

Involvement of Community and Individuals in safe-guarding ICH

Performing arts are not simply something that can be overlooked by any society as ultimately it meets our very spiritual and practical needs for beauty, inspiration, music, movement, story telling etc. We are concerned here with how our traditional indigenous art forms might survive the in future. There is the very real chance for the centuries old way of knowing and passing on art forms dying within the next generation or two. At each horizon there are the subtle dangers of commodification, academization, reductionism and outsourcing of our indigenous art forms . The tangible physical continuance of arts and moreover the intangible soul of arts can never be totally captured in the printed word and electronic media nor disseminated through conventional systems of modern institutional education. Rather they are ways of knowing which can only be transmitted be means of an intimate relationship between senior and younger generation of performers known as Gurukula system. The Gurukula system had played a significant part in nurturing and preserving the rich traditions of India's classical and traditional art-forms down the centuries. Performing art traditions always live on through the most outstanding practitioners of the period. Gurukula connotes the systems by which the intangible knowledge of our cultural heritage are passed down over continuos from generation to generation. It was one of the major responsibilities of the society, especially the government bodies

and art loving public to provide all the facilities to such centres of learning.

When we think of conservation of ICH, the most important aspect should be finding out the individuals who possess a truly extraordinary character with exceptional brilliance that is, scholarship, skill and creativity in their field of art. What distinguishes a real master (a guru) from an ordinary teacher is his/her absolute dedication and clear vision to the art as well as zeal to instruct the next generation.

From the point of view of our Indian tradition, a guru cannot be seen only as an individual person, but must be understood as the continuation of a long line of artists and the Gurus. A Guru therefore is the embodiment of all these gurus and their intangible past knowledge and experience. Traditionally the guru expected little or no financial reimbursement from his students (shishya); expected nothing but respect, loyalty and devotion to learning. All traditional knowledge survived because there were patrons with great awareness about the value of our cultural heritage took care and the responsibility of maintaining such centre of knowledge (Gurukulam).

Two of the best specimens of Gurukulam in the second decade of twentieth century are the music school established by Ustad Allaadin

Khan in Maihar, a small town in Madhya Pradesh patronised by the local king, where he produced some great wonders in the history of Indian music like

Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Annapoorna Devi and Pannalal Gosh, and in Kerala Guru Ammannur Chachu Chakyars efforts to help nourish a tradition of outstanding disciples like Painkulam Rama Chakyar, and Ammannur Madhava Chakyar to preserve Kutiyattam for the future. If a serious study is done today on the lineage of disciples of these Gurukulas there would be no cultural institutions or a department of performing arts in an University could stand to match.

In the institutionalised training we can concretise and package all knowledge and that this can be 'taught' and learned within arbitrarily imposed periods of time, Thus it takes only four to six years to become an artist, and there are tests and certificates to prove this is so. By contrast, in the Gurukulam concept we see knowledge as emerging out of darkness, through experience; something which is cultivated which must mature, and thus pass through life stages from disciple-hood to artistry, to mastery and finally to a Guru in a long process.

A fine performer seeks to manifest the divine in performance, while a mediocre one sets out to merely make a passing grade. The artist always should have the vision of what a great performance is from having observed the gurus and also with the awareness about the great tradition.

When this divine presence and strength within is not developed the result is that an artist produces soulless art. Sometimes when viewing such art we wonder why it is being performed at all- “ what meaning does this have, what relevance to life?”. The answer is that it has no relevance- it has ceased to be creative, authentic and divine. It has become static measured and contrived. This is no small reason why interest of society in the traditional performing arts is declining.

To preserve a traditional performing art we have also the responsibility to ensure the social and financial security of the younger generations practicing an art form. However the social, economic and cultural climate of the immediate local context cannot be ignored of the traditional arts are to continue and thrive.

Whatever practical actions we take, whether it be funding, networking or popular outreach, they read to be addressing the root causes of disempowerment. We might envisage new local audience in urban areas as well as villages. We should conduct appreciation courses for young people including school- children.

Thanks to the initiative of UNESCO in protecting ICH, the Government of India declared in the Parliament on 1st March ,2006 inclusion of a reasonably good amount in the budget for the first time

dedicated entirely to the regeneration of performing arts in the ICH
category.