

ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE ON RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Submitted by:

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General

1. Please briefly describe the general awareness in your country about the importance of intangible cultural heritage (as defined in Article 2 of the Convention).

[You may wish to distinguish between the levels of visibility among different groups of population (youth, minorities, academic world, etc.), or the visibility of specific intangible heritage domains (such as music, oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, etc.). You may also indicate why you consider it relevant, or not, to enhance awareness about the importance of the transmission of the intangible heritage. You may refer to some specific problems that you may encounter when doing so, and propose possible solutions]

India has classically been equipped to conserve and perpetuate its intangible heritage in an invisible manner. It had been achieved through weaving, blending, fusing art, philosophy and religion into everyday routine of people through customs, rituals, festivals and education. The wealth of this heritage was endangered at intervals only through external forces, which disturbed the static life of people partially and temporarily. It is only in the past few decades, with advent of media, that this process was challenged. With multiple stimuli imposing on their senses, the languid life-style of people has evolved into a fast-paced global one eroding their faith and mores. The distant uncertainty with which people had learnt to deal has changed into an immediate uncertainty. After independence, the country evolved measures to preserve and promulgate its intangible heritage. Various institutions work in field of culture, education and human resource to provide visibility to the process of conservation. In all states of India are academies relating to theatre, art, music, languages etc. apart from national bodies. Strategies planned in the fifth, sixth and seventh decades of twentieth century were about to yield fruit when the revolution in information and communication technologies flooded in concerns of a different kind. The older policies were aimed at celebrating that which had been derided under foreign rule. National pride was linked to country's intangible heritage and thus despite frictional losses, a definite improvement could be seen. Nineties brought in full and free interaction with the world which caught people unaware. The young generation was in dilemma – to celebrate the past or equip oneself for the onrushing future? Today, India needs far potent strategies because its intangible heritage has various modern competitors.

Music is a good case study. From the ancient lore and legends to its modern practice, music has been appreciated and practiced by the learned and uninitiated alike. The most universal of performing arts, music is such a natural activity that people hardly think of it as something more than a "gift" or "skill". In India, right from the Vedic ages, music has been a perfect science, the premises of which have proved to be true on the modern principles of sound. Thus Hindustani Sangeet or classical music having been integrated with Indian life-style has been an example of continuous intangible heritage. When the shift from community

or higher authority to individual occurred, the best indicator of empowerment of the individual was his ability to listen to music of his choice. ICT based delivery systems now train the four year old to express himself through his personal 'taste', but there is little training in how to develop that 'taste'. At a much deeper level, the 'Gharana' or school system of music has been endangered less because of material difficulties (pupils living with family of Guru for 15 or more years) and more because the learner no longer has musical silence necessary to understand and develop musical skill of that particular school; he is continually exposed to music of individuals from different traditions and schools. On a broader level, students learn music at facilities located in crowded areas of cities with street noise destroying their sense for discrimination of notes. In the past decade, the few schools that taught music as a subject have stopped teaching it, treating it as a hobby instead.

Visibility for transmission and conservation for Intangible Heritage is an urgent need in India, where youth of communities engaged in such activities leave their innate skill and talent and take up other activities simply because they are unaware of its importance. It is a natural outcome of the rapid process of modernization, urbanization and globalization. Erosion of local economy, social and civic systems through industrialization, broad-based development strategies resulting in displacement and environmental imbalances result in loss of traditional skills and practices. Small action groups get formed to take up particular causes but lacking organizational skills and financial support, fizzle out once the initial, binding emotional force is spent. Burdened with the chore of earning daily bread, the average man is hardly motivated to take steps to conserve the abstraction of "intangible cultural heritage", despite his acknowledgement of its loss or erosion. At all levels there is a clear understanding of losing some or other vital ingredient of their lives, but limitation of this loss to their personal life-style and inability to appreciate it as intangible heritage worthy of preservation leads them to treat it with resigned indifference. In some cases they shun practice and training of such arts / crafts considering them to be a liability in earning bread and butter.

Awareness-raising at the national level

2. How can practitioners and bearers of the intangible cultural heritage be effectively involved in raising awareness about the importance of their heritage, while respecting customary access to it?

Once again with (Indian Classical) music as case study, the process of communicating Intangible heritage can be understood. Native talent would plead to a reputed Guru who would accept him as disciple if he showed merit. The unwritten condition would be complete devotion to the art and Guru. For years the only musical sound would be that of the Guru and other disciples following the same tradition. After a dozen years or so, his ears would be attenuated to the minute-most nuance of his 'gharana' or 'gurukul'. One of the disciples would take place of the Guru and carry on the tradition of transmission. Today, a young learner is handicapped by the very equipment of 'empowerment', the personal music-player. He listens, unwittingly to masters of all traditions as well younger practitioners, thereby losing his ability to catch the unique tone of a particular school or style.

Masters should be accorded physical facilities to practice their craft in privacy with unobtrusive monitoring of their work being made at regular intervals. For example, arrangements can be made to film activities on every third Thursday of the month so that documentation builds up over years. Occasionally they can be invited amongst youth to acquaint them with significance of the area of their expertise. Young students can be selected as observers for a definite period at master's place. However, true visibility should be amongst adults. Small cultural groups created at work-places should be encouraged with support from employers to interact with Masters or younger representatives from different fields at least twice a month. Only through appreciation of Intangible heritage being incorporated into work-routine can genuine attention of the adult be drawn. As next step ICH facilitators should be assigned to each Master / specific area, who would be responsible for providing adequate

response to interested persons thereby saving Artistes from disturbing interruptions while keeping the interest of the curious alive.

In some cases, despite availability, various channels are still unable to serve the cause of some ICH activity as it falls outside their purview. For example, a particular past tradition of performing Sanskrit plays has been researched. The objective is to nurture a troupe that may begin to perform plays in that tradition. The language itself poses a tough challenge and academies for Sanskrit language would support research and publication, but developing a theatre stream lies outside their scope. Institutions for theatre may support existing styles and folk theatre but linguistic research is not within their domain. The project involves creation of an institution, providing for teachers, students, paying for research activities and other costs. The project may not involve local community immediately, yet it is undeniably an ICH project. Masters should be invited to take up such projects. Through ICH facilitator or directly, inputs may be obtained. Both dedicated as well as multi-facility centres can be planned on such inputs.

3. What role can formal and non-formal education play in raising awareness about the importance of intangible cultural heritage? What kind of educational materials could be developed for that purpose?

Identification of various forms of ICH in the region is the first step for taking up formal and informal research projects at school. A list of past and present practitioners with some basic details can be prepared and provided to students. Short biographies both in print and film can be prepared. Material on the actual process can be compiled with assistance of masters and their colleagues. Formal education should be wary about the process as its objective methodology may dry up genuine interest.

There is huge scope for producing educational material. In North Indian and Carnatic Classical music alone there are over 600 known Raga-s which can be played using any of almost 100 rhythm patterns at various tempo. To date, the traditional schools (Gharana) excel in chosen few Raga-s played in certain Taal-s; the various schools together form the total repository of Indian music. There is some material available in local languages but all such works need to be translated in major global languages to provide easier access. Special cells should be formed that identify such works / manuscripts and help in translation projects.

Post graduate and diploma courses should be planned which can train students for working as ICH facilitators. Depending on their major subjects they can choose to work in a specific stream.

4. What role can community centres, museums, archives and other similar entities play in raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage?

Community centres play a vital role in directing the intellectual and emotional flow of the area. However, in cities these centres fail to attract residents in considerable numbers. The rural centres serve more as information kiosks for current government schemes for health, hygiene and other areas. There is little appreciation of the local skills and talents. A well-designed centre itself would become the hub for promotion of local skills and understanding related arts. A trained ICH facilitator can initiate exercises for residents that result in documentation or historical research. He can arrange exchange exercises with other centres.

The public-private partnership model is indicated here; however the role of public institution should be limited to providing infra-structure and maintenance and community should be free to run the actual centre in a creative manner. Their sense of belonging and cohesion should not be marred by bureaucratic control or interference; their well-paced world-vision should be respected. Instead of introducing diverse cultural elements one after other, they should be introduced at intervals which awaken their curiosity for novel or alternative practices without discouraging them from the activity by turning distant and alien.

Museums are repositories of tangible articles which are always products of a specific culture. While granting them the sanctity of their work, museums may be invited to invoke interest in their collection through re-creation of a particular period using dance, theatre or even food festival every once a while. Programs that link performing artistes and craftsmen to museums should be envisaged.

Archives should gain visibility through publication of a list of their repertoire on their websites. Programs for providing access to public on all levels should be devised. Where ever possible replication should be carried out. Sangeet Natak Akademi has done good work by releasing recordings of great masters. Recordings released by All India Radio and Doordarshan have been helpful in providing form to artistes who were mere legends till now. Archives have a role in linking generations.

5. How can various types of media contribute to raising awareness? (television, radio, films, documentaries, Internet, specialized publications, etc.)

The role of Media in raising awareness about Indian culture has always been acknowledged, however, not always without reservations. Several modern myths have been created that while raising visibility, hamper sincere appreciation. Often, they end up appealing to emotion than to reason. Emotions being understood as native elements of artistic expression, the media frequently underplays or neglects the rational part of the art-form.

Conscious utilization has yielded result in case of archives through documentation and publication / release, in case of radio through simple, interesting lessons, in case of television and film through documentary / dramatic presentation of event / process / life-style. Documentary films have often raised relevant questions, sometimes with probable solutions. However, the presence of media necessarily interrupts the natural flow of artistic practice. Rather than being a detached observer, it becomes a player. Unless the media-persons are not trained in ICH they would never develop the sensitivity and humility necessary for giving the original activity full play. There are strong chances of media representation of an activity turning, unwittingly or consciously, detrimental to preservation or promotion of an art-form / skill / practice.

Broad directives should be agreed upon for ensuring required sensitivity in handling an ICH object within a certain region. As far as possible the production team should work on the project with guidance from a trained ICH facilitator or expert.

Internet is already contributing to knowledge and awareness in numerous fields. Navigation is a major problem. An ICH link should be created through which websites of communities, groups and experts are categorically joined. Internet is the only way which secures the physical privacy of a performer / practitioner while keeping him in touch with the world. Linking resources in various forms – print, audio, video – related to a particular community / fraternity of an ICH activity would enhance genuine visibility and ensure sustenance and promotion.

6. Can commercial activities related to intangible heritage contribute to raising awareness about its importance?

Activities leading to ensured means of livelihood are certain to attract practitioners to their native skills. But linking them directly to economics of market shall interfere with the nature of skill itself. For example, let us assume a community of textile workers known for its designs, which relies upon another community of craftsmen which makes wooden blocks for printing. Market forces may direct the weavers to change the designs with a frequency which is beyond the capacity of the block-makers. An entrepreneur with machine-cut blocks steps in to supply them with new designs and the community of wooden block makers goes out of existence. As the machine-made designs are no longer unique, the demand for such textile wanes in favour of factory-made goods. This brings an end to the weaver community. In the

case of Indian Classical Music, the commercial forces have acted against its diversity as the present delivery mechanism of publishing music on records / cassette tapes / compact disks requires mass production. If it acknowledges the presence of a hundred Sitar players, playing a particular Raga out of a base of 600, it shall be unable to sell the minimum pieces required to break even. Therefore its need is to project a small number of artistes, enough for an apparent choice so that it can ensure returns. Commercialization to a degree where original practitioners are rewarded can help in stopping rejection of the practice by younger generation; where middlemen and non-practitioners are allowed to reap rewards, it is certain to dry up the ICH practice or change it beyond recognition defeating the very purpose. When a direct monetary compensation is in sight, the practice itself gets corroded.

A sustenance-cum-reward model should be employed. Patrons in feudal societies would take care of basic needs of the artiste and would occasionally reward him; while the first act would ensure comfort, the second would be a kind of motivation. It has been suggested that conservatory-appreciation centre would best sustain an ICH practice.

7. Can enhanced visibility and awareness of the intangible heritage lead to income-generating activities?

Linking intangible heritage with income generation in modern sense of the phrase 'income generation' may not always aid the ICH activity. In most cases the element of intangibility worth preservation arises out of immersion in one's art. Indian communities of artistes have survived on these major elements – complete lack of insecurity due unconditional patronage, lack of any material ambition and considering their art as a pathway to absolution (Moksha). All these elements suppress the human and the material and elevate the intangible and the ideal. If worldly awareness brings about change in the nature of original practice, the purpose of its conservation gets defeated. Awareness should be raised amongst the audience / beneficiaries for greater appreciation of the practice. In other words, the product quality should not be tampered with, for being successful in market; the market should be prepared to receive the product with its innate qualities. When the process of visibility and awareness of the intangible heritage is taken up indirectly through education, public celebration etc. it would lead to income-generating activities, e.g. a youngster from a community of puppet-artistes grows up to become an art-critic cartoonist or animation designer. However, it is his sustenance as puppet-artiste that should be ensured, which may be the case if more and more people prefer going out to watch puppet-theatre to a video film at home.

Awareness-raising at the international level

8. What kind of actions and tools do you expect the UNESCO Secretariat to develop in order to assist the States Parties in enhancing awareness about the intangible heritage?

[such as the collection and dissemination of information, the development and maintenance of a website, the production of information materials, the constitution of a repository of audiovisual materials, the launching of international campaigns, the development of partnerships, the participation in international congresses, the provision of information to other UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, etc.)]

The prime requisite is creation of ICH dictionary and compendium at local, regional, national level, so that there is a visibility of ICH activities. This would help in planning activities. A huge amount of information about these already exists; it needs to be compiled as resource to ICH. For example, Indian Classical Music has been in existence for more than three thousand years. Yet, there is no authentic or even proximate compendium of its practitioners on a regional / national level. India conducts the bulkiest census exercise every ten years and repeats it twice every five years for conducting elections. It can easily yield the richest such compendium if elements of ICH are added to its questionnaire.

As already stated Internet has a great role to play. An ICH link should be created through which websites of communities, groups and experts are categorically joined. Internet is the only way which secures the physical privacy of a performer / practitioner while keeping him in touch with the world. Linking resources in various forms – print, audio, video – related to a particular community / fraternity of an ICH activity would enhance genuine visibility and ensure sustenance and promotion. It shall also prove useful in setting standards in a democratic fashion. A questionnaire or proposal should be displayed twice or thrice seeking suggestions for modification; however decision should always be quality oriented, to be taken by a panel of experts who clearly explain why certain popular suggestions may not be accepted.

Thrust should be on increasing accessibility to pre-existing material in various archives. UNESCO Secretariat may request and aid archival institutions / repositories in creation of detailed records of their holdings and share it on a public database. In the next phase the actual holdings may be linked in digital form to this database. A clear statement about free personal use without change / modification / distortion of the ICH archival material, when made available over the Internet, would distinguish it from ambiguity of the term ‘piracy’ and thereby reach a greater number of beneficiaries. Where cultural practices are available, there is a natural appreciation and sensitization, strengthening the practices in turn.

A chain of events should be designed by which an ICH practice is showcased internationally after passing through multi-tiered event-festivals at local-regional-national level. Similarly, awareness / enhancement / conservation activities should be similarly identified.

9. The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is established under Article 16 of the Convention "in order to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity". What kind of specific measures should be taken to achieve these objectives?

The objectives are grounded on the premise that activities pertaining to ICH are conducive to cohesive human existence and their visibility shall lead to comprehension, acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity ensuring peace and harmony throughout the world. Most of these practices have grown out of placid, insular world-view and unhurried pace. Modern pace and demystification of life through glut of information tend to reduce intensity and focus of the practitioners. While some cultural practices may find such interaction conducive, others may wither out because of it. There should be clear identification to which of these two categories does a given practice belong. In case of activities demanding insularity, State parties should modify existing regulations and make new provisions to ensure appropriate life-style of communities of practitioners. Activities to gather expert opinion (debate, seminar, conferences) should be taken up and conveyed to people at large through gatherings, fares, festivals, films etc. and seek consensus to implement these measures in development programmes and economic activities.

To ensure awareness, on the pattern of Carbon points, ICH points should be introduced, which takes into account accommodation of, and contribution to conservation and promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The standard for designation of points to various activities – awareness/ sensitization programmes; conservation / support of practice /livelihood projects; promotion / enhancement / research activities – should be decided in consensus with State Parties with ample latitude to include rare ICH practices. Gradually this shall percolate to grass-roots with people opting for products and services that contribute to ICH practices.

10. How can the programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention, as referred to in Article 18, contribute to raising awareness about the importance of the intangible heritage?

Activities and programmes should be categorized as (a) Awareness / Sensitivity Enhancement, (b) Continuation of Practice, (c) Direct Training modules. With reference to Indian Classical Music, there are already institutions and organizations which hold music concerts and rare lectures for their target audience; some give music lessons. Yet, there is a clear lack of structure. Dr. Lalmani Misra (UNESCO released a compact disc of his Vichitra Veena recitals) spoke time and again for establishing structures to address these three areas. On public-radio (and as corollary, on Television) there should be a twenty-four hour classical channel, especially as Indian music follows Time-Raga principle. He advocated for creation of Conservatories which train students 10-14 years and formation of orchestral units at town / municipal level. While Conservatories primarily fall under 'Direct Training modules', they may also serve in part 'Continuation of Practice' by inviting reputed artistes as resident experts. The graduating students would find employment in the Philharmonic like Orchestral Units which primarily serve the objective, 'Awareness / Sensitivity Enhancement'. In education, informal textual information regarding ICH should be accompanied with richer activity-based experience.

11. Through what means can the Committee disseminate best practices, as referred to in paragraph 3 of Article 1 B?

Progress follows the human cycle of activity-displacement-relocation-rehabilitation. While, with physical displacement, the loss and sorrow are explicit and mourned by many, in case of Intangible Cultural Heritage the sufferer weeps alone and in silence. Known for its philosophical and religious learning India is a land primarily of vegetarians, but being a secular state it does not differentiate between flesh-eaters and vegetarians or vegans. On regional level some of the areas of a few pilgrimages or holy-cities' have banned sale and consumption of meat and eggs to safeguard the principle of 'purity-in-mind-speech-and-deed'. Similarly, the ICH activities too demand enunciation of best practices. Most practices have been conducted in a static, natural environ. The process of development has interfered through large-scale exploitation of natural resources and destabilized the environmental balance. ICH practices should be understood in tandem with protection and restoration of environmental balance. It must be understood that even when human beings are relocated and rehabilitated the ICH practice of that area is irrevocably lost. Thus all such developmental activities / plans should be designed to ensure uninterrupted continuation of the practice. Where necessary, relocation should take place when the alternative place guaranteeing continuation of the ICH practice meets with approval of the displaced persons. It is a common thing to fell trees whenever their presence interferes with broadening of the street. In India, the tree is also a part in daily worship, important rituals and festivals. If all 'Peepal' trees in the vicinity are cut, the pious women would walk bare-feet on burning asphalt to find one in order their worship may be completed. India's heritage is linking of the intangible with the visible and ensuring longevity of both. This mantra can prove to be the ideal starting point for formulating best-practices. Sanctity, not only for physical but for mental, emotional, spiritual spaces should be ensured.

Threats related to awareness-raising

12. When applying awareness-raising measures, what aspects or elements of the intangible heritage should be excluded?

Negative aspects, which display cruelty, bigotry, racism, gender difference etc. should be underplayed but not used as standards to evaluate the practice itself. It should be stressed time and again that every practice has a unique, individual sanctity and has to be dealt on this basis alone. However, it should always be remembered that intangibility is represented by the essence or spirit of that activity. A distinction between growing, living activities and perfect art-

forms should be made. While living activities (theatre) may be encouraged to grow and mutate, art-forms (Sanskrit theatre / Ramlila) should be preserved without interference.

13. When attempting to raise awareness about intangible heritage; what kind of measures should be taken to avoid inappropriate use or access to it?

All visibility/ awareness programmes should be based on appreciation promoting comprehension, tolerance and harmonious co-existence. As all terms involved are abstract and not tangible, any part of programme which reduces the intrinsic intangibility to materialistic, utilitarian, economic form beyond their traditional, natural scope should be avoided. Database of expert knowledge through dedicated study of the ICH object should be created and visibility controlled. For example, in Indian Classical Music, a review on the purity of content (Raga), form (Chalan) and practice (flawlessness of rendering) in an artiste's presentation would serve for ensuring a worthwhile module for appreciation. The third element is insignificant in comparison to knowledge of content and illustration of form when a module for teaching is designed.

The various elements within the ICH practice can best be preserved in accordance with traditional practices. Any activity which interferes with the form, manner and pace of the practice should be discouraged. Modern interactions with traditional community often introduce bulk of knowledge that wipes out their native innocence so necessary for ICH practice. Often the developmental goals challenge preservation of ICH.

14. What kind of precautions should be taken to avoid possible negative effects resulting from enhanced visibility of certain forms of intangible heritage?

All actions should be based on well-researched guidelines. The criteria of acknowledged action-plan would be to ensure sanctity of the practice, the community and their autonomy. Economic activities like direct sale or tourism may be conducive to some practices (handicraft, puppetry) but even there uncontrolled materialization would affect the practice. In most others, economic, social or academic intrusions are certain to disturb the natural balance.

In the community of Bhopa-s (folk-musicians), if a visiting modern artiste identifies a few musicians and creates a modern band with the pious aim of presenting them to the world in order their economic / living conditions may improve, he unsettles the existing order. First, he may have identified artistes out the existing order of significance thereby instilling within community a disregard for their own intrinsic values and instilling in them an ambition which was as yet unknown to them. Secondly, he disturbs the balance between routine work and musical practice of the Bhopa-s. Thirdly with his foreign aesthetic sensibilities, he disturbs the traditional aesthetics of the community (The Bhopa-s are primarily minstrel poets who end up being portrayed as musicians). Finally, his endeavour results in several such projects taken up by main-stream enthusiasts to attempt 'recognition / integration' of quietly existing ICH practices.

With little understanding of the practices at grass-root level there exist no regulations to ensure the sanctity and prosperity of an ICH practice. Only those activities should be considered for visibility modules for which there exists ample authentic documentation and their action-plan in no way interferes with the spirit of ICH activity in question.

15. What ethical questions do you think need to be raised when promoting the intangible heritage of certain communities?

This assumes that a given community has been granted the right to survive. Most traditions and practices have developed out of humankind's experimentation with its given environment for sustainable existence. Promoting one without the other is inefficacious. Therefore, the ethical questions raised to one would be applicable to the other. In most cases, it is the other way around, but in case if because of the community's practices, there is depletion

of natural resources or their practices poses a threat to human conditions at large, a programme for gentle correction spread over a generation (15-25 years) may be debated. The ethical question here would be whether superiority of modern knowledge grants the actors to interfere with life-style and survivals of the innocents?

A more common issue in this regard would be to assess whether the visibility programme may prove detrimental to essence of the ICH practice. (See 13)

Additional comments

The questionnaire above has been answered in absence of the knowledge of earlier discussions; hence likely repetitions may kindly be excused.

The view that comes to fore after examination from several angles is that prior to visibility programmes, activities which study the nature, scope and evaluate manner of sustenance of ICH activity should be made. Visibility, more often than not, is a concept, which through 'visuality' alone, leads to concretization and solidification on one hand and sensuousness and apathy on the other. It is often incapable of conveying the intrinsic rationale and discipline, commitment and inexplicable essence, which serves as motivation to the practitioner. Visibility, only in the form of appreciation should initially be allowed laying greater stress on sensitization. Exercises that lead to this end alone should be promoted as uncontrolled element of visibility may, in all probability, interfere with intangibility. When through presentation, achievement is highlighted, elements like talent, skill, dedication, knowledge and rigorous contemplation of the practitioner are sidelined. Sanctity of ICH practice should be considered as basic criterion for evaluating a proposal.

As Intangible Heritage by its very concept is recognition of the abstract, practices that have not yet existed but are a natural progression to existing practice must also be encouraged provided its seeds can be traced in the essence.