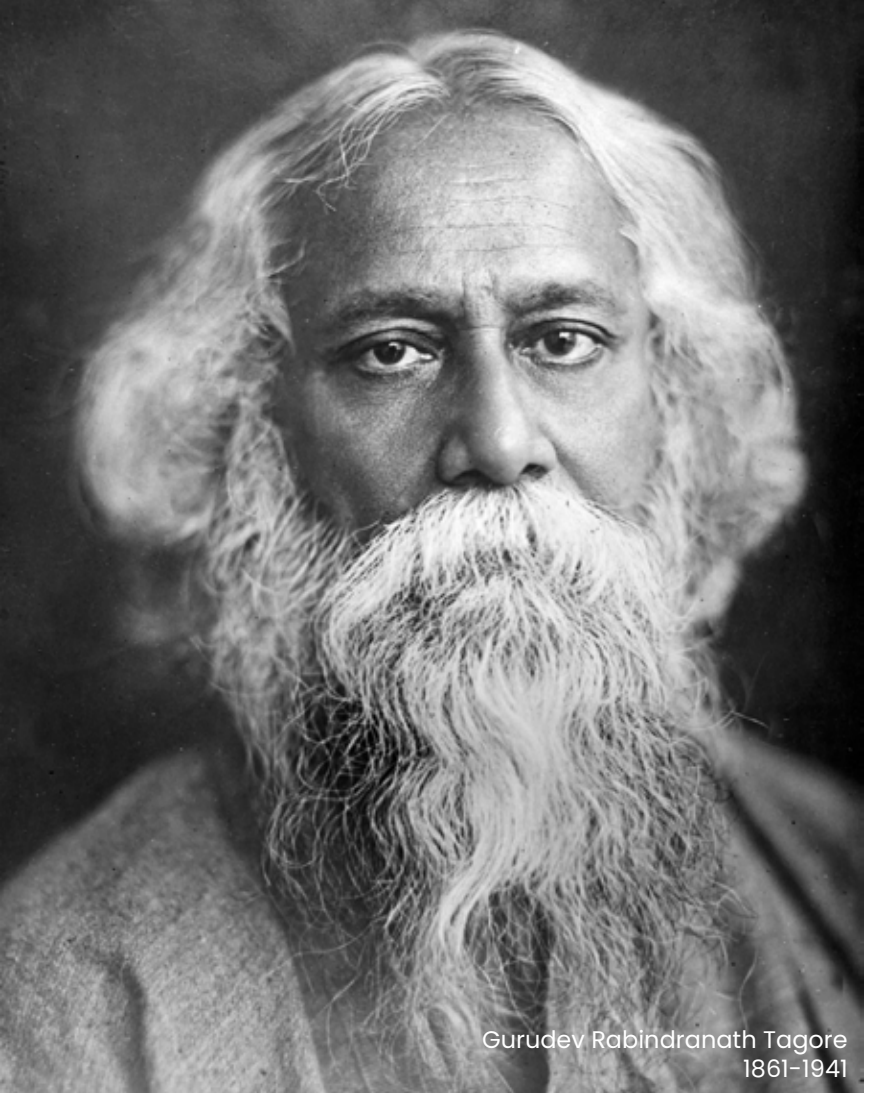




Indian Council for Cultural Relations  
भारतीय सांस्कृतिक सम्बन्ध परिषद्  
Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre  
High Commission of India, Colombo

# *Sanskarika*

Newsletter of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre May 2021



Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore  
1861-1941

# Online Events Calendar - May 2021

## International Day of Yoga 2021 Curtain Raiser

8

Saturday

7.30am - 9.00am

-

4.00pm - 5.00pm

**Yoga for All**  
**Online Yoga session**  
by Ms.Sonal Jain

**Online Yoga session**  
by Mr. Vyasah Kalyanasundaram for the students & staff  
members of the University of Colombo  
Organized in collaboration with Centre for Contemporary  
Indian Studies, University of Colombo



LIVE

**Yogic Sukshma Vyayama for**  
**Weight Management**

by Ms SarathaDevi Sivakumar, Hatha Yoga Instructor &  
Yogic Life Style Counsellor -3000H,  
Yoga Therapist - Astanka Yoga Mandir  
And Dr Aneshaa Rajandram M.B.B.S,  
Hatha Yoga Instructor &  
Yogic Life Style Counsellor of Astanka Yoga Mandir  
Organized in collaboration with Astanka Yoga Mandir

15

Thursday

4.00pm - 5.00pm



LIVE

22

Saturday

4.00pm - 5.00pm

**Yoga Nidra**  
**(Art of psychic Sleep for Deep Relaxation)**  
by Ms S.Sadeshkumar (Premy )-Y.I.C  
Hatha Yoga Instructor & Yogic Life Style Counsellor -3000H  
Yoga Therapist- Astanka Yoga Mandir  
Organized in collaboration with Astanka Yoga Mandir



LIVE

**Tagore Jayanti**  
**160<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of**  
**Gurudev Rabindranth Tagore**  
**Rabindra Sangeet**  
by Tiyaasa Chatterjee from India



LIVE

9

Sunday  
6.00 pm

13

Thursday

10.30 am

**Cookery Demo for Eid Festival**  
**Layers vermicelli cake**  
by

Mrs Rumi Goswami  
Chocolate maker and Home Baker from India



LIVE

**Vesak Full Moon Poya Day Celebrations**



LIVE

25

Tuesday

28

Friday

6.00 pm

**Bharatha Natya Performance**  
by Meera Santosh Iyer from India



LIVE

For details in regard to online classes on Bharatha Natyam, Kathak,  
Sitar, Violin, Tabla, Carnatic vocal, Yoga and Hindi  
please call on tell no.011 2684698 or email to [iccrcolombo2@gmail.com](mailto:iccrcolombo2@gmail.com).  
For upcoming facebook live events, visit [www.facebook.com/ICCRSriLanka](https://www.facebook.com/ICCRSriLanka)

**Free Events. All are cordially invited**

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# CUISINE SCARLET STRANDS

Be it imparting a host of health benefits or adding a distinct colour, flavour and texture to culinary delights – the uses of a few saffron strands are unparalleled. This spice produced in Jammu and Kashmir was recently hailed for its uniqueness by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly radio address Mann ki Baat. Gita Hari explores the several applications of saffron in everyday life

Touted to be one of the most expensive spices in the world, saffron (*Crocus sativus*), popularly known as kesar, is the golden-hued stigma of the purple crocus flower. Each crocus bears up to four flowers, each with three stigmas. The reason behind its high value is the simple fact that harvesting saffron is a labour-intensive process

and is carried out entirely manually. On the outset, the flavour profile of this spice is not easily definable. It exudes a strong exotic aroma that is not overpowering. And once added to food, it not only adds a beautiful colour to the dish but also a distinct flavour. Although this almost 4,000-year-old spice was first said to have been produced in Greece, one of its major producers today is India, specially in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir. Such is the quality and the exclusivity of the Kashmir saffron that it was given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry in 2020. In his monthly radio address to the nation (Mann ki Baat) on January 2021, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highly praised the Kashmir saffron,

calling it “unique”. “It has a strong aroma, rich colour and its threads are long and thick, which enhance its medicinal value. It represents the rich cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir. If we talk about quality, then Kashmiri saffron is very unique and it is entirely different from saffron of other countries,” PM Modi had pointed out.

### HEALTH BENEFITS

The advantages of the spice as a therapeutic agent were ascertained by ancient Egypt and Rome. One of the most common and age-old applications of saffron has been in Indian kitchens for the treatment of common cold and fever. According to a paper published by the United States National Library of Medicine (a branch of the National Institutes of Health), crocin, the orange

water-soluble carotene, which is one of the components of saffron, has the ability to trigger apoptosis (programmed cell death) in a number of human cells, including that of cancer, leukemia, ovarian carcinoma and soft tissue sarcoma. “As per a study published by the US-based National Center for Biotechnology Information, saffron was initially used for depression but it can also be used to treat epilepsy, asthmatic attacks, digestive disturbances and fever. It is best absorbed in the stomach with milk but can also be had with warm water,” says Dr Shakkeel, chief medical officer of Viveda Wellness Village, Nashik, Maharashtra. Pranati Bollapragada, head of nutrition and dietetics of Dharana at Shillim, a wellness retreat in Pune, informs, “Saffron contains more than 150 volatile compounds



*Saffron adds a buttery hue to sweet treats. Here, homemade saffron ice cream topped with pistachio*



which include carotenoids and safranal (also an antioxidant). It is rich in vitamin B that assists in elevating serotonin levels, which, in turn, helps fight depression.” Health experts believe that saffron contains such potent anti-oxidants as safranal and picrocrocin, which help in reducing insomnia. The presence of manganese, a nutrient known for its subtly sedative properties, helps in inducing sleep. Saffron also contains a compound called crocetin, which is known to curb the blood’s cholesterol level, thereby checking heart-related ailments. But like all good things, saffron should be consumed in limited portions.

### CULINARY TAKE

Saffron’s resilience and adaptability has seen it come a long way from just being an ingredient to foster

good health. It finds a wide variety of application in the culinary arts too. Chefs and gourmands swear by its compliance and ability to create a strong flavour, along with its golden yellow hue in dishes like zaffrani murg (where chicken is cooked in aromatic Indian spices with saffron as the key ingredient) or lend a delicate touch to sweet treats like shahi tukda (clarified butter-fried bread slices dipped in thick sweetened milk) or ras malai (small, flat cakes of curd cheese immersed in thickened milk). Just a sprinkle of a few saffron strands in a dish can uplift the experience from delicious to sublime. Saffron’s mainstay are milk and rice-based dishes like turmeric latte, biryani, pulao and meat dishes. Throwing light on its usage, Nilesh Limaye, chef culinaire of the entrepreneurial venture All ‘Bout Cooking, says,



*Tuna and rice salad with saffron*

“Traditionally, saffron has to be mildly roasted to release its oils and then soaked in warm water or milk. I use this decoction to infuse flavour, colour and texture to my saffron and ginger sauce.” Amit Kocharekar, executive chef of Mumbai-based hotel, The Resort, says, “Soak saffron in water and rub it on meat to obtain maximum flavour and desired colour.” To get the most out of this pleasant spice, it is best to use it on its own and not with too many other zests. Chef Limaye points out, “It has to be used sparingly and in the end. If mixed with other spices, its flavour can get masked. However,

saffron works best when combined with ginger, lemongrass, rose water, cardamom or nutmeg.” Saffron is more than just another culinary ingredient in the kitchen. It is an all-round performer. From possessing compounds and antioxidants that impart a host of health benefits to properties that elevate a dining experience – its uses and benefits are truly unmatched. PM Modi’s appeal to the nation to purchase Jammu & Kashmir-produced saffron will not only help saffron cultivators but will also further the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.



*Haldi doodh or turmeric milk, a popular Indian health drink, is traditionally topped with a pinch of saffron and cardamom pods.*



### GITA HARI

*Gita Hari curates healthy Sa’vik cuisine for premium hotels. Her recipes have been featured in the health columns of leading newspapers. The recipient of Women Achievers’ Awards, Hari has conceptualised, scripted and hosted shows on television and the digital platforms as well.*

Source : India Perspectives | Issue 01 | 2021