMMAD IKHTIAR JAHAN  
KABIR**



## **MALDIVIAN CULTURAL EVOLUTION FROM THE 18TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY**

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**Mr. ALI WAHEED and Ms. ASİYATH MOHAMED**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HERITAGE, REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES**



Maldives is situated in the central Indian Ocean, some 2,500 miles north-east of Mombasa and some 400 miles south-west of India and Sri Lanka. The Maldives Archipelago is both geographically and culturally closer to South and Southeast Asia than to Africa. Nevertheless, despite the vast distance involved, commercial and cultural links between the Maldives and the Swahili Coast have existed for many centuries. Earliest evidence suggests that the first settlers may have been from Sri Lanka and Southern India. There is also evidence that Buddhism and Hinduism existed in Maldives. However, Maldives shows inhabitation of

mixed ethnicity from different parts of the world. Maldives was converted to Islam in 1153 CE.

From the eighteenth century till the twentieth century Maldives has experienced considerable changes in its historical and traditional culture. The reason for these changes is the ease of travelling experienced over the world during this time. The location of the Maldives in the Indian Ocean has facilitated diasporic communities. Furthermore, many people travel abroad to the surrounding countries to gain higher education and thereby spend many years in foreign lands. On return, these people bring back certain aspects of the culture of the host countries likewise sharing Maldivian culture with the host countries. This trend has resulted in some of these acquired practices becoming popular and accepted among the Maldivian community thus making way to a permanent change in the local culture.

The main areas impacted by the diasporic communities were:

- Food
- Attire
- Architecture, and
- Performing Arts

The original staple foods which were yam, bread fruit, coconut, and pumpkin shifted to rice, wheat and flour. The attire worn by Maldivians also has a strong affinity to the attire of the African culture. The

performing arts are similar to that of the South African, Indian and the Sri Lankan communities. For example *bodu beru* is very close to the African performing arts. Boat building and modes of transportation are similar to boat building on the Swahili coast. Therefore, this shows evidence that those who migrated from Africa to Maldives shared their way of living in Maldives. According to history, the script used by the Maldivians is Eveyla Akuru, Dhives Akuru, Thaana Akuru. In relation to architecture there were thatch-roof houses, coral-stone houses, cement houses and now there are multi-storey buildings.

Another interesting factor is that among the 400,000 population in Maldives, there is a population of 150,000 who are employed and have settled in Maldives from different countries. Therefore, the cultural practices of Maldives have undergone a transformation due to the cultural influences of European, African and South Asian countries.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. How did the conversion to Islam take place?**

There is a folk story about a person named Koimalar who came to Maldives from the Arab world. During this time there was a demon came from the sea and kept some people imprisoned. The Arabic scholar questioned as to why they did certain things and asked them to stop these things and started reciting the Quran. This is the folk story of how Islam came

to Maldives. There is also evidence of Buddhists and Hindus in Maldives and it took 40 years to convert to Islam. These Buddhist and Hindu sites still remain as evidence.

**2. What was the influence of Buddhism in the Northern atolls of Maldives during the pre-Islamic times?**

We do not know exactly how Buddhism came to Maldives. Inhabitants of Maldives are settlers from the neighbouring countries. There are differences in the figures, the stupas and the temples in the islands. The first original settlers in Maldives cannot be traced, but they could be from India or Sri Lanka. However, at present no empirical research has been conducted on the original settlers of Maldives.

**3. Is there a syncretic culture in Maldives? How does this engage with pre-Islamic Maldivian traditions?**

There are studies on the state of Islam in South Asia and South East Asia. Jerry Bentley (1993) talks of Islamic encounters of merchants and rulers in Maldives. Although Buddhism and Hinduism were prevalent in Maldives, these were not organized. As Islam was a centralized, organized religion, it was easy for the Maldivians to convert to Islam.

An etymological study has been done by Mr. Ponnambalam Raghupathy (2006) on names of the islands in the Maldivian archipelago which reveals



that every island name has a Sinhala, Tamil and Sanskrit intermingling. This portrays cultural intermingling.

When studying diaspora, linguistic and historic influences should be studied. Prof. Hettiarachchi in his study asserts that the Divehi language is closer to the Sinhala language in the eleventh and twelfth century. Furthermore, old maps in Lisbon drawn by the Portuguese prove similar names have been given to atolls in the 1600s. The Dutch also prepared such maps calling the atolls by similar names. Therefore, historical and linguistic factors should be examined in understanding the cultural influence.

#### **Reference:**

Bentley, Jerry, *Old world Encounter: Cross Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1993).

Raghupathy, Ponnambalam, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Island Names in the Republic of Maldives* (2006).

## **CIRCULATION OF IDEAS AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS VIS-À-VIS THE SRI LANKAN AND NEPALI DIASPORAS IN SINGAPORE**

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**Ms. HEMA KRIUPPALINI**

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, INSTITUTE OF SOUTH ASIAN  
STUDIES, SINGAPORE.**



This paper seeks to define diasporic culture as overseas groups in Singapore who

- (i) retain social, cultural and economic links with their homeland and display those characteristics as a minority community;
- (ii) refrain from assimilation but by means of integration have shaped Singapore's political culture of multiracialism; and,

(iii) have an impact on circulating ideas in their home country that go beyond cultural norms and values.

Drawing from empirical research conducted for five years, the paper explores the circulation of ideas and cultural expressions vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan and Nepali diasporas in Singapore during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Kindled by compulsions of colonialism and propelled by the South Asian spirit of adventure, countries like India, Nepal and Sri Lanka have witnessed their citizens venturing abroad to Singapore at a phenomenal scale over a long period of time. The emigration of Sri Lankans dates back approximately 150 years with the flow of Sinhalese gem merchants and Jaffna Tamils who were brought in by the British to staff the civil administration during the mid to late nineteenth century. Attributed to the British colonial legacy, emigration Nepalese to Singapore goes back more than 63 years although the Singapore Gurkha Contingent was officially formed in 1949.

Historical affinity between Singapore and the South Asian region led to vigorous exchange of ideas and cultural forms that continue to define Singapore's immigrant society. Through research on ethnicity and immigration, this paper aims to illustrate:

- (a) how the circulation of Sri Lankan and Nepali cultures to Singapore during the nineteenth and twentieth century has shaped and strengthened Singapore's multiculturalism and nation-building efforts;
- (b) the contrasting dynamics of the Sri Lankan and Nepali diasporic formations shedding light on the barriers to the latter's circulation of culture in Singapore; and,
- (c) how the Sri Lankan and Nepali diasporic communities are deeply engaged with their homeland and have influenced the culture of circulation in their respective countries.

In the context of the aforementioned communities, their diasporic cultures in Singapore go beyond institutions that seek to highlight their cultural expressions (e.g., Singapore Ceylon Tamils Associations (SCTA), Singapore Sinhala Association (SSA), Sri Senpaga Vinayagar temple at Ceylon Road, Sri Lankaramaya Vihara, Nepali Hindu *Mandir*, etc). Rather, these diasporic institutions that are premised on the promotion of culture are poised towards the social development of their homeland. In other words, these institutions serve as spaces that transcend the projection of cultural norms. They act as a site for the circulation of social, cultural and economic ideas that facilitate engagement in their homeland by means of diaspora philanthropy.

The Sri Lankan diaspora make efforts to assimilate while the Gurkha community have a strictly insular approach and is housed within Mount Vernon Camp. The Camp is architecturally Singaporean but has embellishments of Nepalese river, street names etc. can be seen within the Camp. This discourages any interaction between the mainstream Singaporean community and the Gurkha community and consolidates their stance as an impartial force within Singapore.

Therefore, these are two distinct South Asian diasporic communities. The Singaporean policy of 'integrate not assimilate', is vital in understanding these communities. The Sri Lankan diaspora is integrated into the community but in the case of the Nepalese Gurkha community, the government itself provides that they retain their own culture and remain excluded. However, the Gurkhas remain loyal to Singapore and even have an entire district in Nepal named after a Singaporean district. The *samaja seva* (social service) halls and other structures are also similar to the Singaporean ones. This trend is also observed among the Sri Lankan diaspora who named a tsunami village in 2005 Merlion Village, after the national icon of Singapore. Therefore, the impact of the host country on the homeland is evident.

This paper identifies themes and proposes the need for greater research in two areas. First, within the

broad theme of diasporic culture and identity, this study enquires into the need for further research that explores the inextricable cultural and social interconnectivity between the South and Southeast Asian region. Secondly, this research aims to facilitate comparative research among the relatively understudied states of South Asia, viz. Sri Lanka and Nepal. Within this framework, it is critical to analyze sub-themes such as the largely unexplored 'diaspora engagement' and 'diaspora philanthropy' as a means to better understand the circulation of ideas and cultural expressions.

## **Discussion**

- 1. The Nepalese diaspora is monolithic, but Sri Lankan diaspora is diverse. Therefore, we need to answer the critical issue of how we define the diaspora. Can we call the Nepalese a diasporic community as they live in isolation? Furthermore, should we not question this concept of state policy on diaspora?**

Terming the Gurkha community as diasporic is because they have been in Singapore for 63 years. There is a wish to integrate but not assimilate. Therefore, it is necessary to reconfigure the notion of diaspora to accommodate such categories.

- 2. Similar factors as presented by you are also seen in diasporic studies. The role of the state and the diasporic communities is significant as mentioned.**

**Have you considered the relationship between different waves of Sri Lankan diasporic communities? How have they been impacted by the changes taking place in Sri Lanka?**

Ethnic tension is not accentuated in Singapore as in Europe. The ethnic divides are separate and there is little interaction. However, when a Sinhalese and a Tamil meet in Singapore, the 'Sri Lankanness' does not emerge as they consider themselves Singaporean. Maybe thirty years before this may have occurred, but there was cordial coexistence in Singapore between the Sinhalese and Tamils.

**3. What about the other Nepalese diaspora (other than the Gurkha community) who are not working in the police force?**

Most of them are in the food and beverage sector and others in the professional sector (banks etc.). They are given professional citizenship. This creates a disparity as the person who is not there for long gets citizenship but not the Gurkha community.

**4. What about the Gurkha children?**

In the Singapore Birth Certificate it is stated in the corner that *"This child is not a Singaporean citizen at the time of birth"*. They go to government schools and they are brought up in Singaporean society, but they are not citizens. At the age of 45 many Gurkhas retire and they go to Afghanistan, Iran and other countries to serve in the armed forces. Therefore,

when the Gurkha children return to their home country they are totally dislocated and disoriented.

## **COMMENTS**

**There was a special ferry service that existed between Kankasanturai (Sri Lanka) and Nagapatnam (India) to support the migration process. Also if we try to compare the Sri Lankan and the Gurkha community, the main difference about the Sri Lankan Diaspora is that it was the professionals who migrated to Sri Lanka.**

The Sri Lankans came to Singapore as professionals, but the Gurkhas came to Singapore and were accepted for their qualities of loyalty and impartiality.

**In the racial profiling in Singapore there is a need to integrate and not assimilate but within this statement there are accentuated ethnic differences.**

There are two countries coming into Singapore but both have different entries into the nation of Singapore. The Gurkhas also replaced the Sikh contingent in 1949. This was because the Gurkha community was more loyal to Singapore.



## OVERVIEW OF BHUTANESE DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CULTURES

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**Mr. HARKA B. GURUNG and Ms. TSHERING CHOKI**  
**NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, BHUTAN**



Bhutan is in the eastern Himalayas at an altitude of about 162 metres to 7,554 metres above sea level. Bhutan comprises of three main ethnic groups: Tibeto-Mongoloid mainly in the North and West, Burmo-Mongoloid mainly in the East and Indo-Aryan (Nepalese) in the South. The major prevalent religions in Bhutan are Buddhism 75 percent and Hinduism 25 percent. Dzonghka is the national language, while English is also widely spoken and is used as the medium of instruction for the education system.

There are various stages of diaspora that have occurred in Bhutan. Like any other country in South Asia, the Bhutan too experienced diasporic formation at

different periods of time in the annals of its history. The diaspora that occurred in the fifth and sixth centuries until the twentieth century was mainly because of wars, political turmoil and labour migration. The other reason was the serene environment of Bhutan which was considered a perfect place for Buddhist missionary activities from Tibet and political asylum by people from neighboring countries.

The migrations that occurred in several phases are just one of many in history. Over very long periods, eventually the migrants assimilated into the settled area so completely that it became their new homeland. Thus, the migrants before the nineteenth century assimilated into the main population and they did not feel that they belong to the diasporic community.

The twentieth century too saw huge population movements. Some cases involved large-scale migration by individual choice. Some migrations occurred to avoid conflict and warfare. The largest Bhutanese diaspora, is that of the Tibetan and ethnic Nepalese communities. In the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, many Tibetans from the Southern part of Tibet fled to Bhutan on their way to India. Some chose to remain in Bhutan. Bhutan gave asylum and also the option to accept Bhutanese citizenship to those who chose to renounce their right to return to Tibet or preferred to stay as refugee. Many of them opted to live as refugee hoping to return to Tibet one day. The

Nepalese community is spread across many regions in southern Bhutan, whereas the Tibetan community is concentrated in western and central Bhutan.

Bhutanese tradition and culture, though similar to Tibet is unique in its own way. Both the Bhutanese and the Tibetans practice the Vajrayana form of Buddhism. Language similarities are found in both the written scriptures and spoken languages and there is a strong similarity in the classical form of writing and in Buddhist literature.

The first reports of the Nepali diaspora were in 1620. The family system, marriage practices, religious practices, food, and language have undergone a trajectory of change due to diasporic influence.

These two communities, especially the Nepalese community form part of a larger Bhutanese population and constitute a diverse, heterogeneous and inclusive community representing language, culture, and faith. This paper explores the nature of diaspora that occurred over the centuries in Bhutan with special focus on the Nepalese and Tibetan communities, and seeks to situate it in the context of identity construction for the constituent community members by highlighting their cultural tradition.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1. Bhutan is located in an area where many Tibetans come to Bhutan as a result of cross border conflicts. Some come to Bhutan as a transit to India. How does Bhutan engage in border management in the rise of tensions in India and China?**

There are no issues of Tibetans fleeing from Bhutan to India. This only occurred in the 1950 and hopefully this will not occur again. There are strong allies with India and we do not anticipate any such situation.

- 2. The refugee status is a transitional status and this should not be a long term status. They should be supported in a third country. What is the future for these refugees?**

Most Tibetan refugees have accepted their Bhutanese citizenship in the 1980s and have been granted citizenship, while others have returned to Tibet.

- 3. There is a strong affiliation with India. However, physically and ethnically there is stronger resemblance to South East Asia, how do you see this development?**

Traditionally and historically our trade partnership was with Tibet and there was a rock barter system with Tibet. However, as time passed the inaccessibility of the mountainous North region forced us to have more connection with the South. Therefore, the connection with the North was disconnected.



## ACADEMIC SESSION: 5

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CHAired BY PROF. SYED MINHAJ UL HASSAN



## DIASPORIC CULTURE OF BANGLADESH - 18TH TO 20TH CENTURY

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**PROF. SHARIF UDDIN AHMED**  
**UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA, BANGALDESH**



The movement of people from Bangladesh to other regions of South Asia and beyond in any large scale is a recent phenomenon. Bangladesh, for many centuries, has been a place of peace, political stability and economic prosperity. Rather many nations came here for taking advantage of its economic prosperity, secular culture, and religious toleration, all contributing to the growth of a newer culture. *"Bangladesh is hell but full of bread"* was a popular statement while deciding to settle down in Bangladesh.

Therefore, till the eighteenth century, those from Europe, Middle East, and Asia would come to Bangladesh. This resulted in a new culture in Bangladesh in the fields of music, food, and art.

From the eighteenth century, the people of Bangladesh started moving to other regions of South Asia and beyond particularly to Britain. The movement increased tremendously particularly in the twentieth century. The places where they have moved to include South Asia, Middle East, South East Asia, Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand. One of the distinctive features about the Bangladeshi diaspora is they go in their entirety and this is handed over to each generation enriching the culture of the places of their settlements. At the beginning of the British era, there was a forced movement of the elite classes of people to the neighbouring territories. However, after a while Kolkata emerged as the main hub of administrative, industrial and commercial activities and this attracted many Bangladeshis.

One of the elements for them to move out of Bangladesh was English education. An important movement of people took place to Assam and the British took Bangladeshis to Assam for work and they occupied high positions in administration, trade and commerce. In Shillong (capital of Meghalaya) there is a locality (*muallah*) named after the people of Dhaka.



The second phase of the diaspora was not forced but was for in quest of employment. One unfortunate incident that precipitated the movement of the population was the partition. Some Bangladeshis went to West Pakistan and established their own *muhallahs*. E.g. Chittagong Colony. The next major movement was due to the demand of labour in the Middle East but also included the movement to Europe, North America and Canada.

The first Bangladeshis arrived in Britain during the eighteenth century; and started work as lascars and seamen. Initially they worked as unskilled labourers but later the more enterprising Bangladeshis moved to the restaurant industry and created an impact on the food culture of the local people.

The Bangladeshis living abroad cling to their Bangladeshi culture and ethos and they also set up networks among themselves to reflect Bangladeshi culture. Furthermore, they also have a close bond with their country of origin.

Therefore, these were the significant changes in the culture and the social life of the host countries. The Bangladeshi community living abroad had a deep connection with the country of origin and this was based on a good compact relationship. Therefore, the diasporic movement is not a new phenomenon but has existed for centuries. Furthermore, the sense of guilt

that exists in the diasporic mentality should be challenged and the diaspora should be accepted as normal. The subject of diaspora is important and has global implications involving community relationships, peace and harmony and there is a need to carry out extensive research. Furthermore, research should be undertaken on subjects like cultural evolution, family relationships, position and role of women, new perspectives on religion, attitude to politics, environment and entrepreneurship, changes in aspirations of specified communities which develop migrant traditions etc.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. What are the language differences between the Indian West Bengali and the Bangla people?**

There is little difference between the Bangla people and the West Bengalis. There is no difference in relation to the standard language, but there are regional dialects. It would not be difficult to communicate with any of these Bengali groups. However, second and third generations have different accents. Therefore, there is an attempt to maintain the purity of the language by conducting of Bengali language classes.

### **2. What happened to the Buddhist community in Chittagong?**

There is a large population of Buddhists in Chittagong.

- 3. There is focus on Brick Lane in Britain and this is an interesting venue chosen for research. Was there an internal divide in Britain, Brick Lane after 9/11? Are there contradictions within this community?**

The world is not free from problems. In Brick Lane, it looks a wonderful place and the whole area is run by the Bangladeshis, but there are problems.

- 4. Is there a majority discourse among the Bangladeshi diaspora? Are there contradictions within the Bangladeshi diaspora?**

The general trend of Brick Lane in Britain is dominated by the Bangladeshis. There are two parties in Bangladesh, and this is also prevalent in London, Brick Lane. They have overcome most problems and maintain the Bangladeshi link, and have prospered from an economic perspective. In the 1960s, the idea was that the minority should be absorbed with the majority. However, now the main discourse is multiculturalism and it is hoped that the Bangladeshi diaspora will prosper for many centuries.

## DIASPORIC CULTURES OF SOUTH ASIA: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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**Mr. SHAMSUZZAMAN KHAN**  
**DIRECTOR GENERAL, BANGLA ACADEMY, BANGLADESH**



This paper looks at the concept of ‘diaspora’ as has been conceived by the academic circle in the recent times. The presentation will discuss the form or types of diaspora identified by the academics in contemporary literature. This will help us understand the role of multilayered and multidimensional meanings of context-specific diaspora. Gabriel Sheffer’s formulation of diaspora is as follows: “A fundamental characteristics of diasporas is that they maintain their ethno-national identities, which are strongly and directly derived from their homelands and related to them ” (*Ethno-National*

*Diaspora and Security–Survival*, Vol. 36.1, 1994). One important fact is that though they do not know each other in their homeland, they regroup themselves as an active and cohesive identity in their host lands. Therefore, migration is an essential part of human existence as the world is not static but dynamic in nature.

The next step of the paper will be to explore the historical roots of South Asian migration or movement of people from their respective home countries to host countries or regions. The cultural assimilation process of diaspora formation in their resident countries will also be investigated.

Several studies show that the economic, human and infrastructural and even technological and scientific advancement of many highly developed countries have been closely linked with the migration of people over the centuries. Industrial growth of Europe has been possible due to forced or natural migration or colonization. Recent massive infrastructural growth of Middle Eastern countries is possible due to migration of skilled and non-skilled labour force from South Asian countries, Philippines and Indonesia etc.

Migration is viewed both positively and negatively. It reduces the burden of economy and helps reduce problems of unemployment, health, sanitation and housing. Furthermore, the regular flow of

remittances boosts the national economy. However, critics state that migration of skilled professionals is a loss to the sending country. Therefore, they clearly assert brain drain.

The South Asian diaspora around the globe has been formed by movement of people to circulate knowledge, ideas, cultural values and preaching religions. The South Asian region comprising India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives and Bhutan is widely known as the world's largest diaspora estimating to nearly thirty million people.

Historically the Bangali are a dominant ethnic community in South Asia. They speak Bangla – a language of Indo-European language group and considered as the fifth largest language group in the world. Bangla, over the centuries, has assimilated words, phrases and grammatical terms from Latin, English, Turkish, Portuguese, Arabic, Persian and even Japanes. Through this we see the interplay of cultural circulation and circulation of culture in South Asian regions and beyond. During the British period, the colonial rulers imported labourers from different parts of India to develop their tea industry in Sylhet. Bangali sailors also migrated to different port areas in England to work under the patronage of different British merchants. A section of the population of Sylhet migrated to England during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They formed a vibrant

diaspora in London and other cities in the UK. They are famous for their catering business and have transformed the culinary system by introducing sub continental dishes. They also contributed significantly to the independence movement in 1971. The Bangali diaspora has formed in New York, Canada, Australian and Japan. They are working in different professions and conducting businesses. They send substantial amounts of remittances to Bangladesh and contribute to uplift the economic growth. There are literary and cultural conferences to preserve and expose their cultural traditions. They also introduce cultural artifacts and articles of daily use in the host countries.

Finally this paper discusses the Bangladeshi diaspora around the world keeping in mind the historical depth and geographical spread of the subject. Therefore, the diasporic movement of people, goods and commodities from Bangladesh has a long history.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. How do you describe the diasporic aspect of the translations of Tagore and the impact of his work in Bangladesh?**

Tagore is dear to us but his literature has a limited effect on the people. Tagore was not very concerned about the diaspora. However, he praised the ideals and the aesthetic tastes of the Bengalis and wrote poetry for them but he also criticized

them. He asserted, *“You have created us as Bengali but we want to be human beings.”*

**2. Do you have any ideas to establish Bangladeshi studies and Tagore Literature abroad particularly among the Bangladeshi diaspora?**

There are plans to implement centers with Tagore studies and an idea to construct a Tagore Chair in Dhaka. However, this has not been implemented yet by the Bangladeshi government. If there is an opportunity to construct a Tagore Chair in Bangladesh or even in the USA, this will help to expand the Bangla language.

**3. What is your view on illegal and irregular migration in Bangladesh?**

This is a situation seen in Bangladesh but the statistics can be given by a specialist in the subject.

**4. The presentation portrayed the Bangladeshi diaspora from a positive perspective. Perhaps a more holistic picture could have been presented.**

This was because there was no time to explore indepth into the subject area.

**Chairperson’s Comment**

There are different methods of presentation and limited time to present the entire research.



## **ASSESSING SOUTH ASIAN INTERNAL DIASPORA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: IDENTIFYING TRANSNATIONALISM, CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND NEWER CULTURAL HUBS IN INDIA**

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**DR. WASEEM RAJA**  
**ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, INDIA**



The presentation will focus on the internal displacements in India. This presentation will be divided into four main parts. It will focus on theoretical aspects, historical aspects, internal displacement in India and a focus study on certain diasporic communities in India.

Diaspora is seen as a social form, and a conscious mode of cultural production. There are different ways of conceptualizing diaspora. Each of

these concepts have different meanings and they affect South Asia in different ways. It is also caused by the sense of homeland where communities have been dislocated.

The historical context of diaspora should be discussed. This has been linked with religion. India is one the unique countries where they have assimilated and absorbed many other cultures. There has been migration to India from the Aryan hills and other places. Also there have been Indian areas like Hindu Kush and Nooristan. Hindu Kush is where the Hindu army was annihilated. Similarly, there were other methods of diaspora for example when Emperor Ashoka sent people to different parts of the world and his son to Sri Lanka for the purpose of propagating Dhamma. With the advent of Islam in India there were changes in Indian culture.

Furthermore, diaspora has had an impact on the architecture in India. The impact of colonization from the Mughals and the British created an impact on Indian architecture. This was also a time of cultural assimilation. After independence in India, the partition diaspora arrived. After Bangladesh was created, twelve million people were displaced. This resulted in an economic imbalance in India. Causing a borderline movement. In addition, localized violence, i.e. caste violence and religious conflict induced displacement

resulting in formation of internal diasporic communities. These factors created displacement and relocation.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- 1. We think there is great democracy in India. What is the role of international humanitarian organization to solve these issues of IDPS?**

The issue of internally displaced persons is difficult to track as they are here one day and gone to another village the next day. There is little involvement in this issue.

- 2. There is no clear definition of IDPs. There is a process of change, and transition from informal settlements to formal. Do you face a similar problem in India of IDPs?**

This is involuntary and a natural factor. This is not a big disaster.

- 3. Can you draw some general conclusions to analyse a particular context from the wide ranging subject area diasporic studies?**

In India there are two parallel processes that continue. E.g. many of the Parsi community have moved.

- 4. In the context of globalization and free trade agreements, for example many Indians come to Sri Lanka for employment. Would it not encourage trade agreements encourage the movement of people?**

There are agreements like SAFTA. Furthermore, there is acrimony and suspicion between the countries. E.g. an Indian would not be able to travel freely to Pakistan. There is a need to have agreements that would encourage travel between the SAARC countries as in the European Union. Free movement should be encouraged.

**5. What about the Anglo-Indian influence on the Indian diaspora?**

This is explained in the example presented of the Persian script on the Church which praised Jesus Christ.



## ACADEMIC SESSION : 6

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CHAired BY MR. HARKA B. GURUNG



# CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND SPACE: DIASPORA COMMUNITIES IN SRI LANKA FROM 18TH TO 20TH CENTURIES

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**DR. D.N.N.R. DEWASIRI and DR. J.D. JAYAWARDENA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY**  
**OF COLOMBO**



This presentation is a suggested study that will attempt to map the cultural space in Sri Lanka with reference to the impact of diasporic communities on the formation of modern Sri Lanka cultural space. Anthias (1998) suggests that we cannot study culture as a single monolithic entity and that identity is not a fixed concept. If we understand culture in this way it would create exclusion rather than inclusion. The study will specially focus on two cultural settings without falling

into the ideological ethno-religious naming patterns of culture. The two settings chosen are the Colombo Metropolitan culture and selected towns in the plantation region in the central highlands. These two social spaces were heavily exposed to diverse migrant communities in the last three centuries.

Colombo metropolitan space has been a cosmopolitan centre from the onset. It was heavily urbanized in the eighteenth century under the administration of Dutch East India Company (VOC). During this period, the population of Colombo comprised a number of diverse ethno-religious communities from South India, South East Asia and Europe. This urbanization process continued in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the British administration and various diaspora communities in Sri Lanka contributed to shaping the culture of the metropolis.

The case of the plantation region in the central highlands, Nuwara Eliya is important mainly because of the social and cultural encounter between migrant South Indian plantation laborers and Sinhalese peasants. Contemporary cultural space in the central plantation regions is an outcome of this encounter.

Jacques Derrida's notion of supplement will be used as a theoretical framework. Diaspora is something supplementary and something added. Therefore, by



way of challenging this, we need to have an approach that would overcome this essentialist type of culture defined in terms of Sinhala Buddhist ethno-religious categories. Therefore, there are different types of articulation of circulation patterns. Due to the migration patterns, movement of people and historical development in Sri Lanka, certain ethno-religious identities are dominant in certain areas.

The aim of this presentation is to highlight the fact that during the said time period, the culture of the Colombo and the central highland towns were enriched and shaped by the interaction between the locals and migrated communities and to analyse how it was able to construct a new landscape for the people to experience shared cultural aspects.

By finding about shared cultural experience, we can destabilize the notion that Sri Lanka's culture is compartmentalized along ethnic lines. It will enable us to question how groups that left the places that they were 'belonging' to come to another country and were able to be 'fix' into another social space and feel at home. Nira Yual-Davis' concept of 'belonging' will be used to understand the affective dimension of relating to social bonds and ties.

This presentation also looks at elements of movement in terms of pastoral communities and the influences that affected the communities. These

influences are seen in Nationalism, Liberalism, Marxism. The necessity to understand these spaces in a broader historical perspective without giving prominence to essentialist ideologies Will be brought out.

This presentation will enable us to conclude that interaction and intermingling of diverse cultural practices of locals and diaspora communities from eighteenth to twentieth centuries constructed a new social space in Sri Lanka that blurred the rigid notions of culture and created a new landscape in the metropolitan and central highland urban centers. It will emphasize that culture a single monolithic entity and attempting to understand culture would create exclusion rather than inclusion.

## **DISCUSSION**

- 1. Postmodern ideology could be problematic. Especially the concept of supplement has a sense of negativity, and it is better to absorb other postmodern theorists like Homi Bhaba, and Zijec who discuss notions of the *other* and the nation. Furthermore, it is the diaspora that decides the thought of accorded space and gives agency to the diaspora. In addition, utilizing Bregev's holistic theory of longevity without problematizing could be conflicting.**

The diaspora community is trying to find agency and in certain countries like in Paris there are restricted areas for diasporic cultures. e.g. Chinatown.

Therefore, it is natural for the diasporic cultures to find agency in certain larger settlements. However, by using supplement there is a hierarchical notion that certain cultures are marginalized and have a secondary value. To peripheralize what we call as dominant and to deconstruct hierarchized sources of a particular setting is different a typical diasporic group trying to maintain their identity. This project is not necessarily to identify a particular diasporic community. It is to understand a cultural space which has been dominantly identified as a supplement.

- 2. There is a need to further explain the concept of longitudinal.**
- 3. Is there a dominant Buddhist ideology which undermines the cultural spaces?**

There is always a tension between ideology and reality. Ideology makes a desperate attempt to represent what exists but fails. This is not a project that goes against Sinhala Buddhist ideology. However, there is a need to go beyond certain ideological claims and locate it within the historical and social context.

The main focus is to discourage the notion that concepts and ideas are fixed but rather to see that cultural space is fluid and locate it within the movement of people.

# TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY OF INDIAN TAMILS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TEA WORKERS IN SELECTED PROVINCES IN SRI LANKA.

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**DR. A.S. CHANDRABOSE**  
**SENIOR LECTURER IN SOCIAL STUDIES,**  
**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA**



The study provides an outline of the cultural practice of Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka (ITS). The ITS have emigrated during the British period from South India to engage in the newly opened plantation system in the country. The plantation system was completely different to the traditional agriculture in South India. Hence, the ITS almost immediately adjusted to the new system to work in the plantations. The regimented work ethics in the plantations, such as 'wage for the work', 'attending to task work dictated

by the planter through the *Kangany*, 'work for all six days', 'living in line rooms' etc. greatly facilitated their conversion into a pliant workforce in Sri Lanka. It is found that almost 65 percent of ITS workers are still working in the line rooms.

The main objective of this study was to trace the challenges faced by Indian Tamils to retain their cultural identity in the newly established economic activities of the plantation system in Sri Lanka.

The migration of ITS was unique in contrast with indentured labour migration of other countries. The migrant labourers were free to move between their homeland in South India and the workplace in the island from 1830s up to 1923. Although there were strict labour laws in Fiji, Malaysia, and Mauritius, India did not impose strict labour laws for Sri Lanka till the 1930s. In 1871 there were around 123,000 ITS in the plantation sector and this increased to 235,000 in 1891. After the Sirima-Shasthri Pact in 1964 nearly 350,000 people left Sri Lanka. Currently, the estimated figures of ITS living in Sri Lanka is about 1.5 million. However, the actual figures have not been obtained in the government Census as some ITS reported themselves as Sri Lankan Tamils. About 1 million ITS population is concentrated in the Nuwara Eliya highlands area.

There are three main factors about the life of ITS in the plantation. The influence of British planters,

continuity of Indian culture and adaptation of Sinhala culture by the plantation workers. The British organized a Master Servant Ordinance, (No: 11) of 1865 for the ITS. The labour force was organized according to *Kangany* a new system introduced by the British. The *Kangany* wore a coat and a long sheet of cloth (*vetti*). This depicted a half British, half Tamil approach. The hours for work were a stark contrast to the agricultural sector and the plantation workers worked from 6a.m to 4p.m. The line sweeper and the scavenger were not there in the earlier system, but they were appointed during the time of the British and these were stigmatized people.

The Indian culture was continued by the ITS in their dress patterns, language, festivals, rituals and the food. However, *roti* was acquired into their diet of the tea plantation workers. The plantation workers did not engage in rice cultivation but still celebrated *pongal* which is a celebration for the agricultural sector.

The ITS in Ratnapura, Kalutara, Galle and Matara adapted to the Sinhala culture by absorbing Sinhala words and Sinhala concepts into their culture. Using *Putha* (son in Sinhala) instead of *Mahan* (son in Tamil), going to a *dhana gedara* (alms giving), were changes seen in their culture.

The immigrant Indian Tamil workers considerably converted into a particular culture in the

country. The location is influential in the determination of assimilation or segregation. The civil war made a considerable impact on retaining their identity in the country.

The vast majority of ITS who settled in the plantation were Hindus and a marginalized community in the caste hierarchal system. However, the plantation system gave them a new perspective of social life, the status of supervisory and intermediate level positions were acquired by the upper caste elite, which was similar to their position in their ancestor village. Inevitably, caste and gender identities served to specify their role within the plantation economy and society. The 'high caste' people also maintained links with their ancestral villages in Tamil Nadu through frequent visits for social and ritual purposes. On the other hand, the 'low caste' communities were more or less restricted and isolated in their respective estates. Caste has been a factor in recruitment of workers of estate origin for positions such as sales assistants in the Indian Tamil-owned businesses in Colombo and other cities (Jayaraman 1975, Hollup 1994).

Therefore, the culture observed by the Indian Tamil plantation workers in Sri Lanka is a transformed Indian culture. Many things have been newly added and some elements of the original culture were given up leading to the formation of a distinctive culture (see, Suryanarayan 1999, Bass 2001, 2005). Another

important factor is that estate trade unions replaced the role of caste in their original villages in India. Their marginal position is due to a complex web of factors, including history of indenture, social class, ethnicity, caste and overall minority status in a Sinhala dominated political system. Therefore, opening up opportunities for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy in terms of ethnicity, class, caste, gender and political and social rights remains a key challenge to social policies in the plantation sector in Sri Lanka.

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#### **COMMENTS**

1. Indian Tamils who live in Hatton, Nuwara Eliya and near Adam's Peak have adapted various new rituals according to the sacred sites.
2. There is a need to conceptualize the discussion based on a theme. Furthermore, the period, political economy and space are factors that should be taken into consideration. Did they have any connection with the space as other diasporic communities do? How did they differ to other diasporic communities? These are factors that could help to conceptualize the research in a broader framework.



## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- 1. Are the figures related to the Southern Province or to the entire nation? How have the Tamil estate workers been absorbed into the community?**

There is little focus on the Southern Province. There needs to be more focus on this area in my research.

- 2. We have observed that the colonizing powers have used the strategy of slavery, but now they changed their strategy to acquiring paid labourers. What caused this change of heart?**

- 3. In 1834 they abolished slavery, because it was not financially viable. They replaced the system and made it free labour. The labourer came on their own wishes, but borrowed the money and came of their own accord, but they were still impoverished and under debt when they came. Isn't this bonded labour? Can we really classify the ITS as free labour?**

Both countries were under the control of the colonizers. There were those in the agricultural sector in India who were without employment and this was a reason to have free labour which was because there was free movement between the countries. Furthermore, they came because of the expectations they had of labour in Sri Lanka, and the volatile situation in India. However, many died with a big debt.

## **DRESS CODE OF INDIAN PLANTATION LABOURERS IN SOUTH ASIA: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA**

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**MS. RAMESHA DULANI JAYANETHTHI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY**  
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Diasporic culture survives as a result of spreading of communities in the South Asian region due to many economic and other dynamic social factors. Diasporic communities symbolize and preserve a culture different from their host countries and maintain strong ties with their country and culture of origin. The diasporic culture of Indian plantation labourers with special reference to their dress code is a theme noteworthy of discussion.

An unwritten dress code rules the society or community with regards to clothing.

Indian plantation labourers are widespread diaspora in many South Asian countries, especially in Sri Lanka. Indian plantation labourers have been considered as a minority group in the ethnic hierarchy of these countries. The social structure of the plantations resembles the South Indian rural social structure where the community is generally bound by the caste system. In the plantation sector, the tea factory or rubber factory is the centre of activities. The community is identified as a subaltern group with subaltern cultural values and rituals in their own estates. Postcolonial and historical discourses have added, value historical and cultural aspects of many diaspora, and the discussion about the uniqueness of plantation labourers' culture has been advanced. Therefore, there is an attempt to examine the uniqueness of the dress code of Indian Tamil plantation labourers and the emergent cultural background.

The main methodology of this research is identifying and analyzing sources according to the current historical discourse, especially the private records of British administrators, planters and travelers. Publications such as *Everyday Life on a Ceylon Cocoa Estate* by Mary E. Steuart, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* by Arnold Wright and

*Picturesque Ceylon* by H.W. Cave have been used as historical evidence.

This study examines the relationship between the social status of rural plantation labourers and their simple dress code as a facet from the British era. Rituals, religious beliefs and caste hierarchy are directly affected by the design and dress patterns. Also the historical and social practice of the motherland in India was influenced to create a unique cultural value of dress. This study discusses the differences in dress patterns among plantation labourers and other native Tamils and Sinhalese. It also discusses the evolution of dress code in the colonial and postcolonial era which combines social, religious and cultural changes. In addition, differences of dress patterns used in the context of the factory, field, weddings and ritual ceremonies are considered as a valuable fact which shows social diversity in unity.

In the British period, based on their social and economic level, females would wear sarees with or without saree jackets. The *Kangany* would wear saree jackets and sarees made with rich material and borders. The saree patterns would differ according to the material type, pattern, colour etc. The ornaments would also range from *thandatti*, *attiyal*, *thea karambu* (simple to heavy earrings and earrings that enlarged the hole of the ears).

In comparison with the Jaffna Tamils, there are similarities in the headwear, traditional dress and jewellery. However, the attire of Brahmins in Ceylon is totally different from the Indian Tamils. In striking parallels to the Kandyan dress, they too wore heavy sarees and jewellery. The Kandyan girl in the British era would wear simple jewellery. However, low country Sinhalese attire was different. The Malay women in Ceylon also wore jackets with their sarees.

In evaluating the attire of those in South India, the Madras women in South India wore colourful, heavily designed and ornamented sarees. However, Tamil ladies in rural South India had similar saree patterns to those in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, the dress code of Indian Tamil plantation labourers was a reflection of cultural aspects and social features of their diasporic society with uniqueness from other natives in their host country.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. The Content analysis method encouraged by Nira Wickramasinghe used in this study is a valuable contribution. However, there was emphasis on high class Sinhalese families. It is also important to identify differences between high class and subaltern Sinhala communities.

A difference in dress patterns between the high class and the low class Sinhalese can be observed.

2. Is it important to highlight different saree types in Sri Lanka. A diagrammatic presentation of the saree and its draping could be included.
3. The methodology and theoretical framework when making such studies should be carefully formulated. The topic of the presentation should be limited only to Sri Lanka. Furthermore, sources should be identified, whether they are of the same region, the same time period in Sri Lanka. This should also be related to the larger framework of the conference.
4. Nira Wickramasinghe's study on dressing the body and the social hierarchy could be used as a theoretical framework. For example in the pre-modern context, there was an indication of power in the way one covered one's body. Covering one's body was a privilege and certain caste groups would not allow people to cover their upper body. The more one covered one's body the higher s/he was placed in the social hierarchy.



## ACADEMIC SESSION: 7

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CHAired BY PROF. SHARIF UDDIN AHMED





## **CIRCULATION OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS FROM THE 18TH TO 20TH CENTURY: EUROPEAN DIASPORA AND SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST ART**

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**Ms. BINDU URUGODAWATTE**  
**FREELANCE CONSULTANT & INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER,**  
**SRI LANKA**



Sri Lanka lost its last King with the arrest and exile of King Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe by the British in 1815 and subsequently Sri Lankans faced the consequences of being ruled by a minority population who migrated temporarily for the sole purpose of ruling and controlling the majority races. The British colonial rule spread its authority over all aspects of the island. Although many battles of weapons prevailed, pens,

paintings, and various other means were used during the period between eighteenth to the twentieth Century.

The safeguarding of traditional culture and beliefs were initially adhered to stringently by both the British diaspora in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankans themselves but gradually many aspects were absorbed into the Sri Lankan culture which we today accept as Sri Lankan heritage, completely disassociating with the original sphere of influence from the British diaspora. Some of these are an important part of our culture today and we fail to recognize their origin.

Buddhism and Buddhist art in Sri Lanka, which is the backbone of Sri Lankan culture, is believed to be a Sri Lankan manifestation with strong influence from India. The role of the British diaspora in Sri Lanka which gradually changed the face of Buddhist art is not given much attention. This is a study of Sri Lankan Buddhist art between the eighteenth to the twentieth Century to identify the influence of the British diaspora. The diaspora influence on architecture, paintings styles, clothing styles etc., is studied in depth and reasons for its absorption analysed in detail. This paper also discusses reasons for the absorption of the influence of the British diaspora in Sri Lanka and the enrichment of the Buddhist art.

The influence of the governing community or the ruling diaspora on the Sri Lankan context is significant. Not all colonizers have left strong colonial expressions but in traditional architecture a strong imprint remained. There are certain architectural impressions in Europe; squares, gables and the front facade. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these European architectural elements were absorbed into Buddhist architecture. Therefore, in places like the Balapitiya temple there are front facades, arches and gable type roofs in Dodanduwa reminiscent of the European architecture. The craftsmen, priests and donors absorbed the architectural influences into the Buddhist architecture and art.

European deities and the cherubic angels presented in single colour, wearing shorts, with lightly draped shawls and gentle figures are found in certain Buddhist temples. The traditional Sri Lankan art of this period was not single colour but was floral and geometric so this imagery is a sharp contrast to traditional art. However, the wreaths these angels carry are similar to the Sri Lankan art. Therefore, there is assimilation into Sri Lankan art.

The British influence on Buddhist art is depicted in figures wearing Western clothes, shoes, coats and jackets. Horse and chariots, guns, chandeliers, guitars and fans are Western concepts that seep into Buddhist art. However, the flora, grapes and flowers are

juxtaposed with traditional paintings. Most of these paintings are from the Southern province and the Ratnapura district.

However, the influence of the British is not senselessly adopted and there are strong protests in temple art. This is seen in the saying, *“The king of hell named Ravulawa, is making judgements.”*

Therefore, art was not something imposed on Sri Lankan culture but it was absorbed and assimilated.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **1. Are these processes of absorption and adaptation taking place in other places?**

This is assimilation that was not imposed. Most often the craftsmen or the artists had the choice. Most often if there was art done by the Europeans it was destroyed. In 2004, the temple paintings done by European and American artists were destroyed by the villagers.

### **2. Is there any period of paintings related to the British era?**

The paintings of this period belong to the Kandyan period. Some scholars believe the paintings of the Kandyan School are different to the Southern School. Prof. Senaka Bandaranayake believes there are two schools, the Kandyan School and the Southern School. However, my personal belief is

that these are not really different schools as the basic principles of the paintings are the same. The artists who created these were South Indian artists. Most of these paintings were from the Ratnapura district and this was considered as part of the Kandyan School. There we have an assimilation of art. The artists included some of the best painters who were patronized by the king. However, the local artists used their own initiative.

**3. There is a difference in the way temple artists of certain castes depict art. There is an assimilation of Western traditions and culture.**

Local artists have created this art. The unique facet of this art is the assimilation and the acceptance of different cultures. Sri Lankan artists accepted the British, Dutch and Portuguese influences on local art.

## **CIRCULATION OF IDEAS IN THE CIRCULATION OF CULTURES**

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**Mr. MUHAMMAD DAUD EHTISHAM**  
**HIGH COMMISSION OF PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA**



This conference opens a gateway to a broader appreciation of the cultures of the South Asia region. The Asian Diaspora across the world has increased to 30 million, with approximately over 5 million Pakistanis abroad.

Although this conference is limited to the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, one has to go back several centuries to the time of Lord Buddha and the progressive ancient civilization called the Gandhara civilization. Pakistan has a community of 3000 Buddhist

worshippers concentrated in the Southern province of Sindh. Furthermore, the annual Festival of Lights was celebrated at the Buddhist Cultural Centre at Islamabad which received worldwide attention. This is an example of ideas proliferating universally to generate global interest in cultural practices.

Presently there are projects to replicate the present Buddhist Cultural Centre of Islamabad with a new facility in Sindh. The SAARC Cultural Centre is invited to help us build a Buddhist Centre in Pakistan with contribution of design, architecture, relics and documents written in Pali with translation in languages of SAARC countries. The proposal would not transgress the scope of the prescribed study of Diasporic Cultures. However, the study of Buddhist people and their way of life across the countries within the SAARC region would interest several countries.

The emergence of overseas diaspora within Pakistan began with the arrival of Alexander the Great in India in 326 BC. There is also a story of how he left behind a number of Greeks in Chitral in Pakistan who are now called the Kafirs of Kalash. The tribe is unique in allowing freedom to their women in several fields of activities. Therefore, this highlights the fact that Pakistan has believed in pluralistic cultures since the beginning of time. Although there are many misgivings about Pakistan, especially in certain Western countries, pluralism is the dominant stream of life.

Throughout history, Pakistan has been a gateway for people to come in via the Khyber Pass. Kings, emperors, marauding hordes chose to make our country their home and did not leave. The subcontinent region was resultantly ruled by the Muslims for nearly 1000 years. The British followed as also the French and Portuguese whose empire lasted 150 years. This continued until the subjugated population rebelled against the colonialists rulers. There were two protagonists in the freedom struggle of the Indian sub continent. They were Quaid-i Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi. Mr. Jinnah affirmed that the British must quit but added "Divide India into two dominions and then Quit". Thus came into being Pakistan—a country where Muslim population would live as free citizens. However, the rights of the Pakistanis of other faiths have never been overlooked. Muhammad Ali Jinnah promised equality to all citizens of the state of Pakistan and this was incorporated within the constitution.

In response to the present times, the Pakistani people have settled in all the habitable continents. The Pakistani expatriate population in Canada, England and United States has contributed to the prosperity and the wellbeing of the adopted countries. Therefore, the diasporic population benefits the country of migration. However, there is also a fear of the immigrants, and they fear that the expatriates would overtake the native



populations and that they would be engulfed with Al-Qaidas and Talibans.

The Pakistan National Council of the Arts is involved in projecting the cultural heritage of the country. It also calls for the restoration of the agriculture and production of food grains. The vision of Pakistan is to motivate people to learn from the rich treasures of Muslim people. Pakistan is also a country that has led the world in improvising of agricultural implements. Furthermore, Pakistan is working to protect the 3,800 Kalash people who live in Chitral and hope to protect their language, culture, religion and their lifestyles. The government is determined to preserve their culture and way of life and enlist them in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

As a Diplomat based in Colombo, I represent my country at this Conference. However, it is generally accepted that circulation of ideas is a way to free us from encumbrances of conflict and suspicion. When more people interact and come to know the general tenure of life and listen to music and poetry and see visual objects and the diaspora population help in projecting culture and themes of their original land in adopted settlements.

Therefore, the visual arts and history help people to interact with each other and is a cardinal principle of the SAARC Charter. Therefore, I leave you

with the thought that what you decide in this forum would provide and advance knowledge and cross fertilize new thoughts and urge to make investment in culture and it would also add to mankind's heritage.

### **COMMENTS**

The Deputy Director (Research) reaffirmed the commitment of the SAARC Cultural Centre to Pakistan and all the other member states, stating *"If you walk one step we will walk 7 steps."* On behalf of the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre he reiterated their support to establish a Buddhist Centre in Pakistan. He also reminded those gathered of the forthcoming Conference on Buddhist Archeology to be held in August 2012. He asserted that there has been decentralisation of activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre and increasingly the programmes are being organized by the Centre in other Member States. In this connection, he referred to the Symposium on Folk Dances of South Asia, organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre at Dhaka in Oct. 2011. Furthermore, he extended an invitation to Pakistan to host the Lok Mela in collaboration with the SAARC Cultural Centre which would further enhance interaction.

### **COMMENTS OF THE CHAIRPERSON**

We look forward to the various programmes that Pakistan and the SAARC Cultural Centre will organize in the future.

## DIASPORIC CULTURE AND INTERSTATE RELATIONS

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**AMBASSADOR SUMITH NAKANDALA**  
**MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, SRI LANKA**



I wish to place on record my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Director and the Deputy Director, Dr. Sanjay Garg for his personal invitation and also for his insistence that I come and that I should present a paper. I felt that it would be difficult to present a paper as I represent the Government of Sri Lanka. However, I am here not only as a member of the government but also because of my interest in the diasporic discourse.

A broad overview of diasporic cultures and interstate relations will be presented as state action is vital to the sustenance of diasporic cultures. Through

this there will be an attempt to fill some empty spaces in the discussion.

Diaspora exists in conjunction with the concept of migration. Although migration has not been discussed *per se*, it is at the back of our minds as migration and diaspora are interlinked. It is important to realize that diaspora has become a critical word and we cannot hide from diaspora. Human civilizations cannot last without diaspora as it can benefit human civilization and without diasporic transitions, civilizations will not last.

Another factor addressed will be the diaspora not spoken of in Sri Lanka. Especially in the case of the Malayali diaspora which has not been addressed. Until recently there was a Malayali newspaper published in Colombo, and although it no longer exists, this was in print till recently. The Malayali community came to work in the Colombo Harbour and even though they were workers they were able to contribute to the Sri Lankan economy on a large scale. The speakers from India mentioned the diaspora of the Sindhi and Gujarati communities. These communities are a valuable part of the cloth industry and are living in Sri Lanka as a highly respected community. The other community is the Tamils who came to work in the plantation sector as bonded labourers. This particular diasporic community came from Southern India and later created a powerful political force. At the insistence of Mahatma Gandhi and

the need for a welfare mechanism to take care of one's people, the Ceylon Workers Congress was created, and it became a formidable political force and still remains so.

Another aspect not dealt with is the Sri Lankan Diaspora who made a significant contribution to art and culture. Many like Michael Ondaatje and others have contributed to literary novels and the diaspora have made a tremendous impact in different cultural spheres.

In order to bring this discussion into context, we mentioned the Malayali, Sindhi and Gujarati communities. They were under resident hold and were Temporary Resident Permit Holders. In the 1960s, Mrs. Bandaranaike was under pressure to cancel these Temporary Resident Permits. Some were given residency in Sri Lanka but others left. Therefore, this is in relation to state reactions and state policy.

The Sri Lankan audience is knowledgeable about the plantation sector and how we were able to address to their citizenship rights. This was subsequent to the Sirima-Shastri Pact, 1964. Some were repatriated and some remained here. However, they were given citizenship rights as Sri Lankans. An interesting factor is that of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee community in Tamil Nadu, numbering about 80,000, 25 percent consist of the plantation Tamils. At every anti-Tamil riot, the plantation Tamils became victims of rioting by the

Sinhala Villagers. Therefore, they moved up North and ended up in Tamil Nadu.

The next important question that needs to be addressed is “How do we see the diaspora as a catalyst in cultural globalization and how do we address the concept of diaspora?” There is a symbiotic relationship between culture, original cultures, existing culture and diasporic cultures. We need to develop these cultural linkages beyond our imagination.

In conclusion, it is necessary to address the question about how we should deal with diaspora. Diaspora for any given country will become a foreign policy subject. Especially in countries like India and China with large diasporic populations. India has a different Ministry for Overseas Indians. In China, although there is a main Ministry in Beijing, they have provincial units for overseas Chinese. This is to fulfill the purpose of looking after overseas Chinese and the Chinese diaspora. They have recognized the importance of the Chinese Diaspora, their investments and returns to the Chinese economy. Furthermore, Overseas Chinese are highly influential in some countries and strive to change the foreign policy of many countries.

However, in Sri Lanka, diaspora is not given much importance but it is imperative that we deal with diaspora. When we refer to the concept of diaspora this does not exclude diasporic culture. Diasporic culture and diaspora is synonymous. Therefore, we need to see

how the Sri Lankan Diaspora is going to contribute to the larger perceptual developments in the Sri Lankan context as well as in South Asia.

In summary, this presentation brings a different perspective into the diasporic discourse. Diaspora does not only negotiate with domestic affairs but goes beyond domestic affairs and traverses into the realm of external affairs and foreign policy. This is a perspective that needs to be considered within this conference and the research agenda. This would be the submission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **DISCUSSION**

- 1. Prof. Parnavitana emphasized that the Malay community was discussed in his address. The work done with Mr. Hussain and the research conducted to bring Malay manuscripts of the Malay Community to the National Archives was reiterated. Some of these manuscripts have copied and taken to Malaysia.**

The work of Ron Ritchie who is conducting wide research on the Malay community in Sri Lanka was mentioned. Furthermore, references commencing from the Dutch period were emphasized. The Dutch have recorded that people were sent from Malaysia, Java, Bali, and many islands. Although they constitute one community they are diverse, and though we call them Malay, there is heterogeneity within the Malay community. They are the Javanese,

Malay and others in this community. Furthermore, there is evidence that in the Dutch period there was a separate street called Java Street and a separate *thombu* (land register) for them. Many land registers existed for the Javanese.

**2. The relation between the Sri Lankan state and the diaspora was highlighted. However, the state has failed to accommodate non-Sinhalese diaspora. There is a challenge for the Sri Lankan state to accommodate these people and a need to change the existing ideology.**

Furthermore, there are people who have gone abroad and have become a part of the Diasporic community. There is an important diasporic constituency in the UK, Canada, Germany, France and Australia, and this is not only the Tamil diaspora. So far, we have not been able to taken them on board. There were one or two occasions when Mr. Kadirgamar was the Foreign Minister and we tried to work with them, but there was reluctance from our diaspora. For now, we must take the Tamil diaspora in a different context. However, what about others of the diasporic community? The Tamil diaspora came after 1983. What about the diaspora since 1948? They have not been able to garner any support. Therefore, it is important that we learn from the practical examples of India and China.





## DAY 3

### ACADEMIC SESSION: 8

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**CHAired BY PROF. KARUNAMAYA GOSWAMI and  
MR. SHAMSUZZAMAN KHAN**



## **CULTURAL CONTINUUM OF INDIANS IN DIASPORA: THE ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES**

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**DR. AMIT KUMAR MISHRA**  
**CENTRE FOR INDIAN DIASPORA, HYDERABAD**



Greetings from India, as a delegate representing my country. Over the last three days we have seen different aspects of history of diaspora so the topic of this presentation has been changed to underline the diversity of the diaspora. This will absorb the spectrum of Indian diaspora and not view it as a singular monolithic entity. Therefore, the title will present 'The Cultural Continuum of Indians in Diaspora: The Issues and Experiences.'

The presentation will include experiences of diverse scholars and empirical experiences. The concept of circulation will be problematized to understand the circulation of culture, ideas and commodities. Furthermore, the idea of diversity within the Diaspora is also significant. In addition, identity and home are critical issues as these operate and negotiate within the diasporic discourse. Dynamic and vibrant representations in the visual media are also elaborated, e.g. films and songs.

The circulation of ideas, people and commodities are interlinked and influence each other. Although we use the word cultural space, is a limited concept and it cannot describe the cultural circulation that occurs in the globalization and flow of IT revolution and mobile technology. Arjun Appadurai, a scholar of Indian origin, talks of the concept of *scape* in his book *Modernity at Large* to facilitate this idea of fluidity.

There is an interesting circulation of commodities. The sub-continental diaspora and the indigo, cotton, sugar, and rubber plantation enterprises in India, led to a huge disturbance and disruption among the peasantry. Due to the opium and indigo plantation they lost their rank and could not sustain the commercialization and were displaced. At the same time the colonial enterprise of overseas diaspora started. During this time people came forward and volunteered to go to Mauritius, Trinidad, Caribbean,

South America, South East Asia and to Sri Lanka. This movement of peoples was linked to the movement of commodities. The sugar, the indigo, the opium was not produced for indigenous consumption but was produced for circulation across the empire. For example, the sugar produced in Trinidad and Mauritius was taken to Europe. Therefore, within the colonial context there was a circulation of commodities and this led to the circulation of people.

In the post-colonial context, people started moving with a different kind of socio-economic composition. They had more money, they were out of India, and they wanted to get the feel of India. They wanted to come out of the feeling of loss and dislocation. They started missing the *dal poori*, the *chicken tikka* and the Bollywood movies which led to the circulation of commodities. Therefore, in the colonial context it was the circulation of commodities which led to the circulation of people but in the post-colonial context it was the circulation of people which led to the circulation of commodities. This became an interesting combination of each domain inducing and mobilizing the circulation of the other domain.

Another way of circulation of commodities were labourers who worked in Gulf countries bringing *home* to the diaspora and the diaspora who brought commodities home. In the post-liberalization period all labourers brought back commodities like televisions,

VCRs, LCD screens. These have strong socio-cultural and economic impact on the home country, home economy and the home order.

In the past couple of decades, ideas have become a part of this circulation. This circulation occurs via artistes performing at Nehru Centre in London, to fresh sugar cane juice and Salman Khan Palm masala in Clifton Restaurant to chicken tikka in Harrods.

Attempts to absorb the diversity within the Indian Diaspora into diasporic policymaking are important. One policy cannot address the concerns of the Indian diaspora for example concerns of the Indian diaspora in Fiji are different to those of the Indian diaspora in Vancouver and California. Therefore, history is important and it is necessary to understand the composition and formation of Indian diaspora. Specific audience based policies and research are essential. Furthermore, there is a need to combine engagement and academics can contribute in the area of policy dialogue.

The making of the Indian diaspora outlined two discernible phases. In the colonial period the large part of the diaspora was labour and this was the phase of Colonial Capital (19<sup>th</sup> century–mid-20<sup>th</sup> century). The second phase was that of Global Capital (late 20<sup>th</sup> century) and the 'Border Diaspora' were predominant challenging the very premise of diaspora.

The concept of identity in relation to diaspora can be divided into two parts. How the diaspora is being identified and how the diaspora identifies itself? Amartya Sen, Nobel-laureate and a leading scholar, then Master of Trinity College, University of Cambridge, begins his book *Identity and Violence* with this incident. At Heathrow Airport, an immigration officer looks at his passport and asks “Is the Master of Trinity College such a good friend that you can use his address?” In the perception of the white immigration officer, Amartya Sen, being a brown skin could not become the Master of Trinity College. This is indicative of how the *Other* identifies the diaspora. The next factor is how the diaspora identifies itself. This is a historical process. The post-modern concept of ‘Duality of Truism’ can be used to identify the multiple contexts and multiple identities in the Diasporic context. Furthermore, the importance of identity should also be considered. Salman Rushdie explores the disruption the migrant suffers in identifying him/ herself. Therefore, diasporic identity is never static and will always be a continuous process. According to Stuart Hill’s concept, a diasporic identity is fluid, the dialectic of becoming and being.

The next factor relates to the formation of identity. This undergoes a process of persistence and assimilation. Another important factor is typologies and markers of identity. National identity is unchangeable and in all censuses and profiling, national identity will not change. However, religious markers are also

important particularly in the South Asian context. Image of Goddess Kali, the East London Mosque, Kavadi festivals in Mauritius, Gandhi Indian cuisine restaurant that serves balti dishes (meat in a bucket) are important and sometimes present contradictory diasporic markers.

The concept of Home is an important one in the diasporic discourse. In the larger context of diaspora, home becomes an imaginary construct. Particularly in the case of the older diaspora who try to recreate an ideal of Home which is noble and supreme. Therefore, the Indian state is now appealing to the diaspora not to shed their identity but accept their identity. Indians in Silicon Valley and in Europe are not ashamed to say “I’m an Indian”. The poignant poem of the Fijian poet, Mohit Prasad reasserts this factor:

*I’m carrying a mango seed to plant at the end of the  
voyage:*

This depicts the height of the ambition of the diaspora where they desire that others will acquire the flavour of the Indian culture. Other diasporic poets present the metaphor of hybridity in the diasporic discourse. Bharati Mukerjee emphasizes that she is not uncomfortable about hybridity and that this is part of her identity. Therefore, in summary this presentation discusses the concept of circulation, underlining the diversity of the Indian diaspora and examines issues and experiences of identity, home and representation.



## **COMMENTS OF THE CHAIRPERSONS**

1. The paper has been presented very well emphasizing the important diversity within the Indian diaspora.
2. This effort touched every pore of my heart. I would like to share a very important experience of mine, about my granddaughter who says when she comes home, this is not my own home, my home is in Canada now. I tried to convince her a thousand times that she is living at her own home. But she says “My family is my mummy, my daddy, myself and my debit card.” This is diaspora...it cuts our souls away from home.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. **How does the diaspora come to the country of the host? What is the action of the Indian government to facilitate the shipping of diaspora in SAARC countries? How do you deal with the movement of peoples? What is the concession of SAARC countries for diaspora?**

This is where engagement comes in. This was not included in the presentation as I thought others would reflect on this aspect. The main problem is that the bureaucrats do not treat people properly. The machinery of the bureaucracy causes human beings to be treated as commodities. It is an important question but often this is not considered in the bureaucracy in relation to the Indian Diaspora. They should realize that they are also

human beings. Therefore, there should be attempts to humanize the diasporic discourse.

**2. What happens when they change their citizenship?**

We often change citizenship for pragmatic reasons. For example, health insurance reasons, job permits. Therefore, permanent residency is taken for particular reasons. However, this poses certain serious problems.

**COMMENTS**

1. One of the basic ideas for forming SAARC was to have visa free travel among the SAARC states. However, this is limited to SAARC officials, academics and certain journalists. Therefore, the provision already exists.
2. The duration for the SAARC visa should be extended for a longer period of time.
3. The collaboration of SAARC countries scheduled in April and the upcoming regional conference was mentioned.

## **INTELLECTUALITY, SHARING EXPRESSIONS AND KANDYAN DANCE**

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**Mr. SUDESH MANTILLAKE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY**  
**OF PERADENIYA, SRI LANKA**



In this paper Kandyen dance and its shared expressions resulted by intellectual traditions of South Asia will be characterized. Dance is not only an art form but one can read culture through dance and understand the circulation of cultures. Therefore, culture will be interpreted through dance.

This presentation will examine intellectuality and intellectual tradition to represent the notions of thinking, philosophy, knowledge, skills and attitudes. It

will also analyze other aspects of Kandyan dance, identifying the diasporic cultural influence on Kandyan dance and will bring out the intellectual traditions that have developed through Kandyan dance. It will characterize the strength of the intellectual traditions in a wider context.

The Kandyan dance form is the most popular traditional dance form in Sri Lanka and originates from the Central hills. In 1957, the Kandyan dancer was advertised as a symbol of Sri Lanka by the Government Tourist Bureau. Therefore, the identity of the country is combined with Kandyan dance.

The intellectual traditions of Kandyan dance are inspired by folklore, beliefs, literature and aesthetic traditions of Sri Lanka. There are also other intellectual influences that have impacted Kandyan dance. This is seen in the South Indian influence during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, the British influence after the nineteenth century and the Santiniketan influence during the twentieth century.

Deeper analysis of the context where Kandyan dance developed shows a wide canvas of expressions of the people connected to South Asia. After South Indian Nayakkar dynasty came to power in the Kandyan Kingdom in eighteenth century, South Indian influence on Kandyan art and culture was patronized. The South Indian influence during the fifteenth and eighteenth century is characterized in the example of the *vannam*.

There are 18 *vannam* in Kandyan dance. The lyrics are inspired by nature, folklore, *jataka* stories and beliefs. As a result, new *vannamas* – a form of appraisal recitations performed with dance – like *Mayura* (peacock) were introduced to Kandyan dance. *Mayura* or the peacock is the vehicle of the deity Skanda (Murugan) whose cult was brought from South India and circulated in Sri Lanka. Having popularized as *Kataragama deviyo* (the god of Kataragama) in Sri Lanka, Skanda, the god of war, gained a very powerful status during the Kandyan Kingdom and afterwards. Circulation of this belief system is represented in *Mayura vannama* of Kandyan dance. Moreover, South Indian literature tradition too played a role in forming the literary structure of the *vannama* dance in general. A number of South Indian literary works have been translated into Sinhala the language during Kandyan Kingdom. A close association of South Indian literature helped the Kandyan dance to develop a rich dance form like Vannama. When one analyses the lyrics of the Vannama it says, “*The deity of the City of Kataragama, takes the golden peacock as his chariot*”. Therefore, the cult of Kataragama had an influence during the period of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and this influences the *Mayura vannama*. The god Kataragama as mentioned in the *vannama* is exactly the same god as in South India. In South India he is called Murugan or Sri Subrahmanya in Tamil, in Sinhala he is Kataragama Deviyo.

The British influence after the nineteenth century is seen in the paradigm shift from the ritual to the performative dimension. Until the British period,

the Kandyan dance was in the ritual context but after the British influence it moved into the entertainment context. There was a change in the Kandyan dancer's socio-economic status. The performing skills also changed, with improvements, the presentation, and acrobatic skills, as they began to perform all over the world. Kandyan dancers became a tourist attraction and came to represent the culture and art of Sri Lanka. Although the Kandyan dance was rich with beliefs, literature, folklore and aesthetics, it had to adopt its expressions according to the need of the audience. This made the Kandyan dance extremely popular worldwide and attracted the interest of the scholars, including the Indians. However, the Indian scholars like Tagore reinforced the literature, folklore and aesthetics of the Kandyan dance in the context of Nationalism. As a result, a number of Kandyan dancers went to India, shared their expressions with their Indian counterparts. In the twentieth century, Indian and Sri Lankan dancers inspired by a group of artists formed by Tagore, changed the atmosphere of the aesthetics and the culture of aesthetics in their countries and South Asia in general. Circulation of intellectual traditions in South Asia had resulted in having an enormous impact on the ideas and the expressions of the cultures involved. Analyzing the circulation of intellectual traditions and expressions is, therefore important for understanding the philosophy of each society's development.

The Santiniketan experiment and the influence of Tagore on the Sri Lankan art were significant. This influence was quite significant on the performing arts, especially the Kandyan dance. Morris Dias (Chitrasena), Panibharatha, Premakumara Eppawela, Vasantha Kumar Depp, Sesha Palihakkara, and Besil Mihiripenna were those who benefited from the Santiniketan tradition. They learnt new performing aspects from Rabindranath Tagore and a collective energy was created at Santiniketan.

Therefore, the circulation of culture develops knowledge, skills and attitudes. These domains affect the universal view of the Kandyan dance. The knowledge, attitudes and skills have also changed according to the Diasporic influence.

In conclusion, it is necessary to have a long term process that promotes constant and conscious cultural dialogue rather than one off activity. There is a need to have deep studies on intellectual traditions so that it will identify the strengths and weaknesses of thinking, intellectuality behind cultural practices and material culture.

#### **CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS**

There is a very strong diasporic impact in the making of dance. This is seen in the South Indian dance forms. Therefore, this is an important area of research to examine the diasporic influence on South Asian dance forms.

## **CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE RISE OF NATIONAL CULTURES IN SOUTH ASIA**

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**PROF. S.T. HETTIGE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, FACULTY OF ARTS,**  
**UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO**



The presentation is focused on the nexus between cultural diversity within the region and the emergence of overarching national cultures. These are cultures that have been elevated to the status of national cultures and are operating at a national level. In Sri Lanka there are several such national level formations. These overarching cultural formations have led to the marginalization of certain diasporic cultures and displaced them from the public view. This presentation will include empirical data from Sri Lanka looking at the



national level formations and its impact on intercultural relations at the subnational and community levels.

To reassert the definition of diasporic cultures in South Asia, these are seen as cultures that are transmitted, nurtured and maintained by the migrant communities. Furthermore, population mobility across regions increases cultural diversity within territories. When people moved around in cultural territories, people had cultural space. However, in the pre-modern era there was no contestation for space. In contemporary times, within modern state systems there is a need to assert oneself as a distinct cultural group. The impact of expanding empires creates an impact on diaspora. Today, one cannot talk of a landscape without referring to the nation state.

We see that culture is important for the state and for legitimacy. Culture is a very dynamic concept and there is no standard formula for culture. However, an important question that should be considered is how the state deals with cultural diversity. There are many ways and strategies, like the Kandyan Convention, royal decrees, the constitutions etc. The Constitution of India is an example for an effort to establish a secular state and bring in cultural constituencies. State policies as seen in Canada or the USA talk of multicultural policies and these are valuable in dealing with cultural diversity. Various cultural groups are accommodated or marginalized in the process depending on their relative

standing. Some cultural formations are elevated to the level of the nation state while others are excluded in the deeper issues of cultural diversity. For example in the case of India, ethno-linguistic diversity was taken into account when they were organizing devolutionary units but much of the cultural diversity was subsumed. Therefore, it is challenging to do justice to cultural diversity. However, this could be dealt equitably at a community level.

Another point of consideration is public space and how this is utilized. The ideological dimension should be explored in relation to secularism versus state religion. The ideological dimension of culture in a state context should be studied. The question of popular culture versus national or elite culture should be negotiated as this is important when managing intercultural relations. Another important factor is that in a state situation one must explore the politics of representation. Identity groups compete for different things, as they do not coexist in a cooperative environment. Therefore, identity politics provide the basis for competition among various groups.

Therefore, the empirical part is how people on a day-to-day basis try to find a way with the state-imposed larger cultural formations. Intercultural relations at a subnational level or at a community do not reflect popular culture but broader ethno-national level culture. Furthermore, one should understand how

people deal with culture and identity at a micro level. Do they have the autonomy to decide or are there various forces operating at a national level? Often the finer cultural divisions marginalize the larger context of competition within state formations. This is manifested in various ways, as people try to negotiate access to public space. In certain areas where development is taking place, there is also competition for resources on ethno-cultural lines which causes conflicts.

Population mobility across South Asia has contributed to cultural diversity in all parts of the region. On the other hand, the processes of state formation have tended to mobilize people around dominant cultural symbols, public religion and nationalist ideologies. However, diverse cultures within state territories have not been unified into a single dominant culture. Instead, the emergence of a plurality of national cultures within a single territory leading to inter-cultural competition in the public domain can be observed. One of the major challenges facing the modern state in South Asia is the management of national cultural differences and their diverse manifestations in the public sphere. Therefore, while cultural pluralism continues to be an important aspect of community life at the grass-roots level, dominant cultural ideologies continue to underplay cultural diversity as manifested in people's everyday life in many communities.

## ACADEMIC SESSION: 9

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CHAired BY DR. AMIT KUMAR MISHRA



## INDIAN TAMIL DIASPORIC CULTURE IN SRI LANKA: *MĀNIKA VINĀYAKAR KŌVIL* AS A CENTRE FOR CULTURAL CIRCULATION

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The Indian Tamil diasporic culture may be a new phenomenon to research in the context of diasporic studies of Sri Lankan academia. Many concepts such as marriage, family, kinship, ritual, customs and identity have been revisited to study the dispersed community in a foreign location. This study focuses on the *kōvil* (Hindu temple) and how it is the significant centre for cultural circulation. Therefore, Hindu *kōvils* help to reconfigure the diaspora. The theories and the

methodologies undertaken to study the South Indian diaspora will be examined in this presentation. The *kōvil* is selected as a key concept to study South Asian diasporic culture which is connected to Indian Tamil community in Sri Lanka. In this context, the *kōvil* is seen as a centre for cultural circulation in relation to community building, temple culture establishment, *kula deiva* worship establishment, mythical connection, caste ideology and South Indian culture.

The objectives of the study are to study how the *kōvil* is considered as the identity of a community, to explore linkages between caste, temple culture, social solidarity and 'community continuity' and to understand the South Indian Tamil community in Sri Lanka, examining the elements of the diasporic culture and how it can be used to study the Indian Tamil community. The basic elements of culture within the diasporic culture during the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries are identity, history, the temple, caste, myth, community continuity, social solidarity and collective consciousness.

The *kōvil* is a centre for cultural circulation possessing symbolic as well as material resources, and comprises concepts of privilege and deprivation, facilitates identity of the Indian Tamil community and accommodates Murugan and Ganesh worship of the Tamil identity. It was also a place for the circulation of religious values and South Indian traditions.

Furthermore, caste based solidarity of the Chettiars, Mudaliyars and Pillaimar is also important. The Temple trustee belonging to the Pillaimar community is also significant. During the eighteenth and twentieth centuries the people were careful about maintaining their religious identity in a foreign land. Therefore, temple belongingness was significant.

This study has selected *Mānika Vināyakar Kōvil* located in Bambalapitiya, Colombo. This is a locale where Tamils worship and carry out devotional activities but the temple management and festival rights are held by Indian born Tamils, especially a caste group, *Pillaimar*, locally known as *Mottai Vellalar*. The historical perspective of the formation of this temple and management structure and establishment of Ganesh worship are connected to the Indian Tamil community. The *kōvil* culture has also portrayed the circulation of culture among the Indian Tamil community. Centuries-old myths related to the origin of temple depict how all Indian communities especially *Chettiars* and *Pillaimars* collectively worked to establish a temple in the *Madam* (*Ambalam*) where pilgrims going to *Katharagama* would stay. Gradually, the *Madam* was transformed into a form of *kōvil* where the Lord of the Ganesh idol was established and paved the way to the establishment of Ganesh worship.

Historically, it indicates that *Ganesh* worship was introduced by the Indian community in the nineteenth

century and the temple trust also started with five members from the same community which takes unanimous decisions for the functioning of the temple. Though the temple management and other related activities are organised and maintained by the *Mottai Vellalar*, the management strictly retains the membership within the Indian Tamil community ever since the time of its establishment. It clearly denotes their efforts in sustaining 'community continuity' and 'social solidarity'. Theoretically, Durkheim's theory on collective consciousness, collective representations, and social solidarity are appropriate to discuss the issues relating to configuring the community. In addition, Bourdieu's theory, *habitus* explains the mental or cognitive structures that people deal with the social world are important for analytical purposes. Dialectically, *habitus* is the product of the internalization of structures of the social world, it shows it as internalized, embodied social structures. A *kōvil* historically played a major role in circulating the culture through a community. Therefore, in such an analytical context, *Mānika Vināyakar kōvil* is seen as a centre where people gather not only for worship but also for their collective identity which is revealed from their management structure. Methodologically, this study greatly relied on secondary data and primary data and qualitative research methods such as participant observation were adopted together with key informant interviews and case study methods used for this study.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1. The main deities were mentioned in your study but what about the small scale village deities that existed before these main deities were introduced?**

The deities in the Hindu pantheon are divided into the *agamic* and *non-agamic* gods. The plantation sector worship *Mariamman*, *Arasami*, *Ardasami*, *Karpasamai*, and *Ayanayaar*. These are the small gods for the clan worship. The *thevar* community in Madurai gives prominence to only *Mardasami* and the clan gods and not for Sanskritized gods like Shiva and Vishnu. Therefore, clan worship is very important.

- 2. When the Tamil community came as bonded labourers, they brought family deities and established this form of worship. After many years we can see a change in patterns. The small temples have been replaced by the bigger deities. These came with larger political interventions of other groups.**

This is caused by the Sanskritization that created the imitation of superior gods.

- 3. Skanda worship belonged to Sangam period. Do you have local literature that refers to this period?**
- 4. What is the significance of the public ritual in relation to urban public space?**

The rituals are held collectively in the urban space and only a certain group of people perform. In the Manikkayam temple all the drummers come from the Jaffna peninsula. Therefore, the temple belongs to the community but it is the Brahmin who perform the puja rites. Therefore, there is a plan to bring these people from India.

**5. There is a huge concentration of Chettis around the Hindu Temple in Pettah. What is the connection between the Natupottu Chetty and the other Tamils?**

The Tamil community cannot exist without the *kōvil*, the village cannot exist. The same is true in the formation of the Sinhala village. The Dagoba is crucial. When they were establishing the community they established the *kōvil*. The *kōvil* is the centre for socialization. That is the value of the *kōvil*. This is an important place for identity formation.

**COMMENTS**

- 1. The need to evaluate the studies done on Hindu *kōvils*. For example the studies of Prof. Rohan Bastin on Munneswaran Kovil and Arjun Appadurai, Chris Fuller and others on South Indian temples should be taken into consideration.**
- 2. In relation to the Mariyamman temple, in Arayawan, Singapore there is no accentuation of caste but there is a breakdown of caste in the**

**Diasporic setting. Especially in the second, third and fourth generations caste breaks down. In the case of UK, Italy, and Canada as they go abroad caste is very important, but in the case of the third and fourth generations, caste is less important.**

This is the Singaporean case, but this is not the case everywhere. Caste is identity. And even in the case of Canada, India and Sri Lanka, caste is a very important factor in marriage.

### **CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS**

The changes of the small temples to the big, grand temples is observed. The Munneswaram temple deity was never the major God in India, but in diaspora he becomes the principle god for the plantation workers. The second is the politics of space. They had no means and they were running a small temple. But now the diaspora have the money to bring the priests from their homeland and they construct grand temples. E.g the temple in Mauritius. They have the resources to celebrate it there for the diaspora. Therefore, they want society to know that they have arrived and so there is celebration.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK ON THE RESEARCH THEMES / TOPICS

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**CHAired BY DR. AMIT KUMAR MISHRA and  
DR. SANJAY GARG**



**The agenda for the General Discussion was:**

- to consider all suggestions submitted by the participants in the feedback forms,
- to prepare a preliminary draft of the research themes,
- to discuss the preliminary draft with the participants and solicit their comments,
- to approve the research proposal form, and
- to set the agenda for the course of action.

## **PROCEEDINGS**

The Chairman of the Session gave a vote of thanks to all the Organizers and especially to Dr. Sanjay Garg and Mrs. Garg.

This was followed by Dr. Garg who evaluated the deliberations of the past three days and outlined the course of action for the future, based on the conference recommendations. He invited all the participants, delegates and paper presenters to handover any remaining feedback forms so that suggestions could be made by them could be evaluated by the Plenary Committee.

The feedback forms were evaluated and the draft research themes were considered. The dates for submission of full papers and the potential themes and future course of action for the next SAARC regional conference were discussed.

Thereafter, the participants left for lunch at Hotel River House, Balapitiya. There was a brief stopover at the Seenigama Devale where the participants were able to travel to the island by boat.

## PLENARY SESSION

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### CHAIRD BY PROF. K.D. PARANAVITANA



The Plenary Session was chaired by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana. The members of the Plenary Committee included the Chairpersons of the academic sessions, namely; Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Mr. Ali Waheed, Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa, Mr. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir, Prof. Minhaj ul-Hassan, Mr. Harka B. Gurung, Prof. Sharif uddin Ahmed, Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan and Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra. Prof. S.T. Hettige and Dr. Sanjay Garg, attended the Plenary Session as Special Invitees.

**The Agenda of the Plenary Committee was :**

- to consider all suggestions submitted by the participants in the feedback forms;
- discuss the preliminary draft of the research themes;
- finalize the research themes/ topics; and
- approve the Research Proposal Form.

**PROCEEDINGS**

The Chairman of the Plenary Session and all Members of the Plenary Committee met in a separate area and the Session commenced with the opening remarks by Mr. Prof. K.D. Paranavitana. The Plenary Committee considered all the suggestions for the themes of research on Diasporic cultures in South Asia that the participants had submitted in their feedback forms and had been shortlisted. After evaluating various inputs and deliberating the suggested topics at length, the Plenary session finalized 15 research themes for the purpose of inviting research proposals.



## RESEARCH THEMES

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1. Relationship between diasporic and host cultures – Causes, processes, effects and symbiosis of ‘Being and Becoming’:

How diasporic communities influence the culture of the host and how host culture influences the diasporic cultures

2. Diaspora and the Homeland: Image and Reality in Cultural Context
3. Representations of the South Asian Diaspora (visual, textual, performing and in Cyberspace)
4. South Asian Diaspora and its Historical Dynamics: Analysis of ‘Continuity and Shift/ Change’ in following domains of Diasporic lives:
  - Religious practices
  - Culinary cultures (Cuisine, Food habits and Diet etc.)
  - Generational perspective
  - Costumes and attires
  - Language
5. South Asian Women in Diaspora
6. Socio-Cultural Diversity in South Asian Diaspora
7. Colonization and the making of South Asian Diaspora: Country Studies
8. Intra-Community relationship in South Asian Diaspora beyond the South Asian region



9. Monetary and Trade practices of South Asian Diaspora: A historical analyses
10. Cultural impact of the Circular migration in South Asia
11. Cultural Implications of Education Overseas for South Asian Diaspora
12. Cultural context of Nationalism in South Asian Diaspora
13. Material culture of diasporic communities of South Asia
14. Sports as a carrier of diasporic culture in South Asia
15. Cultural Transformations in South Asian Diaspora as an impact of Globalisation

## VALEDICTORY SESSION

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*Having come to your city, I have fallen in love,  
I have decided not to return...*



The Valedictory Session concluded the official proceedings of the Conference. The participants from the seven countries voiced their unanimous commendation of the immaculate organization of the Regional Conference giving credit to the team at the SAARC Cultural Centre. The experiences that the participants related were indicative of the valuable sharing they had during the Conference and was heartwarming as each word articulated the realization of the vision of the SAARC Cultural Centre.

Thereafter, the Director distributed the Certificates of Participation and mementos to all

Delegates from the Member States, Resource Persons and Other Participants.

Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director (Research), SAARC Cultural Centre conveyed the Concluding Remarks and the Vote of Thanks. On behalf of the Director and the Staff of the SAARC Cultural Centre he thanked all the participating delegates and participants for their significant contribution bringing the deliberations of the SAARC Regional Conference to a successful conclusion. He also expressed his thanks to the governments and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their cooperation. He encouraged the participants to continue to be connected with the SAARC Cultural Centre as it launches the next stage of research in the field of diasporic Studies. Finally, the session was concluded and the invitation to dinner was extended.



## MOMENTS OF LEISURE

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## CULTURAL SHOW AND DINNER

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A cultural show and dinner was hosted by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre on 17 March 2012 at Hotel River House, Balapitiya. The atmosphere was enlivened by live Calypso bands, fireworks, fire-eaters and a series of exciting Southern dances that kept the participants entertained and on the edge of their seats. The dances performed during the night included;

1. Pooja Dance (Worship Dance)
2. Kala Gedi natuma with Shanthi Karma (Pot Dance with a ritualistic dance)
3. Gini Sisila (Ritualistic Dance)
4. Kulu Natuma (Harvest Dance)







## FIELD TRIP

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On 18 March 2012, the delegates and participants were taken on a field trip to the multicultural setting of Katharagama, where they visited the Maha Devale, Kiri Vehera, and the Katharagama Museum.

Katharagama is believed to be the domain of God Skanda and is also a place of veneration of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians alike. After visiting the Kiri Vehera Stupa all participants visited the Katharagama Archaeological Museum which features Buddha statues, moonstones, ancient inscriptions, huge fiberglass replicas of religious sculpture from various places in the island, along with other religious statues and other paraphernalia- conch shells, stone figurines etc. The participants also had the opportunity to watch a documentary on the festivals and rituals celebrated at Katharagama. Many of them purchased replicas, picture postcards, and posters depicting the rich civilization of Sri Lanka. The tour to Katharagama was facilitated by Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director, Research, SAARC Cultural Centre.









## ANNEXURES

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## ANN. 1: PROGRAMME

### PROGRAMME

Day 1 - Thursday, 15 March 2012	
<b>9.00 – 11.00</b>	<b>Inaugural Session</b>
09:00-09:30	Registration of the Delegates
09:30	Arrival of the Chief Guest
09:35	Lighting of the Oil Lamp
09:45- 10:00	Welcome address by the Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo.
10:00- 10:15	Address by the Chief Guest: Hon'ble Chandima Weerakkody, Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Sri Lanka
10:15- 10:25	Vote of Thanks by Ms Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director - Programmes
10:25-11:30	Group Photograph
10:30-11:00	Tea
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<b>Academic Session – 1: Introduction. Chaired by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe</b>
11:00-11:30	Introduction of the Delegates/ Participants
11:30-12:00	Introduction of the Conference Theme and Research Project by Dr Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director, Research
12:00-12:30	Keynote Address by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana (National Archives, Sri Lanka)
12:30-13:30	Lunch
<b>13:30-15:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 2: Panel: Chaired by Mr. Ali Waheed</b>
13:30-13:50	Paper 1: Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa (Sinhala Encyclopedia Project, Colombo, Sri Lanka) Diasporic Culture of South Asia during 18th to 20th Centuries

13:50-14:00	Discussion
14:00-14:20	Paper 2: Prof. Karunamaya Goswami (Cambrian College, Dhaka, Bangladesh) Diasporic Impact on South Asian Cultures during 18th to 20th Centuries
14:20-14:30	Discussion
14:30-14:50	Paper 3: Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir (Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation, Dhaka Bangladesh) Circulation of South Asian Peoples and Commodities: An Overview
14:50-15:00	Discussion
15:00-15:30	Tea
<b>15:30-17:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 3: Panel: Chaired by Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa</b>
15:30-15:50	Paper 4: Mr Mohmad Umar Marufi Kaleem and Mr Ahmad Samim Ahmadi (Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, Afghanistan) Country Presentation
15:50-16:00	Discussion
16:00-16:20	Paper 5: Prof. Minhaj ul-Hassan (Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong) The Changing Pattern of Pakhtun Culture under the influence of Diaspora
16:20-16:30	Discussion
16:30-17:00	PowerPoint Presentation on Galle Fort (UNESCO's World Heritage Site), by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana
	End of Academic Sessions for Day 1

Day 2 - Friday, 16 March 2012	
<b>9.00 – 11.00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 4: Panel: Chaired by Mr. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir</b>
09:00 – 09:20	Paper 6: Mr. Ali Waheed and Ms. Asiyath Mohamed (Department of Heritage, Maldives) Maldivian Cultural Evolution from 18th to 20th Century
09:20 – 09:30	Discussion
09:30 – 09:50	Paper 7: Ms. Hema Kriuppalini (Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore) Circulation of Ideas and Cultural Expressions vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan and Nepali diasporas in Singapore
09:50 – 10:00	Discussion
10:00 – 10:20	Paper 8: Mr. Harka B. Gurung and Ms. Tshering Choki (National Library and Archives, Bhutan) Diasporic Culture of Bhutan - 18th to 20th Century
10:20 – 10:30	Discussion
10:30 – 11:00	Tea
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>Academic Session - 5: Panel: Chaired by Prof. Minhaj ul-Hassan</b>
11:00 – 11:20	Paper 9: Prof. Sharif uddin Ahmed (Dhaka University, Bangladesh) Diasporic Culture of Bangladesh during 18th to 20th Centuries
11:20 – 11:30	Discussion
11:30 – 11:50	Paper 10: Shamsuzzaman Khan (Bangla Academy, Bangladesh) Diasporic Cultures of South Asia : Bangladesh Perspective
11:50 – 12:00	Discussion
12:00 – 12:20	Paper 11: Dr. Waseem Raja (Aligarh Muslim University, India)

	Assessing South Asian Internal Diaspora in the Twentieth Century: Identifying Transnationalism, Cultural Exchange and Newer Cultural Hubs in India
12:20 – 12:30	Discussion
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
<b>13:30 – 15:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 6: Panel: Chaired by Mr. Harka B. Gurung</b>
13:30 – 13:50	Paper 12: Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri and Dr. Janaki Jayawardena (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka) Cultural Interactions and Space: Diasporic Communities in Sri Lanka from 18th to 20th Centuries
13:50 – 14:00	Discussion
14:00 – 14:20	Paper 13: Dr. A.S. Chandrabose (Open University of Sri Lanka, Colombo) Transformation of Cultural Identity of Indian Tamils: The Special reference to the tea workers in the Southern Provinces of Sri Lanka
14:20 – 14:30	Discussion
14:30 – 14:50	Paper 14: Ms. Ramesha Dulani Jayaneththi (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka) Dress Code of the Indian Plantation Labours in South Asia
14:50 – 15:00	Discussion
15:00 – 15:30	Tea
<b>15:30-17:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 7: Panel: Chaired by: Prof. Sharif uddin Ahmed</b>
15:30 – 15:50	Paper 15: Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte (Independent Scholar, Sri Lanka) Circulation of Cultural Expressions from the 18th to 20th Century European Diaspora on Sri Lankan Buddhist Art
15:50 – 16:00	Discussion
16:00 – 16:20	Paper 16: Mr. Muhammad Daud Ehtisham (High

	Commission of Pakistan, Colombo) Circulation of Ideas in the Circulation of Cultures
16:20 – 16:30	Discussion
16:30 – 16:50	Paper 17: Ambassador Sumith Nakandala (Ministry of External Affairs, Sri Lanka) <b>Diasporic Culture and Interstate Relations</b>
16:50 – 17:00	Discussion
	End of Academic Sessions for Day 2

Day 3 - Saturday, 17 March 2012	
<b>9:00 – 11:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 8: Panel: Chaired by Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan</b>
09:00 – 09:20	Paper 18: Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra (Centre for Indian Diaspora, Hyderabad, India) Making of Indian Labour Diaspora in Colonial period (tentative title)
09:22 – 09:30	Discussion
09:30 – 09:50	Paper 19: Mr. Sudesh Mantillake (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka) Intellectuality, Sharing Expressions and Kandyan Dance
09:50 – 10:00	Discussion
10:00 – 10:20	Paper 20: Prof. S.T. Hettige (Department of Sociology, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka) Cultural Diversity and the Rise of National Cultures in South Asia
10:20 – 10:30	Discussion
10:30 – 11:00	Tea
<b>11:00 – 12:00</b>	<b>Academic Session - 9: Panel: Chaired by Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra</b>
11.00 – 11.20	Paper 21: Mr. Sanmugeswaran Pathmanesan (Open University of Sri Lanka, Colombo)

	Indian Tamil Diasporic Culture in Sri Lanka: Mānika Vināyakar Kōvil as a Centre for Cultural Circulation
11.20 – 11.30	Discussion
11.30 – 12.00	General Discussion and Feedback on the Research Themes/ Topics
	End of Academic Sessions for Day 3
12.00-14.00	Seenigama Devale
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch at Hotel River House, Balapitiya
<b>15:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>15:30 – 16:30</b>	<b>Plenary Session. Chaired by Prof. K.D. Paranavitana</b>
	Finalization of the Research themes/ topics
16:30 – 17:00	Tea
<b>17:00 – 18:00</b>	<b>Informal discussions</b>
<b>18:00 – 18:45</b>	<b>Valedictory Session</b>
18:00 – 18:15	Concluding Remarks by the Participants
18:15 – 18:35	Award of Certificates and Mementos to delegates and participants
18:35 – 18:45	Concluding Remarks by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre
19:00	Cultural Show and Dinner Hosted by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre at Hotel River House, Balapitiya.

Day 4 - Sunday, 18 March 2012	
<b>06:00-19:30</b>	<b>Field Trip</b>
06.00 am	Leaving Galle
08.30 am	Breakfast at Hotel Priyankara, Tissamaharama
09.30 am	Leaving to Kataragama
09.45 am	Kataragama Devalaya
10.30 am	Kataragama Kirivehera
11.00 am	Museum



12 noon	Sella Kataragama
01.30 pm	Lunch at Hotel Priyankara, Tissamaharama
02.30 pm	Leaving to Sithul Pawwa
03.00 pm	Sithul Pawwa
04.00 pm	Leaving Sithul Pawwa
05.00 pm	Tea at Tangalle
07.30 pm	Reaching Galle

## ANN. 2: LIST OF DELEGATES FROM THE MEMBER STATES

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Member State	Name
Afghanistan	Mr. Ahmad Samim Ahmadi
	Mr. Mohmad Umar Marufi Kaleem
Bhutan	Mr. Harka B.Gurung
	Ms. Tshering Choki
Bangladesh	Mr. Shamsuzzaman Khan
	Prof. Dr. Karunamaya Goswami
	Prof. Sharif Uddin Ahmed
	Mr. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir
India	Dr. M. Waseem Raja
	Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra
Pakistan	Prof. Minhaj-UL-Hassan Syed
	Mr. Muhammad Daud Ehtisham
Maldives	Ms. Asiyath Mohamed
	Mr. Ali Waheed
Sri Lanka	Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa
	Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri
	Dr. Janaki Jayawardena
	Dr. A.S. Chandrabose
	Prof. S.T. Hettige
	Mr. Sudesh Mantillake

### ANN. 3: LIST OF RESOURCE PERSONS

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Member State	Name
Bangladesh	Mr. Shah Muhammad Ikhtiar Jahan Kabir
India	Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra
Sri Lanka	Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa
	Prof. K.D. Paranavitana

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