

THIRD NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL FOLK LITERATURE AND ORAL POETRY FESTIVAL

In an era shadowed by global unrest and conflict, the Third Regional New England Folk Literature and Oral Poetry Festival —held virtually on Sunday, June 29th, 2025, and organized by the South Asian Poets of New England (SAPNE)—convened an international gathering of poets, scholars, and performers to reflect on **Peace**—not as an abstraction, but as a lived, spoken, and remembered truth. This vibrant poetic assembly featured thirteen multilingual presentations, spanning ancient Vedic chants, Taoist wisdom, mystical revelations, modern commentary, and indigenous oral traditions.

Each contributor explored a unique pathway to tranquility: through nature's rhythms, cultural memory, contemplative silence, and resilient human connection. The following is a detailed chronicle of these diverse offerings:

1. Vedic Recitation – Peace Prayer



By: Srinivasa Kuikel (Nepal), Sriram Kumar Pandey & Kailash Tripathi (India)^[1]

Language: Sanskrit

English Translation by: **Dr. Bijoy Misra**

This presentation featured verses 7–14 from the Atharva Veda (Samhita 19.9), recited with devotion and reverence. The hymn invokes peace (Shāntiḥ) across the cosmos—from Earth and atmosphere to celestial bodies and elemental forces. It offered a spiritual call to transform fear, pain, and destruction into harmony. The recitation emphasized natural unity, meditation and awareness. Translated by Dr. Bijoy Misra, the chant concluded with the sacred thrice-repeated incantation: “Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ.” The reciters, from Swami Atmananda’s Satyachetana Ashrama—renowned for its sound-vibration studies—offered a rare and immersive spiritual experience.

2. Maybe the Deluge



By: **Béla Kosaras**^[L]_[SEP]

Poet: **Mihály Babits**

Language: Hungarian

Béla Kosaras presented Mihály Babits’s prophetic poem, “Maybe the Deluge...,” composed during a time of global instability. The poem mourns the disintegration of moral order and pleads for a radical transformation—perhaps even divine judgment—to restore balance and justice. Through haunting imagery and spiritual urgency, Babits envisions destruction not as an end but as a gateway to rebirth. It is a vision of peace forged through recollection, reflection, and spiritual healing.

3. The Sacred Utterances of Kabir



By: Sangeeta Prasad^[L]_[SEP]

Language: Hindi

Through a selection of verses from Kabir Das presented as “Kabir Das Ki Bani”, Sangeeta Prasad illuminated the inner path to tranquility championed by the 15th-century mystic poet. The timeless words of Kabir Das challenge the external rituals while pointing inward to the seat of divine realization. The poet reminds listeners that tranquility is neither granted by status nor ritual, but is attained through a disciplined soul, emptied of ego and filled with compassion. These verses blend the spiritual and the practical, offering clarity in a world often clouded by illusion.

4. Karama Folk Songs



By: Shakuntala Gupta^[L]_[SEP]

Languages: Sambalpuri, Oraon

Shakuntala Gupta brought alive the Karama Festival through traditional folk songs from tribal communities across central and eastern India. These songs are not mere performances but living rituals that call upon the gods of fate and fertility to bless the earth. Accompanied by Karma Naach, a rhythmic group dance, the performance emphasized seasonal cycles, gratitude, and harmony with the land. In this vision, peace is not abstract—it is ritualized, sung, and danced into being.

5. The Peace of Pastoral Life



By: Anand Ramanujam^[L SEP]

Language: Tamil

Drawing inspiration from Sangam Tamil literature, Anand Ramanujam's lyrical tribute to Mullaiyur—a pastoral village in Tamil Nadu—celebrates tranquility as found in the harmony of nature, agrarian simplicity, and timeless rituals. The poem paints vivid imagery of rain-fed fields, melodious breezes, and an unbroken cultural rhythm passed down through generations. Each verse expresses serenity through depictions of nature in bloom, birds in song, and people living in gentle coexistence with their land. The closing stanza elevates peace beyond the absence of conflict, presenting it as a radiant and soulful essence experienced through inner harmony and environmental grace.

6. Abbottabad: A Tribute



By: Shahab Ahmad^[L]_[SEP]

Language: Urdu

In this poetic homage to his hometown, Shahab Ahmad recalled Abbottabad not merely as a place on the map, but as an emotional landscape of memory and belonging. Nestled between the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush, the city becomes a symbol of beauty, sanctuary, and enduring connection. Ahmad's verses stir a powerful nostalgia and affirm the role of place in shaping inner peace. The presentation touched hearts with its gentle but profound depiction of rooted identity.

7. Sanskrit Ode to Peace (Shāntistava)

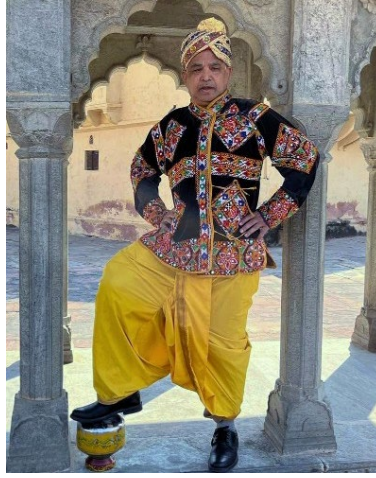


By: Kushagra Aniket^[L]_[SEP]

Language: Sanskrit

Kushagra Aniket presented Shāntistava, a contemplative Sanskrit hymn composed by Tyāgarāja, meditating on Śiva as the essence of tranquility. The eight verses explored concepts of non-duality, inner light, and transcendence beyond worldly attachments. The poem eloquently dissolves the boundary between self and divine, asserting that peace is found in the realization of the eternal and formless within. Rooted in yogic and Vedic tradition, the recitation served as a call to awaken one's deeper consciousness.

8. River and Human



By: Mir Fazlul Karim^[L]_[SEP]

Language: Bengali

In this deeply moving presentation, Mir Fazlul Karim traced the journey of the Ganges River from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal, weaving it with the lived experiences, emotions, and histories of those who dwell along its course. The poem revealed the river as both lifeline and silent witness to love, loss, and longing. It invoked the memory of partition, migration, and ancestral heritage, touching the heart of the shared spirit of a region shaped by flowing waters and past hardships. The river's voice reminded the audience of an elemental truth: nature does not forget, even when people do.

9. Dao De Jing on War and Peace



By: Dr. Chun Yu 陈昱

Language: Classical Chinese

Dr. Chun Yu shared insights from Laozi's Dao De Jing, focusing on chapters that offer profound reflections on leadership, restraint, and the misuse of power. The verses stress that weapons are not tools of pride but of sorrow and misfortune, used only when all other paths have failed. Laozi's voice emerges as a cautionary sage, encouraging societies to lead with humility and to trust in natural order rather than coercion. By aligning with the Dao, one finds a form of peace that flows not from dominance, but from the power of surrender and balanced essence.

10. Peace and Humanity



By: Bahara Hussaini^[SEP]

Poet: Saadi Shirazi

Language: Persian

Bahara Hussaini shared Saadi Shirazi's timeless couplet "Bani Adam," which proclaims that all humans are limbs of one body, and that the pain of one must be felt by all. The piece stands as both ethical instruction and moral plea, asking us not to turn away from another's suffering. Set against the gentle landscape of Jaghori, Afghanistan—a region long known for tranquility and tolerance—the recitation carried a deeper emotional weight. The message is as clear now as it was in the 13th century: to feel another's sorrow is to be truly human.

11. A Tale of Two Beverages: Chaa and Lassi



By: Ammara Nawaz Khan^[SEP]

Poet: Dr. Anwar Masood

Language: Punjabi

Ammara Nawaz Khan delighted the audience with a humorous yet meaningful rendition of Dr. Anwar Masood's "Lassi te Chaa." In this witty debate between two quintessential South Asian drinks—tea and buttermilk—urban modernity confronts rural tradition in a lively, satirical exchange. Behind the humor lies a gentle call for harmony across cultural

divides. The poem champions the idea that tranquility can flourish when diversity is embraced with mutual respect and laughter.

12. Peace

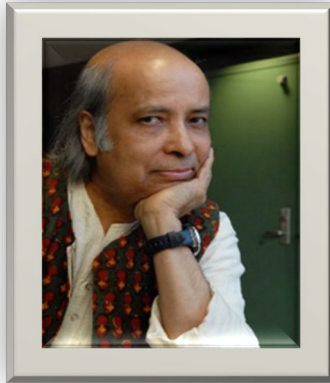


By: Preetpal Singh^[1]_[SEP]

Language: Punjabi

Preetpal Singh's Punjabi poem reflected on the futility of seeking tranquility in material gain and modern distractions. Set against the rich backdrop of Punjab's cultural heritage, the poem questions the hustle of contemporary life and the spiritual void it often conceals. Through the contrast between East and West Punjab, the poet evokes a shared cultural heart yearning for tranquility amidst historical scars and present-day pressures. Ultimately, the work affirms that peace is not something to be hunted in the world outside, but something to be remembered within.

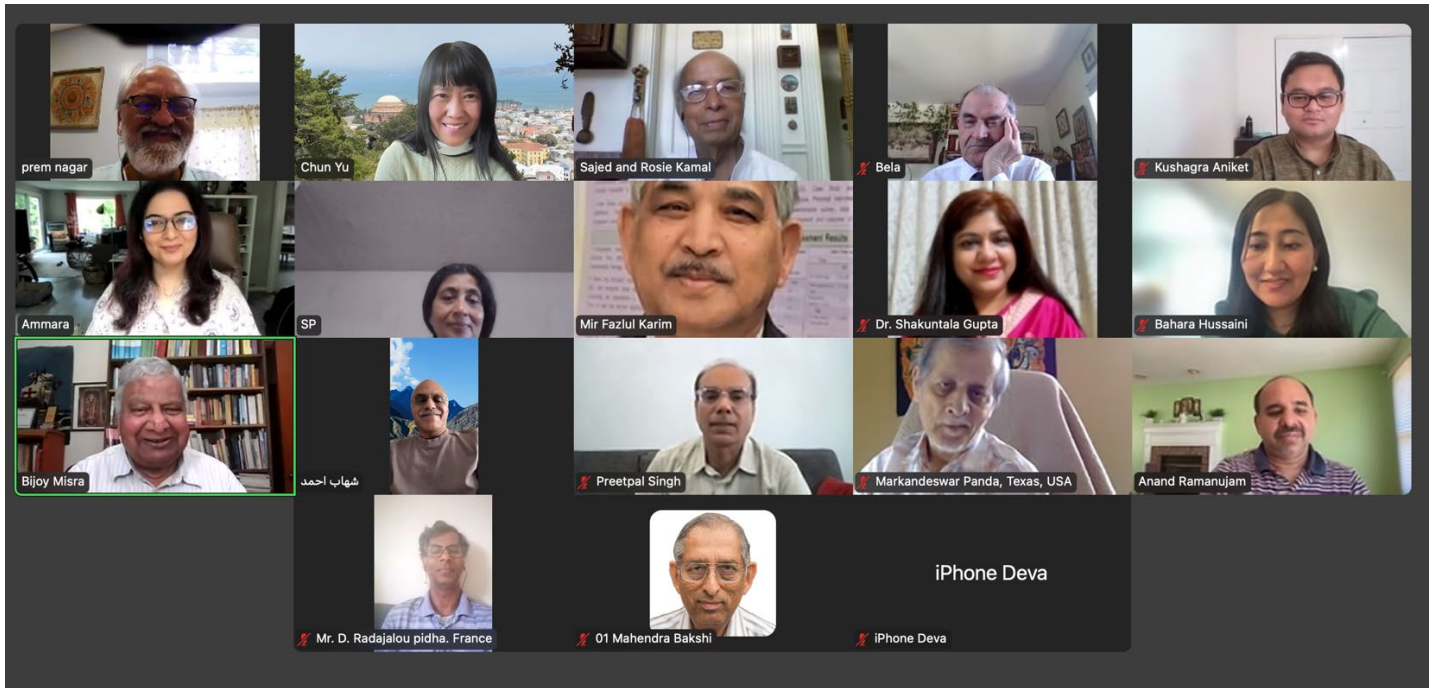
13. War and Peace: A Glimpse into World Poetry



By: Sajed Kamal

Languages: English, Hebrew, Japanese, Arabic, Russian

Sajed Kamal offered a remarkable survey of global poetic voices reflecting on war and peace. Through translations and readings of works by Pushkin, Kurihara Sadako, Mahmoud Darwish, Julia Ward Howe, and Yehuda Amichai, Kamal formed a picture of shared pain and lasting hope. Each poet brought their cultural wounds and aspirations to light, showing how language—no matter how varied—can articulate the same deep longing for an end to suffering. Kamal's own reflections tied these diverse threads together with grace and insight.



We would like to thank all the participants who graced the occasion with their creative presentations.
We thank Mass Cultural Council for the Festival grant.
The video of the event is being prepared.