

**Title - Documenting the Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Economic
Growth in Developing Countries**

Authors –

1. Kamani Perera

Librarian

Regional Centre for Strategic Studies

Sri Lanka

k_vithana@yahoo.com; kvithana@gmail.com

+94775965252 (M)

2. Dinesh Chandra

Section Officer

Ministry of Defence

Government of India

New Delhi

India

chandradines@gmail.com

dinesh.conf@gmail.com

+918826012232(M)

Abstract - The main purpose of documenting the intangible cultural heritage is to preserve past and providing access it in future. There should be a collaborative relationship in between cultural and educational institutions to fulfill this task. It is very important to create knowledge bases and folk creativity centers for acquisition and storage of intangible heritage in digital form. UNESCO convention has defined intangible cultural heritage as oral traditions and expressions including language, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, traditional craftsmanship etc. It generates cultural knowledge. It supports for economic well-being, community health and provides strategy for cultural tourism. The first step of documenting intangible heritage is to capture it while protecting its ownership. At this juncture, special preference is given for traditional indigenous knowledge. In this digital era, there are so many methods to capture the tacit knowledge. If not captured, one day this knowledge will be vanished without keeping a footprint for future generation. Any living human being in this earth needs to know their past, oral traditions, languages etc. Language is a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage. Language is important for oral expressions. To make use of traditional herbal medicines, industrial know-how it is very important to preserve the language by way of recording and it will be a great asset for future inventions. Digital tools such as smart phones, digital cameras, tablets etc. can be used for this purpose. Recorded knowledge can be documented and preserved in museums, libraries, and archives for present and future access. They can work collaboratively and make documented knowledge available to wide audience via World Wide Web and can generate more income for sustainable economic growth in developing countries who are very rich in intangible heritage.

1. Introduction

It is important to keep intangible heritage active for its survival for longtime and sustainable economic growth. For this purpose it should be make use continuously and then it become a living heritage. Living heritage can be transmitted one generation to another. But if not continuously used it could die one day and would vanish from the community. Therefore, it is essential to safeguard the intangible heritage and easily done by using multimedia tools. The captured data can make available via museum websites and preserve them for present and future generations. This has been clearly described by the UNESCO Convention (2003) and according to it safeguarding intangible heritage is about the transferring of knowledge, skills, and meaning. It further emphasized the transmission or communication of heritage from generation to generation rather than production. According to the convention not all the intangible heritage are safeguarded but only the one, which recognized by its community as theirs and that provides them with a sense of identity and continuity is to be safeguarded.

2. Definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

The cultural heritage are considered as monuments and collection of objects and defined as tangible cultural heritage. The heritage, which cannot be, touched call intangible heritage. This has been clearly described by Amarasiri (2012) and he stated that the traditions include oral, performing arts, rituals, festivals, craftsmanship etc. are defined as intangible cultural heritage. He pointed out that ICH is an important part of the cultural heritage and how ICH helps to build-up inter-cultural relationship among communities. Thus, it makes stronger the social value and expresses the cultural identity of particular community. Amarasiri added that Sri Lanka is a rich

country in intangible cultural heritage. In Sri Lanka, folklore, folksong, folk poems, folk music, beliefs, rituals, traditional festivals, practices, folk drama, performing art, traditional crafts etc. can be considered as intangible cultural heritage. There are many traditional practices related to agricultural and traditional medicine. Sri Lanka has also faced the danger of disappearing certain elements of intangible cultural heritage. As mentioned by Amarasiri it is important to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and maintain cultural tie for sustainable economic growth in developing countries.

Lowe (2013) has stated that through international policy heritage has come to be defined as a resource that must be sustained and made available to all. Within the past fifteen years, through the influence of these policies, there has been a shift specifically towards the preservation of intangible heritage, and the need and possibilities of it to fulfill all the definitions of an economic, cultural, social, and natural resource.

3. Importance of Documenting the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

It is crucial to documenting, preserving and making accessible to documented and preserved intangible heritage, historical records for its community and beyond via museums and cultural heritage institutions. The developing countries in the world are rich and diverse of their intangible cultural heritage such as expressions, rituals and skills that helps to identify the particular community. Therefore, it is important to safeguard and documenting to make accessible such heritage for present and future generations. This helps to strengthen the sustainable economic growth in developing countries by way of expanding the cultural tourism industry, which eventually helps for sustainable economic growth. UNESCO convention (2003) has emphasized the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage such as daily rituals and

traditions, which includes performing arts, social rituals, knowledge and practices about nature and the universe, traditional craftsmanship and oral traditions as well as oral history.

4. Use of Internet and Multimedia Technologies

In this digital era, the documenting of intangible heritage are easily done by using multimedia technologies and it helps to preserve undocumented intangible heritage mainly, expressions, social rituals, daily rituals, performing arts, oral traditions, knowledge and practices etc. This has been clearly expressed by Dewhurst & Kornbluh (n.d). They have stated that field workers can use simple digital equipment to capture voices or the rituals of daily life. In the same vein, they have mentioned that archivists, scholars and community members can collaborate via Internet to catalog and contextualize these records and potentially, make them available online. As described by them, there are websites, which maintain and preserve documented intangible heritage in the globe. One example for such website is <http://vedda.org/> which maintains information on Sri Lanka's forest-dwellers the *Veddas* or *Wanniyalaeto*.

5. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in Developing Countries

5.1 Sri Lankan Context

Blundell (2007) has done a research on *vedda* heritage in Sri Lanka and stated that innumerable intangible elements of culture exist away from the mainstream. Specific knowledge is found among the *Vedda* in terms of the forest and belief systems based on nature. This knowledge-sharing is a valuable asset as intangible cultural heritage that could assist the neighboring Sinhala and Tamil communities by introducing the

use of local herbal substances. The *Vanniyaletto* communities are intentionally few in the numbers of a group as they are reliant on limited natural resources. These groups have remained essentially peaceful throughout their history, without initiating violence against other groups (Gunawardhana, 1993; cited in Blundell (2007)). In Blundell's research he emphasized the value of local performance such as *tovil* (exorcism), drumming, low country dance, puppetry, palm leaf weaving, ocean going catamaran making, and innumerable other living folk crafts. He has further described that every location in the country has separate traditions.

Wickramasinghe (2013) described that Sri Lanka, having had a civilization of more than 2500 years had sustained a cultural heritage that vied with many civilizations of the outside world. Many cultural sites in Sri Lanka have been enlisted world heritages. i.e. Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla, Kandy and Galle. Sri Lanka, as mentioned earlier is not only rich in tangible culture but also in intangible culture. She further stated that Sri Lanka has contributed immensely for the cultural development of the world both tangible and intangible culture and will continue to do the same in the future. Wickramasinghe further stated that the Government of Sri Lanka as well as private sector has taken initiatives to promote cultural heritage as follows -

1. Establish a craft village for traditional craftsman and traditional Sri Lanka (Apegama) Folk village near Colombo to promote cultural tourism.
2. Private sector participation and international assistance for the preservation and conservation programmes.
3. Public participation in conservation programmes.

4. Inculcate positive values in school children on national heritage through awareness raising programmes.

5. Conducting electronic and print media programmes to promote awareness of general public on heritage.

As described by Wickramasinghe, the initiatives taken by the government of Sri Lanka has immensely facilitated to safeguard and documenting the intangible cultural heritage for the sustainable economic growth of the country.

The traditional and rural people of Sri Lanka have so many beliefs, magic and superstitions in day to day life. So due to many reasons they are not allowed to give their traditional voluble and hidden knowledge to outsiders. Most probably, such rituals are very complex. To do some rituals and rites there are auspicious moments and special taboos. The presence of women is not tolerated at a place where the ritual is taking pace. One example that could be quoted here is the “Kem”. It is a very elementary ritual carried out whenever a minor ailment affects a man or woman. A “Kem” consists of a physical act such as the plucking of a fruit, herb or a twig without being seen by anyone and without talking to anyone (Case Study Report: Sri Lanka, 2009). Sri Lanka case study report clearly described the challenges to documenting and preserving of intangible heritage. Therefore, it is important to educate rural people about the importance of their rituals and why it needs to be preserved. Therefore, more research is needed to capture the vanishing intangible heritage from rural communities.

5.2 Indian Context

Bala (2012) has pointed out that the Indians are losing their oral history, traditions and intangible cultural heritage at a very fast rate. As pointed out by Bala it is important to link our cultural heritage memories with digital technologies. Bala has clearly described the importance of preservation of dying heritage using new technological tools. The traditional oral history and intangible heritage is not passing out to next generation in a proper manner. Once the old generation is gone, the links of socio-cultural memories will also die. Bala further mentioned that globalization and modernization have affected on oral history and intangible cultural heritage. Though Bala expressed that way the other side of the coin is the advent of technology has enabled to support and save the cultural memories of the communities. It is clear that globalization and modernization have ups and downs. Our responsibility is to make optimum use of the new technological tools and preserve our dying intangible cultural heritage for present and future use. Digital technologies help to convert intangible heritage to tangible one. According to Bala digital technologies can help the community/society to transmit non-material cultural into material format while transmitting the heritage across generation. In the same vein, the younger generation is more inclined to new communication media and such as social media networks eg. Facebook and spend very less time with old generation. Because of this young generation do not know much about their family values and memories. As he mentioned, the link between young and old generation is getting diluted day by day. Once the relationship in between old and young generations is diluted, collective memories, significance of oral values is not able to pass on to the young generation. At this point, it is important to transmit these oral values through digital media to

make digital inventories before it vanished from the community. Even it helps to make awareness of the value of ICH among the young generation.

6. Safeguarding Methods for Intangible to Tangible

1. Audio video recording
2. Still photography
3. Inventories

Most important thing of intangible cultural heritage is not to convert it into dead or still documents but to create a strong medium to spread awareness and make more active and participatory heritage between the two generations. Yin (2006) has divided intangible cultural heritage into two groups as follows –

1. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) that used to live and be practiced within original natural and social context.
2. The ICH that is still living and being practiced within its natural and social context.

As pointed out by Yin it is necessary to make use ICH as living heritage. There are religious, wedding and funeral rituals that continue from generation to generation. Then it becomes living heritage. It helps to preserve such ICH in its original, natural and social context.

7. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and Community

Even though the oral history has used as intangible heritage, it has not taken equally to ICH. Objective of the ICH is to study and preserve cultural heritage, which directly connected to people and community in its original nature. This has been clearly stated by Archibald (2004). According to Archibald (2004) ICH attempts to study and

preserve cultural heritage in straight connection with the people/community of its origin.

“Heritage initiatives carried out in Sri Lanka during the past few decades have been recognized by one of the oldest standing professional bodies of heritage in the world and by the community of global heritage professionals at large. Our commitment towards professional excellence was seen as an investment for the future protecting the tangible, intangible and mixed heritage of humanity. By doing so, we placed a high premium bench-marking best practice for the next generation of archaeologists and heritage managers” (excerpt from Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne – award acceptance speech, Conservation and Heritage Management Award for Excellence 2013, Archaeological Institute of America). Prof. Seneviratne’s speech has given clear evidence of the commitment towards the protecting of tangible, intangible and mixed heritage of humanity for sustainable economic growth in developing countries. At this stage, museums, cultural heritage institutions have a big role to play to documenting intangible cultural heritage. Intangible heritage reflects the image of the particular country and its inhabitants as expressed by Professor Seneviratne.

It is not possible to involve government or the other stakeholders alone to documenting of ICH. It is necessary to obtain permission from community leaders, practitioners to undertake documentation, preservation activities etc. Therefore, community participation is mandatory for ICH awareness and protection programs. It helps to educate community leaders on the importance of documenting the ICH for sustainable economy.

8. Relationship among Tangible and Intangible Heritage (ICH)

There is a strong relationship among tangible and intangible heritage. This has been pointed out by Kreps (2009, cited in Hennessy, 2010). According to Kreps objects stand for significant traditions, ideas, customs, social relations, and it is the stories they tell, the performance they are a part of, and relationships among people and between people and places that are more important than the objects themselves. Kreps has clearly expressed how tangible objects reflect the intangible value of in it. Therefore, it takes paramount importance of documenting the ICH to preserve its value for generation to generation.

Tedla (2012) pointed out the ways of curating ICH in museums. As Tedla described that all tangible heritages have intangible components so that the values of objects displayed in museums are meaningful only with the interpretation of the conflation between the object presented and the idea presented by the object. Examining how, when for what purpose and from what materials these objects are made tells us then the significances of the intangible components to the objects. It gives the clear evidence of relationship between tangible and intangible heritage and how intangible heritages are preserved in museums. In the other hand intangible heritages are documented by using multimedia tools. According to Tedla, that intangible heritage resource are curated in museums by recording and digitizing the intangible performances themselves visually and by recording and displaying places and materials used to perform intangible practices.

9. Conclusion

Yeo (2012) pointed out that most of the verbal traditions are lost when they reach Generation X because Generation X are better educated and they believe that they know more than their grandparents and parents, and they feel that these verbal traditions have little scientific proof. Through visual media verbal traditions can be recorded and preserved. Those recorded traditions can be displayed in museums. Through recorded traditions it is easy to make awareness among the community how they were connected to those traditions in old days. Therefore, it is mandatory to document the vanishing traditions such as traditional know-how, indigenous medicine, rituals that carried out to bring prosperity etc. for sustainable economy in developing countries.

References

Amarasiri, G.D. (2012). Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Intangible Cultural Heritage, Retrieved from <http://archives.dailynews.lk/2012/06/27/fea05.asp>

Archibald, R. (2004). The New Town Square; Museums and Communities in Transition. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.

Bala, Shashi (2012). Digital Inventories on Cultural Memories and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Case Study of Yadav Community of Haryana, India. Retrieved from http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/cidoc/ConferencePapers/2012/bala.pdf

Blundell, David (2007). Revisiting Cultural Heritage in Sri Lanka: The Veddha (Vanniyaletto). Retrieved from

<https://ejournal.anu.edu.au/index.php/bippa/article/download/21/20>

Case Study Report: Sri Lanka (2009). A Project of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sri Lanka (with special reference to folk lore). International Partnership Programme for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage “Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (15-22 July 2009, Kyoto, Osaka and Nara JAPAN). Retrieved from

http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/training/casestudy_pdf/09_10/case_study_report_srilanka.pdf

Dewhurst, C. Kurt & Kornbluh, Mark (n.d.). MSU (Michigan State University Museum) at Work in Africa: Cultural Documentation and Preservation. Retrieved from

http://www.isp.msu.edu/resources/documents/africa_cultural_docu_preservation.pdf

Gunawardhana, Dambane. 1993. The social organization of the traditional Vedda community. Soba 4(3):21.

Hennessy, Kate ((2010). Intangible Cultural Heritage Research and Documentation. Simon Fraser University, SIAT. Retrieved from

<http://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources/images/ich-research-and-documentationp1-50.pdf>

Humanising Archaeology in Multi-cultural Society. Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne – award acceptance speech, Conservation and Heritage Management Award for Excellence 2013, Archaeological Institute of America, The Sunday Times, Sri Lanka, Comments, 24 March 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/130324/sunday-times-2/humanising-archaeology-in-multi-cultural-society-38143.html>

Lowe, Tiffany M. (2013). Cultural Heritage as a Tool for Development and Diplomacy: Examining further uses of UNESCO's intangible heritage-based Socioeconomic Development programs for Women, Master Thesis, The State University of New Jersey, USA, 68p.

Tedla, Bantalem Tadesse (2012). Curating Intangible Heritage in Museums. In: DIHA (Special session 1 DIHA) Archiving and Visualization of Intangible Heritage, Hong Kong. Retrieved from http://www.nodem.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/DIHA_Booklet_Web_Nov-28.pdf

United Nations Education, Scientific, Cultural, Organization. Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris, France. October 2003. UNESCO Website. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>

Wickramasinghe, Nanda (2013). Role played by Culture in Socio-Economic Development- The Sri Lanka Experience. Retrieved from <http://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/wcf2013/wpcontent/uploads/sites/48/2013/11/Absract-Nanda-Wickramasinghe.pdf>

Yeo, Jesvin Puay – Hwa (2012). Recording Verbal Tradition through Visual Media. In: DIHA (Special session 1 DIHA) Archiving and Visualization of Intangible Heritage, Hong Kong. Retrieved from http://www.nodem.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/DIHA_Booklet_Web_Nov-28.pdf

Yin, Tongyun (2006). Museum and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, The Ethic Arts, 6. Retrieved from http://museumstudies.si.edu/safeguarding_intangible.pdf