



# SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

June 2020 | Vol 10, No. 1



## Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda, assumes duty as the 4th Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre

Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda, Former Head of the Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya has been appointed as the Director of SAARC Cultural Centre. With the long-term experience in the cultural, social and academic, she wishes to contribute the centre for a successful institute in the SAARC Organization. A brief profile is given below.

Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda (Professor of Fine Arts) is a qualified professional and an academic who has been serving in the Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya since 1992. In addition, she serves as the Secretary of the Ethics Review Committee of University of Kelaniya, the central body which evaluates and reviews the quality of the research carried out

by the candidates who accomplish their research at University of Kelaniya and elsewhere possible. She, at the Department level, holds the position of the Senior Treasurer of the Performing Arts Students Society of the Department of Fine Arts, and Coordinator of the Art Gallery both of which serve to enhance the quality practice of the soft skills of University students whereas at the

### News in Highlight

**Director, SAARC Cultural Centre meets the Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka**  
Page no. 03

**Visit to the SAARC Cultural Centre construction site, Matara Navimana**  
Page no. 04

**Culture in Nutshell**  
Page no. 05

**COVID -19 and the New Normal**  
Page no. 06

**Book Launch- Photographic Documentation of Ancient Wall Paintings of the Medawala Temple on Pillars (Tampita Vihara) in Kandy District of Sri Lanka**  
Page no. 07

**Announcements**  
Page no. 08



National level, serves as a member of the Subject Bench Mark Panel of Fine Arts, and a member of the Management Committee, Gamapaha Wickramarachchi Ayurvedic Institute, University of Kelaniya. She obtained her Bachelors' Degree of Fine Arts with a Second-Class Upper Division Honours from the University of Kelaniya in 1992, and Master of Science Degree from the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology, affiliated to University of Kelaniya

in the year 2000. In 2012 she obtained her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of the West, California, USA. She also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Architectural Conservation of Monuments and Site from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka which she obtained in 1994. She bears the life membership of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) since 2007, American Association of Religion (AAR) since 2010, and a member of the Scientific Committee

of the UNESCO International Dance Council since 2016. She is also a member of the National Trustees Board. Her vision is to become an academic and a research scholar who can better serve enhance the quality of research, education and social awareness to treat the needs of economy, polity and culture of Sri Lanka and contribute to achieve the best standards of education in the global market.

## Dr. Anamika Biswas (India) assumes duty as Deputy Director, Programmes at the SAARC Cultural Centre

Dr. Anamika Biswas has been selected for the post of Deputy Director (Programme) by the Selection Committee of the SAARC Cultural Centre. The programmes of the SAARC Cultural Centre will be handled by herself with the help of Cultural Specialist. She wishes to implement the programmes for the benefit of peoples of the whole SAARC Region during her tenure with her cultural expertise knowledge.

Dr. Biswas has obtained her M.A. and PhD degrees in History of Art from the National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology, New Delhi. She has been active in the field of Heritage and Cultural Development and Management for the last 20 years. Her holistic approach towards Cultural Heritage is a consequence of her hands-on experience with museum design and development, event conceptualization and implementation, academic research, teaching, organizing conference and formulating publications. She commenced her professional journey with UNESCO – ICOMOS project for digital documentation of museum collections for more than fifteen museums in India which included Mumtaz Mahal Museum, Patna

State Museum, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, Bodhgaya and Nalanda Museums, etc. Her expertise in using Information Technology as tool for managing Cultural Heritage, creating interactivities for museums and archiving museums (online & offline) has established her formidable identity. Her recent projects include Content Research, Design & Development for Bihar Museum, Conceptualization of Tansen Museum in Madhya Pradesh, Design and Conceptualization of Surajkund International Craft Mela in Faridabad, Design and Implementation of International Gitamahotsav in Kurukshetra, India. Her work experience includes Programme Director at the Indira

Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Associate Professor and Deputy Dean at Pearl Academy of Fashion of the Laurate International Universities Network and Research Head & Senior Consultant at NIIT Ltd. She was also attached to the National Museum, Delhi, National Museum Institute of History of Art, Conservation and Museology, Delhi and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi as Guest Faculty. She has received fellowship on Indology from Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi and Ministry of Culture, Government of India. She has published her PhD thesis on the artist Ram Kinker Baij and has authored many articles in prestigious journals.



# Director, SAARC Cultural Centre holds meeting with the Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka 29-05-2020

Professor Prashanthi Narangoda, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre had a meeting with Mr. Gamini Senarath, Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to discuss the matters and present situation of the construction of the

allocations for completing the Phase I to propegate the activities from the Centre because it plays a major role with regard to the future of the SAARC Cultural Centre which is going to be re-named as the SAARC Educational and Cultural Centre in 2030. He further emphasized that its



cooperation with the Member States must be strengthened by all means with the proposed cultural activities in the year 2020.

It was also discussed that the SAARC Cultural Center must be moved to a location where it

proposed SAARC Cultural Centre, at Navimana, Matara and proposed future activities of the Phase I, Phase II and Phase III in terms of enhancing cultural activities and promoting Cultural Centre as the Centre of Excellence in the SAARC Region for Cultural Studies. The discussion was focussed on the currently held up physical construction of the Centre, and the feasibilities and possibilities of completing the Phase I along with the road access towards the Centre from Matara town.

can better perform the duties of the SAARC Cultural Centre by exhibiting cultural properties, artifacts, and establishing a reference library and a resource center and museums etc., where people can visit and improve their knowledge on the Culture of our region and its significance with regard to the regional identity and cooperation.

The Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister explained the importance of completing the Cultural Centre at the earliest convenience in terms of obtaining and achieving the goals of SCC and instructed to prepare a detailed report on the current situation of the Centre: pending payments, estimated budgetary

The meeting took place at the Temple Trees with the participation of the Secretary of the Ministry of Buddhasansana, Cultural and Religious Affairs Mr. Bandula Harishchandra and high rank officials.

## Editorial

It is with great pleasure we launch the first issue of the SAARC Cultural Centre's Newsletter for the year 2020 which contains the important events took place amidst the Corona Virus pandemic tension all over the SAARC Region. The whole SAARC Regional Centers were kept silence for three months from the start of Corona Virus Pandemic situation in the Region according to the SAARC Secretariat's advice. However, SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo resumed work according to the health guide lines issued by the government from 11th May 2020. The scheduled events were postponed due to the pandemic situation until the bad time leave the Region. During the lockdown for Covid 19, SAARC Cultural Centre benefitted with new professionals to revamp the promotion of the culture in the Region. The Director and the Deputy Director Programmes posts were appointed for the SAARC Cultural Centre. The upcoming events announcements for the year 2020 and the progress of the ongoing activities will content in this Newsletter. The SAARC Cultural Centre wishes all peoples of the Region a healthy and fruitful year ahead 2020.

- Editor



## Visit to the SAARC Cultural Centre construction site, Matara Navimana

Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, together with the Deputy Director Programme Dr. Anamika Biswas and Mr. Keerthi Gunathilaka, Administrative Officer of the Centre visited the SAARC Cultural Centre Construction Site at Navimana, Matara. Officials representing the Secretary, Ministry of Buddhasasana, Cultural and Religious Affairs and Director General SAARC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs also joined the site visit. The team met with the Project Officer, Consultant for the Construction and the Construction Party at the site. It was reported that the construction of the SAARC Cultural Centre

was commenced in 2009 and still the completion of the construction is pending. The objective of the site visit was to review the progress of the construction and find some favourable solutions to expedite/ complete the construction. It was highlighted that the completion of the site would be successful if the construction would proceed step-by-step. It was decided to propose the completion the Phase I, and commence the activities from the Navimana Center and implement programs for self sustainability and attract the local and overseas travelers across the country, and move forward accordingly.



# CULTURE IN NUTSHELL

Culture is something we all enjoy from our birth to death!! It defines the behavioural and ethical conduct of mankind at its best and embellishes our own inventions and interventions through the ages for the wellbeing of our society. Needless to say: “Culture encompasses religion, food, [clothes and attires:] what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things,” as Cristina De Rossi, an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London emphasizes its immemorial values as Live Science. This involves not only the customs and norms, thoughts and attitudes, language and behavior but also the arts and crafts that include dance, music, art and architecture and their symbolic and societal characteristics that forms and reforms any society that shape the uniqueness of people of the particular society. The simplest fact is that what we enjoy everyday belongs to our culture.

In its deepest point, the eco sounding value of the culture is that it is the universal language we all use to express our ideas, impressions and expressions to appeal the audience in front of us. Further, it is the most respectful medium of expression that each one of us uses to pay our gratitude, sympathy, empathy and any other attainment of life to the others. That provides us a very good reason to think of the importance of “culture” and the massive responsiveness that it has encountered on us to serve, preserve and promote its authentic

elements to the generations ahead while awakening the minds of our brethren to move forward hand in hand to serve our society.

**“Culture encompasses religion, food, clothes and attires:| what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things,”**

The SAARC Cultural Center, as the custodian of culture of our region, as I believe, under the canopy of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, stands for providing every single opportunity to preserve the authenticity of each culture: its aspects and elements which offers us with empirical evidence of any nation at any time. Be it is Visual or Performing, Tangible and Intangible, Stable and Unstable etc., these artifacts and cultural products and properties are precious gifts of our ancestors and it is our responsibility to restore and promote them with the understanding that it “belongs to human family” because we live in a global village to date. The temperament of all such categorization is that we as the members of the same genre of human civilization have contributed to the growth and sustainability of it by shaping the thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes and the cultural identity of the members of the society. The unity

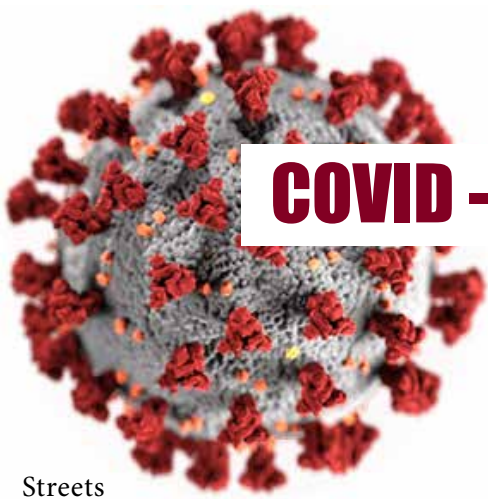
and integrity developed through ages while respecting their “identity” is one important element that we restore for the day, by celebrating and promoting the cultural festivals, artifacts, scholarship and the beauty of it in its very nature!!

Thus, it is significant that culture plays a major role, and its contribution is so significant in a locked down situation as we are facing today, because everyone of us have been

set apart unprecedentedly and isolated unpredictably under so much pressure due to abundant of reasons. Having that in our minds we, the members of the SAARC Cultural Center, with all the support and guidance from the SAARC Secretariat, are making all the efforts to reach our community through various means to sooth their mind and soul with so much love and compassion. This newsletter serves as the preamble to show our continuous engagement in restoring and promoting the beauty of our cultures and their elements while outreaching to heal our wounds!!

**Professor (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda**

Director, SAARC Cultural Center,  
Colombo



# COVID -19 and the New Normal

Streets are empty, railway stations are desolate, international borders sealed, schools and academic institutions are shut and local public transport is on halt... life with restricted human interaction is trying to fulfil its primary functions with the help of technology. It is mandatory – to wear a mask and keep 6 feet distance from each other.

Lockdown, work from home, classes from home, social distancing – a new culture has emerged as a result of COVID-19 Pandemic. The virus has caught the human race unprepared and gripped it to re-think and restructure their lives. The impact of the COVID -19 has been unprecedented, never seen, heard or experienced before. The very first thought in the morning and before sleeping seems to check the number of infected people worldwide, rate of survival and fatality. In this gloomy and grim atmosphere year 2020 is schooling and preparing humanity for the new normal...

The Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped our life and living culture in unprecedented ways, forcing us to live inside the four walls of our homes. All except necessary services and businesses are closed. Heritage sites, Museums are closed and cultural events are cancelled. Cultural Institutions are closed, community cultural practices suspended. As an individual, we all are experiencing our very own spaces, relations and functions in a very different way. Our cities and towns have a new identity as containment zone, quarantine zone or safe zone.

COVID 19 has impacted the organized cultural sector globally.

This impact is social political and economic- it affected the fundamental right of access to living- tangible culture, social right of creative artists and professionals to mobilize and express. The pivotal cultural issues being raised around the world is related to the loss of tourism revenue, social security of artists and cultural professionals, arts and culture in confinement, and ensuring culturally appropriate awareness-raising about the pandemic.

As per the UNESCO official website 89% of Heritage Sites and Cultural institutes and Museums were closed in Month of March-April 2020; which means the loss of jobs for many temporary workers, independent artists, creative professionals and their auxiliary partners. Putting this data into context would be to share that the creative and cultural industries (CCI) contribute USD 2,250 bn. to the global economy and accounts for 29.5 million jobs worldwide. However, this economic loss can be quantified whereas the other facets of culture are harder to gauge. The lockdown and confinement measures have interrupted living heritage practices and expressions such as celebrations – from Nowruz in parts of Central Asia and the Middle East to Buddhist Vesak celebrations in South-east Asia, Christian Holy Week festivities in several countries, carnivals in Latin America and the Caribbean, and countless other festivals and community performances around the world. While assessing the impact of this pandemic, we must account for the disruption it caused to the living heritage and cultural practices.

None the less, the vital and incessant creative force of human race has bounced back with the help of technology. Museums and Cultural institutes quickly adapted themselves to online platforms and have inaugurated virtual exhibitions, webinars, interactions, and online

guided tours. Lebanon, the ministry of culture opened its virtual tours for its world heritage site by the month of April 2020. There is an unprecedented acceleration in free online of cultural portals, websites, content, performances, lectures and webinars and discourses.

On an individual level, most of us have updated and upgraded ourselves with online conversations, meetings, celebrations like birthday, engagement and wedding are conducted online. The physical world of the human race has been constrained within the four walls; it has taken the wings of technology and connected globally with more intense and shared emotions of hope, care and concern.

COVID-19 is an extremely infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The outbreak of COVID-19 was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the WHO Director-General on 30th January 2020 and on 11th March 2020, the outbreak was characterized as a pandemic. The virus spreads through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The infected person experiences mild to moderate respiratory illness and recovers without requiring special treatment. The vulnerable group as defined by the WHO, aged people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are likely to develop serious illness. Worldwide many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments are going on as there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19.

**Dr. Anamika Biswas**  
Deputy Director - Programmes  
SAARC Cultural Center  
Colombo

# Book Launch- Photographic Documentation of Ancient Wall Paintings of the Medawala Temple on Pillars (Tampita Vihara) in Kandy District of Sri Lanka

One of Research Reports of the *Buddhist Cultural Trails*, “**Photographic Documentation of Ancient Wall Paintings at the Medawala Temple on Pillars (Tampita Vihara) in Kandy District of Sri Lanka**” conducted under the research grant scheme awarded to the scholars across the member states, launched on 06 March 2020, at the Auditorium of the Department of Archaeology of Sri Lanka. It was the research outcome of the grant awarded to the Research Team of the Department of Archaeology who successfully completed their project back in 2017. Dr. Senarath Dissanayake, Director General, Department of Archaeology, Sri Lanka was the chief guest at the book launch. His Excellency Omar Abdul Razzak, the Ambassador of Embassy of Maldives and High-level officials of the SAARC Member States were present at the event.

It is worth mention here that the SAARC Research Grants for further studies on Buddhist Cultural Trails was awarded to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka, consequent to the SAARC



Research Seminar on “Buddhist Cultural Trails: Journey through Time and Space, of Merchants, Monks and Pilgrims,” held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August 2017.

Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, Former Director, SAARC Cultural Centre welcomed the distinguished guests while Dr. Senarath Dissanayake, Director General, Department of Archaeology addressed the

gathering. Ms. Bindu Orugodawatte, Deputy Director, Research made the introductory note for the book launch. Representing Research Team Ms. Nishanthi Ranasinghe, Research Officer, Department of Archaeology proposed the vote of thank.





## Farewell Tribute

### Mrs. Renuka Ekanayaka

Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake successfully completed her tenure as the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre for nearly two years. She always paid attention to the successful completion of the SCC Programmes and Research projects. During her tenure she introduced and worked out several programs that could contribute to the advancement of the cultural activities locally and regionally. We take this opportunity to pay our tribute for her commendable service and wish her a happy retirement!!

### Mrs. Kishani Jayasinghe Wijayasekara

Mrs. Kishani Jayasinghe Wijayasekara served as the Deputy Director (Programmes) at SCC and she offered her services with the assistance of Culture Specialists Mr. Karma T Wangchuk (Bhutan) and Dr. Soumya Chavan (India) and the Programme Assistant Mr. Nadaraja Harishnath. Keeping with good rapport with all the staff she was able to implement the programmes successfully under the supervision of two directors; Mr. Wasantha Kotuwella and Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake. We wish her success in all her future endeavors!!

### Ms. Bindu Orugodawatte

Ms. Bindu Orugodawatte led the Research Division of the SAARC Cultural Center along with her Research Assistant Ms. Apsara Karunaratne. She was able to finalize three research projects; Buddhist Cultural Trails, Hindu Cultural Trails and Islamic Cultural Trails during tenure of her service. Keeping with standards of research methodology, she contributed to the SCC with Research reports and books. She further assisted in conducting programmes and many SAARC Cultural Centre events. We wish her all the success in her future endeavors!!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SAARC Exhibition of Paintings, Sri Lanka

The SAARC Exhibition of Paintings 2020 has been rescheduled due to restrictions on public gathering in response to Covid-19. This event marks the respect and recognition for the South Asian Artist for their unprecedented effort in creating some of the best works for the Region. This year's public display would exhibit the creations from SAARC Artist Camp 2019 which held in Maldives from 22nd -27th September. Moreover, the Exhibition would stand out as a learning platform for the budding artist and aspirants.

### SAARC International women's Day, Bangladesh

A Documentary Film is underway in its production in a collaborative effort by the SAARC Cultural Centre and the Ministry of Women Affairs of the Member State of Bangladesh. The Documentary would be a tribute in observance of the SAARC International women's Day 2020 with an emphasis towards Women in Handicraft Industry of the Member State of Bangladesh

### SAARC Film Festival

SAARC Film Festival will be held from 22nd to 26th September 2020 in Sri Lanka. The Festival which is acclaimed for being the platform for regional engagement for the South Asian film fraternity will witness its 10th Edition this year. SCC has been working on the realignment of the festival format and the due precautionary measures to comply to the prevailing challenges.



#### SAARC Cultural Centre

No. 224, Baudhaloka

Mawatha, Colombo 7,

Sri Lanka

Tel : +94 11 2584451

Fax : +94 11 2584452

Email : [scc@saarcculture.org](mailto:scc@saarcculture.org)

Web : [www.saarcculture.org](http://www.saarcculture.org)

ISSN 2579-2423

#### Executive Editor

Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda, Director

#### Editor

Dr. Anamika Biswas, Deputy Director - Programmes

#### Text

Mahinda Sumanasekara, Documentation Officer

#### Layout and Design

Ishan Amaraweera, Computer Operations Officer

#### Published by

SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka