

‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ – harnessing cultural traditions through digital media towards peace and harmony

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Abstract

Indian cultural tradition has a rich treasure to cherish and be proud of. But the intangible cultural heritage has always been restricted to specific communities and locations, making it inaccessible to larger part of the society. Of late, culture has rightly been recognized as a major contributing factor in sustainable development of societies, addressing the challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusiveness. Hence, digital communication platforms are the best bet for preservation, promotion and dissemination of the heritage, making the culture element popular and adaptable.

Key words : *Culture, Heritage, Digital media, Sustainability*

Introduction

The cultural heritage of India dates back to times beyond memory, with the relics of its rich ancient civilization lying buried under its contemporary cities and villages, some still undiscovered. The melting pot of multiple other civilizations, which co-existed as a result of economic exchanges or political ambitions, has generated its modern form, with its richness and diversity. On one hand, there are the monuments with their astonishing architecture announcing the glorious past and on the other, India boasts of an ever-evolving living culture and tradition that is reflected through a vast treasure of verbal, written, visual depictions as well as its artifacts, performing art and craft forms. Being one of the most ancient and richest civilization, both these tangible and intangible assets are vast beyond imagination, most diverse and sometimes, limited to specific communities or geographic peripheries. Documenting, showcasing and popularizing heritage at such a large scale is undoubtedly a gigantic task.

“The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of the future.”
— Wendell Phillips. Preserving the seed for our next generations to make them savor the fruit has been a constant endeavor for countries like India, whose monuments have withstood the vagaries of nature, wrath of foreign invasion and a lack of awareness among its own citizens. The conditions of the intangible heritage have not been exposed to such menace, but their preservation got endangered by sheer lack of interest to share and preserve. “Our heritage and ideals, our code and standards - the things we live by and teach our children - are preserved or diminished by how freely we exchange ideas and feelings.”

—Walt Disney. Of late, however, the contemporary societies have started paying heed to it, leveraging it to address the challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusiveness, by looking through the lens of the past. Historic monuments and museums with their grandeur, living heritage practices enriching our ways of life and creativity and innovativeness associated with visual art forms could go a long way to build 'inclusive, innovative and resilient communities' (UNESCO). "UNESCO is convinced that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component. Indeed only a human-centered approach to development based on mutual respect and open dialogue among cultures can lead to lasting peace". (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/india-IN?info=elements-on-the-lists>)

The 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity by UNESCO acknowledged cultural diversity as "a source of exchange, innovation and creativity" and considered it as fundamental as maintaining the biodiversity on earth. In the same tune, during the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development—MONDIACULT 2022, the role of cultural diversity in furthering sustainable development, ensuring inclusive growth and resilience, fostering human-centered, contextual stability and as a harbinger of global peace and multilateral cooperation has been re-confirmed. By then, the culture sector was already hit by the challenges of the pandemic and the vulnerability of the system lay exposed, revealing inequalities in social structure, gender, and unequal access to culture. The global environmental challenges also identified intentional or collateral damage of cultural heritage, discrimination in relation to human and cultural rights, and destruction of living cultural practices. The preamble of the said conference points out the "impact of the digital transformation on societies and the cultural sector in particular, which affects the cultural industries, and access to cultural goods and services, while opening up prospects for broadening access to culture for all, enhancing the knowledge, documentation, conservation, safeguarding, promotion and management of heritage, and stimulating creativity and innovation; as well as expressing our concerns about the challenges it poses, increasing risks such as the reinforced global imbalance of flows of cultural goods and services, and the impoverishment of cultural and linguistic diversity online, linked to artificial intelligence systems and the insufficient regulation of algorithms, unequal access to culture, the unfair remuneration of artists, cultural professionals and practitioners, as well as deepened inequalities in the global exchange of cultural goods and services, in particular due to the unequal concentration of global cultural platforms" (Unesco.2023)

To recognize the strong bond between culture and development, the G20 Culture Ministers integrated culture into the G20 agenda and a Culture Working Group was formed in 2021. The objective is to fortify collaboration among the member nations to support cultural and creative industries, so as to understand culture as a propeller to push inclusive sustainable socio-economic recovery and development. India's G20 Presidency would help to find pragmatic global solutions for the wellbeing of all, manifesting the true spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. It aims to harness the diversity of cultural traditions aiming towards a holistic, pro-people planet. The first G20 Culture Working Group (CWG) meeting

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for 2023 was held in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh from 22nd to 25th February 2023, highlighting on the theme of “Protection and Restitution of Cultural Property”. Four priority areas of India’s CWG include “Protection and Restitution of Cultural Property; Harnessing Living Heritage for a Sustainable Future; Promotion of Cultural and Creative Industries, and Creative Economy; Leveraging Digital Technologies for Protection and Promotion of Culture” (<https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/culture/g20> and <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1909583>).

It is within this context, the relevance of promulgating the cultural heritage through all possible formats of communication becomes evident. Digital media, as a communication technology, have the ability to protect past data against the forces of time, nature and man-made events that can destroy the memories. Thus, it can become a well crafted tool for safekeeping, sharing and creating an experience around the heritage data and knowledge. It uses the emerging technologies in computer vision, graphics, audio and video modes and user interface design to create this enriching experience for the common users. A user can almost feel like being present physically at the heritage sites without actually being so and relive the experience of the bygone era.

In 2022, Government of India announced the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav program where the 75th anniversary of India’s independence is celebrated, reminiscing about the glorious past of India, reflected through its cultural environment. Under this program, the best practices and strategies related to development of museums have been undertaken and to reiterate, a global summit on ‘Reimagining Museums in India’ was arranged. In the summit, where diverse countries interact on the theme, the best practices were identified and a roadmap for development of new museums could be designed which also focused on renewal framework to reinvigorate existing museums in India. The National Digital Repository for museums, established in 2018, had started the project of introducing our rich and diverse heritage through a plethora of digital collections of various artifacts’ like sculptures, paintings, manuscripts, weapons, coins etc. The features of digitization include collaborative framework for historians to collectively enrich the information, integration of documentation of antiquities in multimedia formats, Integration of 360 degree panorama, search and retrieval of data etc. The ultimate objective would be to create an online database of the collections for online viewing by general viewers.

A most recent example in this regard is Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalay, a digitized museum that showcases the lives of Indian prime ministers since independence. AR/VR technologies and data analytics have been used to create an experiential tour, where an experience going down memory lane has been created using pods, control centers, and crystal balls. Visitors can not only enjoy the stories, but also can see the crowd cheering, or feel the vibrations of blasts, among many such experiences.

The tangible and intangible heritage

The term culture has been formally defined by UNESCO as “*the spiritual, material, intellectual*

and emotional features characteristic for the groups of people" (UNESCO, 2001). But the concept of heritage remains metaphorical, as it is something of value to a community which wants it to be preserved, safeguarded and handed over to the next generations. However, the cultural heritage relates not only to the perceived value but also to the culture. Safeguarding its tangible and intangible elements demand for unique segregation strategies, as opined by UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention and Charters of The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural (2003). Of course, all tangible elements stand out to be an embodiment of intrinsically embedded intangible elements like oral tradition, languages and symbols and rituals. Intangible heritage was recognized to be an integral part of the cultural heritage of the world for the first time by the 2003 Convention, providing "*a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity*" (UNESCO, 2003). Against an overwhelming force of globalization which induces blurring of diversity, the protection and communication regarding intangible cultural heritage harps on strengthening social cohesion around the cultural symbolism, by building a cultural identity. Some of these elements, which were passed onto generations for ages, are now facing extinction, which is more a reason to focus on their preservation and dissemination. Sustainability and future development of such cultural heritage is more of individual or community centric, where knowledge, skill or techniques are held by individuals and then passed onto a small selected group in a specific community. Thus, the dispersal of this knowledge and skill requires a new communication medium, digressed from the traditional format of connecting the artist with the art, where the diffusion happened through verbal or visual formats. Because of this typical character of being driven by personal abilities and socio-economic dynamics of the environment, the intangible heritage is ontologically vulnerable. Social practices and perceptions are greatly influenced by the concept of 'space' as a social product (Lefebvre, 1991). The spatial triad concept of perceived, conceived, and lived space confirms the flexibility and fluidity of the transformation of a literary /craft/ artwork into something material created on the digital space. Again, social space" from "absolute space" can be produced by collating three ways of thinking about space. The physical space is created by the intangible culture artists. Regardless of whether it exists or not, the discourse about the "space" will continue independently. Finally, the representational space is a lived experience of people (phenomenological component). This lived experience now can transcend the geographic barrier with the help of digital technology. Conceptually, The 'lived space' (Watkins, 2005) - a space of "pure subjectivity, of human experiences, of people's sense-making, imagination, and feeling – that is, their local knowledge" (Zhang: 2006) is situated between the abstract space of designs and verbal messages – manifested in symbols (Spicer and Taylor, 2004) and an indifferent space of physical representations. The 'materialization' of the intangible thus becomes possible, conceptually and through recording, archiving and inventorying.

Indian intangible cultural heritage takes up many forms. UNESCO identifies the intangible cultural heritage in five areas : "oral traditions and expressions, including language;

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performing arts; social practices, rituals, and festive events; knowledge and practices concerned with nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship” (UNESCO, 2020). In all these formats of heritage elements, India prides of a rich contribution. UNESCO has included the following elements in their intangible cultural heritage list: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/india-IN>

1. Ramlila: Inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. The most representative Ramlilas are those of Ayodhya, Ramnagar and Benares, Vrindavan, Almora, Sattna and Madhubani. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/ramlila-the-traditional-performance-of-the-ramayana-00110>)
2. Tradition of Vedic chanting: Inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Although the Vedas continue to play an important role in contemporary Indian life, only thirteen of the over one thousand Vedic recitation branches have survived. Moreover, four noted schools – in Maharashtra (central India), Kerala and Karnataka (southern India) and Orissa (eastern India) – are considered under imminent threat. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/tradition-of-vedic-chanting-00062>)
3. Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre: Inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is practiced in Kerala, being one of India’s oldest living theatrical traditions, in vogue for more than 2,000 years. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kutiyattam-sanskrit-theatre-00010>)
4. Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India: Inscribed in 2009 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It combines theatre, music, historical reconstructions, and traditional oral and written tales seamlessly, reflecting the environmental, spiritual, mythical and cultural identities. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/ramman-religious-festival-and-ritual-theatre-of-the-garhwal-himalayas-india-00281>)
5. Mudi yettu, ritual theatre and dance: Inscribed in 2010, it symbolizes a community ritual where the entire village participates. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/mudiyettu-ritual-theatre-and-dance-drama-of-kerala-00345>)
6. Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan: Inscribed in 2010, this is a dance form of Kalbelia community of Rajasthan. Once professional snake handlers, they express their former occupation in new and creative forms of music and dance, where women, replicating the movements of a serpent, swirl to the tunes of the poongi, a woodwind instrument traditionally played to capture snakes. Men accompany them also on the khanjari percussion instrument. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kalbelia-folk-songs-and-dances-of-rajasthan-00340>)
7. Chhau dance, Inscribed in 2010, has three distinct forms, originating from the regions of Seraikella, Purulia and Mayurbhanj, the first two using masks. Chhau dance is intimately connected to regional festivals, specially the spring festival Chaitra Parva,

while enacting episodes from epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana and local folklore. Being generated from traditional martial arts, the dance forms include mock combats as well. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/chhau-dance-00337>)

8. Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India: inscribed in 2012. Two forms of Buddhism – Mahayana and Vajrayana – and four major sects, namely Nyngma, Kagyud, Shakya and Geluk are practiced in Ladakh, where. Each sect has its own unique form of chanting for rituals on special occasions. Chanting is meant for spiritual uplifting, to please the evil spirits or to invoke the blessing of various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and Rinpoche. Instruments such as bells, drums, cymbals and trumpets accompany the chanting and keep them in a rhythm. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/buddhist-chanting-of-ladakh-recitation-of-sacred-buddhist-texts-in-the-trans-himalayan-ladakh-region-jammu-and-kashmir-india-00839>)
9. Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur: Inscribed in 2013, Vaishnava performers of Manipur plains narrate the lives and deeds of Krishna through song and dance. It acts as a cohesive force within the Vaishnava community and it establishes a relationship between the individual. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/sankirtana-ritual-singing-drumming-and-dancing-of-manipur-00843>)
10. Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India: inscribed in 2014. The craft constitutes the traditional technique of manufacturing brass and copper utensils in Punjab. Metalwork integrates family structure, work ethic and social hierarchy of the community (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/traditional-brass-and-copper-craft-of-utensil-making-among-the-thatheras-of-jandiala-guru-punjab-india-00845>).
11. Nawrouz, inscribed in 2016, celebrates the New Year on March 21 in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is not only marked by a variety of rituals, ceremonies and other cultural events happening through a period of about two weeks, but also includes street performances of music and dance, public rituals involving water and fire, traditional sports and the making of handicrafts (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nawrouz-novruz-nowrouz-nowrouz-nauryz-nooruz-nowruz-navruz-nevruz-nowruz-navruz-01161>)
12. Yoga (inscribed in 2016): Based on the philosophy of synchronizing the mind with the body and soul, Yoga postures and meditation and breathing techniques aim for mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing and allow for a state of liberation. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/yoga-01163>)
13. Kumbh Mela, inscribed in 2017, is the largest congregation of pilgrims on earth, exerting a mesmeric influence on a variety of devotees, including ascetics, saints, sadhus, aspirants-kalpavasis and visitors. The festival is held at Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik

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every four years by rotation, posing as the central spiritual event in the country. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kumbh-mela-01258>)

14. Durga Puja in Kolkata : the latest inscription in 2021. An annual festival celebrated most gorgeously in Kolkata and also in other parts of India, mostly amongst the Bengali diaspora. It marks the ten-day worship of the Hindu mother-goddess Durga. It is perhaps the best instance of the public performance of religion and art, a thriving ground for collaborative artists and designers, whose creations are admired by hoards of spectators coming from different class, religion and ethnicities. (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/durga-puja-in-kolkata-00703>)

Intangibility is at the core of the cultural heritage of any country, as described to be “living and evolving” (R. Williams, 1960). Thus, all immaterial elements that give the community a unique, distinct and diverse identity are included in cultural heritage. However, where the transmission could have been spontaneous focusing on preservation and perpetuity, the intensification of cultural prevarication and dominance of one culture over other have necessitated the deliberate attempt towards its preservation. The cultural hegemony, emanating from globalization and political ambitions, have eventually lead to the crystallization of uniform and stereotyped cultural models, at the cost of mortification of the cultural diversity. Preservation of cultural diversity ‘is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind’ (Article 1 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity). It serves as a ‘source of exchange, innovation and creativity’ (ibid), promoting harmony in intercultural relations, as the diversity and idiosyncrasies of human communities are recognized, respected and therefore safeguarded.

Here, of course, the differentiation between high art, which is part of heritage and popular culture, popularized through mass media is a necessity. Heritage of India has always extracted a high reverence in the rest of the world, because of its richness, diversity and being primeval. The intangible culture may take diverse format, but the innate creativity and uniqueness of the process in creating them should not be neglected or belittled. On the other hand, the mass produced popular culture elements that are showcased through films, light music, radio programs, TV shows, magazines etc. are being produced with a commercial viewpoint of consumption of easy pleasure. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) pointed out, they push the population towards passivity and a false sense of psychological needs that can only be fulfilled through consumerism. They termed it as “Culture Industry”, where elements of culture are being produced not for a free expression of contemporary world, but as a part of one unified industry whose only motive is to “ensure the continued obedience of the masses to market interests.” Authentic culture fosters suggestions and possibilities, thus challenging the human capacity, leaving room for independent thought. The digital media need to focus on authentic culture more.

However, Adorno’s theory of ‘Enlightenment as Mass Deception’ is not beyond questions

and criticism. Wiggershaus (1995) states: "The other side of Adorno's apparently paradoxical definition was ignored: that rational objectivity was still possible for the modern work of art, in any significant sense, only as a product of subjectivity". But in 2014, music critic Alex Ross argued that Adorno's work need to be revisited with importance related to modern digital age: "The pop hegemony is all but complete, its superstars dominating the media and wielding the economic might of tycoons...Culture appears more monolithic than ever, with a few gigantic corporations—Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon—presiding over unprecedented monopolies." The Neitzschian approach also holds that the paradigm of philosophical discourse rests on aesthetics, derived from poetic and artistic styles (Zuidervaat 2011). As aesthetism proposes, there are three fundamental premises: subjective aspects of artistic expression like taste (Morizot 2013, Shelley 2010), the artwork itself and its authentic objective qualities in revealing eternal truth (Hammermeister 2002), and finally the experience of art that can ethically influence or even change a person, thus becoming an instrument in changing social structure (Hammermeister 2002). As Adorno pointed out, culture industry tries to dominate individual's internal landscape, promoting subservience and stereotyping and therefore moves completely in the opposite direction.

Use of digital media in communicating the culture elements has a major role to play in this context. The communication industry has transformed from being producer driven towards being prosumer-led, where a consumer of the communication is a producer as well. Latest developments of YouTube usage is a burning example of this where collaborative capitalism is taking cent restage. (Curran 2004, 2014)

Using digital technologies have not only ensured a collaborative dissemination of cultural knowledge and skill, but also have become instrumental to render an ability to the culture elements or their creators to withstand the challenges of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Towards building a cultural resilience in India

Resilience is the capability of a system to adapt to abrupt changes (Folke et al, 2010). However, the contemporary concepts do not focus any more to leap back to the previous state, but rather emphasizes on processes of leaping forward involving grasping, re-learning, adjusting to the new state and transformation. Also, any resilient system is long lasting, which is a proof of their ability to withstand adversity and continuously evolve. Cultural resilience thus involves both continuity and transformation, leading to sustainability.

As proposed by Jigyasu (2013), cultural heritage is able to strengthen a community's resilience in two ways : (1) by utilizing conventional skills and knowledge to prevent and mitigate the risks of adversity, and (2) by providing psycho-social support in times of crisis, whereby the community can increasingly absorb disturbances (Trigger, 1995.Saito, 2016). A commitment to customs, convention and legacy and a sense of belongingness generate a community's collective sense of self-identity and prestige.

A fast global change and urbanization have resulted in the rapid reconstruction of

cultural heritage, as every change event helps to construct a new dramatic dimension to the age-old story. Cultural heritage, particularly the intangible, has to be adaptable and receptive to change to become resilient and sustainable over long periods of time. Thus the challenge is not only to identify the near-extinct or vulnerable manifestations, but also to identify why they are not resilient. A living culture, which is exposed to adversities and resultant transformations, is bound to face inevitable extinction. Even UNESCO Head of Emergency Preparedness and Response, Giovanni Boccardi (2015), has claimed the current heritage preservation approach to be “faulty and unsustainable”: In his term: “The battle to preserve the existing remnants of the past is sooner or later going to be lost, as nothing lasts forever”. Cultural heritage thus should play an important role to inspire people to embrace transformation through successful adaptation, just like their predecessors who have proved the resilience through sustainability, by being adaptable. This can be ensured by decreasing psychosocial dependencies on past certainties, increasing resourcefulness and adapting to changes and uncertainties.

Exchange and co-creation of experience become the starting point towards an adaptable culture. The membership of a person in a network, and level of information disseminated can reduce uncertainty (Rogers, 1981). According to DeVito (2013), all relationships face uncertainty, creating a gap with other individuals. When a communicator finds something in common with the recipient of message, the gap decreases, increasing the interest levels between the two. So, an effective communication message needs to be able to reduce the gap created by uncertainty. The digital communication platforms serve this need of network building based on common interest very effectively. Members of the network can not only share information on areas of common interest, but also can co-create the experiences. When the intangible elements of heritage are being considered, this concept of networked community feeling becomes more effective in creating a sense of belongingness, being more resilient as a group towards external challenges and connecting to others. Indian culture possesses inherent resilience and adaptability, because of its non-dogmatic, non-exclusivist nature, and being apparently unorganized. Digital communication models, and more precisely the social media network can enhance this resilience to a great extent.

According to the Digital Preservation Handbook (<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/>) published by Digital Preservation Coalition (2008), the objective of digital preservation is to preserve/protect objects in digital format from the threat of technological threats like media mishap, system update or obsolete hardware (Li, 2015). In a physical environment, museum conservation depends on the natural elements of humidity, temperature, light, and pollution (Brimblecombe, 1990). To protect the objects from potential erosion, the direct interaction with viewers need to be highly restricted. On the other hand, the digital museum ensures the availability of its collections put on the digital medium for viewer access for a stretched time period. Also, research results suggest that an interactive and immersive environment can enhance the user experience to a great extent (Wang Y, Stash, & Sambeek, 2009).

In 1992, UNESCO took up the project of “Memory of the World”, to boost digital curation programs for museums in different countries. Some major projects are: Digitization of The Louvre Museum (Lahanier, Schmitt, Le Búuf, & Aitken, 2003); digitization of The National Gallery and The British Museum (Gregory & Healey, 2007); The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s “Timeline of Art History”; and the national projects of digital archive for National Palace Museum in Taiwan. Another important development has been done through Cultural Heritage Experiences through Socio-personal interactions and Storytelling (CHESS), wherein the Acropolis Museum in Greece, and the CitÈ de l’Espace in France aim to provide some “adventure” for visitors by following a series of defined stories while exploring the museum objects (Katifori, Karvounis, & Kourtis, 2014). Available on (<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/>).

Even further immersive experience has been created in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, with ‘Rijksstudio’, that invites the public to create their own piece of artwork by downloading images of the museum collection and use them creatively.

Having the physical presence of audience at a gallery, theatre or a film remains critical for artists and audiences. But the digital world has helped them surpass the concept of geographic barrier, so as to reinvent the stories through live and digital hybrid ways of collaborating, creating, and experiencing.

A virtual tour of the Great Wall of China is available for viewers at Google Arts & Culture. The “Walk the Great Wall of China” includes 360-degree tour of the exclusive sections which are best-preserved, 370 images and 35 stories of its architectural information. It’s no more a journey down memory lane, but also a guide towards its preservation for future generations.

A total of 10 million jobs were lost in the creative industries worldwide in 2020, as per UNESCO’s report. (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377863.locale=en>). In Indian context, the creative economy and culture sector experienced a 39% recession according to several reports. (https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/final_ttt3_report_web.pdf) The pandemic and post-pandemic effects acted as a catalyst to innovate new ways of communication through digital modes. Artists started to network online, developed international partnerships, while production in AI, VR, gaming and film production during the pandemic increased. On the other hand, the consumption of media increased exponentially through OTT platforms. The potential of digital technologies, as applied to enhance cultural resilience, is applicable in India as well in terms of its tangible and intangible heritage (Gupta and Jha, 2018; Mansuri and Patel, 2018).

Communication through Digital space :

The India Heritage in Digital Space (IHDS) Research agenda has been designed to utilize the emerging digital technologies in the fields of computer graphics, audio-video technologies and user interface design to create a lively experience for common users interested in heritage. It also focuses on establishing a crowd-sourcing framework to create digital

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collections of heritage resources through participation of the public. It includes showcasing of ‘Indian Heritage in Digital Space’ where visitor engagement is created through interactive virtual tour with AR, VR, and holographic interventions. This project has been awarded by UNESCO.

Digital Cultural Communication (DCC) aims to develop a co-creative harmony between the cultural institution and the community at large by using new media. By using audience-focused interactive experiences in the culture space, it tries to generate original community derived content (Russo and Watkins 2005). The cultural institution, the audience and the virtual community are interrelated, as conceptualized in Peirce’s language of semiotics (Mattleart and Mattleart 1998). This claims that signs consist of three inter-related parts (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/?ref=superjump#:~:text=Peirce's%20Sign%20Theory%2C%20or%20Semiotic,importance%20of%20interpretation%20to%20signification.>) : a sign, an object, and an interpretant. The sign is the signifier, eg a written word; the object is whatever is being signified, e.g. the object which the word attaches, and the interpretant, is the understanding of this sign/object relationship. Interpolating this concept, we can say that the community is the ‘sign’, the institution is the ‘object of representation’ and the audience becomes the ‘interpretant’. Based on this triadic relationship, cultural ‘experience’ is born. Thus, the role of the community in cultural communication is reviewed in perspective of this semiotic structure. The community no longer holds the role of a stakeholder of an institutional exhibition. Rather it produces and consumes its own original cultural content, being armed with information literacy, in the forms of narratives, digital contents or any other medium. The institution also is no longer a custodian of cultural experience but is the provider of a co-creative infrastructure to generate and distribute original cultural content to the audience via multiple online and offline platforms.

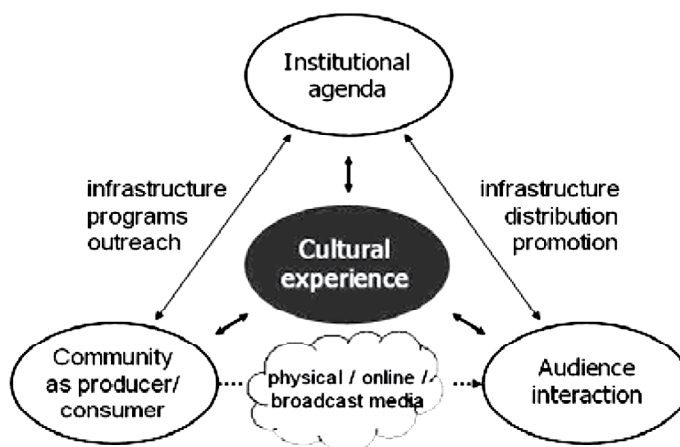


Figure 1

In the context of this paper, digital environments re-create or amplify the physical environment that is virtually engaging by using modern technologies like Augmented Reality (AR), Mixed Reality (MxR), and Virtual Reality (VR). These environments are appointed to augment the reality in heritage sites, GLAM institutions (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums), or exhibitions. CHComm (Reffat and Nofal, 2013) includes such communications propagated through websites or social media channels.

In traditional communication modes, the intangible cultural heritage had been passed on to future generations through verbal or written or pictorial/visual formats mostly in non-interactive way. In digital mode, however, the same can be done where the audience can not only share the information, but can also reflect individually or collectively on it and perceive it uniquely. Additionally, digital tools can create and augment the user experience (UX) in many ways. Comparatively lower costs than traditional modes and the ability of digital mode in ensuring engaging audiences enhance the effectiveness of CHCom. For example, Twitter has been proved to be a highly effective social media platform for creating a heritage brand personality (Bulearca and Bulearca : 2010).

Krasteva et al(2016) and Bogdanova et al(2019) have showed trends of new media in promoting cultural heritage through online contents with open access, online libraries and archives, social media contents virtual tours and exhibitions including 3D modeling, and 3D restorations. It also creates a satisfying experience for viewers through digital ticket reservations and online souvenir stores, live events, phone apps etc. Ibrahim & Ibrahim (2022) on the other hand, reiterated how the digital platforms are capable of creating common interests groups of heritage enthusiasts. This is more intriguing as collective knowledge and content creation are used to promote culture through access and interactivity (Bogdanova et al., 2021).

“The digital protection of intangible cultural heritage refers to the comprehensive application of digital technical means and methods to achieve the purpose of digital preservation, presentation, restoration, and regeneration of intangible cultural heritage through digital collection, digital storage, digital analysis, and digital transmission and to preserve it in a new form, understand it from a new angle, use it in a new way, and develop it to meet new demands”(Liu, Zhang and Jason, 2020)

Though started late, the safeguarding and promulgation of intangible cultural heritage has taken up great pace in recent years, owing to immense development in digital space. Munjeri (2004) studied the historical purity of intangible cultural heritage and reiterated the urgency to protect them, along with archives management which can further enhance the credibility more effectively. However, the challenge lies in homogenization, extensive urbanization, pace of modern lifestyle, and lack of awareness among the inheritors. In the process of digitalization, aesthetic art needs to be analyzed scientifically, and in the process, the originality may get compromised.

The challenges now promote intensely for digital transformation, for protection of the intangible elements. The basic advantages of digital protection methods come from

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three areas: firstly, a flexible storage with optimized storage format, storage carrier, storage capacity and cost, scientific classification schemes, and usage protocols. Secondly, with the facility of co-creation, a continuous enrichment takes place in the traditional heritage elements, making them contemporary and ready for modern societies. The transformation and evolution make the formats more robust and resilient. Third, digitization has strong real-time presence and embedded intelligent interaction mechanism, making it more practical. For display and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage, the following digital tools are commonly used (not exhaustive)(Y. Liu, 2022) :

- Visualization technology
- three-dimensional modeling technology,
- wide-angle stereoscopic display technology,
- tracking technology,
- tactile /force feedback technology,
- voice transmission technology,
- lidar and remote sensing technology.
- natural language processing to maximize the user experience

The value of the collected and classified information is not only embedded with physical entity, but also the production process (Zong and B. Ren, 2017). Therefore, the database should not only store information on the real objects or their photographs, but also through text and video contents to make it more immersive (Wang, Zhai, and Liu, 2022). Therefore, databases are divided into three formats of image, text and video with high precision, strong recoverability and least interference.

The digital cultural consumption can take place onsite and remotely, by user journey mapping. Online, consumers will prefer contents that they prefer and those are unrestricted, sustainable and reliable. The complexity of cultural goods, sometimes involve critics’ comments for attracting more visibility. Social media can be a reliable platform in this. For example, a critic’s review of some culture elements may be put on YouTube, while the images of the same being available on Instagram, and the creator’s details are showcased on Wikipedia. Consumers of such platforms may also act as prosumers. Projects like Google Art and Culture Institute opens up a new window where smaller or more obscure collections are accessible when we otherwise would not know of their existence accessing them would have incurred huge cost.

Digital reproductions of culture objects or elements are easy to replicate, assemble and transmit, and to be reused in the networked digital environment. Digital interfaces allow even to create new juxtapositions, explore information about individual creations or creators (Besser 1997). This “wealth of networks” (Benkler 2006) increases access to digital images of artworks, and also promulgates creation of a prosumer-controlled knowledge

base. Though the authenticity and contextualization may get compromised due to easy access and low replication cost, still this medium cannot be ignored just because their the high dissemination and re-use opportunity can generate new revenues in information markets, enhancing economic and social value of the objects (Bertacchini and Morando, 2013).

This important tool in protection and dissemination of intangible heritage elements is however remaining under-utilized due to lack of professionalism. It is necessary therefore to attract professionals with adequate knowledge, passion and ability and nurture them appropriately. The digital protection of intangible objects lags far behind the same for tangibles, and so it is urgent now to ensure the sustainability, and hand it over to the next generations, thereby enhancing the country's intellectual property quotient and the cultural resilience.

Conclusion

The challenge faced by preservation and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage lies in its very nature involving intangibility, making it difficult to be perceived, documented and handed over. Over and above of that, there are modern day challenges of transforming the format fit for contemporary society to ensure its sustainability, at the cost of purity of form. In this context, how the inheritors of the heritage are being made aware interested and networked has been a field of investigation. the digital model thus come handy where concerned people can be brought together through common interest groups, can be engaged in co-creation and further development and inheritors can be identified through exchange of information and dialogue. Further, digital tools and software's can be used further to enhance the user experience, making the culture element popular and adaptable. The cultural resilience, which is a harbinger of harmony across societies, can be established only through this adaptability and transformability of the culture elements, thereby ensuring their sustainability over long period of time. This is an urgent call of the hour as the resilience is under continuous threat emanating from globalization and homogenization of culture across societies, supporting the concept of 'global village'.

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