

I . Background

Culture represents a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices. The Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is essentially an internal resource for growth of a community - a threshold for a forward movement even if that is rather evolutionary in character. It is not only an identity deeply rooted in the past but also constitutes the spiritual resource of the community as also of individuals. The current pace of change poses unprecedented threats to the ICH not only in India but throughout the world. Awareness about the significance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has recently grown due to the promotional efforts of UNESCO. In 1998, UNESCO developed the "Proclamation of Masterpieces or Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, in October 2003 it formulated a "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and in 2005, "Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions".

The term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. There has been active discussion in the global community on recognition and respect for the diversity of culture in this age of globalization. In particular, the importance of preserving and promoting the intangible cultural heritage that comprises the roots of each people's cultural identity has especially been gaining attention around the world. Societies are expressing a growing demand of preservation, renewal and promotion of ICH. Recent efforts in this field have been made to ensure the safeguarding of the ICH.

Intangible cultural heritage cannot be recovered once it has been lost. In Africa, there is a saying that when an elder dies, a library burns. In recent years, due to

the aging of practitioners and the lack of successors for their arts and crafts, a great amount of intangible cultural heritage is facing the danger of extinction. Urgent steps must be taken to preserve and promote intangible heritage.

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life. The importance is not only in the cultural manifestation but also in the wealth of knowledge and skills that are transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge tradition is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

In the view of UNESCO Intangible cultural heritage is:

Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part;

Inclusive: we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practised by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are manifestations of intangible cultural heritage. They have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large;

Representative: intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its roots in communities and depends on those whose knowledge traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation uphold communities value system or communities' world view.

The notion that says “Intangible cultural heritage can only be a heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage”, has been changed due to unawareness of the communities; in fact, there is a need for intervention by the ICH experts and catalysts to create awareness by organizing platform to safeguard the invaluable heritage of the community.

A country as diverse as India is symbolized by the plurality and diversity of its culture. India has witnessed cultural confluence in past millennium. The person from various places coming together, of distinct racial stocks, religions, cultures, practices and ideas, and this interactive togetherness has created a unique plurality. The plurality of religions, languages, dress, and architecture - that yet draws upon and strengthens the same resource that has acquired eternity namely the ‘Indianness’. For the achievement of this ‘Indianness’ in the fullest, the unique Indian plurality must continue to blossom unfettered and unhindered. And that will be possible only if these diversities, the totality of which constitutes the Indian existence - the very many ‘heritages’ of India - Composite face of all their cultures that defines the cultural contours must have for them legitimate space and freedom not only to survive but also to grow and evolve as living cultures.

India has more than two thousand ethnic groups, and every major religion is represented, as are four major family of language (Indo-European, Dravidian, Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages) as well as two language isolates (the Nihali language spoken in parts of Maharashtra and the Burushaski language spoken in parts of Jammu and Kashmir). Further complexity is lent by the great variation that occurs across this population on social parameters such as caste and ritual practices.

India is among the few countries in the world where the continuity in its indigenous craft, traditions, beliefs and skills have survived over centuries which makes this nation a rich repository of intangible cultural heritage. Traditions like ‘shruti’ and ‘smriti’ (memories) and ‘guru-shishya’ (master-disciple) have so far ensured that the visual and the oral arts are handed over from one generation to the next, largely rich in their authenticity and expression. Much of India is a treasure trove of such living traditions. For many communities and groups in the country, the intangible cultural heritage is an essential source of an identity, deeply rooted in the past. However, a number of its manifestations, such as

traditional and popular music, dance, festivals and skill of craft production, oral traditions and local languages and dialects have already disappeared or are in danger of doing so. The chief rationale is perhaps that local intangible cultural heritage is rapidly replaced by a standardized monoculture, fostered not only by socio-economic modernity but also by the progress of information and transport techniques. The intangible nature of this heritage also makes it vulnerable. Today, with the sway of the market economy, the repositories of these ancient traditions are switching to professions with greater monetary returns. Furthermore, the pace of this change is escalating - resulting in many of these traditions and arts to escape from our living memory.

Emphasizing culture means also giving members of the community an active role in directing their own destinies, restoring the agency for change to those whom the development efforts are intended to impact, which is crucial to sustainable and long-term progress.

Respecting and promoting cultural diversity within a human right based approach, moreover, facilitates intercultural dialogue, prevents conflicts and protects the rights of marginalized groups, within and between nations, thus creating optimal conditions for achieving development goals. On the other hand, culture as a sector of activity – including tangible and intangible heritage and the creative industries - is in itself a powerful driver of development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts.

In the recent past, development policies and migration resulted into displacement of the communities from their native places. This displacement led to lose their roots from the origin. The very factor of development, though necessary, led towards the destruction of many intangible heritages. The consideration of culture effectively enables development when projects acknowledge and respond to the local context and the particularities of a place and community through the careful use of cultural resources, as well as emphasis on local knowledge, skills and materials. Dr. Amartya Sen, renowned Economist, has aptly said “Cultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture.”

If achieving sustainability is first and foremost about making an appropriate use of the planet’s resources, then culture must be at the centre of our development strategies. Irina Bokova, DG UNESCO has said, ‘Culture, in all its

diversity, can foster a sense of identity and cohesion for societies at a time of uncertainty. It is also a powerful source of creativity and innovation. No development can be sustainable without it. ' Since cultures frame people's relationship to others in their society and the world around them, including the natural environment, and condition their behaviours. Culture should be used as a tool for development. Merely making policies will not guarantee safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage until it becomes an integral part of development policies.