



CONCEPT PAPER

**SAARC Regional Seminar on Intangible Cultural Heritage for Food Storage in the SAARC
Region
Host Member State-The Republic of Maldives**

1. Background

SAARC Regional Seminar on Intangible Cultural Heritage for Food Storage in the SAARC Region was approved by the Fourteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre held from 22nd to 23rd October 2024, and at the Sixtieth Session of the Programming Committee Meeting held in Kathmandu from 28th to 30th April 2025.

Food storage refers to the process of keeping food items safe and fresh for consumption over an extended period. It involves storing food in a suitable environment to prevent spoilage and contamination and maintain its nutritional value. The methods of food storage/preservation include refrigeration, the use of storage containers etc.

Food preservation, on the other hand, is the process of treating food in a way that prevents or delays spoilage caused by micro-organisms or other factors. Food preservation methods include drying, salting, pickling, fermenting, smoking or using chemical preservatives to extend the shelf life of food.

Food storage/preservation has been integral to South Asian culture for centuries. Traditional food storage/preservation practices encompass a wide range of techniques that preserve food for longer periods and enhance its nutritional value and flavour. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) for food storage/preservation in the SAARC Region is imbued with tradition and culture. Traditional food storage/preservation knowledge generated a culture that has become part of human history. The SAARC Region has a rich food storage/preservation heritage that has stood the test of time. However, with the advent of modern food storage/preservation systems, these traditional practices are slowly dying away, putting our intangible cultural heritage at risk.

Thus, this seminar aims to promote the appreciation of traditional food storage/preservation practices, a reminder to embrace our traditional practices and preserve our cultural identity. Through discussions and analysis of case studies, the seminar will explore effective methods for transmitting and preserving traditional food storage/preservation practices.

The seminar is designed for two days, inviting papers from experts, academics, scholars and practitioners of traditional food storage/preservation methods from the Member States.

2. Research Questions

The Seminar aims to address the following research questions:

- 2.1.** What is the impact of the evolution of food storage/preservation practices on the food culture of the SAARC Region?
- 2.2.** What is the role of oral traditions in passing down the intangible heritage of food storage/ preservation?
- 2.3.** In what ways were food storage/preservation practices traditionally divided among genders?
- 2.4.** How can communities safeguard the intangible cultural heritage related to food storage/preservation?
- 2.5.** What are the changes made by modern food storage/preservation methods towards diet and nutritional values when compared to the traditional methods of food storage/ preservation practices?

3. Objectives

The main objectives of the Seminar are as follows:

- 3.1.** To investigate how oral traditions contribute to the cultural significance of food storage/preservation practices;
- 3.2.** To examine how gender roles evolved and what their impact is on the current traditional food storage/preservation practices;
- 3.3.** To identify the challenges and threats communities face in preserving these practices and how can they overcome them;

- 3.4.** To explore in what ways, have modern preservation methods affected the traditional techniques of food storage/preservation in terms of diet and nutritional value of the foods;
- 3.5.** To provide a platform for networking and knowledge exchange, facilitating the spread of these practices and encouraging their incorporation into modern lifestyles.

4. Methodology

The Seminar will be a blend of theoretical discussions and practical case studies, making it an enriching and interactive experience for the participants.

- 4.1.** Speakers will do oral presentations to share their expertise and insights on the subject.
- 4.2.** Assign session chairs to introduce speakers, manage Q & A sessions and ensure the smooth flow of the Seminar.
- 4.3.** Virtual options will be available for those participants unable to attend physically.

5. Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Seminar are the following:

- 5.1.** An increased understanding of the significance of traditional food storage/preservation as part of intangible cultural heritage.
- 5.2.** Development of potential partnerships to support traditional food storage/preservation practices in the SAARC Region.
- 5.3.** Generation of new initiatives aimed at safeguarding and promoting traditional food storage/preservation techniques.
- 5.4.** Dissemination of best practices, case studies and research findings within the SAARC Region through the publication of papers presented at the Seminar and uploading them online on the SAARC Cultural Centre website for free global access.

6. Sub-themes of the Seminar

The following sub-themes have been identified for the seminar. However, papers based on related themes will be accepted depending on their content and relevance to the main themes.

6.1. Traditional Techniques and Knowledge of Food Storage/Preservation

The traditional techniques of food storage/preservation have been developed over centuries to preserve food for a longer period. These techniques vary from region to region like smoking, drying, pickling, fermenting etc. This session seeks contributions that explore the different methods of food storage/preservation practised in the SAARC Region.

6.2. Intersections of Food Storage/Preservation Practices with Cultural Identity and Heritage

Food storage/preservation practices are deeply intertwined with cultural identity and heritage preservation. This session encourages papers that reflect the values, beliefs and traditions of a community, making them an integral part of cultural heritage.

6.3. Oral Traditions Related to Food Storage/Preservation Methods

Oral traditions related to food storage/preservation methods are an integral part of cultural heritage. This session welcomes papers exploring the oral traditions that give insight into the cultural significance of food storage/preservation practices and their role in the community.

6.4. Sustainability and Resilience of Traditional Food Storage/Preservation Practices in the Modern World

Traditional food storage/preservation practices have stood the test of time and have proven to be sustainable and resilient in the modern world. This session seeks contributions that highlight these aspects of traditional food storage/preservation practices.

6.5. Gender Roles and Traditional Food Storage/Preservation

Gender roles have a significant impact on traditional food storage/preservation practices. In many cultures, women are responsible for processing and storing food. In this session, we seek contributions that address the division of labour that has resulted in different techniques and methods of food storage/preservation.

6.6. Revival and Preservation of Endangered Food Storage/Preservation Practices

There is a recent trend of revival of these practices due to their cultural significance and sustainability. Efforts are being made to preserve and promote endangered food storage/preservation practices to keep their cultural heritage alive. In this session, we welcome papers that examine the role played by various organizations and communities to preserve and promote endangered food storage/preservation practices.

6.7. Community-based Approaches to Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage Related to Food Storage/Preservation

The community-based approach to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage related to food storage/preservation is crucial for preserving these practices. Organisations and communities are coming together to document and promote traditional food storage/preservation practices. This session welcomes papers that explore active community participation in knowledge sharing.

7. Participants

Officially Nominated Participants from the Member States

7.1. The SAARC Cultural Centre invites all **Member States** to send a maximum of **Five (5) Official Nominations** of experts working on the abovementioned theme from their respective countries for the SAARC Symposium. The **Host Member State** can nominate a maximum of **15 Official Nominees**.

7.2. All Official Nominees must present a paper at the symposium.

Other Participants from the Member States

7.3. The SAARC Cultural Centre would also accept the participation of other experts from the Member States (other than the Official Nominees of the respective SAARC Member States) as well as those residing outside the SAARC Region provided they can meet their travel and accommodation expenses to attend the symposium.

7.4. The SCC, however, reserves the right to accept or reject any request for participation based on the availability of space and the relevance of the abstract to the symposium themes.

8. Accommodation and Travel Details

Officially Nominated Participants from the Member States

8.1. The airfare of the Official Nominees of the SAARC Member States is to be borne by the respective Member States.

8.2. The SAARC Cultural Centre would provide local hospitality (hotel accommodations on a full board basis) local transport, working lunch, delegate kit and invitation to cultural tour/show to all the Official Nominees of the SAARC Member States.

8.3. Official Nominees from the Host Member State (The Republic of Maldives) will be provided with accommodation, if required, depending on the availability of the budget.

Other Participants from the Member States

8.4. Air Travel and accommodation is to be borne by the participant.

8.5. Only paper presenters (Other Participants from the Member States as well as the Host Member State) will be provided with a working lunch, delegate kit and invitation to cultural tour/show.

8.6. Virtual Participants -Participants unable to attend the symposium physically can join virtually.

9. Nomination Process

9.1. The Official Nominees will be selected by each Member State, comprising leading academics and subject experts from the Member States. Registration Form (**Annexure 1**) and Format for the Submission of Abstract (**Annexure 2**) must be submitted to the SAARC Division of the respective Foreign Ministries/External Affairs of the Member

States for onward transmission to the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu. The required Annexures can be downloaded from the SCC website (www.saarcculture.org).

9.2. An advance copy can be emailed to **sccpublications@gmail.com** or **dd-research@saarcculture.org**.

10. Additional Information

10.1. The Language of the symposium is English. All abstracts and presentations should be in English.

10.2. The participants are requested to submit their full papers by **4th November 2025** and prepare a PowerPoint Presentation of 15 minutes maximum to be presented during the SAARC Symposium.

11. Tentative Time Schedule for the Seminar Paper Submissions

The deadline for accepting Nominees & Participants	15 th October 2025
Selection of Abstracts & Informing Participants	21 st October 2025
Submission of full papers to be published before the seminar	4 th November 2025
Seminar Dates	25 th -26 th November 2025
Field trip/Cultural show	27 th November 2025

12. Agenda for the Seminar- 25th November 2025

(Day 1)	Seminar
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Inauguration
10:00 – 10:30	Tea
10:30 – 12:30	Session 1-Traditional Techniques and Knowledge of Food Storage/Preservation
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	Session 2-Intersections of Food Storage/Preservation Practices with Cultural Identity and Heritage Preservation.
15:30 – 16:00	Tea
16:00 – 18:00	Session 3-Oral Traditions related to Food Storage/Preservation Methods.

26th November 2025

(Day 2)

Seminar

8:00 – 10:00	Session 4-Sustainability and Resilience of Traditional Food Storage/Preservation Practices in the Modern World.
10:00 – 10:30	Tea
10:30 – 12:30	Session 5-Gender Roles and Traditional Food Storage/Preservation
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	Session 6-Revival and Preservation of Endangered Food Storage/Preservation Practices
15:30 – 16:00	Tea
16:00 – 18:00	Session 7-Community-based Approaches to Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage related to Food Storage/Preservation.
18:00 – 19:00	The Closing Ceremony

27th November 2025

Field trip/Cultural show

13. Dates

25th-27th November 2025

14.Venue of the Seminar

The Republic of Maldives

15.Focal Person at the SAARC Cultural Centre

Dr. Bina Gandhi Deori, Deputy Director (Research)

Email: dd-research@saarcculture.org/sccpublications@gmail.com

16. Logistic Paper

A Logistic Paper containing more details regarding the planning of the Seminar on **Intangible Cultural Heritage for Food Storage in the SAARC Region** will be shared with the Host Member State of the Republic of Maldives.



**SAARC Regional Seminar on Intangible Cultural Heritage for Food Storage in the
SAARC Region**

**Host Member State- The Republic of Maldives
Annexure 1**

REGISTRATION FORM

(All fields must be completed, use additional paper if required.)

Category: (Please mark the relevant category)

Official Nominee of (Name of the SAARC Member State)

Other Participant ☐ Category A ☐ Category B

Personal Details:

1. Full Name (as mentioned in the National ID/Passport with surname underlined):

2. Nationality.

2.1. Host Country Participants (National ID No.):

2.2. International Participants (Country and Passport No.):

3. Contact Information

3.1. Postal Address: Phone No/Mobile No:

3.2. WhatsApp/Viber:

3.3. Email:

4. Institute of Affiliation, if any: Present designation:

4.1. Name and address of the institute:

4.2. Name, designation, email and phone number(s) of the Head of the institute:

5. Educational qualifications:

6. Work Experience:

7. Title of the Proposed Paper:

Place:

Date:

Signature:

Full Name:



SAARC Regional Seminar on Intangible Cultural Heritage for Food Storage in the SAARC Region
Host Member State – The Republic of Maldives
Annexure 2

FORMAT FOR THE SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACT

- 1. Country:**
- 2. Name of Paper Presenter: (As used in identification)**
- 3. Title of the Abstract:**
- 4. Abstract: (Maximum 350 Words)**
- 5. Theme of the Paper (Please select appropriate theme/s)**
 - 5.1.** Traditional Techniques and Knowledge of Food Storage/ Preservation
 - 5.2.** Intersections of Food Storage/Preservation Practices with Cultural Identity and Heritage Preservation.
 - 5.3.** Oral Traditions Related to Food Storage/Preservation Methods.
 - 5.4.** Sustainability and Resilience of Traditional Food Storage/Preservation Practices in the Modern World.
 - 5.5.** Gender Roles and Traditional Food Storage/Preservation
 - 5.6.** Revival and Preservation of Endangered Food Storage/Preservation Practices
 - 5.7.** Community-based Approaches to Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage Related to Food Storage/Preservation
- 6. Keywords:**
- 7. Please state whether the full paper of the seminar can be submitted by 4th November 2025 (YES/NO)**

Please Note:

- The SAARC Cultural Centre reserves the right to select the Other Participants for the Seminar.
- The Language of the Conference is English.