

VIII. Living Human Treasures System (LHTS)

Sri Lanka does not have any Living Human Treasures System to ensure transmission and safeguarding of the traditional culture and folklore in the island.

But since culture embraces practically all aspects of our daily life like food, dress, social customs, religious practices, rituals, rites of passage, entertainments etc. that represent distinctive cultural traits of each culture and civilization, society as well as the authorities have realized that it is not only necessary to preserve our culture and values but it is equally important to strengthen them through sustained and coordinated efforts. Therefore, certain measures appear to have been taken by all concerned to protect the cultural traditions of the country after independence at different levels.

- (a) Action at Government Level
- (b) Action at Institutional Level
- (c) Action at Academic Level
- (d) Action at Community Level

Government Level

For the first time a separate Department of Cultural Affairs was established in 1956 after the peoples' political upheaval at the 1956 general elections which marked the turning point in the political history and the cultural renaissance of the island nation. The 'Ministry of Culture' followed few years afterwards. Ministry and the Department of Cultural Affairs have ever since then taken several steps to uplift the Sri Lankan culture with the sole aim of making the Sri Lankans, spiritually perceptive. In order to achieve this vision they prepare and implement programmes aimed at the preservation, propagation and development of Literary, Arts and Cultural Activities, maintaining the Sri Lankan identity. However one cannot underestimate the contribution made by the Arts

Council of Ceylon established in 1952 and continuing up to date under the name of Arts Council of Sri Lanka.

At present there are two Ministries in charge of Cultural Affairs. Ministry of National Heritage with the Departments of Archives, Archaeology and National Museums under it is largely concerned with the tangible culture where as the Ministry of Culture and Arts with the Department of Cultural Affairs and several other institutions under its authority, is more bent on culture with emphasis on intangible culture. It must be mentioned that both Ministries have equal concern on both tangible and intangible since they are two sides of the same coin and hence inseparable.

The Department of Cultural Affairs initiates the activities to uplift the Sri Lankan culture with programmes for the preservation, propagation and expansion of literary, arts, and cultural activities maintaining Sri Lankan identity. The Arts Council of Sri Lanka is also mandated to undertake services towards the promotion, preservation and propagation of arts and crafts as an important segment of ICH in Culture in a wider sense. Among the activities embarked on by the Dept of Cultural Affairs following can be highlighted.

1. Preparation and implementation of plans for the efficient and productive development of cultural activities of Sri Lanka.
2. Assisting the Sri Lankan writers and artists
3. Recognizing that the Sri Lankan Languages, Literature and history as the foundation of the culture, provides necessary facilities for the compilation of Encyclopaedia, Dictionaries and updating the Mahawansa etc.
4. Building a society rich in values through the formulation and implementation of programs embracing all the sectors of the society regenerating the tangible and intangible aspects of the culture.

Several schemes to ensure the conferment of benefits to the artists like pension schemes, insurance schemes, conferment of honorary titles in recognition of their services, medical benefit schemes and funeral assistance schemes have been launched and operated.

Establishment of cultural centres in each Divisional Secretariat division with all facilities and programmes to train locals in arts and crafts, dancing and music etc to make them centres of village cultural revival. This is in addition to the promotional assistance extended to Kalayatanas or centres of training conducted by master artists and craftsmen.