

## SURAJKUND MELA



As spring glides in, full of warmth and vibrancy leaving the gray winter behind, Surajkund adorns itself with colorful traditional crafts of India. Craftsmen from all over the country assemble at Surajkund during the first fortnight of February to participate in the annual celebration known as the Surajkund Crafts Mela. This Mela (fair) is a meeting ground for talented artists, painters, weavers, sculptors and craftsmen from all over India who exhibit their creations for the arts and crafts lovers who come from the world over to admire and acquire these creations.

Surajkund (literally, 'Lake of the Sun') is a dusty little town in Haryana, on the outskirts of Delhi. For two weeks every year, on February 1-15, it gets transformed into a sprawling and comprehensive craftsmen's village. The Surajkund Mela is not just the biggest artisans' fair in the country; it is also unique in that every year there is a different theme to the fair. So, nobody can say, "I've been to it," and ignore this celebration of the essence of Indian culture and traditional crafts.

### SURAJKUND MELA: HISTORY

Surajkund is a historic site, eight km from the southern border of Delhi. The Sun temple stood here during AD 1000, the remains of which can still be seen here. The temple and the enchanting surroundings of this place won the heart of a Tomar chieftain Surajpal, who belonged to a clan of sun worshippers. Raja Surajpal had a sun pool and amphitheatre built in this area with the sun temple at its periphery. After the chieftain Surajpal, who built the complex, the place was named Surajkund.

It was around this temple and sun pool that a resort property came up in Surajkund. What began as simple tourist center in 1987 flowered into a center of pilgrimage and a haloed piece of land that celebrates centuries old crafts and traditions of our colorful country at the annual Surajkund Crafts Mela.

### SURAJKUND MELA: SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS



This delightful handloom and handicrafts fair is held annually at Surajkund. Skilled Artisans from all over the country display the rich crafts tradition of India in the typical setting of a rural Indian marketplace. Cultural programmes and rural cuisine are also a part of this colorful fair.

The theme that changes every year, works on two levels. First, it has a state theme, which dictates the look of the entrance, the fair grounds, and the setting. One can get the specific ambience of the particular state - the characteristic colors, materials, architecture, furniture and decorations. The other is less cosmetic and more purposeful-each year highlights one craft, and about half the stalls are dedicated to that craft. And there are a total of about 400 stalls.

So, if the theme is pottery/terracotta, it has stalls that display the various kinds of pottery and clay craft available in the country. The stalls also function as workshops, where artisans from all over the country make their wares: pots, vases, urns, molded images, trinkets.

Apart from this, there are stalls that cater to the other crafts, where again one gets first-hand experience of how the artisans work and how things are made. Woodwork, metalwork, papier-mache, weaving, embroidery, sculpture, and bamboo and cane craft are all featured at the Mela.

For the mela, some of the most delightful crafts collections arrive from practically all over the country. In wood and cane craft come inlay work from Punjab and rosewood carving, sandalwood from South India.

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## Cultural Calendar for February 2008

### February 12

Film: Bhumika  
Language: Hindi ( with English subtitles)  
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration:3 hrs

### February 15

Thiagarajar Aradhana - Carnatic Music Festival  
*All Carnatic musicians & music lovers are invited to join in the event*  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

### February 19

Film: Ankur (with English subtitles)  
Language: Hindi  
Directed by: Shyam Benegal  
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

### February 22

Violin Recital by Sangeeth Shasthrapathi  
Mahinda Senevirathne  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

### February 27

Launch of Nalini Jayasuriya's "Letters to Ingy"  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free and on first come first served basis)



'Chikri' woodcraft of Kashmir and some very fine cane craft come from West Bengal and North Eastern states. Delicate 'Sholapith' and 'Shital Patti' work come from Assam and West Bengal.

In embroidery, the Phulkari of Punjab, the 'Banjara' and 'Bunni' embroidery of Gujarat and Rajasthan, the 'Kantha' traditions from West Bengal and Tripura, lace and crochet from Goa, the 'Suzni' of Kashmir and mirror encasing work along with the traditional 'Chikan' work of Lucknow delight. In the section of floor covering the 'Namda' and

carpet of Kashmir, the 'Punja Durrie' of Haryana and Punjab, the woollen druggets of Mirzapur and coir and rag carpets of south India fascinate the visitors.

Oxidized jewellery, seashell decorations and agate stone work delight as also the delicate gold work and chunky silver jewellery. Toys in wood and cane, ply and mud make the young thrill with joy.

The fascinating 'Phad' paintings of Rajasthan, the 'Kalamkari' of Andhra and Karnataka, temple paintings of Orissa, 'Madhubani' of Bihar are also on display. In the metal section, tribal 'Dhora' work, classical South Indian metal work, glittering brassware, bell metal and iron craft delight collectors.

A fair of this magnitude would naturally have supplementary interests. So, one has an equally interesting food section that serves a variety of Indian cuisines, which is traditional although there are several stalls selling fast food like burgers and chow mien too. Apart from that, there is the usual gamut of entertainment-rides and shows for kids, and daylong cultural events, including folk dance and music recitals, with stress on the state theme. The potter's wheel always holds a special enchantment for visitors as the artisans mould pots and pans with their deft fingers.

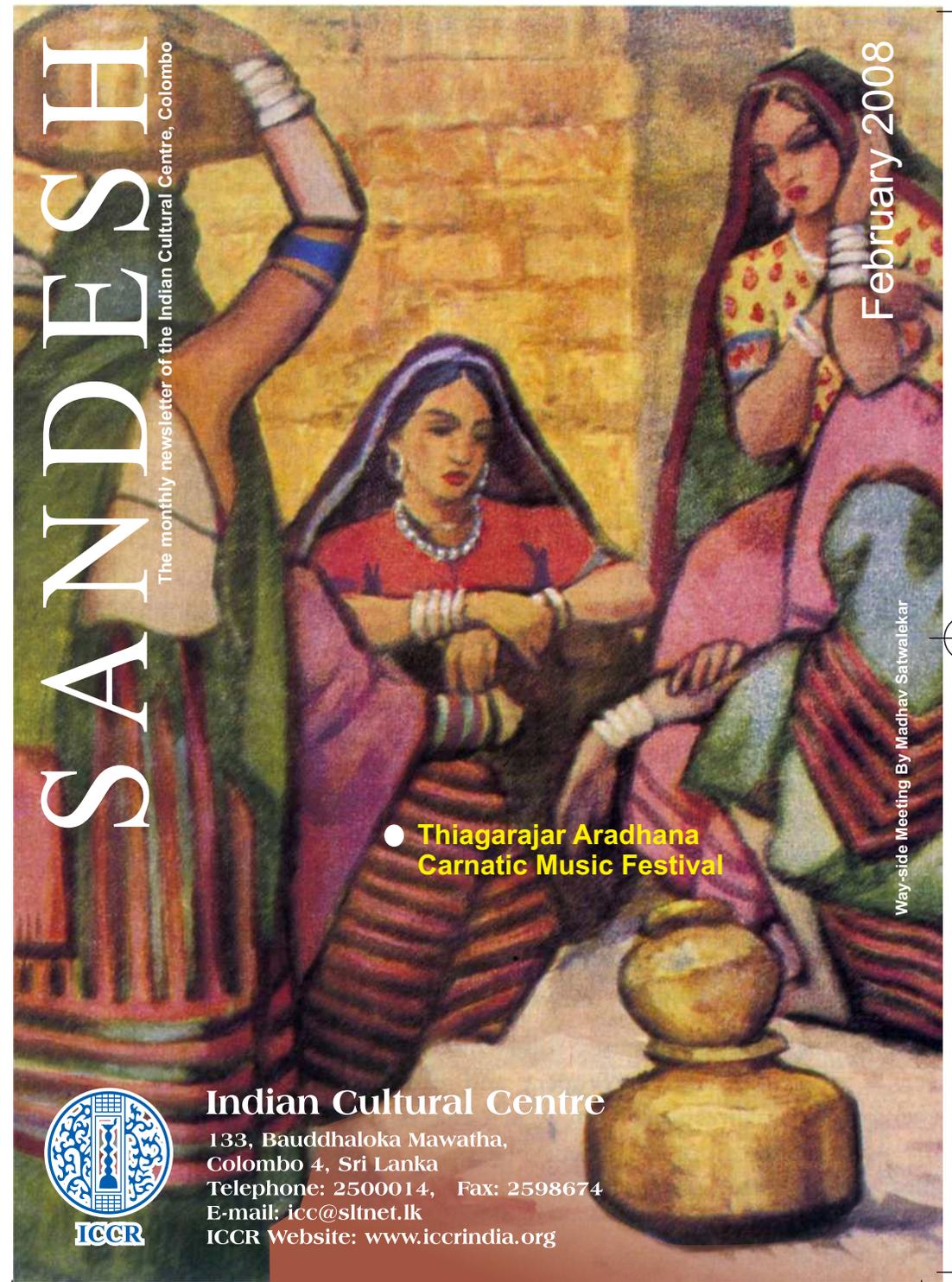
The crafts in the Surajkund Mela are the creation of people coming from the remotest parts of the country. The craftwork of the people rain forest area of Assam and Manipur, the deserts of Rajasthan, the Nilgiri hills of south, the tribal lands of Bastar and from all the other areas come here to display their

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## Indian Cultural Centre

133, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,  
Colombo 4, Sri Lanka  
Telephone: 2500014, Fax: 2598674  
E-mail: [icc@slt.net.lk](mailto:icc@slt.net.lk)  
ICCR Website: [www.iccrindia.org](http://www.iccrindia.org)



SANDESH

The monthly newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

February 2008

Way-side Meeting By Madhav Satwalekar

## Past Events

14th December

“The Indian Experience” – A cookery demonstration of unusual Indian dishes



An enthusiastic audience gathered at the Centre to witness the expert skill of the Chef Manohar Arya of the Hotel Taj Samudra turn out the mouth watering Indian cuisine. The items prepared were Rajma masala, Hare masala ka gosht, Sabji pulao, Gajar ka halwa & Dum murgh salan. The audience was given clear instructions on the preparation of each recipe and they were treated to a sample of the preparations.

18th December

Tabla recital by Sangeeth Shasthrapathi Chandralal Amarakoon



Sangeeth Shasthrapathi Chandralal Amarakoon, lecturer at the University of Visual & Performing Arts gave a scintillating tabla performance on 18th December at the Centre and captivated the audience. He also explained and demonstrated various styles followed in playing tabla.

20th December

Kathak dance recital by students of Ms. Umesha Samarasoorya



Kathak dance recital by the students of Ms. Umesha Samarasoorya presented at the Centre on 20th December kept the audience spellbound. They commenced their performance with a classical kathak dance item and continued with contemporary dances. The performance was very well enjoyed.

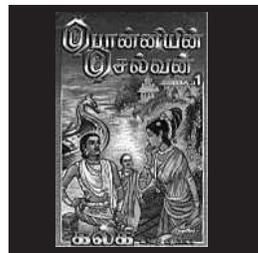
## LIBRARY

Recent Library Accessions



### INDIRA GANDHI -A Living Legacy-

By Raghu Rai  
New Delhi, Timeless Books, 2004, pp144



### PONNIYIN SELVAN

by Kalki published by Vanathi Pathippakam, India. 14th Ed.,  
December 2006

A 5 part Historical novel in Tamil

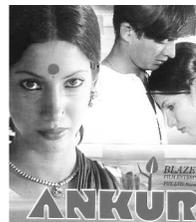
## Films in February



### Bhumika (With English subtitles)

Usha (Smita Patil), born and brought up in a poor Brahmin family that had seen better days is trained in classical music by her grandmother. After her father's death, poverty drives her into the world of Hindi cinema where she rises to be a famous singer-actress, courted by men and revered by her fans. All along she is assisted in her career by her possessive husband Keshav Dalvi (Amol Palekar), her neighbor from her village and a failed businessman who depends on her income for survival. Her marriage is a failure from the word go and she leads a tempestuous personal life and enters into a series of relationships that take their toll on her.

**Language:** Hindi **Starring:** Smita Patil, Amol Palekar, Naseeruddin Shah, Anant Nag, Amrith Puri, Sulabha Deshpande & Kulbhushan Kharbanda  
**Directed by:** Shyam Benegal



### Ankur (with English subtitles)

The debut directorial film from Shyam Benegal, deals with social disparities and exploitation. This film focuses on power and privilege with careful thought and acute perception. This film won the award as second best feature film in 1974.

**Language:** Hindi **Starring:** Anant Nag, Shabana Azmi, Priya Tendulkar, Sadhu Meher, Kadar Ali Beg & Agha Mohammed Hussain  
**Directed by:** Shyam Benegal

## NEW COURSES

### HINDI

Course will commence	:	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2008
Age limit	:	Over 16 years (adult class) between 7 – 15 (children class)
Course fee	:	Registration fee Rs.150/= Monthly fee Rs.200/=
Registration	:	Commence from 2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2008

### YOGA

Course will commence	:	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2008
Class days	:	Saturday/Sunday
Age limit	:	Over 12 years
Course fee	:	Rs.2050/= (Registration fee + 6 months fee)
Registration	:	Commence from 2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2008

### CARNATIC VOCAL MUSIC

Course commenced	:	1st October 2007
Age limit	:	Over 7 years
Class days	:	Thursday / Saturday
Course fee	:	Registration fee Rs.250/= Monthly fee Rs.500/=
Registration	:	Commenced September 2007

**Admissions open**

## SURAJKUND MELA Contd.

aesthetic pieces of work.

### SURAJKUND MELA: LEGENDS

The story of how the sun pool came into existence is an interesting tale. Over a thousand years ago, the clan of Tomar chieftains began establishing their supremacy near Delhi. They built their domain here, calling it 'Dellikha'. The Tomars were sun worshippers. One chieftain Raja Surajpal worked to build a sun temple at this site. Legend has it, that it was after this Raja that the place came to be known as Surajkund. But the Tomar kings could not stay here for long. Mauraders vanquished the Tomar clan and desecrated the temple. But the amphitheatre sun pool built adjacent withstood the onslaught of time to become the celebrated fair ground that it is today.

### SURAJKUND MELA: GETTING THERE

The Surajkund Crafts Mela is held in the picturesque Surajkund Tourist complex of Haryana Tourism. The complex is eight km from south Delhi, the national capital and a drive from the Indira Gandhi International Airport would take approximately 35 minutes.

By Road Surajkund is well connected to Delhi, Gurgaon and Faridabad district head quarter towns by road. It is approachable by tour coaches, tourist taxis and other public conveyance.

By Air The nearest Airport is at Delhi. The complex is 35-minute drive from the Indira Gandhi International Airport and 25 km from Palam Airport.

By Rail Delhi is the nearest Railway junction. Faridabad and Gurgaon are both linked to Delhi through Railway lines. From each of these stations travel to Surajkund has to be done by cab/tourist coach. During the Mela period, special transport services link the main shopping centers and interstate bus stands of Delhi, Gurgaon and Faridabad to the Mela grounds.

Source: web site