ACCU
2nd Workshop for Better Practices in Communities ICH Revitalization –for Promotion of the UNESCO’s 2003 Convention
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Presentation by:
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Members of delegation from Pakistan

Mr. Syed M. Abbas Kazmi...Researcher-Writer
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Our motto:

Culture for Peace

The Country: Pakistan

*Pakistan is situated in the south of Central Asia, in between India, Iran, Afghanistan and China.
*Due to its location and mountains in the north, Pakistan is one of the most important countries politically, as well as for world trade and tourism.
The Area: Baltistan

*Area from which the ENTRY under the title of “Classical-Sword dance & Music in Baltistan” was made in the 2nd Contest is Baltistan, a mountainous area of Karakoram Range in the north of Pakistan.
*It is situated on both flanks of river Indus and in between Ladakh and Gilgit straddling towards Himalaya and Karakoram.
*Total area is 27000 sqr km with a population of about 0.5 m.

History of Baltistan

*The history is traced from 4/5th Century AD when the Palolashahi dynasty was ruling Baltistan.
*In 727 AD a Tibetan king conquered Baltistan and till 950 AD. Anarchy prevailed till 12th Century AD when the Maqpon Dynasty was founded, which ruled over Baltistan and the neighboring areas of Ladakh and Gilgit till 1840 AD.
*16th Century was the prime time for the zenith of Baltistan politically and culturally.
*In 1840 the Dogras of Jammu conquered the area and annexed to their state.
*In 1948, Baltistan became independent of Dogras and since then is under the administrative control of Pakistan.
Religion

*Till 4th Century AD people practiced Shamanism. In 4th Century Buddhism was introduced by the monks of Northern India.
*Though the elites and common folk accepted Buddhism, but many belief and practices of Shamanism remained in practice.
*In 14th Century AD a Saint Ali Hamadani from Iran arrived and introduced Islam and the majority of population accepted Islam.
*Now 100% of the population is Muslim.

Culture

*A great number of Cultural Heritage of Baltistan were evolved and sprout from the ancient Tibetan Cultural Heritage.
*They have been enriched with Iranian and Central Asian cultural influence.
*Due to fall of the former ruling families who were the great patron of Culture and Arts, pressure of fanatic Muslim Clergy as well as modernization of community in every aspect of life, the indigenous cultural heritage of Baltistan whether intangible or tangible have arrived to their end.
*A great number of beautiful and meaningful arts and crafts have totally vanished and a few which exist are near to die for ever.
Tangible Cultural Heritage

*However some remarkable tangible cultural heritage exist in shape of built heritage like religious buildings and castles of the former rulers, as well as houses of common folk.
*These built heritage are unique in their built, decorations, as well as in strength to hold seasonal severe ness and earthquakes etc.
*The structure were built fully framed in Tibetan architecture and Iranian wood works i.e. screens, ceilings and carvings
The Buddhist Heritage

*There were numbers of Buddhist Heritage in shape of Buddha and Saints images, carvings of animals mainly the Ibex and inscriptions in Brahmi, Tibetan, Khroshti and Soghdian.
*Most of these images and inscription have disappeared due to climatic affects as well as the Muslim Clergy opposition.
*A very few of this heritage still exist and among them the Sakyamuni Buddha image in Skardu is a world famed heritage
There were various intangible cultural heritage in Baltistan. The following is the most famous and meaningful:

1. Sports; Polo
2. Music and Dances
3. Handicraft by women

**Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Sports; Polo

*Polo is a Balti/Tibetan word for a ball.*
*Baltees claim that Polo on horse-back was invented by Tibetans some millennia years ago, which later adopted by Central Asians and Persia.*
*Afghan & Mughal kings brought this game to India which was adopted by English ruling officials in India.*
*They took the game to England.*
*However, the Polo of Baltistan and Gilgit and the English style is different.*
*Baltees still play Polo in very old style.*
2nd Workshop for Better Practices in Communities' ICH Revitalization, 13-15 Nov. 2009, Japan

Music & Dances

Baltees never lost opportunity to amuse themselves by dancing
*There were a treasure of musical heritage like
1. Haribs or Ragas (60 numbers),
2. Tunes for sword and other dances (in dozens),
3. Tunes of poetical parts of the epic of Kesar,
4. Tunes of folk songs and modern Ghazals
5. Tunes played during Polo,
6. Tunes for hunting,
7. Tunes for rowing boats and some other depicting the ancient religious belief, etc.

*Many dances and music have lost in the dust of time and few exist, but are at the verge of extinction.
Present musicians who are in a very few number of 5-6 can play only 4-5 Ragas, some tunes for sword and other dances and for Polo.

Handicraft

• Indigenous handicraft like shoe making, embroidery etc have also become totally unknown. A few items like women caps and purse and small hand-bags, which was the main cash earning means for poor women is near to extinct. Now few women in rural areas make handicraft for their personal use.
Condition and Problems before Revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Baltistan

- The Intangible Heritage of Classical Music and Dances were totally forgotten.
- Some important dances were not performed since a century.
- The Master instrumentalists of Classical Music and Dances had expired.
- Muslim Clergy were deadly against this heritage Community had also lost their interest.
- There was no one to revitalize these arts.
Problems in Revitalization

1. The living Performers refused to perform due to clergy’s pressure.
2. The few instrumentalist and dancers were dispersed also.
3. There was no finance to bring them together and make a band.
4. In the beginning majority of the people showed dis-interest.

How We Overcame

1. We made a programme to revitalize the Classical Music and Dance.
2. Made a request to NORAD for some financial support.
3. Convinced the major clergy.
4. Wrote articles in a local Newspaper about the importance of revitalizing these heritage and emphasized their benefits to community.
Objectives were

1. To revitalize the by-gone intangible heritages.
2. To give a cultural and historical awareness to community.
3. To raise the self and national pride of Balti community.
4. To provide a small financial support to performers.
5. To attract tourism and contribute in poverty alleviation.

Revitalization Activities

1. Got some financial support from NORAD
2. Conducted dialogues with the performers
3. Arranged Flower Carnival in Skardo and Khaplu
4. An event of Classical dances and related Music was arranged and was video-graphed
5. Paid a small amount to performers
Community response.

1. Community response was overwhelming
2. Hundreds of young men joined the Carnival vehemently
3. Dozens of amateurs and tourist made video and photos
4. The senior people appreciated our programme
Future

1. If the existing performers are encouraged financially and morally, this intangible heritage can be restored in a better way.
2. Establishment of a 02 years Music and Dance Training Center is essential need to transfer this art from the last performers to young generation.

Handicrafts

*Handicraft is another very important intangible cultural heritage, as well as support to the poor and deprived women financially.
*Designs and patterns used in Balti handicraft also have sprout and evolved from Tibetan and Central Asian arts and crafts.
**Problems**

1. Due to the opposition of clergy, not only the music and dances were heavily affected, but the Tibetan patterns and designs had also an opposing attitude of clergy.
2. Easy availability of machines made handicrafts and items from the markets gave a set back to local handicraft.
3. The master makers of different items expired and there was no arrangement to produce new craftswomen.

**Community Interest**

1. Due to easy availability of modern handicrafts of all types from the market the wealthy and middle class families lost their interest in the indigenous handmade items.
2. It is the nature of human to become indolent quickly and looking for easier ways in life.
How we overcame the situation and revitalized

1. Got some funds from the Spanish Embassy and Trust for Voluntary Organization.
2. Conducted meetings and dialogues with poor, deprived and encouraged them.
3. Started a Training Centre in BCF premises and other villages and trained about 500 women.
4. After training they were given the job of making different items and they were paid in cash at the spot.

Results

1. Hundreds of women became good craftsmen.
2. Their personal cash income rose from 0% to 5-10%.
3. They became a little independent of their men for money.
4. Their moral rose higher and a wave of satisfaction appeared in them.
After-result

1. As soon as I quite BCF (now BCDF) and the religious oriented persons came to my place. this mini project was closed,
2. Production & Marketing System which I had made ended.
3. The trained women became again jobless and penny less.

Future

1. If this Art and Craft of Baltistan is patronized by a donor, hundreds of poor women can be refreshed and trained again and make useful force of the community in alleviating poverty.
2. The ancient Tibetan and Central Asian patterns and designs will revitalize as well.
3. World tourist coming to Baltistan may get local and beautiful handicraft items on a very cheap price.
4. Poor women will have job and cash income.
Suggestions to save Intangible Cultural Heritage

1. International Organizations and Donors should help and encourage Communities and organizations toiling to save, restore and revive their intangible cultural heritages.

2. They should be encouraged by supporting with financial grants, before it is too late.

3. Selected performing groups should be brought on international stage.

4. The performing arts under the UNESCO Convention of 2003 should be filmed and recorded by professional ACCU or local experts and preserved and displayed on net and other means.

5. The Performing Art of Baltistan i.e. Classical Dances and Music of Baltistan and the Buddha Image in Skardu should be declared as the most endangered heritages and be enlisted with UNESCO for their revitalization and restoration.

Recommendations

1. The project proposals

   a. Revitalization Of ICH Classical Music & Dances & Establishment of Music Institute in Baltistan and

   b. Revival of local Handicraft for ICH Revitalization and providing Self Employment to Refugee and poor women. which are being submitted to ACCU/UNESCO and their patrons by our delegation should be approved and requisite funds be provided;

2. A band of performers (instrumentalists and dancers) from Baltistan should be invited to any international event / stage to demonstrate their skills in order to give international projection as well as to encourage the performers and attract young generation to learn this art.
Thanks & Acknowledgement

In the last, I on behalf of our delegation, the community of Baltistan and the people of Pakistan express our deepest thanks and gratitude to ACCU/UNESCO for accepting our participation in the contest, selecting our entry for the second position of “Honorable Mention” as well as for inviting us to this dignified Workshop and extending all possible services and cooperation. We are grateful to the distinguished delegates for taking interest in our presentation. Thank you all.

The End