



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

June 2025 | Vol. 15 | No. 1

News in Highlight

Page

02

New Director of SAARC Cultural Centre and Farewell Ceremony for The Former Director of SAARC Cultural Centre

Page

03

60th Session of SAARC Programming Committee

Page

04

Hon. Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Visits SAARC Cultural Centre

Page

05

SAARC Film Day - Highlights

Page

10

Remembering 20th Century South Asian Women in Culture

Page

12

SAARC Talk Series 2025

Page

14

Courtesy Calls

Page

16

Events Attended

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we extend our warmest greetings to all readers, partners, and well-wishers of the SAARC Cultural Centre.

The SAARC Cultural Centre remains steadfast in its mission to promote cultural cooperation, understanding, and dialogue among the nations of South Asia. Through a wide array of regional programmes — ranging from academic research forums and cultural festivals to heritage preservation workshops and youth engagement initiatives — we continue to witness culture not merely as a relic of the past, but as a living, evolving force that fosters peace, identity, and innovation. The first half of 2025 has been particularly inspiring, marked by a dynamic array of activities including the successful continuation of the SAARC Talk Series, and the celebration of key regional observances such as International Women's Day, International Mother Language Day, SAARC Film Days, and the SAARC Puppetry Festival. Each of these initiatives reaffirmed the power of culture as a bridge that transcends borders and strengthens the bonds of regional friendship. Whether through digital platforms or community-based events, we have seen how the vibrancy of our arts, languages, heritage, and storytelling remains central to our collective identity.

In this issue, we bring you highlights of recent initiatives, insightful contributions from scholars and artists, and a glimpse into what lies ahead. As always, this Newsletter stands as a testament to our shared cultural legacy — dynamic, diverse, and deeply interconnected.

Our work would not be possible without the unwavering support of the SAARC Secretariat, the SAARC Member States, the commitment of cultural ministries and institutions, and the passion of artists, scholars, and practitioners across the region, who continue to inspire us with their creativity and dedication.

As we move forward, we warmly invite you to remain engaged with the Centre's initiatives, participate in our programmes, and continue building bridges of cultural unity across South Asia. Together, let us celebrate the profound diversity that defines us, and the enduring values that unite us.

-Editorial Team
SAARC Cultural Centre



Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, New Director of SAARC Cultural Centre



The SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) welcomed, newly appointed Director, Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, who officially assumed duties at a brief ceremony held at the Centre on 3rd February 2025.

In his address, Dr. Kumarasinghe emphasized the importance of recognizing the rich and enduring cultural encounters that define the South Asian region. He reaffirmed the SCC's vital role in promoting and protecting the cultural diversity of South Asia and expressed his commitment to furthering the Centre's mission of regional cultural cooperation and exchange.

The SCC staff warmly welcomed Dr. Kumarasinghe and extended their best wishes and support as he begins his tenure in leading the Centre into its next phase of cultural engagement.

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe is a Sri Lankan novelist, researcher, translator, and cultural activist. He holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Colombo, an MA in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from Durham University, UK, and an MPhil and PhD in Sociology from South Asian University, New Delhi.

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe's fiction has been translated into English, Tamil, Urdu, and Hindi, and has been featured at prominent literary festivals and discussed in South Asian literary journals. His academic work, published in both Sinhala and English, has appeared in international journals. Beyond writing and research, he has curated numerous cultural events and festivals, notably Red: Festival of Love. He also serves as a visiting academic at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo.

Farewell Ceremony for The Former Director of SAARC Cultural Centre



SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) held a warm farewell ceremony on 31st January 2025 to honour Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, former Director of the Centre, in recognition of her exemplary service and leadership.

A distinguished officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service with over 34 years of public service, Mrs. Ekanayake brought a wealth of experience to the SCC. During her tenure, she played a pivotal role in strengthening regional cultural cooperation, enhancing institutional performance, and promoting South Asia's rich cultural heritage. Her visionary leadership and dedication have left a lasting impact on the Centre's growth and regional engagement. Staff members, dignitaries, and well-wishers gathered to extend their heartfelt appreciation and best wishes for her future endeavors.



Sixtieth Session of SAARC Programming Committee

The Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, participated in the 60th Session of the SAARC Programming Committee held in Kathmandu, Nepal from 28-30 April 2025. H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Chair of the SAARC Standing Committee and H.E. Md. Golam Sarwar, Secretary General of SAARC inaugurated the session. Distinguished delegates from Member States, Heads of SAARC Regional Centres and Specialized Bodies,

senior officials from the SAARC Secretariat, and National Focal Points, and Directors of SAARC entities attended the meeting.

The Committee reviewed the progress and activities of SAARC Regional Centres and Specialized Bodies, and finalized their budgets and Calendar of Activities for the 2025, providing key recommendations for the year ahead.





Hon. Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka Visits the SAARC Cultural Centre

The SAARC Cultural Centre had the honour of welcoming Dr. Hiniduma Sunil Senevi, Hon. Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka, on an official visit to its premises in Colombo on 22 May 2025. The Hon. Minister was accompanied by Mr. Jagath Manuwarna, celebrated film director, actor, and Hon. Member of Parliament, whose presence further underscored the significance of the occasion.

The primary objective of the visit was to explore the Centre's current operational framework and to assess the need for a permanent establishment to accommodate its growing regional mandate. The delegation was given a guided tour of the existing facilities and participated in detailed discussions with senior officials regarding the Centre's long-term vision, strategic objectives, and its impact in fostering cultural cooperation among SAARC Member States.

A key focus of the visit was to evaluate the suitability of the present location and to consider proposals for establishing a permanent institutional space that reflects the stature and aspirations of the SAARC Cultural Centre. Such an initiative is viewed as essential to supporting the Centre's expanding programmes and

reinforcing its role as a regional hub for cultural dialogue, exchange, and collaboration in South Asia.

The SAARC Cultural Centre extends its deep appreciation to Hon. Minister Dr. Hiniduma Sunil Senevi and Hon. Member of Parliament Mr. Jagath Manuwarna for their genuine interest, insightful observations, and steadfast support for the Centre's mission. Their commitment provides renewed momentum for efforts to promote regional cultural integration and ensures the continued relevance and growth of the SAARC Cultural Centre within the broader South Asian cultural landscape.





SAARC Film Day 2025 held at Ananda College, Colombo

The SAARC Cultural Centre launched the inaugural edition of the SAARC Film Days 2025 on 29th May at the Kularathna Auditorium of Ananda College, Colombo. The featured screening was “Ankhi O Tar Bondhura” (Akhi and Her Friends), a critically acclaimed children’s film from Bangladesh, directed by celebrated filmmaker Morshedul Islam.

The event drew an enthusiastic audience of over 900 schoolchildren, filling the auditorium and highlighting the growing interest in regional cultural initiatives among the youth. The programme aimed to promote cultural awareness, foster regional friendship, and encourage appreciation of South Asian cinema.



Several dignitaries graced the event. His Excellency Mr. Andalib Elias, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, attended as the Chief Guest, while His Excellency Mr. Purna Bahadur Nepali, Ambassador of Nepal to Sri Lanka, and Mr. D.M. Lal Dissanayake, Principal of Ananda College, were present as Guests of Honour. Other attendees included Dr. B. Moazami Goodarzi, Director of the Iran Cultural Centre; Ms. Ruvini De Silva, Deputy Director, SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); and Ms. Sajeeda Rasheed, Assistant Director, South Asia and SAARC Division, MOFA.

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre. In his keynote speech, Chief Guest Mr. Elias encouraged students to enjoy South Asian films and to learn about the shared cultures of neighbouring countries, emphasizing that these nations, while distinct, are bound by deep-rooted cultural similarities. He highlighted the role of cinema in building mutual respect, empathy, and understanding among future generations in the region.

A curated Q&A session, led by Mr. Vidarshana Kannangara, offered students a platform to reflect on the film's themes of friendship, inclusion, and resilience. The session also explored broader aspects of South Asian identity and cultural values, inspiring students to think critically about regional connections.

The programme concluded with the presentation of certificates to the winners of the Q&A segment, acknowledging their insightful contributions and enthusiastic engagement. The Vote of Thanks was delivered by Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes) of the SAARC Cultural Centre, who expressed sincere appreciation to all the dignitaries, school authorities, and students for their support and active participation.

The SAARC Film Days 2025 series continues to serve as a meaningful platform to inspire young audiences across South Asia through cinematic storytelling and cultural dialogue.



SAARC Film Day 2025

held at

Saraswathi Hall, Colombo

The second edition of the SAARC Film Day 2025 series, organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with Hindu College Colombo, was successfully held on 30th May at Saraswathi Hall, Bambalapitiya. The event featured the screening of the acclaimed Bangladeshi children's film "Ankhi O Tar Bondhura" (Akhi and Her Friends), directed by renowned filmmaker Morshedul Islam.

More than 500 schoolchildren attended the event, filling the auditorium with curiosity, excitement, and a shared spirit of regional togetherness. The screening aimed to foster cultural appreciation and South Asian unity among youth through the impactful medium of cinema.

The occasion was graced by the presence of several distinguished guests. His Excellency Mr. Andalib Elias, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, served as the Chief Guest. Other Guests of Honour included Mr. Shahurab Rashid, Third Secretary at the High Commission of the Maldives to Sri Lanka; Mr. Vijay Kumar Raut, Councilor at the Embassy of Nepal in Sri Lanka; Mr. Kanapathypillai Nagenthira, Principal of Hindu College, Colombo; and Mr. Llangeshwaran, Vice Principal of Hindu College.

The programme began with a warm welcome address by Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre. In his keynote speech, His Excellency Mr. Elias emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy and youth engagement, encouraging students to explore and enjoy the films of neighboring countries that share rich and interconnected cultural traditions.

A specially curated Q&A session, moderated by media professional Ms. Sathya Priya, provided an enriching forum for students to reflect on the film's themes friendship, empathy, and resilience while also exploring broader aspects of South Asian



culture and identity. The enthusiastic participation of students underscored their growing interest in the region's diverse cultural narratives.

To celebrate student engagement, certificates were awarded to the winners of the Q&A segment, acknowledging their insightful contributions and thoughtful questions. The event concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes) of the SAARC Cultural Centre. He

expressed gratitude to Hindu College for their partnership, the participating diplomatic missions for their continued support, and the students whose spirited involvement made the event a memorable success.

The SAARC Cultural Centre reaffirms its commitment to continuing the SAARC Film Day series an inspiring initiative promoting cinematic appreciation, cultural connectivity, and youth engagement across the South Asian region.



SAARC Film Day 2025

held at

Seruwawila Mangala Raja Maha Vihara

The third edition of the SAARC Film Day 2025 series, organized the two days Film Day programme at Seruwawila Mangala Raja Maha Vihara screening three movies: Ankhi O Tar Bandhura (Ankhi and Her Friends), I am Kalam, and Vishama Bhaga (The Other Half), from Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka respectively on 25th and 26th June 2025. A total of 1150 students with escort teachers and Principals from the nineteen schools were participated in the program followed by interactive discussions after screening the movies.

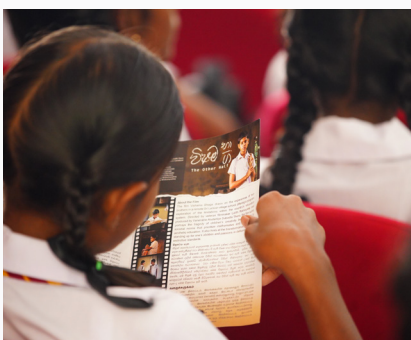
The event saw enthusiastic participation from students and teachers from local schools in Seruvila. Interactive sessions were held after screening the films, encouraging students to share their thoughts, ask questions, and reflect on the themes presented in the films. The students participated in the interactive session were awarded with gifts and certificates as a gesture of encouragement and appreciation.


The event was graced by distinguished guests Ven. Aludeniye Subodhi thero, Chief High Priest and Chief Incumbent of Seruwila Mangala Rajamaha Viharaya, Diplomatic communities, Directors of Education in the Division of Religious and Value Education of Ministry of Education, and representative of Seruwila Cultural Centre.



SAARC Film Day

The objectives of this programme is to promote the rich cinematic heritage of the Region and motivate the youth film enthusiasts bridging the gap of communication within the community through cinema. Furthermore, the event has created opportunity in bring the youth from different schools and educate students with a unique vibrant culture of South Asia using cinema as a medium for cross-cultural understanding dialogue, critical thinking, and social responsibility. The participants praised the initiative for its educational value and positive impact on students and was warmly received leaving a lasting impression on the young participants.





IRAWATI
KARVE

NOOR
JAHAN

PARIJAT

BEGUM SUFIA
KAMAL

MINNETTE
DE SILVA

Remembering 20th CENTURY SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN CULTURE

First Session



Dr. Kumud Bhansali
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
South Asian University
INDIA



Dr. Nabiha Fatima
Assistant Professor
Department of Social Sciences
Lahore School of Economics
PAKISTAN



Prof. Sangita Rayamajhi
Senior Professor
Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu
NEPAL



Jinat Ara Haque
Chief Executive
WE CAN Alliance to end VAW
BANGLADESH



Irushi Tennekoon
Artist, Animator, and Educator
Colombo
SRI LANKA

To celebrate International Women's Day 2025, SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) hosted an online forum on Tuesday, 11th March 2025, under the theme "Remembering 20th Century South Asian Women in Culture." The event brought together distinguished speakers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to honour the legacy of iconic women who made remarkable contributions to South Asia's cultural and intellectual history.

- Dr. Kumud Bhansali spoke on Irawati Karvé (India), Pioneering anthropologist and sociologist, whose work reshaped Indian cultural and caste studies.
- Dr. Nabiha Fatima spoke on Noor Jahan (Pakistan), Legendary singer and cultural icon, who broke barriers in music and film.
- Prof. Sangita Rayamajhi spoke on Bishnu Kumari Waiba 'Parijat' (Nepal), Literary voice of resistance,

known for powerful narratives addressing gender and social issues.

- Jinat Ara Haque spoke on Begum Sufia Kamal (Bangladesh), Poet and activist who championed women's rights and played a key role in Bangladesh's liberation movement.
- Irushi Tennekoon spoke on Minnette De Silva (Sri Lanka), Internationally acclaimed modernist architect and South Asia's architectural pioneer.

With nearly 60 participants joining virtually from across the SAARC region, the forum fostered rich dialogue on women's cultural legacies, challenges, and inspirations. Q&A session followed the presentations, marked by enthusiastic participation and insightful reflections.



Remembering 20th CENTURY SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN CULTURE

Second Session



Prof. Swati Ganguly
Department of English
Visva-Bharati
Santiniketan
West Bengal
INDIA



Moneeza Hashmi
Trustee
Faiz Foundation
PAKISTAN



Dr. Sonam Choden
Postdoctoral Researcher
ERC Synergy Project Intellexus
University of Hamburg
GERMANY



Mariyam Isha Azeez
Member
Nationhood Council
Ministry of Divehi Language
Culture and Heritage
MALDIVES



Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya
Department of History
University of Colombo
SRI LANKA

The second session of the online forum “Remembering 20th Century South Asian Women in Culture” was held on Wednesday, 21st May 2025, via Zoom, drawing more than 40 participants from across the SAARC region. Organized under the South Asian Cultural Cooperation (SCC) initiative, the session brought together scholars, researchers, and cultural practitioners to reflect on the lives and legacies of five iconic women who helped shape South Asia’s cultural heritage.

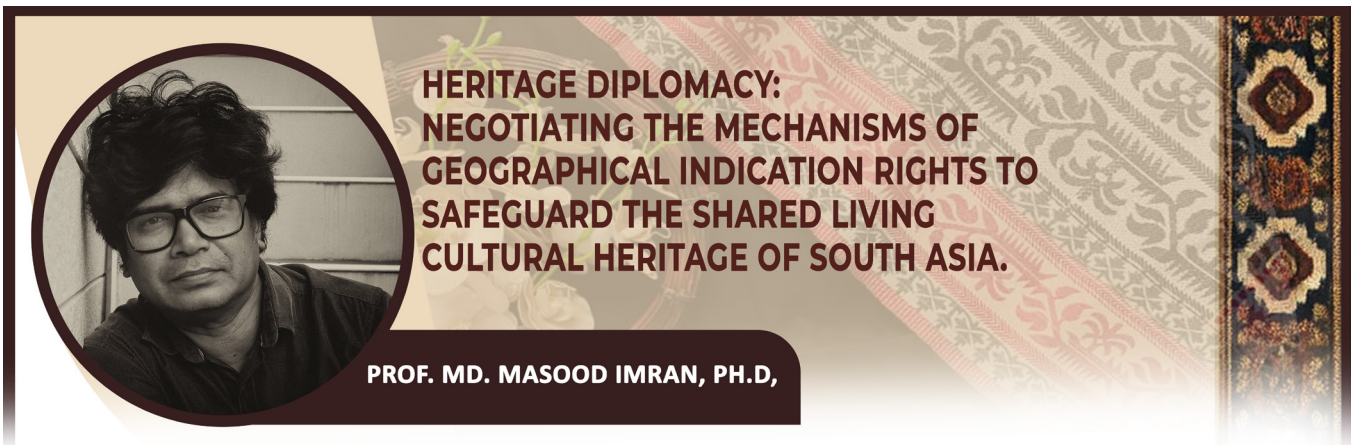
- Prof. Swati Ganguly spoke on Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan (India), a pioneering scholar of Indian classical arts and founding director of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.
- Moneeza Hashmi spoke on Bano Qudsia (Pakistan), a revered novelist and playwright known for her deep philosophical insights and powerful Urdu literature.
- Dr. Sonam Choden spoke on Gyalyum Phuntsho Choden Wangchuck (Bhutan), a royal figure celebrated for her role in preserving and promoting Bhutan’s traditional arts and crafts.

- Mariyam Isha Azeez spoke on Al-Nabeela Aminath Hussein (Maldives), an influential educator and poetess who played a key role in advancing girls’ education and women’s civic engagement.
- Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya spoke on Sivagami Verina Obeyesekere (Sri Lanka), a cultural entrepreneur who empowered rural women and revived traditional handicrafts.

The presentations highlighted how these women defied societal constraints and became agents of change in fields ranging from arts and literature to education and cultural policy. Their lives illustrated broader themes of gender, modernity, and identity across post-colonial South Asia.

The session concluded with a lively Q&A, during which participants expressed gratitude for the rich insights and compelling narratives. The forum served as a powerful reminder of the need to remember and celebrate the women who helped shape South Asia’s intellectual and cultural foundations and of the continued effort needed to bring their stories to light.

SAARC TALK SERIES 2025



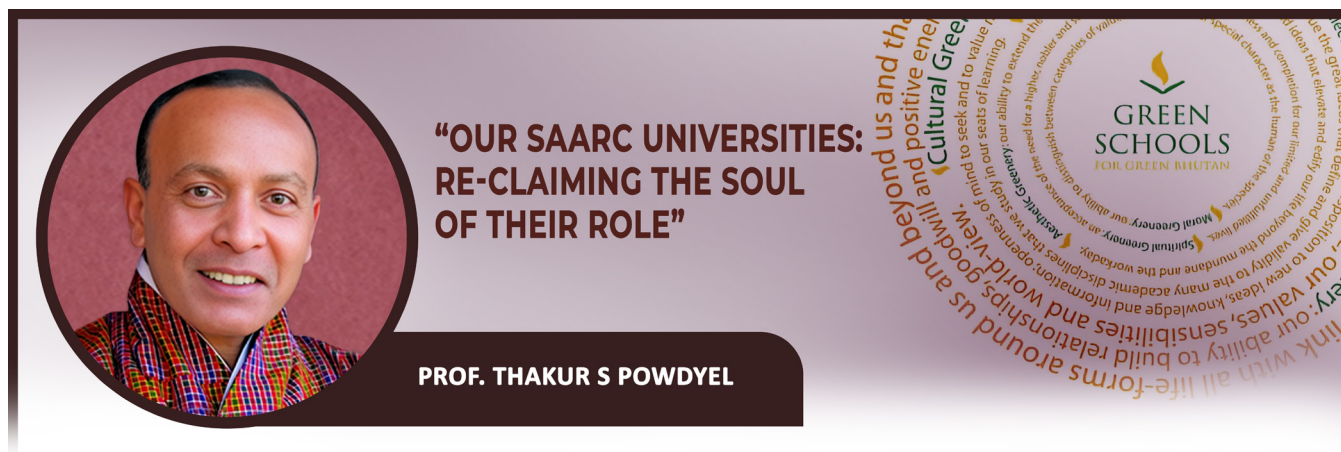
SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) successfully launched the first session of the SAARC Talk Series 2025 on Thursday 27th March 2025, in virtual mode. The keynote lecture, titled “Heritage Diplomacy: Negotiating the Mechanisms of Geographical Indication Rights to Safeguard the Shared Living Cultural Heritage of South Asia”, was delivered by Prof. Md. Masood Imran, Department of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

Prof. Imran explored the pressing need for

effective heritage diplomacy in the Global South, emphasizing the role of Geographical Indication (GI) rights in preserving cultural identity, asserting regional agency, and promoting economic cooperation. Through case studies such as the Basmati rice dispute and Champagne protection, he illustrated how GI diplomacy shapes global trade and safeguards intangible heritage.

The session drew 96 participants from across the SAARC region and concluded with an interactive Q&A, receiving enthusiastic feedback.

SAARC Talk Series 2025

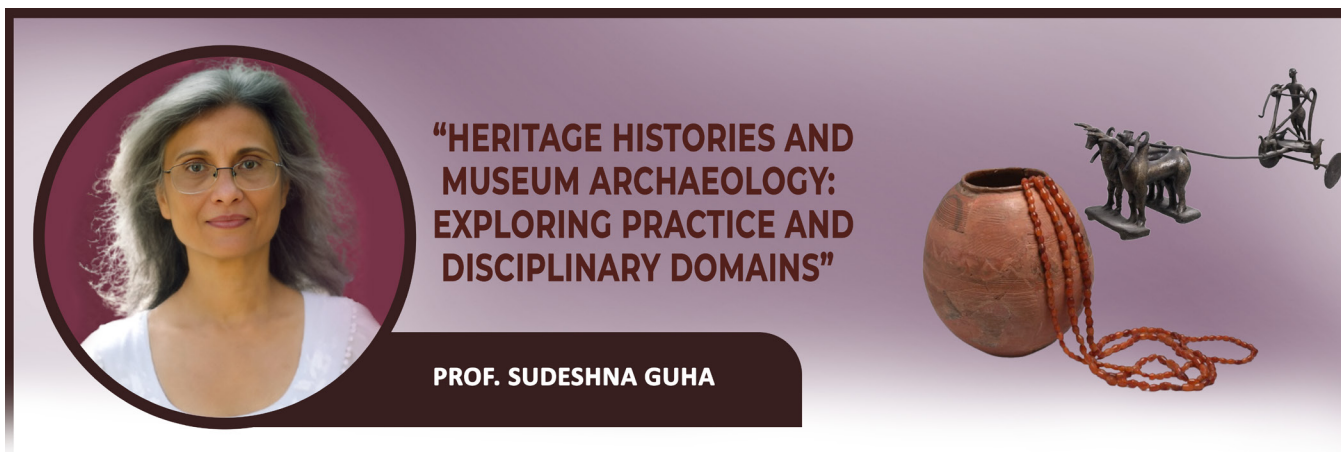


SAARC Cultural Centre hosted the second session of the SAARC Talk Series 2025 on 25th April 2025, featuring renowned educationist Prof. Thakur S. Powdyel, former Minister of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan. The session, held virtually, drew participants across the SAARC region.

Speaking on the theme “Re-claiming the Soul of Universities,” Prof. Powdyel emphasized the importance of reviving the original vision and values that define higher education. He distinguished

between the “outer life” of universities comprising infrastructure and systems and their “inner life,” which embodies purpose, inspiration, and intellectual integrity.

He urged universities to move beyond market-driven models and reaffirm their role as transformative institutions that nurture wisdom, uphold values, and build enlightened societies. The session concluded with an engaging Q&A and received highly positive feedback.



The third session of the SAARC Talk Series 2025 was held virtually on Friday, 13th June 2025, featuring renowned educationist, historian, and archaeologist Prof. Sudeshna Guha from Shiv Nadar Institute of Eminence, India.

Prof. Guha offered a thought-provoking exploration of how heritage is constructed and curated within museums, drawing upon South Asian contexts and global museum practices. She emphasized the importance of object biographies, digital databases,

and the role of institutions in shaping historical narratives. Case studies from India, including the National Museum in New Delhi and the heritage town of Vadnagar, illustrated how heritage intersects with politics, identity, and nation-building.

The session drew 40 participants from across the SAARC region and concluded with an interactive Q&A, receiving enthusiastic feedback.

Courtesy Calls



As part of his efforts to further strengthen regional cultural cooperation, Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, the newly appointed Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC), paid a series of courtesy calls to the diplomatic missions of SAARC Member States in Sri Lanka.

Dr. Kumarasinghe met with the H.E. Andalib Elias, High Commissioner of Bangladesh, Dr. Satyanjal Pandey, Deputy High Commissioner of India, H.E. Major General (R) Faheem Ul Aziz, HI (M), the High Commissioner of Pakistan, Mr. Abbas Esufally, Honorary Consulate, Bhutan, H.E. Masood Imad, High Commissioner of Maldives, H. E. Purna Bahadur Nepali, Ambassador of Nepal. These meetings served as a platform to continue the Centre's longstanding cordial relations with Member States and to explore new avenues for collaboration in the cultural and research spheres.

The discussions focused on enhancing joint cultural initiatives, promoting people-to-people exchanges, and expanding research efforts that contribute to peace and harmony in the SAARC region. The diplomats warmly welcomed Dr. Kumarasinghe and reaffirmed their missions' commitment to supporting the activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre.

During the visits, tokens of appreciation were exchanged, and Dr. Kumarasinghe expressed his gratitude for the unwavering support extended by the High Commissions and Embassies in the successful implementation of SCC's programmes. He emphasized the importance of continued cooperation to promote South Asia's rich cultural heritage and shared values.

Courtesy Calls



Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC), paid a courtesy call on Prof. Ankuran Dutta, Director of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), High Commission of India.

During the cordial meeting, both Directors exchanged mementos, and Dr. Kumarasinghe presented the latest edition of SAARC Art magazine, to Prof. Dutta. The discussion focused on potential collaborative initiatives between the two Centres aimed at strengthening cultural cooperation in the SAARC region.

Prof. Dutta emphasized the significance of cultural exchange in promoting peace and harmony and expressed his commitment to support the activities and programmes of the SCC.

Mr. Wangchuk extended his congratulations to Dr. Kumarasinghe on his appointment and expressed interest in strengthening ties between SACEP and SCC. The discussion centred on potential collaborative initiatives focusing on the integration of emerging technologies in the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental conservation. Both parties emphasized the significance of protecting the diverse and iconic manifestations of South Asia's heritage, and the shared mandate to promote peace and sustainable development through culture and nature.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Kumarasinghe presented Mr. Wangchuk with the latest edition of SAARC Art magazine, symbolizing a shared commitment to regional cooperation and innovation.



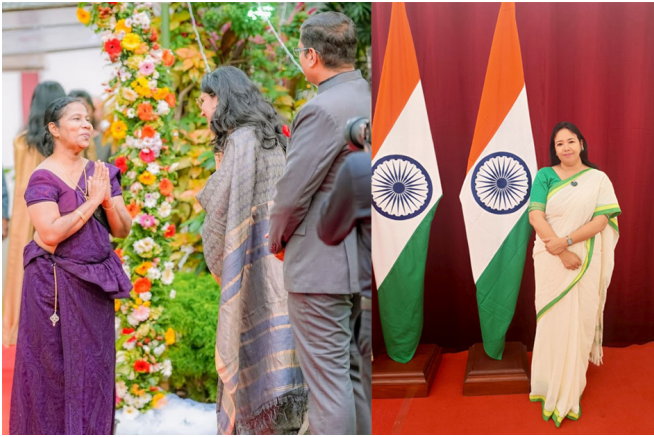
Officials from the South Asia and SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka met with Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, Former Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, on 27th January 2025.

The officials included Mr. Niluka Kadurugamuwa, Director General (South Asia & SAARC); Ms. Ruvini De Silva, Director (SAARC); and Ms. Diana Perera, Assistant Director (South Asia & SAARC). During the meeting, Mr. Kadurugamuwa and Mrs. Ekanayake discussed the ongoing initiatives of the SAARC Cultural Centre as well as future programmes planned for 2025. The exchange highlighted the continued cooperation between the Centre and the Ministry in promoting cultural engagement in the SAARC region.



Mr. Norbu Wangchuk, Director General of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), met with Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC), on 18th March 2025 in Colombo.

Events Attended



Republic Day of India

Mrs. Renuka Ekanayake, Former Director, and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research) of the SAARC Cultural Centre, attended the reception held on 26th January 2025, to celebrate the 76th Republic Day of India. The event was hosted by H.E. the High Commissioner of India in Colombo.



Pohela Boishakh Celebrations

Representing the SAARC Cultural Centre, Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director; Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research); and Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes) attended the Pohela Boishakh celebration at Bangladesh House in Colombo.



National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research) of the SAARC Cultural Centre, attended the reception held on 10th February 2025 to commemorate the 46th Anniversary of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution and the National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This day marks the historic 1979 revolution that led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic, symbolizing a significant turning point in Iran's modern history. The event provided a platform to celebrate Iran's cultural heritage and strengthen diplomatic relations.



International Mother Language Day

SAARC Cultural Centre joined hands with the Bangladesh High Commission and the Roots of Lanka Foundation to celebrate this International Mother Language Day. Together with different diplomatic missions, they hosted a vibrant cultural program showcasing traditional dances from across the SAARC region.



Events Attended



Bangladesh National Day Celebration

SAARC Cultural Centre took part in the celebration of the 54th Independence Day and National Day of Bangladesh on 26th March 2025, hosted by the Bangladesh High Commission in Sri Lanka.

Representing the Centre were Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director; Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research); and Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes).



75th Foundation Day Celebrations of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director; Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research); and Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes) of the SAARC Cultural Centre participated in the 75th Foundation Day celebrations of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), on 30th May 2025.

Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, an ICCR alumna, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya graced the occasion.



Strengthening Regional Cultural and Tourism Ties in the SAARC Region

Representing SAARC Cultural Centre Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director–Research of the Centre, attended a meeting held at the Embassy of Nepal in Colombo on 28th May 2025. H.E. Purna Bahadur Nepali, Ambassador of Nepal to Sri Lanka, chaired the meeting.



Launching of 'Lumbini and Beyond' Campaign

On the invitation of the Embassy of Nepal in Sri Lanka, Director, Deputy Director-Research and Deputy Director-Programmes, SAARC Cultural Centre attended the launching of 'Lumbini and Beyond' campaign, a collaboration between the Embassy of Nepal in Sri Lanka and the Nepal Tourism Board on 30th June 2025. The campaign is part of a broader initiative to promote sustainable tourism and enhance bilateral cultural and people-to-people relations between Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Events Attended



“Echoes of Enlightenment – Light in Stone, Breath on Canvas”

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director, and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research) of the SAARC Cultural Centre, attended the special inaugural ceremony of the exhibition titled “Echoes of Enlightenment – Light in Stone, Breath on Canvas” on 9th June 2025 at the Museum Arcade, Department of National Museums, Colombo.

The exhibition was jointly organized by the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre and the Department of National Museums, Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Bihar Museum and the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), India.

H.E. Santosh Jha, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, officially inaugurated the exhibition.

Sri Jayewardenepura University collaborates with SAARC Cultural Centre

The SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka, welcomed a distinguished delegation from the Department of Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, on 4th March 2025 to explore avenues for future collaboration. The visit marked a significant step towards strengthening institutional partnerships, particularly in the context of the forthcoming 5th International Conference on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICICH 2025).

The visiting delegation comprised Prof. Praneeth Abhyesundara, Dr. Nelum Kanthilatha (Secretary of ICICH 2025), and Dr. Tharaka Ananda (Chair of ICICH 2025), who engaged in discussions with Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research).





Nepal Administrative Service Academy Delegation Visits SAARC Cultural Centre



A 10-member delegation from the Nepal Administrative Service Academy visited the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) in Colombo on 21st April Monday at 12:30 p.m., accompanied by Mr. Sagar Bhandari, Second Secretary at the Embassy of Nepal in Sri Lanka.

Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes), and Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research), warmly received the delegation.

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, welcomed the guests and delivered a brief presentation outlining the Centre's mandate, ongoing programmes, and its commitment to regional cooperation through cultural initiatives. The meeting also focused on potential collaboration between the SCC and the Nepal Administrative Service Academy, particularly in the areas of cultural preservation, capacity building, and administrative training in heritage management.

Meet the Author

Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre was invited as a speaker at the Meet The Author April edition organized by Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) Colombo. Director Kumarasinghe is a contemporary novelist, translator, and social science researcher whose novels delve into human emotions, relationships, and inner struggles, reflecting Sri Lankan society. His novels translated in to English, Hindi, and Urdu.



IN-HOUSE ENNGAGEMENTS

SAARC Cultural Centre Hosts Capacity Building Workshop on International Mother Language Day

SAARC Cultural Centre Hosts Capacity Building Workshop on International Mother Language Day on 24th February 2025

The workshop focused on raising awareness about linguistic diversity and the importance of preserving mother languages as a vital part of cultural heritage across the SAARC region.

In his address Professor Dr. Md. Rejaul Karim Talukder from Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, highlighted the historical and cultural significance of mother languages in shaping identity and fostering intercultural understanding.

Mr. Sonam Tenzing, Cultural Specialist (Programmes), presented an insightful overview of Bhutan's linguistic diversity, enriching the dialogue with perspectives from the Himalayan region.

The event featured a vibrant performance of Baul songs from Bengal by Professor Talukder and his team from Bangladesh.



The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Professor Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes), who expressed gratitude to the speakers, performers, and participants for their valuable contributions and enthusiastic participation.

Eminent Bangladeshi Puppeteer Visits SAARC Cultural Centre

The SAARC Cultural Centre was happy to welcome Professor Rashid Harun, an eminent puppeteer from Bangladesh, during his recent visit to the Centre in Colombo.

Professor Harun, renowned for his contributions to traditional puppetry and cultural preservation, engaged in a fruitful exchange of ideas with the Centre's team. His visit highlighted the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and exploring opportunities for regional collaboration in performing arts



SAARC Cultural Centre Celebrates Pohela Falgun with Colour and Culture

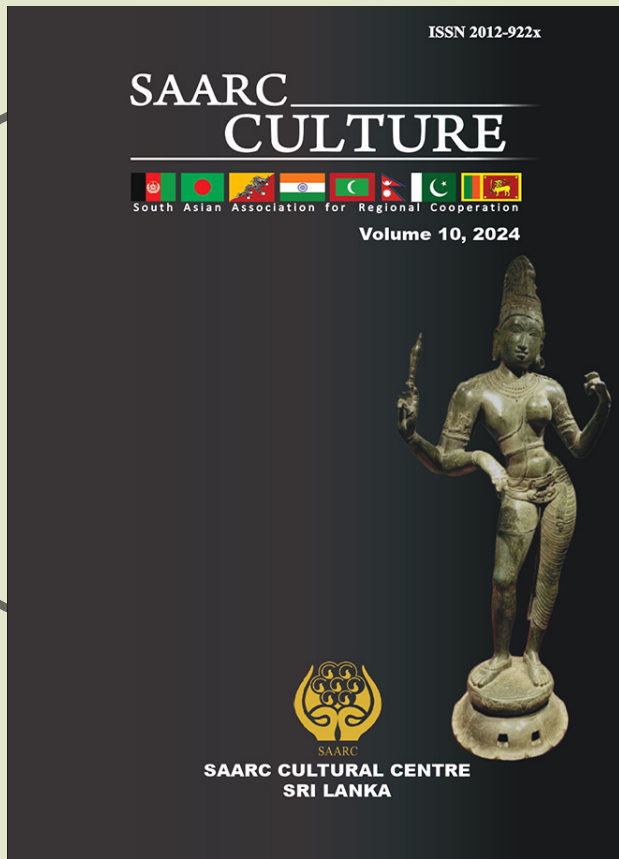
The SAARC Cultural Centre joyfully celebrated Pohela Falgun, the traditional Bengali festival marking the advent of spring, on 14th February 2025 at Director's Office.

The programme began with an insightful introduction to the significance of Pohela Falgun by Prof. Sikder Md. Zulkernine, Deputy Director (Programmes) of the SAARC Cultural Centre. This was followed by a warm sharing of personal reflections and cultural memories by the staff, fostering a sense of community and mutual appreciation.

Dressed in traditional attire in shades of yellow and red, representing the colours of spring, participants embraced the festive spirit with enthusiasm and joy. The event concluded with heartfelt closing remarks by Dr. Kaushalya Kumarasinghe, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre.



NEW PUBLICATIONS

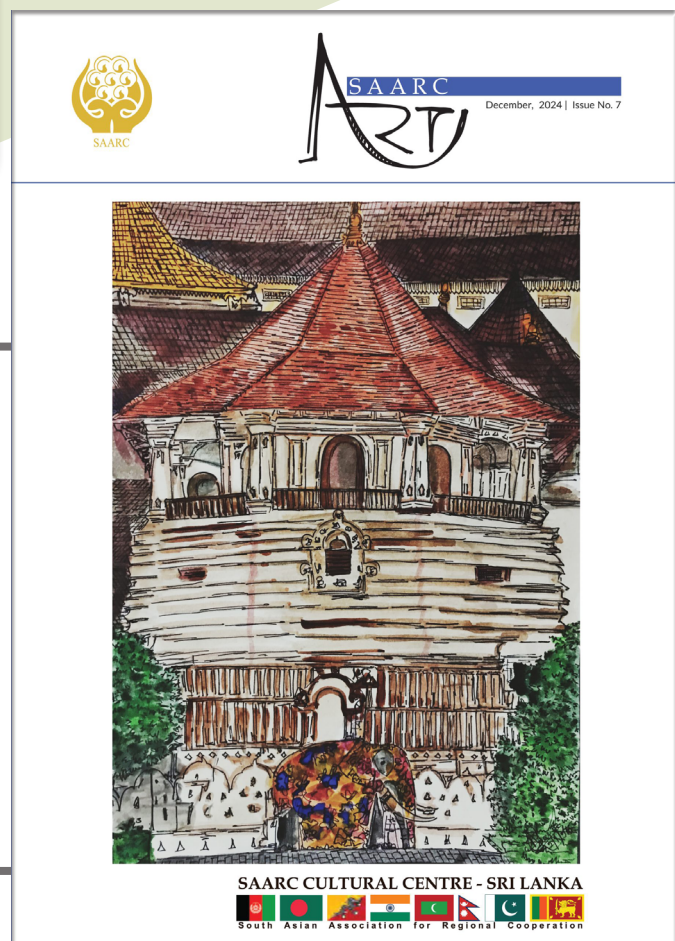


SAARC Culture, Vol 10

The SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka, presents SAARC Culture, Vol. 10 on the theme "Celebrating Craftsmanship: Exploring Cultural Heritage in the SAARC Region." This volume features nine articles that celebrate the rich tapestry of South Asian culture, intricately woven with the threads of traditional craftsmanship.

SAARC Art Magazine, Issue 7

SAARC Cultural Centre is delighted to announce the release of the latest issue of SAARC Art Magazine, Issue No 7. This edition features 17 articles covering a wide range of topics, drawing insights from across South Asia. The content includes art, craft, sculpture, painting, music, cultural heritage briefs, and photo essays.



Announcements



SAARC
SAARC Cultural Centre

Cultural Currents: Journal of South Asian Culture Vol.11, 2025 **Call for Papers**

SAARC Cultural Centre invites original research articles (non-thematic topics) book reviews and interviews that delve into various aspects of South Asia's cultural expressions and heritage.

Submission Guidelines for articles:

- Language- English (British)
- Abstract- 250-300 words, Keywords- 5 (max).
- Full Paper-8000 words (excluding the abstract and the reference)
- Submissions should be in MS word Format, Times New Roman-12, Line spacing - 1.5
- Page margins - Left: 1.5" Right/ Top/ Bottom- 1"
- Article Title - Font Size 14 and bold
- Reference Style: MLA (9th Edition)

Submission Guidelines for Book Reviews:

- The reviewer can choose books (fiction, non-fiction, poetry) in any of the South Asian languages or English published within the last 3 years
- The review of the book should be in English (British).
- Title and Image of the Book
- Author(s), Publisher, Year of Publication
- Number of Page, ISBN No., Word count- 1500-2000
- Font type -Times New Roman

Submission Guidelines for Interviews

- Word limit-5000
- A brief introduction about the interviewee, outlining the background and context of the interview.
- Interviewee and Interviewer's short biographical entry of 100 words, including name with designation, affiliation, along with a colour photograph (300 DPI maximum).
- Topic should relate to South Asian culture and heritage.

All submissions must be original and must not have been published, accepted or submitted elsewhere. The manuscript will be subjected to a blind review process. The final decision regarding the publication will be taken by the Editorial Board. All submissions will be screened for plagiarism. For more details, visit – www.saarcculture.org or write to sccpublications@gmail.com.

Deadline for Submission - 15th September 2025

SAARC Cultural Centre
224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94 11 2584450/53



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

Cultural Currents: Journal of South Asian Culture, Vol 11

SAARC Art Magazine, Issue 8

SAARC ART MAGAZINE 2025

Call for Submissions



The SAARC Cultural Centre is pleased to invite submissions of original articles for SAARC Art Magazine (Issue 8, 2025). Contributors are encouraged to explore the rich and diverse artistic expressions of the South Asian region, including but not limited to Film & Theatre, Folk Art & Music, Photography, Painting & Printmaking, Textiles, Sculpture & Mixed Media, and Digital Art.

Last Date for
Submission:

**31st
OCT
2025**

Submission at:
dcp.sccsaarc@gmail.com

Submission Guidelines

- The submitted article should be original and should not have been previously published elsewhere.
- Times New Roman, 12 point, 1.5 line spacing
- Article should be between 1500 - 1800 words.
- At least 6-8 high-resolution (300 DPI) photographs, properly captioned to be included along with the article with copyright obtained by the author.
- A colour photograph of the author (300 DPI)
- Brief biographical entry, in c.100-150 words
- Author's name, affiliation (if any), postal address, e-mail, phone numbers



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
For more details visit www.saarcculture.org

UP COMING EVENTS

**SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE
PRESENTS**

Puppetry Fest

**SAARC Promoting Puppetry Art
to Enhance Social Awareness**

15th July 2025 (9.30 A.M. - 11.45 A.M.)	Inauguration Programme & Academic Session (Invited Guests only) At De Centrum Conference Hall Fairway Colombo Hotel
(12.00 PM - 5.30 P.M.)	Exhibitions & Hand-on activities (Entrance Free)
(5.30 P.M. Onwards)	Puppetry Show (Entrance Free) At Hospital Street, Fairway Colombo
16th July 2025 (9.15 A.M. - 12.15 P.M.)	Puppetry Show (Entrance Free) At Sri Palee Campus, Horana, University of Colombo
17th July 2025 (3.30 P.M. - 6.30 P.M.)	Puppetry Show (Entrance Free) At Puppet Museum, Ambalangoda

BANGLADESH **INDIA** **SRI LANKA**

Official Hospitality Partner
Fairway Colombo

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

**SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE in collaboration with
COLOMBO PUBLIC LIBRARY
PRESENTS**

SAARC CHILDREN'S LITERARY FESTIVAL

*Celebrating Folktales through
Children's Literature*

**AGE
4-15**

Your literary adventure awaits!

Escape into a world of stories through folktales and stories that make us uniquely South Asian. Enjoy a memorable weekend and unleash your creativity with hands-on activities, crafts and opportunities to interact with storytellers and make new friends.

**30-31
AUGUST 2025**

Colombo Public Library
Colombo 07

Register for **FREE**
by **22 August 2025** via Google Form Link

**30
AUGUST
2025**

Here's how it works

10.00 - 10.30 AM - Opening Session

10.40 - 11.40 am - Puppet Show

Join Mahadanamuththa and Power of Play team to enjoy 'Hungry Enough to Eat a Demon'-a timeless Sri Lankan folktale full of laughter, puppets, music and interactive storytelling

Open to all age groups

11.50 - 12.50 pm

Interactive Storytelling session by Wonderseekers

An hour of pure enchantment! Wonderseekers storytellers will whisk the audience away with vibrant South Asian folktales, and keep the magic going with lively discussions, super fun games, and engaging activities.

Open to all age groups

2.00 - 4.00 pm

Workshop on Interactive Storytelling session by Wonderseekers

Designed to spark creativity, curiosity and fun! Kids are invited to join a storytelling coaching session where they can learn how to tell stories with confidence.

Age- 10-15

**31
AUGUST
2025**

10.00 - 11.30 AM - Craft Session

A perfect blend of fun and creativity Unleash your creativity and gets hands-on to create your very own masterpiece! Create characters, scenes from the folk stories and bring them to life.

***Materials provided
Open to all age groups**

11.40 - 1.00 PM - Mini Storytellers' Open Mic session

Grab the mic and be the story teller that you always wanted to be!

This session is specially designed for children to encourage them to share their folktales.

Open to all age groups

2.30 - 4.00 PM - Panel Discussion

**Theme - Role of Folktales in Intercultural Understanding
among Children of South Asia**

***Lunch, snacks on both days and materials for the craft session will be provided for all registered participants.**

UP COMING EVENTS

SAARC Film Days

SAARC Talk Series

**SAARC Puppetry Program to Enhance Social Awareness
15-17 July**

**SAARC Festival of Rice and Culinary Arts and Spice
Exhibition 14 to 17 October**

**SAARC Celebrating Folk Tales through Children's Literature -
30 - 31 August**

**SAARC Heritage Forum: Promoting Regional Art, Culture,
Heritage Sites, Museums, and Archives 30 Sep - 2 Oct (Tentative)**

SAARC Artist Camp and Art Exhibition 1 - 4 November

Editorial Team

Documentation Division, SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka

Layout and Design

IT Division, SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka

Published by

SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka



SAARC

SAARC Cultural Centre

No. 224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 7,
Sri Lanka.

Tel : +94 11 2584451

Fax : +94 11 2584452

Email : scc@saarcculture.org

Web : www.saarcculture.org

ISSN 2579-2423