

Industrialisation of Asian Cultural Resources; Case Study of India

Dr. Jayanta Kumar Ray, PhD, Director,
Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA);
New Delhi, India.

A brief introduction to Indian culture

“Namaste ! I bring for you the greetings of the people of India!”

This way of greeting is a part of Indian culture which in other words is the Indian way of life. If we define culture as a sum total of music, literature, performing and visual arts, architecture or language, we would not be wrong. But we would not be entirely right either. In fact, “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society”^[1]. Culture is taught, learned and shared. There is no culture of one person. In other words, individuals exist within a culture.

If you happen to travel across the length and breadth of India, you will find that in each of her 29 states, the language or the dialect changes; the food and attire changes, the music and dance changes; the local traditions and beliefs change. You will not find such diversity anywhere else in the world. The celebration of this diversity, rather than uniformity and an underlying unity amidst this diversity has been the essence of Indian culture. Many elements of India's diverse cultures, such as Indian spirituality, Ayurveda – or the traditional and completely natural system of Indian medicines, yoga, and Indian cuisine, have had a profound impact across the world.

The evolution of language within India is a complex story. At present we have 22 official languages in India apart from hundreds of dialects and sub-dialects. The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are the oldest preserved and well-known epics of India. Versions have been adopted as the epics of several Southeast Asian countries and form a part of their culture as well.

No discussion on culture can be complete without a reference to the performing and visual arts. India is home to a rich diversity in music and dance.

Nature and religions have left their imprint on Indian art and sculpture since times immemorial. Cave paintings , temple paintings or the different schools of miniature or folk paintings testify to a love of God and of nature.

¹ Ojha A K, “Indian Culture: A Phenomenological Discourse”, Dialogue July-September, 2011, Volume 13 No.1.

The first sculptures in India date back to the Indus Valley civilisation, where stone and bronze figures have been discovered. Later, as the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism developed, India produced some extremely intricate works of sculpture mainly depicting the Gods and Goddesses.

Indian architecture encompasses a multitude of expressions over space and time, constantly absorbing new ideas and influences. Buddhist and Hindu temples of India bear a similarity of style with South East Asian architecture. With the advent of Islamic influence from the west, Indian architecture was adapted to allow the traditions of the new religion. The colonial rule of the British Empire saw the development and mixing of several other styles, such as the European Gothic style. Contemporary Indian architecture is of course cosmopolitan. The traditional system of Vaastu Shastra serves as India's version of Feng Shui, influencing town planning, architecture, and ergonomics. It is unclear which system is older, but they contain certain similarities.

The life of the common people of India is full of color, music, dance, costumes and rituals. It is manifested in our variety of clothes and dressing styles, in the way we celebrate our festivals and the rituals associated with the important milestones in our lives. Indian families particularly those residing in the villages and the small towns, stilled untouched by the imposing monotony of globalization, are the chief custodians of our rich culture. The way they decorate their homes with traditional and colourful designs, the crafts they pursue and pass down through generations, the traditional beauty treatments using completely natural ingredients that they follow are all simple but important aspects of our culture.

Another important aspect of our culture is our entertainment sector that encompasses our prolific film industry, radio and television, folk lore, theatres as well as our traditional sports and games. They hold their own place in society even in these contemporary times.

I could go on a long discourse on Indian culture but that would digress from today's topic of discussion that is "Industrialization of cultural resources – with special references to India".

Industrialisation of culture

In today's business or market centric world environment where cut throat competition is the mantra for survival, it is pleasantly surprising that along with land, labour, capital and enterprise – 'creativity' is becoming an increasingly important input into the production process of all goods and services. As such, it is a ubiquitous asset. However, unlike labour or capital, or even traditional technologies, it is a resource that is deeply embedded in a country's social and historical context ^[2]. There is a group of activities in which it is used intensively and with a particularly high degree of professional specificity. These activities are the so-called creative industries.

² "Creative Industries and Development", United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Eleventh session, São Paulo, 13–18 June 2004

The term “creative industries” is of relatively recent origin. This sector lies at the crossroads between the arts, business and technology. It includes upstream ‘creative’ activities, such as the traditional arts, performing arts, literature and visual arts, as also downstream ‘cultural’ activities such as advertising, design, publishing and media-related activities. There are obvious connections as well as a thin line of demarcation creative and cultural industries. In fact, cultural industries make up a subset of the creative industries.

Creative industries already contribute to employment generation and export expansion. In addition, there are positive benefits related to the quality of life, social inclusion and the environment. However at present their wider potential is unrealized. Indeed, they are too often associated with a precarious form of job security, with low value addition and limited earnings. There is an urgent need to modernize this sector and strengthen local capacities in order to boost their contribution to income generation and hence contribute to poverty reduction.

Cultural products and services have both a tangible element and an intangible element. They convey ideas, symbols and a way of life. They also inform, entertain and contribute to building collective identity, national cohesion and social identity. This gives them a social and merit value that is not easily captured by market price.

Craft products were traditionally produced for use at work, for play or for use in the home, but throughout history they have served not only the local market but also regional and international markets.

The markets for craft products have been principally driven by quality and design, together with their historical, artistic, ethnic and regional significance and the unique characteristics of the artifacts. They can be classified into four distinct categories^[3].

Traditional Fine Crafts - produce those unique pieces that demonstrate ethnic and traditional heritage. These are classified as works of art, address the high-end market, are exhibited in museums and art galleries and are purchased by collectors.

Artisanal Crafts are handmade and preserve traditional elements. The difference between these and the Traditional Fine Crafts is that the crafters may adjust their work to market requirements whilst ensuring that the ethnic appearance and historical background is maintained. Large volumes can be produced for the medium-high market.

Commercial Crafts are also made in the traditional style but are adapted to the needs and tastes of the mass market. Large volumes may be produced for the low-medium end of the market. The number and types of outlets is larger; it includes specialized stores and exhibition centers - as for the previous categories, but will consist principally of tourist shops, design centers and mainstream buyers.

The last group is that of Manufactured Crafts - Mass Production Crafts. The principal difference between this group and the others is that they are produced in large quantities, using machines or networks of crafters. The producers do not adhere to tradition, but the crafts have an ethnic appearance based on patterns taken from various sources. Emphasis is on commercialization. This type of craft is destined for tourist shops and can connect to mainstream buyers and global chains.

³ “Creative Industries and Micro & Small Scale Enterprise Development: A Contribution to Poverty Alleviation”, a Joint Initiative by UNIDO and UNESCO, 2002.

Performance of Indian cultural industries

India has a rich and varied heritage of handlooms and handicrafts. From time immemorial Indian handicrafts and handlooms have constituted a major chunk of the items exported to various countries worldwide .

Facing a tough competition from its counterparts in other parts of the world who have benefited from advanced technology and a higher degree of research and development, Indian handicrafts and handlooms have still held their ground. The artisans of India are still prized for their perfection of craftsmanship, excellence of design and form and an unsurpassed sense of colour. Both the handloom and handicrafts sectors have witnessed steady growth in output, employment and revenue generation through exports over the years.

A special scheme called Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastashilp Vikas Yojana (BAHVY) ^[4] is in operation in India wherein the main thrust is on a projectised, need based approach for integrated development of potential cultural clusters with participation of the artisans at all stages of implementation of the scheme with the ultimate objective of their empowerment and hence sustainability. The scheme envisages a package of support to the cluster of handicraft artisans, which includes basic inputs and infrastructure support in addition to capacity enhancement to cater to target markets. The package of support under AHVY can be clubbed under the following five parts which can be listed as social interventions, technological interventions, marketing interventions, financial interventions and cluster specific infrastructure related interventions

With a view to provide e-Marketing facilities for Indian Handicrafts, and Handlooms products, e-Marketing platform developed by the Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Ltd. (CCIC), and the Handicraft and Handlooms Export Corporation of India Ltd. (HHEC), has been launched^[5] . The portal hosts more than 1,000 wide ranging handicrafts and handlooms products with specifications, including origin and place of production, along with high quality graphical display, with a single window gateway for procurement with fast and easy navigation in a customized interface. The portal provides e-payment facility through major Debit/Credit card in a secured environment, and offers online tracking of the shipment along with a transparent redressal mechanism for any disputes arising thereof.

Several thousand contemporary designs have also been hosted on the websites of Office of Development Commissioner (Handlooms) & National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), which are free, downloadable with technical details and regional language interface. The contemporary designs help weavers and artisans to innovate, produce contemporary products and help them in sustaining and capturing markets both domestic and export.

There is great focus in India at present on skill development. In order to promote skills and employability of women, the sectors which employ a large number of women including home based traditional crafts are being identified.

⁴ “Outcome Budget 2008-2009”, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

⁵ “Milestones 2009-10”, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

The Indian film industry and the visual effects (VFX) industry is a rapidly evolving segment in India. It can be broadly classified into the following verticals — movies, TV shows and advertisements. The segment is still at its nascent stage with mainly low-end work being done in India. Domestic consumption is fairly small, and therefore, the bulk of the work includes outsourced projects from the US and the UK. ^[6] However, the domestic market is seeing bigger budget movies and ad campaigns, which are now open to spending more on VFX to provide an enhanced visual experience to viewers. India has visual landscape, rich cultural diversity, availability of well-developed post production facilities and talented crew to assist in film-making at a comparatively low cost. All of the above could be a significant advantage to India if incentives are provided to producers.

In the past one decade, Indian fashion industry has moved to a blossoming take-off. Fashion designers as well as professional ramp models are making a mark in domestic as well as international arenas. Fusions of Indian dress and edgier Western styles that combine Western cuts with India's talent for embellishment—and its famously fine textiles are popular fashion trends today.

Consumers worldwide are going green and this is especially true in the health, lifestyle and cosmetics market. Indians have been traditionally inclined toward natural products for their health and beauty needs. While consumers in the rest of the world have to be educated about the benefits of natural herbs, this knowledge is well inherited in India from generations. The need is for companies to translate the ancient ayurvedic recipes into modern easy to use formats with superior quality. During the last decade, the natural lifestyle and beauty care business has emerged as the new growth frontier for culture business in India.

In the tourism sector, the latest trend is to develop tourist circuits rather than isolated tourist destinations and there is huge scope to integrate the culture industry with the tourism industry for realizing symbiotic growth potential.

Role of Government and IGNCA

While it is an undisputed fact that the Govt. of India and the State Governments have intervened in meaningful ways that have led to the revival and survival of culture and creative industries in the past few decades, in the light of new economic developments of one global unified market, these efforts have to be strengthened further to be globally competitive.

Irrespective of the global demand, market reach of craftsmen and communities are limited. Skilled workers (experts) at remote locations are faced with a hand to mouth situation and there is a tendency among the young generation to leave their traditional work. Also, with rapid change in lifestyle, aging and negligence, the vast repertoire of knowledge and wisdom that sustained and nurtured the community, is fast disappearing.

⁶ “Film industry in India: New horizons”, Earnest & Young, 2011, Pp 1-22.

There is urgent need to preserve and revitalize these traditions and make them integral part of our economic development. In most of the states of India there are Crafts Boards looking after the problems of the craftsmen and their crafts. These Boards are also involved in promoting the dying crafts by way of initiating market links, entrepreneurship skills, organizing crafts melas and bazaars, helping the craftsmen to export their products, honoring the craftsmen with best craftsman of the state, providing scholarship etc.

Along with several other cultural institutions in India, my institute Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts (IGNCA) is working for the promotion of creative and cultural industries in India. Situated in the heart of our national capital New Delhi, it is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. We are engaged in important projects on data collection, mapping and analysis of viable cultural industries in India that needs protection and promotion. The cultural industries mapped include all viable forms of art, dance, crafts and music. It also includes mapping of rituals/festivals, cultural spaces (e.g. spaces for markets, processions, rituals, etc.) that are considered to be the root of social and cultural practices. An assessment of the direct social and economic benefits under each of the mapped out data is being made, to enable knowledge-based elaboration of strategies, policies and action plans for the protection and promotion of the said industry.

The Kala Nidhi Reference Library of IGNCA has a collection of over 1,000 volumes of rare publications some over 200 years old apart from personal collections of some of the most eminent Indian scholars and artists. Research and exchange programmes with South-East Asia, East Asia and Eurasia have brought in cultural material and acquisitions, covering a wide range of disciplines both in print and microforms. The microfiche collection pertaining to these areas numbers around 1.50 lakhs, The library is concentrating on building a complete corpus of printed material on Catalogue of manuscripts of Indic and Asian origin published in all parts of the world. So it has acquired catalogues of major Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic Journals manuscripts from libraries/research institutions of India, UK, USA, FRG, GDR, France, Italy and Japan. It is estimated that India possesses more than five million manuscripts, making her the largest repository of manuscript wealth in the world. Though our ancestors had tried to preserve these manuscripts, thousands of such valued unpublished Indian manuscripts on varied subjects are scattered across Indian and foreign collections, making them inaccessible to scholars. This invaluable and unique pool of knowledge is under threat and manuscripts are disappearing at an alarming rate. The Kala Nidhi Reprography Unit has initiated a manuscript-microfilming programme. So far the Reprography Unit has microfilmed over 2.78 lakh manuscripts in 21722 microfilm rolls. All the rolls have been duplicated, digitized and catalogued. Our slides Library has the largest collection of slides on Indian arts, and it is the only centre in India which is equipped with proper infrastructure for archival storage, computerization of data, duplication and digitization of slides. Its collection includes slides of Indian arts, paintings, sculpture, architecture, illustrated manuscripts and the performing arts. Over the years it has acquired and generated about 77,649 carefully selected slides from India and abroad.

Our cultural archive is a treasure house of resource on literature, architecture and sculpture, music, dance theatre and ethnographic collection . An essential component of the preservation of cultural heritage entails documentation of traditional art forms of legendry

cultural figures. IGNCA has initiated several projects for documentation of life-sketches, performances and teaching techniques of eminent artists.

Our Kalakosa division contains a lexicon of fundamental concepts of the Indian arts. In consultation with various scholars a list of about 250 terms of concepts has been prepared. It also houses publications of translations of fundamental texts relating to the Indian arts as well as classical works of art interpretation, analysis and criticism.

The IGNCA views women's contribution to art and culture as an integral part of its endeavor. The aim of our Nārīvāda Programme is to contextualize women's cultural resources and traditional knowledge systems as an integral element of gender studies; and to emphasize and re-assess the key role women have played in the creation, preservation and transmission of our cultural heritage.

We have an entire division janapadasampada working on the lifestyle of cultural communities in a holistic manner. Such a study includes study of physical space or habitat of the community, the conditioning of man by this environment and eco-cycle and the pattern of rites and ceremonies connected with eco-cycle. Next step is to investigate man's view of himself, the understanding of the body system. Preventive and curative indigenous medicinal .study of man-family and man-society relations brings out the position of individual and community, organization of society as well as acceptance of individual in the collective. Invaluable is the role of crafts in a society and the transmission of skills of these crafts from one generation to the next. It ranges from inculcation of skills, identification of raw material to actual making of an object.

With this approach the our 'Loka parampara' programme involves research into various aspects of cultural communities while the 'Kshetra Sampada' programme envisages a study not only of a specific place or a temple and its units, but also its impact on the culture of the people surrounding it.

IGNCA has prepared several multimedia presentations exploring artistic manifestations, emanating from primary sense-perceptions - visual and aural, in the prehistoric past as also contemporary cultures. A major programme of the Centre is the creation of the twin galleries of Adi Drisya (primeval sight) and Adi Sravya (primeval sound). Rock art research contributed greatly for establishing of the Adi Drisya gallery. Exposition of music and musical instruments form the Adi Sravya gallery.

The Kaladarshana Centre provides a forum for dialogue among the arts from different cultures and civilizations. Besides the multi-media presentations dealing with fundamental themes, several exhibitions covering various themes are held at venues all over India. A series of Memorial Lectures in honour of renowned scholars, public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences are regularly organized.

The Kalāsampadā, a digital repository of content and information integrated with a user-friendly interface, has been developed to encompass and preserve the rare archival

collections of the IGNCA. The Kalasampada facilitates the scholars to access and view the materials - over a couple of lakh of manuscripts, over one lakh slide, rare books, thousands of rare photographs, audio and video along with highly researched publications - of the IGNCA, from a single computer interface .

IGNCA has also completed a National Databank on Indian Art and Culture .

The IGNCA's concern for preservation and promotion of all the rare, fast vanishing art forms are now well known to the academic community, craftsmen, artists, volunteers of Indian arts, social animators, planners, policy makers and commoners.

The following recommendations are unanimously suggested by our institute, which we think, if taken seriously, can work very positively in promotion, conservation and enhancement of the heritage of the numerous crafts and craftsmen of India and other developing countries - There is an immediate need of detailed survey for the statistical analysis and documentation of each and every occupation.

- We have to develop, standard benchmark for quality works in arts so that the international acceptability can be compared;
 - Policy guidelines both for community rights and individual's rights of the creative community have to be made available.
 - Proper financial support has to be extended for continuation of the cultural activities in society.
 - Marketing of the finished product or process must be arranged in a packaged form.
 - Study of creative activities may be made the part of the regular school and college curriculum as it is already done in Japan.
 - It is necessary to work out in association with the indigenous craftsmen and the modern technicians, to evolve a method under which a craftsman can use the modern tools without distorting the originality of arts for better production and huge quantity base.
 - There is need to relating the crafts to ecospecific subsistence and resource management strategies, ceremonials and rituals, marketing and exchange centers. This will help in locating the gaps in resource availability, access and use of traditional knowledge base of existing and potential cultural industries.
 - Literary and artistic creations are embedded in cultural goods and services, which, protected by copyright, circulate worldwide in traditional and electronic form. The due recognition of the rights of authors and artists is currently challenged by the spread of piracy, and increasingly also e-piracy. Awareness-raising, training, and updating of national copyright legislation for adaptation to cyberspace is urgently needed. I.P.R. protection is necessary for community based designs, patterns, meanings and shapes, so that the look and feel, colour and texture of the original in not tampered with, without acknowledgment and compension.
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