

MULTICULTURALISM IN ACTION

Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan Culture Workshop

Director: Prof. Siumi Maria Tam
Anthropology Department
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Research Assistant: Ms. Connie Lee
Email: lee-connie@cuhk.edu.hk

The South Asian community has since the 19th century contributed to the development of a multicultural environment in Hong Kong. The Multiculturalism in Action (MIA) Project aims to promote a holistic understanding of South Asian cultures in Hong Kong and to enhance cross-cultural awareness and appreciation among different ethnic groups and social sectors in Hong Kong society. Since 2013, the MIA Project has pioneered a two-tier model of intercultural education, providing training to young people in Hong Kong on aspects of Indian, Nepali, and Pakistani cultures, and on developing mutual-empowerment projects with ethnic buddies. Our cultural trainers have presented their new knowledge through multimedia school presentations and community exhibitions.

This Workshop

The Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan Culture Workshop is the 4th Workshop in the MIA series.

Its goals are:

- 1) To promote an understanding of Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan culture as part of Hong Kong's local heritage;
- 2) To engage young people of Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Sri Lankan origins in mutual empowerment projects; and
- 3) To encourage critical thinking on ethnic relations in Hong Kong and make the above knowledge available to the public.

The Buddy Program

Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Sri Lankan participants will form small groups and become buddies of each other. Together they will take part in:

- Seminars and field visits: Learn about the cultures and experiences of the Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan communities through direct participation, and from academic and insiders' perspectives;
- Project design: Develop community-based projects through acquiring basic research skills and generate outputs that could benefit the community;
- School presentations: Apply your newfound knowledge and reach out to a bigger audience.

Participation and Commitment

An active participation in all of the activities of the Workshop is extremely important as it helps to develop a holistic perspective and in-depth understanding. By taking part in seminars and field visits, asking questions and contributing to the discussion, participants develop skills in critical observation and analysis of social and cultural phenomena.

Seminars and visits will be held in July and August, which include on-campus sessions and outside visits. In the fall semester, participants will make a short presentation to local secondary schools about aspects of Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan cultures. Participants will receive a Certificate of Appreciation at completion of the Workshop.

Workshop Schedule

Activities are held on Saturday 2:00 – 4:00 pm, at Institute of Future Cities, Room 406B Wong Foo Yuan Building, CUHK, unless otherwise stated.

Date	Seminar/Field Visit	Speaker(s)
16 July	1. Introduction on MIA Workshop 2. Sri Lankan Culture and the Sri Lankan Community	Prof. Siumi Maria Tam Dr. Thilina Weerasinghe
23 July	Buddhism and the Sri Lankan Community	Venerable Seegiriye Sumiththa Thero
30 July	1. Sri Lankan Food Culture 2. Personal Narratives: Sri Lankan Women in Hong Kong	Mr. P.B. Thilakarathne Ms. Girtie Jirasinha
6 August	Bangladeshi Culture and the Bangladeshi Community	Mr. Dewan Saiful Alam (Masud)
13 August	Bangladeshis in Hong Kong: Religion and Family	Mr. Syed Ekram Elahi (Naser)
20 August	1. Bangladeshi Food Culture 2. Gender Issues	Ms. Sabina Sultana
27 August	Community-Based Projects: Proposal Discussion	Guest Discussant: Mr. Md. Ashrafuzzaman

Speakers Profile

Siumi Maria Tam

Prof. Tam is an Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research interests revolve around gender, migration, family, and issues of cultural identity. Her recent research includes transnational migration among South Asians in Hong Kong, Australia, and the USA.

Thilina Weerasinghe

Dr. Weerasinghe was born and raised in Sri Lanka. He received his Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Moratuwa. He moved to Hong Kong in 2008 to pursue his Master and PhD degrees in Human Factors at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). He is now working as a Human Factors Consultant in Ricardo Hong Kong Limited.

Venerable Seegiriye Sumiththa Thero

Venerable Seegiriye Sumiththa Thero was a Sri Lankan and has been a Buddhist monk for 10 years. He was a Lecturer in Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy. He is now studying in the Master of Buddhist Studies Program at the University of Hong Kong.

P.B. Thilakarathne

Mr. Thilakarathne moved to Hong Kong in 2000 as a Sri Lankan freight forwarder. In late 2012, he pioneered in importing Sri Lankan food products to Hong Kong. Now, he owns a grocery shop, Pearl Lanka, in To Kwa Wan.

Girtie Jirasinha

Ms. Jirasinha moved to Hong Kong in 1993 as a domestic helper. She is the Secretary of the Association of Sri Lankans in Hong Kong.

Dewan Saiful Alam (Masud)

Mr. Masud was born in Bangladesh and migrated to Hong Kong in 1993. He was the President of the Bangladeshi Association of Hong Kong from 2008 to 2012. He was a recipient of the Chief Executive's Commendation for Community Service in 2013. Currently he is appointed as a member in government advisory committees such as the Committee on the Promotion on Racial Harmony under the Home Affairs Department.

Syed Ekram Elahi (Naser)

Mr. Ekram is President of the Bangladesh Association of Hong Kong. He graduated from Chittagong University in 1981. In Bangladesh, he has received different awards as a sportsman, and the Lion Club's Best Leo Award. Mr Ekram came to Hong Kong in 1995 as director of a company. Currently he is a businessman, and is engaged in various social activities.

Sabina Sultana

Ms. Sultana has lived in Hong Kong for nine years. She received her MPhil in Food and Nutrition from

the University of Dhaka, based on her research on the nutritional status of urban female garment workers. She has pursued a career as a researcher and nutritionist with NGOs in Bangladesh. Currently Sabina provides interpretation support to torture-claimants, and serves as a medical interpreter for the Bangla speaking community in Hong Kong.

Md. Ashrafuzzaman

Mr. Ashrafuzzaman is a Bangladeshi human rights activist. He has participated in the Bangladeshi human rights movement since 1995 and authored research projects on the democracy, justice mechanisms, and the rules of law in Bangladesh and other Asian countries. He now works in the Asian Human Rights Commission.