

The relation between ICH and community development

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ICH a source of pride

Long before the ratification of “The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” by Bhutan, the Royal Government has been already practicing some of the ICH safeguarding measures. Both tangible and intangible aspects of culture have been widely surveyed through out the country and an elaborate inventorying system has been introduced in close collaboration with the local community.

All the spaces, traditional centres and historical artefacts have been recorded and so are some of the different arts and practices through different research visits and interviews with the elderly people. Some of the ICH has been introduced into the school curriculum and some have been institutionalized and patronized by different local bodies. This process has seen so much change in the approach and understanding of the community people towards their heritage. With the more and more studies conducted on the local heritage people have become equally aware of the importance of their traditions.

The ICH is now seen as a community treasure. In most part of the country the name of a particular cultural space or a practice is known by the name of the community. People feel very proud to be associated with it. They not only intend to safeguard their ICH but also disseminate it further beyond their jurisdiction.

ICH a source of development

Now when the community understands the significance and importance of their local practice they attach more affinity to it. In addition when they receive so much of consideration from the government and its policy, careful plans are drawn up to make the art more vibrant and attractive from all perspectives. The community sees so many possibilities to recharge the art and extend its jurisdiction to other localities and gradually to the whole nation as a national art form. This would draw competitions to gain the national status amongst different arts and practices which will result towards more refining of the same in the process. The motive in doing so is dual. They will not only sell their expertise and services in carrying out training and other activities but they will also be able to make themselves and their art more popular and dominant. Where a particular art is introduced in the school curriculum, the community practitioners can have a big role to play as teachers and earn a living out of it.

Moreover, the community could adopt the ICH as part of the local annual festival or make the art by itself a local festival if there isn't one, whereby people and tourists can visit and so will money come along. If not, a particular day could be marked to celebrate this event every year by the community to create more and more awareness especially amongst the younger generation who will be the custodians of the art tomorrow. This will also serve another incidental purpose of ensuring stable posterity besides creating avenue for the local economy to boost. The community can establish corporate business centres where they could sell locally produced souvenirs. This will also create job opportunities to the community people and diversify their earning source and add to the charm of their living style.

Some of the community members could carry out a research work on a particular art independently or jointly with an academic institution or an individual and publish it. The publication will also contribute to the local economy of the community which is also development. A pictorial hand book on a particular subject could also open the door to its propagation and generate income through the sale proceedings.

Conclusion

ICH and community development are not intrinsically interdependent in nature but these two ends could be strategically designed in such a way that they form a perfect cause-and-effect-combination. If succeeded, the result could be two folds: generation of income from it when it is being promoted and safeguarded. Given the time and circumstance and the pace that the whole world is fast converging into a mono-cultural landscape, ICH of different nation states need to be safeguarded in the light of its diversity and it is possible only if an attractive economic factor is associated with it. Therefore, the relation between ICH and community development should not remain as a hypothetical projection but a practical reality to maintain the diverse beauty of the whole world.