



# SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

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## Assumption of duties by Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake as the new Director

**M**rs. D.K. Renuka Ekanayake assumed duties as the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre in April 2023. She has over 34 years' experience in the Sri Lanka Administrative Service and worked as the Permanent Secretary in various Ministries including Ministry of Social Services & Livestock Development, Ministry of Rural Economy and Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic Resources Development & Rural Economy.

Mrs. Ekanayake also served as Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and

worked towards the conservation, promotion and propagation of literary, arts and cultural elements of Sri Lanka.

In addition, she has represented Sri Lanka as the Head of Delegation at various international conferences and published reports and research publications on cultural affairs, gender equality, poverty alleviation, rural economy, environment and technology and research.

# Editorial

In January 2023, the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) welcomed a new addition to the team as Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori joined SCC as the Deputy Director-Research. Following Dr. Deori's arrival, Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake joined SCC as the new Director in April 2023. The arrival of these new staff allowed SCC to gradually resume its activities, which had been temporarily suspended due to the lockdown imposed in response to the global pandemic.

In the early months of 2023, SCC actively participated in several platforms such as International Webinar Series, International Mother Language Day, and International Women's Day to support multilingualism and research for the promotion of peace and unity in the SAARC region.

Continuing the tradition of strengthening relations among the SAARC Member States, Director, SCC paid a series of courtesy calls on the High Commissions and Embassies in Sri Lanka of the SAARC Member States and discussed the possibilities of collaborative works in the future.

SCC also initiated the new SAARC Talk Series 2023 (Virtual Mode) with the aim to bring professionals and experts from various backgrounds to engage in discussions and share insights on how to promote cultural diversity through different mediums and create inclusive environments in the SAARC Region. The Talk Series will be held once a month and speakers representing the SAARC Member States will discuss topics from their specialized fields. SCC has successfully completed two sessions of the Talk Series and hopes to continue the remaining sessions in the coming months.

SCC also organized the SAARC Cultural Celebration in collaboration with the Department of Dance and Drama, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo.

In addition to that, keeping in with the tradition to advance cross-cultural research in the region, SCC called for papers on the theme *Rites of Passage in the SAARC Region* for its upcoming Special Edition of SAARC Research Journal, Vol.8.

With this promising and optimistic start to the year, SCC aspires to achieve its aim to promote regional unity through cultural integration and intercultural dialogue in the SAARC region.

-Editor

## Assumption of duties by Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director- Research



Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori joined the SCC in January as the Deputy Director-Research. Before joining SCC, Dr. Deori was teaching in the Department of Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.

Dr. Deori is a recipient of Nehru Trust, UK Visiting Fellowship 2014-2015 and the CRASSH Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship 2016. In the year 2015, Dr. Deori was granted Erasmus Mundus NAMASTE Consortium Grant for Academic Mobility at the University of Warsaw, Poland. In 2019, Dr. Deori was selected to participate in the capacity building workshop on Nature-Culture linkages in heritage conservation in Asia and the Pacific, at the University of Tsukuba, Japan.

Dr. Deori has presented several research papers at national and international conferences, and worked on projects documenting cultural heritage of the indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh as the Principal Investigator.

## International Webinar Series

The International Webinar Series that was held in March 2023 addressed issues relating to “Socio-Cultural, Archaeological, Natural Geo Sites, and Museums.” Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research

delivered a lecture as one of the Lead Speakers and chaired a session on ‘Cultural Diplomacy in South Asia’ delivered by Dr. Mariam Kamal, Assistant Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

## International Mother Language Day

Representing the SAARC Cultural Centre Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research attended the International Mother Language Day in 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 on the theme “Mother Language: Unity in Diversity” organized by the High Commission of Bangladesh and Ministry

of Education, Sri Lanka. On the occasion, dance recitals and cultural songs were performed in more than eight languages.



## Commemorating the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh

On the occasion of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, Prof. Prashanti Narangoda, Former Director and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy

Director-Research SAARC Cultural Centre along with other dignitaries attended the reception hosted by the High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka.

## SAARC Cultural Centre Director attended Pakistan's National Day

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023 Prof. Prashanti Narangoda, Former Director SAARC Cultural Centre attended the reception hosted by the High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka, H.E. Umar Farooq Burki HI (M) on the occasion

of the National Day of Pakistan along with other key dignitaries. The event also marked 75 years of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in areas such as trade, defense, science, culture, and education.

## Receptions attended by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023 Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, Director SAARC Cultural Centre attended a reception hosted by H.E Tareq Md. Ariful Islam, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, Director SAARC Cultural Centre attended a reception hosted by H.E Umar Farooq Burki HI (M), High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka.



## International Women's Day

On International Women's Day celebrated on 08<sup>th</sup> March, the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, High Commission of India, Colombo organized a lecture to recognize the valuable contribution of women in South Asia. The lecture was delivered by the Former Director of SCC, Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda on the topic: *"Divine Hands that Lulls the World."* After the lecture, a short video clip containing information regarding the activities carried out by the SCC was played for the audience.



## Courtesy Visit to the Director of SVCC



**M**s. Renuka Ekanayake, Director and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research of SCC paid a courtesy call on Prof. Ankuran Dutta, Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Colombo,

on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023. During the meeting both the Directors discussed the need for collaborative projects between SVCC and SCC for the promotion of peace and unity in the SAARC region.



## Director of SAARC Cultural Center pays courtesy calls on Embassies and High Commissions in Sri Lanka

As the newly appointed Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake paid a courtesy call on the Director General, Ms. Priyangika Dharmasena and Assistant Director, Ms. Diyani Perera of SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka on 10th April 2023 and discussed matters regarding upcoming events. The SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka has pledged its support for the activities of SCC in order to further enhance regional cooperation in the SAARC Region.

In order to continue the cordial relations with other SAARC Member States, Director SCC, Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake paid courtesy calls on the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, High Commissioner of Maldives, High Commissioner of India, Ambassador of Nepal and the High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka.

During the meetings, they discussed at length about the possibilities of working collaboratively in near future and exchanged souvenirs. His Excellencies also extended their full support for cultural and research activities that can enhance peace and

harmony in the SAARC Region. Mrs. Ekanayake appreciated the continuous support received from High Commissions and Embassies for the implementation of activities organized at SAARC Cultural Centre.



H.E Tariq Md. Ariful Islam, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka



H.E. Gopal Bagley, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka



H.E H.E Ali Faiz, High Commissioner of Maldives in Sri Lanka



H.E. Bashu Dev Mishra, Ambassador of Nepal to Sri Lanka



H.E Major General (R) Umar Farooq Burki HI (M), High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka

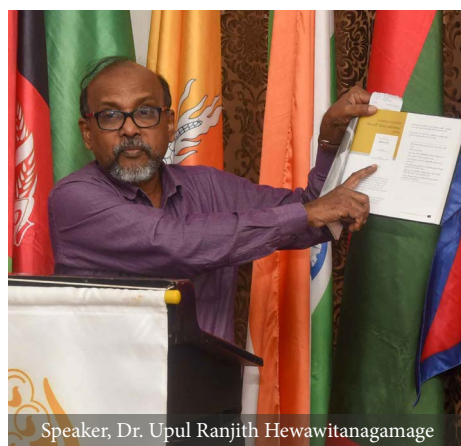




## Rabindra Jayanthi Celebration

To commemorate the 162<sup>nd</sup> Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, SCC organized an event in collaboration with Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), High Commission of India, Colombo. At the event, Dr. Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage, Senior Professor at the Department of Hindi Studies, University of Kelaniya delivered a lecture on “*Translation of Gitanjali from Bengali to Sinhalese*”. Mr. D.A.C Atapattu along with his

students from SVCC sang Rabindra Sangeet. Prof. Ankuran Dutta, Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre graced the occasion along with the staff of SVCC. Mrs Renuka Ekanayake, Director SCC, gave the welcome speech and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research, SCC delivered the vote of thanks. At the end of the event certificates of appreciation were distributed to the participants.



Speaker, Dr. Upul Ranjith Hewawitanagamage



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



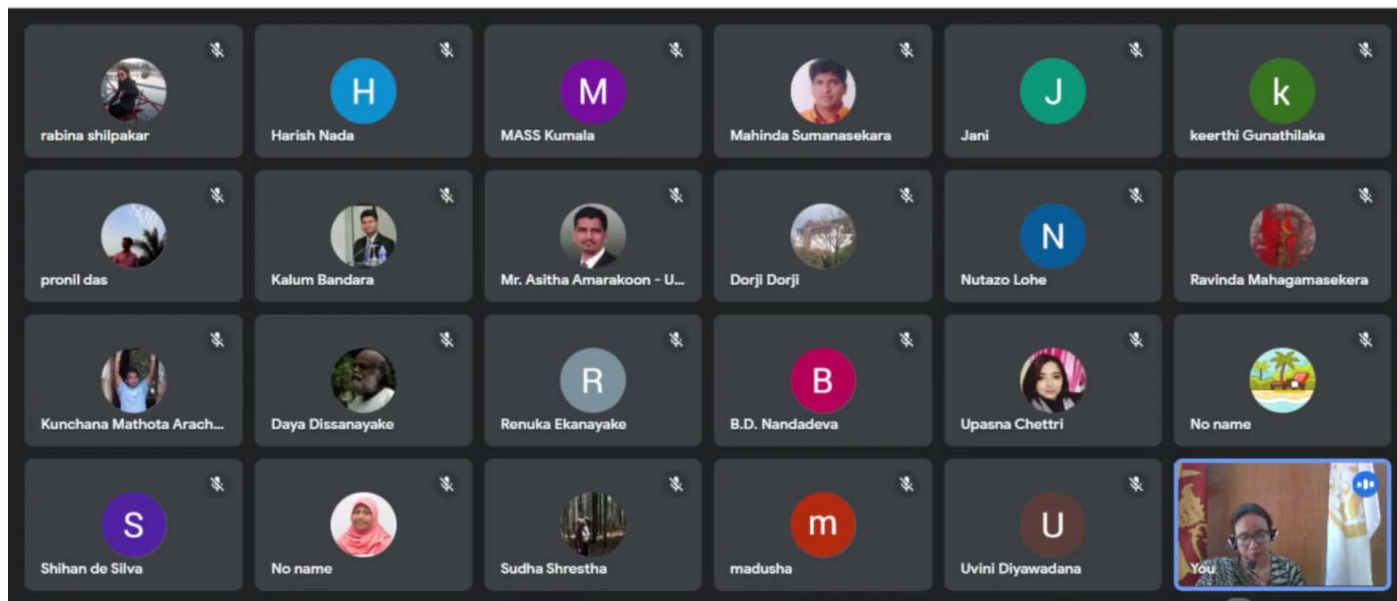
## Director, SCC as Chief Guest at Sri Lanka Foundation

On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Ms. Renuka Ekanayake, Director SAARC Cultural Centre delivered a lecture as the Chief Guest for a special session on Voice Art as a part of the Certificate Course in Voice Training and Stage Performance at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, Colombo, Sri Lanka.





## SAARC Talk Series



SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) started the SAARC Talk Series 2023 (Virtual Mode) with the aim to bring professionals and experts from various backgrounds to engage in discussions and share insights on how to promote cultural diversity through different mediums and create inclusive environments.

The First Speaker of the Talk Series was Dr. Monalisa Maharjan, Research Fellow, Social Science Baha (Heritage as Placemaking), Kathmandu, Nepal. The session started with a welcome address by Ms. Renuka Ekanayake, Director SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) highlighting the importance of academic discourse in the realm of culture among the SAARC countries. Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research, SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) introduced the Speaker to the audience and moderated the whole session. Dr. Maharjan delivered a lecture on the topic “*Water System of Kathmandu Valley: Hiti system in Past*

*and Present*”. Dr. Maharjan argued that hiti is more than just a source of a neighborhood’s clean drinking water, a hiti is a unit of architectural heritage that marks a significant nodal interaction between local newa culture, the natural environment, and the urban present.

The informative lecture was followed by Q & A session in which the participants actively took part and asked queries as well as gave their comments. The session was concluded after the vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori. The lecture is uploaded on SAARC Youtube channel.

The Second SAARC Talk Series 2023 (Virtual Mode) was delivered by Dr. B. D Nandadeva, Retired Professor, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Dr Nandadeva spoke on “*Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage for South Asian Regional Cooperation*”.

Dr. Nandadeva elaborated on the main components of the UNESCO Convention (2003) and its relevance for regional cooperation among the SAARC countries drawing examples mainly from Sri Lanka. In his lecture, he illustrated how the intangible cultural heritage of the South Asian region provides an excellent example of cultural diversity within ‘cultural unity’.

Dr. Nandadeva emphasized on the need to build greater awareness, especially among the younger generations, of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of its safeguarding at a time when the forces of globalization, competition, and geo-political tensions negatively impacting the regional harmony and unity. The lecture was followed by Q & A session in which the audience actively participated and also gave their comments. The whole session is uploaded in the SAARC Youtube Channel.



# SAARC Cultural Celebration

The SCC successfully concluded the SAARC Cultural Celebration on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in collaboration with the Department of Dance and Drama, University of the Visual and Performing Arts (UVPA) at the Panibharatha Theatre.

The event was graced by distinguished representatives from the SAARC Member States, Vice-Chancellor, UVPA, Dean of the Faculty

of Dance and Drama, special invitees and dignitaries from a multitude of disciplines.

The Chief Guest of the event was Senior Prof. Dr. Rohana P Mahaliyanaarachchi, Vice-Chancellor, UVPA. The event commenced with the welcome address delivered by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake followed by the keynote speech by Senior Prof. Dr. Rohana P Mahaliyanaarachchi.



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



Vice-Chancellor, UVPA





The cultural items were performed by Dr. Chandani Kasturi Arachchi, Founder-Director of Sandani Rangana Kala Niketan, her students and other Bhutanese students studying in Colombo. These multicultural dance performances showcased a rich and diverse cultural value representing the Member States of the SAARC Region. Overall, the performances were a testament to the power of art to bring people of South Asia together. Certificates of appreciation were presented to all the artists to acknowledge their remarkable efforts to make this event a big success. The event was concluded by the Vote of Thanks delivered by Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy-Director, SAARC Cultural Centre.





## SAARC Special Lecture on Archaeology

The SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology organized a lecture on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at the Department of Archaeology, Colombo, Sri Lanka. The lecture was delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Anand Singh on the topic “*Water Management in Early Buddhist Monastics: Archaeological Landscape in Middle Gangetic Plain, India*”. Prof. (Dr.) Anand Singh is affiliated with the Department of History, Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Lucknow, India.

The lecture was attended by Prof. Ankuran Dutta, Director, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Mrs. Navya Singla, Second Secretary (DC & PIC), High Commission of India in Sri Lanka, Ms. Pradeepa Serasingha, Director-General, Department of Archaeology Sri Lanka, students and staff of SAARC Cultural Centre and the Department of Archaeology.

The session started with the welcome address by Ms. Renuka Ekanayake, Director SCC followed by a speech from Ms. Pradeepa Serasingha, Director-General of Department of Archaeology. Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director-Research, SCC introduced the speaker to the audience.



Speaker, Prof. (Dr.) Anand Singh

The speech was followed by a presentation of memento to the speaker by the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre. After the presentation, there were interesting queries from the audience. The session concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Arct. Deepal Wijethilake, Director, (Promotions), Department of Archaeology.



Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



Director-General of Archaeology, Colombo



DD-Research, SAARC Cultural Centre





# Announcements

## SAARC Talk Series

Month	Speaker	Topic	Country
July	Iyaz J. Naseem Executive Board Member, Divehi Language Academy	Etymological Connection of Maldivian Language to other Indian Languages	Maldives
August	Dr. Shafi Noor Islam, Senior Assistant Professor, Dept of Geography and Environment and Development Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam	The Prospects and Challenges of the Sundarbans Natural Heritage Site in Bangladesh	Bangladesh
September	Dr. Marium Kamal, Assistant Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Punjab	Political Philosophy of <i>Arthashastra</i>	Pakistan
October	Mr. Dorji, Civil Servant, Department of Culture and Dzongkha, Development Ministry of Home Affairs	Sustainable Preservation of Architectural Heritage in Bhutan	Bhutan
November	Dr Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director of Archives, National Archives of India	Buddhist Heritage in South Asia: Legacy and Prospects	India
December	Dr. Sanath Panawennage, Director General and CEO, Arthur C Clarke Institute for Modern Technologies	Preserving South Asia's Cultural Heritage: "Space" as Decisive Enabler	Sri Lanka

## Call for Papers for SAARC Research Journal, Volume 8

SAARC Research Journal is an open access, peer-reviewed, journal of the SAARC Cultural Centre. All papers submitted to the SAARC Research Journal are initially scrutinized by the editors. The submissions will be subjected to a double-blind peer review process. For the forthcoming volume, Special Issue of SAARC Research Journal Vol. 8, SCC has invited papers on the Rites of Passage in the SAARC Region. Taking into account the significance

of the rites of passage associated with each stage, for its upcoming issue, the journal seeks high-quality articles focusing on the four main stages:

1. Traditional Birthing Rituals: Prenatal and Birth Ceremonies
2. Traditional Initiation Rituals: Journey to Adulthood
3. Traditional Wedding Rituals: Tying the Knot
4. Traditional Funeral Rituals: Final Rest or a New Beginning

### CALL FOR PAPERS

SAARC Research Journal  
Volume 8, 2023

**Theme | Rites of Passage in  
the SAARC Region**

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



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