



# TOWARDS A NATIONAL CULTURE POLICY

VIKRAM SAMPATH



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This paper makes a strong case for the need for a National Culture Policy in India. Such a policy does not define what the culture of a country as diverse as India is, nor is it a tool to impose a homogenized or majoritarian view of culture, as that is undesirable in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual country like India. It instead analyzes effective mechanisms of managing, promoting, preserving and showcasing this rich and vibrant culture and handle the economics of the culture 'industry' through a variety of innovative initiatives, new participation, governmental incentives, funding and Public Private Partnership models. In all of this, the Government can play the role of a facilitator and catalyst rather than the prime mover.

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# Summary

**W**HILE IN A MULTI-CULTURAL, multi-lingual country like India, one might argue that it is ideal if the State or the Government steps out of the cultural arena and allows people manage this themselves, the very fact that a sizeable amount of tax-payers' money is invested in the several existing institutions coming under Government control makes a case for a **National Culture Policy**. Such a policy does not define what the culture of a country as diverse as India is, nor is it a means to impose a homogenized or majoritarian view of culture. The policy needs to look at effective ways of managing, promoting, preserving and showcasing this rich and vibrant culture and handle the economics of the culture 'industry' through a variety of innovative initiatives, new participation, governmental incentives, funding and Public Private Partnership models. In all of this, the Government can play the role of a facilitator and catalyst rather than the prime mover.

The broad areas of consideration on which a National Culture Policy can be developed are enumerated below:

1. Introduce the discipline of Arts Administration/Management, which can produce professionally trained administrators for running academies, arts bodies, national art institutions, museums, monuments, libraries, art galleries and cultural centres for performing arts. Skilled manpower who are sensitive of the arts and also the latest trends and technologies need to be employed. This will be a major job-creation of skilled work force initiative.

2. Implement recommendations of past Committees on role and performance audit of various arts bodies and take immediate remedial steps.
3. Restructure the arts institutions, combining some of them and overhaul others who have not met their objectives or under-performed.
4. Augment the funding and budgetary pie for culture by combining Government intervention with private initiatives, corporate grants and even foreign investment especially in tourism related projects.
5. Provide more tax exemptions and reliefs for donations to the culture industry and bringing it within the ambit of mandatory CSR to encourage more corporates and individuals to adopt culture projects. Important projects adopted by high net worth individuals.
6. Create a structured manner of inculcating cultural component in the education system for holistic development of the child (details in 3.3). Integration into the National Cultural Education scheme can provide employment to so many artists who can also have a livelihood as teachers
7. Enhance grants to Universities and institutions that provide mainly art and culture related study.
8. Utilize the soft power of India's culture for job creation, skill development and enhancing tourism in the country, which can transform it into a profit centre and revenue driver.
9. Establish a National Institute for Skill Development in the traditional arts, crafts, textiles, handicrafts etc. (or added to the NSDC). Certification to become mandatory for these skills and thereby better market prices and export opportunities for our traditional knowledge holders, artisans and craftsmen.
10. Create a National Heritage Trust for experiential tourism. Digital multimedia presentations/sound-light shows, multi-lingual audio guides, qualified tourist guides; sufficient information and pamphlets must be maintained by ASI at the sites. Heritage walks enhance the whole tourism experience and can be conducted with private partnership. In all these important sites opportunities for historical and cultural immersion in the local culture—local dance and music forms, arts and crafts, cuisine etc. and a market for artisans to sell their products to tourists can be made.

11. Refer more monuments for UNESCO listing.
12. Provide more grants for ASI and skilled professionals and training opportunities abroad with knowledge transfer from the best international practices are a must if our archaeological sites have to be preserved.
13. Create a National Audio Visual archive of our country's audio and visual treasures to be created.
14. Modernization and accessibility of archives and libraries through modern technology, e-libraries and e-catalogues to be taken up on priority.
15. Undertake a complete revamp of Museums, the way they are administered currently, along with curation of creative and interesting shows coupled with talks, workshops, performances and outreach programmes.
16. International collaboration and knowledge transfer for Museums. Partner museums with the best internationally to be made for museums in India.
17. More Public Private participation in culture industry. Every town or village or city to have Culture or Heritage Committees that manage asset inventory, conservation and exhibit/archive their histories.
18. Encourage more and more participation of interested Indians, businessmen and foreign investment and collaborations/knowledge transfers in the cultural industry would enhance the ownership, efficiency and working of this vital sector that has been long neglected.
19. Regular showcase of the best of Indian art and culture in international forums and Festivals of India through the embassy networks.
20. More academic and scholarly exchange between countries in the field of culture research and study.





# TOWARDS A NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY FOR INDIA

## Opportunities & Challenges: A Vision Document

### I. BACKGROUND AND THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL CULTURE POLICY

For the longest time it was argued that the country lacked a national culture policy. Ironically, the formulation of such a policy has been opposed by several committees set up by the Ministry of Culture (MoC) itself for the express intention of designing such a policy. In June 2008 yet another such committee declared to the media that Indians were a disparate community, there was hardly anything common between the Kashmiri and a Malayali or a Gujarati and a Mizo in terms of their culture and hence there was no need for a homogenized policy that served them all. The apprehensions of a unified or majoritarian imposition of cultural standards were expressed and the committee had a quiet, unsung burial.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Panel-members-against-one-cultural-policy/articleshow/3089531.cms>

For any meaningful discussion on cultural policy or cultural activity in a country as vast and diverse as India, it is essential to keep in mind the complex, multi-layered, and multi-dimensional cultural fabric of this country. Despite its diversities, that single intangible thread of “Indianness”, which defies definitions and boundaries, unites this cultural fabric. The culture of a people is amorphous; a mosaic of unique identities of groups of people that gets reflected in every aspect of their lives. If civilization is the steering wheel of a country, culture is its driving force. Plato is believed to have said: “The soul takes nothing with her to the next world but her education and her culture.”

A culture policy for a diverse nation like India is in no way an attempt to homogenize the country’s culture—an act, which is anyway impossible through mere legislations or executive decisions. After all, the 5000+ year-old civilizational history and culture of India has borne numerous challenges to be shaken by such a policy document. I argue that a policy of this kind is not even an attempt to define what the culture of India needs to be.

It might be argued that while it is ideal if the State or the Government steps out of the cultural arena and let people manage it themselves, the very fact that a sizeable amount of tax-payers’ money is invested in the several existing institutions coming under Government control makes a case for a **National Culture Policy**. Such a policy needs to look broadly at effective ways of managing, promoting, preserving and showcasing this rich and vibrant culture and handle the economics of the culture ‘industry’ through a variety of innovative initiatives.

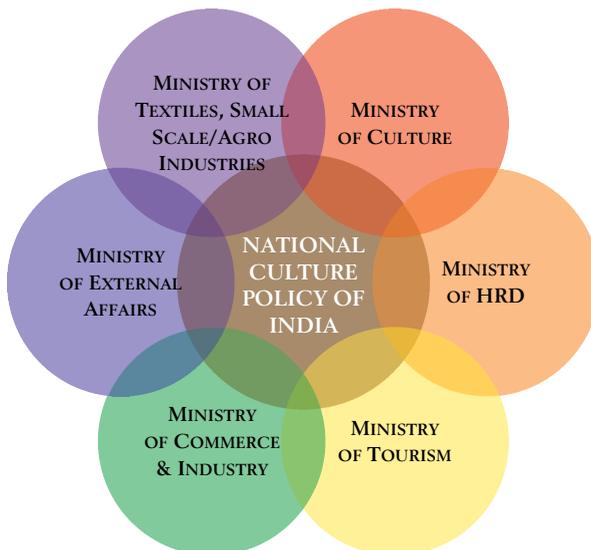
## 2. BROAD FOCUS AREAS FOR A NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY OF INDIA

On this basic premise that the cultural policy needs to preserve, encourage and maintain the unique identities of every Indian and not strive at homogenization, there are broad principles on which a vision forward can be chartered:

1. Complete overhaul and effective management of existing cultural bodies coming under the Government of India.
2. Specialized management of cultural organizations. Proper roadmap, periodic

- performance and objective audits
3. Enhancement of funding for India's cultural industry
  4. Education system to inculcate a sense of national identity, pride and self-worth; funds and grants to universities and educational institutions related to art and culture
  5. Culture as a profit centre that provides jobs, enables skill development and encourages traditional arts and crafts
  6. Integrate culture and tourism to boost the country's rich tourism potential
  7. Dissemination of cultural knowledge through various media
  8. Safeguarding, protecting and conserving our tangible and intangible heritage; enhance funding of specialists for archaeological sites.
  9. Evaluate the cultural needs through people's participation
  10. Showcase and educate the international community about the best of India's culture, heritage, traditional knowledge, performing, and visual arts.

The Culture Policy should be independent of political ideologies. It can be an area of intersection between initiatives of various Ministries of the Government of India and not necessarily just the Ministry of Culture.



### 3. ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY

#### 3.1. ADMINISTRATION OF CULTURAL BODIES

One of the biggest challenges facing the governmental intervention in the domain of culture is the lack of skilled administrators for the 45 odd organizations that fall under the MoC ranging from Sangeet Natak Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, Sahitya Akademi, National Gallery of Modern Art, National Museum, National School of Drama, the seven Zonal Cultural Centres, CCRT, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and so on. While performing artists are masters in their disciplines, they need not always be skilled and unbiased administrators who understand the fine nuances of management. Bureaucrats often consider a Culture Ministry posting as a punishment. India singularly lacks a discipline of “Arts Administration/Management” which produces professionally trained administrators for running academies and arts bodies. Hundreds of qualified personnel are needed for administering national art institutions, museums, monuments, libraries, art galleries and cultural centres for performing arts. If proper National Institutes of Art Administration are established in the near future, within three to five years we can have teams of well-trained professionals to manage our cultural establishments.

#### SCENARIO ABROAD

All advanced countries have Art Administration and/or Museum Administration as a course in their universities. The courses include Arts Management/Administration, basic accounting and financial management, audience development and outreach, marketing and promotion, copyright and law, writing for the arts, curating techniques of exhibitions, use of social media and interactive technologies etc. Over fifty educational institutions from several countries such as the USA, UK, France, Canada, the Netherlands, Austria, Australia, Japan, etc. are affiliated members of a consortium called “Association of Art Administration Educators” (AAAE).<sup>2</sup> There is also the “European network on

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<sup>2</sup> Please see <http://www.artsadministration.org/>

Cultural Management and Cultural Policy Education” (ENCATC).<sup>3</sup> ENCATC, established in Warsaw in 1992, has over 100 members in 40 countries across Europe and beyond. Almost every university in China has a programme of Art and Museum Management.

In total and shocking contrast, India has no such course or educational institution. Just as we have Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Indian Institute of Astrophysics and so on, it is perhaps time to start an Indian Institute of Art Administration or at least Arts Management as a part of an MBA programme at a few B-Schools in the country so that this produces skilled and trained personnel to manage our cultural bodies and museums.

The Ministry of Culture has instituted several committees to look into the performance of these Cultural bodies and suggest changes and recommendations. These include the Bhabha Committee (set up by Order dated 3 March, 1964; Report submitted on 22 October, 1964), the Khosla Committee (set up by Resolution dated 19 February, 1970; Report submitted on 31 July 1972) and the Haksar Committee (Set up by Resolution dated 24 March, 1988; Report submitted in July 1990). The Khosla Committee delved into the details of cultural administration in various countries like France, Italy, Japan, Great Britain, USA, the then USSE, the then Czechoslovakia and was of the view that their study “amply demonstrated the importance of the State’s responsibility in the preservation, development and stimulation of cultural values...a policy of laissez faire in the domain of culture is fraught with danger.” The last in the series was the High Powered Committee (HPC) under Abhijit Sengupta’s Chairmanship set up by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, through an Office Memorandum No.8/69/2013-Akademis dated the 15 January 2014. It was pursuant to a recommendation of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture in its 201st Report, presented to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and the Speaker, Lok Sabha, on 17 October 2013.

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3 *A* Please see <http://www.encatc.org/>

All these Committees have produced excellent documentations of what ails the academies and bodies, examined their constitution, objectives and functioning and conducted a thorough performance audit of whether they met the needs for which they were established and if not, what remedial measures needed to be taken. The Bhabha Committee quoted in the subsequent Khosla Committee report states, “We found that many of the recommendations were not considered acceptable, either because the change would have necessitated an amendment of the existing Constitution, a measure to which the Government was averse. Some of the less important suggestions were accepted, but these did not yield any appreciable benefits.”

The latest HPC report submitted to Parliament in 2014 has nearly 220-pointed action items and recommendations. As the HPC rightly mentions “First, if the Government wishes to experiment with change in administrative systems, a small Ministry like Culture could be a starting point. Second, many of the changes we propose are not entirely new, they revisit the conditions that existed fifty years ago; it is since then that rigidity has set in. And, third, this Ministry is one whose very mandate should require it to interact with the young, with creative, independent minds: it has to be a catalyst for new beginnings.”<sup>4</sup>

A proper Vision and Mission Statement for each body, a specified list of activities that are monitored and evaluated periodically (may be an annual or bi-annual thorough performance audit system; peer reviews from other institutions etc.) and with no overlap with other sister organizations within the MoC is the need of the hour to revive these institutions.

The Regional Centres of many of the GOI bodies are in an abysmal state due to lack of conjunction with the Head Quarters in Delhi, lack of power and basic functional autonomy and suffer from a complete oversight and ignoring by the MOC of the regional branches (NGMAs in Mumbai, Bangalore; IGNCA centres in Bangalore, Guwahati, Varanasi; etc to name a few). These regional Centres are often set up with no clear sense of Mission, Objectives, or Agenda. A case in point

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4 World See full text of High-Powered Committee (HPC) Report on [http://www.indiaculture.nic.in/sites/default/files/hpc\\_report/HPC%20REPORT%202014.pdf](http://www.indiaculture.nic.in/sites/default/files/hpc_report/HPC%20REPORT%202014.pdf)

is the IGNCA, which has been perennially in controversies since its inception. With a sprawling Head Office in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi and Regional Centres in Bengaluru, Varanasi and Guwahati struggling to make any headway since 1987, IGNCA has decided now to start many more regional centres in Ranchi, Srinagar, Goa, Vadodara, Puducherry, and Kerala. Land would be acquired, buildings constructed, a battery of staff appointed, with no well-defined agenda or vision on what is to be done. The maintenance of these inefficient white elephants is subsidized by Indian tax-payers.

Many of the cultural bodies have remained leaderless for a long period of time, which not only demoralizes the staff but also derails the calendar and vision of the institution. The HPC for instance mentions 17 institutions that do not have a regular full-time administrative head. The recruitment rules and eligibility criteria need to be realistic till the time the cadre of trained arts administrators are put in place.

The HPC clearly sums up the issues that need to be addressed with clear-cut action items:

- Structure of the institutions
- Improvement of processes
- Scope of collaborative synergy between institutions
- Need for greater transparency
- Intention to break out of mediocrity
- Acknowledge the ongoing transformation in our social and cultural milieu

This blue-print could be a very good way to chart a time-bound roadmap for the revitalization of our institutions.

### 3.2. FUNDING OF CULTURE

The plan expenditure allocation for 2015-2016 was Rs.2,169 crores whereas it was Rs.2,159 crores the previous year a meagre 0.46% increase in budgetary allocation. On an average China spends roughly 18% of its budget on culture, education and science. The UK recently saw the support of an additional £8.9 Million for culture, 25% tax relief on orchestras and other creative activities, support to roll out Wi-Fi in all State Libraries and Museums and so on. Most European countries spend

about 1 - 1.5 % of their public expenditure on culture and the quantum of private expenditure in culture too is substantial in the relatively affluent countries.<sup>5</sup> From 0.12% spend in 2009-10 to 0.13% in 2014-15 of the Government of India's budget, it certainly paints a sad picture of the priority that is given to a country with such an ancient heritage and culture.

The UK has the concept of the 'Arts Council', which acts as the nodal agency for all matters related to funding the arts. The funding here comes as a mix of two sources - direct Government funding and a large component through private investments in culture called the National Lottery. This funds a wide range of activities – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, crafts to collections; and helps them achieve their mission statement of “Great art and culture for everyone.” Close to £1 Billion of public money invested in 664 arts organizations from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2018. £69.5 Million per year comes from the National Lottery invested in touring and working with children and young people. £22.6 Million spent on developing 20 major partner museums across the country.<sup>6</sup>

The National Culture Fund (NCF) in India was set up in some way to possibly mirror the Lottery system of the UK but has not taken off in the same way.<sup>7</sup> There is an urgent need to augment the funding for culture by combining Government intervention with private initiatives, corporate grants and even foreign investment especially in tourism related projects. The Government could play the role of a facilitator and strictly monitor the flow, sources and utility of funds. Tax exemption for donations to the culture industry and bringing it within the ambit of mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can drive more corporates and individuals to adopt culture projects. Important projects could be adopted by high net worth individuals and even go by their name if that is an incentive that someone is looking for.

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<sup>5</sup> HPC Report Annexures VI, VII & VIII on Budgetary details

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/grants-arts-0>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://ncf.nic.in/>

### 3.3. INCULCATING A CULTURE COMPONENT IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

Swami Vivekananda points out that the defect of present day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. The end of all education, Swamiji opined, was ‘man-making’, manifesting in our lives as perfection, which is the very nature of our inner self.<sup>8</sup>

Our culture, heritage and traditional knowledge has to become an integral part of the education system if we want a future generation that is rooted in Indian traditions and philosophy but ready to soar in the global skies with confidence and pride about oneself and one’s civilizational heritage. As Sri Aurobindo had said ‘Earth bound, heaven amorous’.

The cultural education component can have three dimensions: The first is Knowledge-Based and must introduce young people to a broader range of cultural thought and creativity like workshops with creative people, artists, writers, musicians and painters.

The second element centers on the development of children’s analytical and critical faculties, which additionally has a direct relevance across other curriculum subjects.

The third element is skills based and teaches children how to participate in and to create new culture for themselves - designing a product, drawing, composing music, directing a play, choreographing a dance piece, or making a short film and also teach children how to work together as a team.

Some international guidelines on Cultural Education state well-defined objectives. While these standards are for a largely international target, they can certainly be customized for Indian children taking into account our own sensibilities, realities, and limitations particularly in far-flung areas. A pilot project can be run in select 30-40 schools to assess the impact that cultural sensitization will have on children’s all round development and how it enhances their study. It can then be extended across the country in a phased manner. Those students who discover their own talents can then pursue their area of interest assiduously supported through proper scholarship.

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8 See <http://www.iimb.ac.in/sites/default/files/Art%20of%20Man%20Making%20and%20Character%20Building.pdf>

There are so many artists who can be integrated into the National Cultural Education scheme as teachers. It is vital that children engage with the arts early in their lives as it contributes to their development and wellbeing.

At the level of higher education, it is a real pity that India lacks institutions on Indology/Indic Studies or Civilizational and Heritage Studies. We have outsourced most of this to Western scholars and cry hoarse each time they come up with a biased and warped viewpoint of our country, its culture, and faiths. But there is hardly a strong counter-narrative based on honest scholarship bereft of shallow jingoism or ideological biases.

### **3.4. CULTURE INDUSTRY AS PROFIT CENTRE AND JOB CREATOR: SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

For long the Culture Ministry is seen as primarily a cost centre and grants body for various schemes and individuals. How the soft power of India's culture and the manner in which it can be utilized for job creation, skill development, and enhancing tourism in the country, has seldom been looked at. The Culture Policy of the Government must provide economic stability to traditional craftsmen and give them a sense of pride in their so that they don't abandon their hereditary task. The All India Handloom Board, the Handicrafts Board, and the Khadi and Village Industries Commission were set up with this intention. A National Institute for Skill Development in the traditional arts, crafts, textiles, handicrafts etc. should be set up or added to the existing National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

An exhaustive inventory list of all the crafts and arts from every part of the country should be made. The strong regional identities in methods of weaving, colour combinations, design patterns, dyeing and printing methods, casting methods and metal-work and chiseling methods in stone-work can be leveraged from one region to another. Artisans can be taught enhanced skills for innovative craft products for the modern consumer and sustainable marketing linkages created through modern technology and e-commerce.

A framework for certification must be created by the Institute in consultation with NSDC, NIOS, institutions of higher education and other private stakeholders. Market prices and export opportunities would get enhanced by such

a certified output and benefit millions of artisans producing wonderful wares but living in penury and contemplating a shift of professions.

## TOURISM

As highlighted in the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) 2016 report, Tourism can account for 9.8% of global GDP (direct, indirect and induced), 1 in 11 jobs, 9.8% and 6% of world exports.<sup>9</sup> Our heritage monuments, temples, palaces and forts count for among the best in the world and we have numerous World Heritage Monuments certified by UNESCO. But the infrastructure and upkeep around the monuments is abysmal. The Culture Policy should dovetail with the Tourism Plan of the Government in ensuring good infrastructure around monuments—clean, approachable and motorable roads, clean toilets and restaurants serving hygienic food. This industry in itself can help employ millions of people in the area. The most exquisite monument cannot compensate for the ugliness of public defecation, garbage mounds and rivers of sewage—common in every Indian tourist spot. Beggars found around the monuments and temples must be gainfully employed around the monument. Digital multi-media presentations/sound-light shows, multi-lingual audio guides, qualified tourist guides, sufficient information and pamphlets must be maintained by ASI at the sites. Heritage walks enhance the whole tourism experience and can be conducted with private partnership. Opportunities for historical and cultural immersion in the local culture—local dance and music forms, arts and crafts, cuisine etc. and a market for artisans to sell their products to tourists can be created.

On the lines of the English Heritage, the Government of India must seriously consider a National Heritage Trust (NHT). Gone are the days when people looked at history books for learning about their past and heritage. They looking at experiences that bring history to life in an engaging way standing on the very spot where history happened. The Trust needs to offer a hands-on experience that will be educational for children, national and international tourists who come to the country. This needs to be informed by values of authenticity, quality, imagination,

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/regions%202016/world2016.pdf>

responsibility and fun and the broad vision must be that people experience the story of India where it really happened. Initially some 15-20 major monuments can be selected for the project across the length. The NHT can be a public private model where the Government organizations (especially Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)) work in tandem with private bodies to create this exciting tour framework. Some pilot projects could be undertaken on a more scientific and large-scale basis using specialists, cultural historians and artists to provide a holistic experience of India and its rich past and heritage.

More monuments must be referred for UNESCO listing. There is an economic case too for this. In Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site in Lao, the number of direct jobs increased from by about 10.3% from 2000 to 2005 and the number of commercial establishments has doubled over last six years. As a result, direct employment in the tourism sector has grown at a compounded annual rate of 8.5%. Angkor Wat in Cambodia was listed as World Heritage in 1992 and since then tourists arrivals have grown at an impressive 21% (CAGR) annually. In 1993, the tourist arrivals were about 1.2 and in 2010 the recorded figures were over 25 lakhs. Tourism receipts have grown from 100 million USD in 1995 to 1786 million USD in 2010. Another World Heritage Site, Lumbini in Nepal recorded at 22,000 tourist arrivals annually in 1997 when it was inscribed as a World Heritage Site. With greater political stability after 2007, tourist arrivals indicate an annual growth rate of 54.3% since 2002.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.5. CONSERVATION AND DISSEMINATION

A lot of the country's tangible and intangible heritage needs to be preserved for posterity and also documented. We have lacked a sense of documentation and showcasing of our own very rich past.

Archaeological studies need to be enhanced in a major way to bring the best international practices to our country and to also understand various unknown aspects of our own past. India has a wealth of archaeological remains crying to be excavated. Government and private initiatives can solve the lack of money that

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*10 Source: Karnataka Tourism Vision Group (KTVG) Report submitted to the Government of Karnataka in 2013. pp 19-20.*

plagues the department. Several American and European universities who send their students to other countries for a hands-on experience in archaeology could be invited through government-enabled collaborations to specific archaeological excavation sites, under the supervision of the ASI. Much of the ancient Egyptian and Greek civilizations were uncovered this way. Skilled professional training opportunities abroad with knowledge transfer from the best international practices are a must if our archaeological sites have to be preserved.

Most countries in the world have a National Audio Visual Archive or a National Sound Archive where all audio and video heritage of that country and also of others are stored. In our country sadly, old gramophone records and spools etc. are found with scrap dealers in flea markets. A national legacy monument must bring together Audio (Gramophone, Spool, Tapes, cassettes, CDs, All India Radio recordings etc) and Video (Doordarshan, NFAI etc) on to a single platform, digitize them and make them easily accessible for everyone. Such an institution would be a lasting legacy for the country and a treasure trove of information about the country, its classical, folk and film music and theatre recordings. It would contain valuable information and footage related to the country, its freedom struggle, speeches and videos of our leaders and thereby creates a sense of national pride and self-esteem and awareness of our own history. This will also become a revenue driver for the Government in the long run if marketed effectively.

Modernization of our Archives and Libraries is a crying need of the hour. Accessibility of records is a major issue even with an institution such as the National Archives of India. Online catalogues and e-libraries where students and scholars can easily access material on demand, Wi-fi connectivity in all the major libraries, computer access, online catalogues and easy call for books and records without red-tape should be available.

## MUSEUMS

It is sad that in Independent India there have been very few new museums that have been developed. Government museums make up for 90% of the roughly 1000 museums in India. In 2011, UNESCO published a scathing report on the appalling condition of India's top eight museums, citing sub-standard maintenance,

lighting and signage among other issues. But at the core are deep rooted issues of archaic policies, lack of autonomy and skilled manpower and under-staffing. They are banned from all kinds of partnerships with private individuals or organizations and have to depend only on Central funding for day-to-day operations. Professional salaries are not given to trained museum staff and hence modern curatorial, display and conservation methods are not followed in many cases.

The purpose of a museum is not only for education, knowledge and curiosity but also to give a sense of history, pride and belonging. Our excellent collections in various museums are a proof of socio-cultural history but when museums begin to act as mere closed-door guardians of treasures instead of disseminating them widely, attractively and intelligently, they lose their very purpose. Innovative shows must be creatively curated, an audio tour must accompany each show complemented with large displays, organizing collateral events such as talks, workshops and performances and school outreach programmes.

Collaborations with the best museums abroad for knowledge transfer is a must if our museums have to grow. More and more Indian museums should be encouraged to partner with these museums- like the Metropolitan Museum in New York or the Rockefeller Museums.

Museums are also one of the most significant revenue earners through tourist footfalls. The five most popular museums and galleries in both London and Paris receive more than 20 million visits between them while Shanghai's and Istanbul's 'top five' attract more than six million. 'Newer' cities too are keen to develop their museums and galleries. Singapore alone has more than 50 museums, and 40% of its residents visit a museum or gallery each year. Highest percentage of residents attending museums and galleries are as follows: London (53.6%); Shanghai (47.5%); Paris (43%). Just one museum in Paris (the Louvre) gets more than 1.5 times the number of visitors that all of India gets in terms of foreign visitors according to the last statistics given by the Indian Tourism department. (9.72 million vs. 6.29 million). Just in terms of international scale and standards, if we see the 3 cities with the highest number of national museums: Shanghai (27); Paris (24); Berlin (18) or with 3 cities with highest number of other museums: London (162); Berlin (140); New York (126) and even with cities with

very little history- it becomes amply clear that we in India fall woefully short. Singapore has more than 50 museums and in recent years, about 100 museums have opened annually in China, peaking at nearly 400 in 2011 alone. While it might not be entirely feasible to develop museums in every city and town of India, major centres in the country could have the 'Museum District' (like in London) or the 'Museum Mile' (in New York) set up with public private partnership to become a showcase of the culture and arts of the entire State and also for different facets like for example- science, IT, sound, defence, cricket, etc. which have developed indigenously in Bangalore.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to national museums, regional and community museums need to be encouraged and provided for to showcase regional culture and heritage. For instance a botanical museum for the Western Ghats would be a unique asset. In line with the Government's Digital India Project, the online medium should be used to the maximum extent to conserve, create and disseminate cultural artifacts of India.

### 3.6. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL NEEDS LOCALLY & PEOPLE PARTICIPATION

While since time immemorial culture has thrived through royal patronage, in Independent India, private galleries, institutions, individuals and impresarios have promoted culture a lot more than Government bodies with all their staff, resources and finances have managed to do. The Sabhas of Madras have preserved and promoted the ancient Carnatic music tradition. The art revolution took place in the galleries of the cities of Bombay and Calcutta. The world's largest literary fair, the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) brings the world's attention to India and Indian literature in addition to coughing up lots of revenue for the State Government's tourism kitty - something that the Sahitya Akademi has not been able to. At international literary gatherings like the Frankfurt Book Fair, India has an abysmal presence. The richness of our languages and their literature can become an industry in itself earning billions of dollars for both the writer community and for the country through effective selling of translation rights.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: Karnataka Tourism Vision Group (KTVG) Report submitted to the Government of Karnataka in 2013. pp 46-47.

But one wonders if any bureaucrat, sans sensitivity for culture, can truly grasp the need and importance of promoting culture. Today there is a government-people divide in the field of culture. This brings us to the problem: how can we create a government-people partnership to promote culture? Every city, town or village must have a 'Culture' or 'Heritage' committee, as is done in several parts of the UK. These committees, as a beginning, must create an Asset Inventory by listing every local heritage site, old building, tradition (such as a local weaving or music or craft tradition), and knowledge (of medicinal plants etc.), and all private collections of art, craft and other artifacts. At a local level there must be a devolution and decentralization where the Committees must be responsible for the preservation of existing archaeological and heritage monuments and local art traditions. However, all restoration should be done under the supervision of the ASI.

Unless the local people— who have, after all, preserved their local heritage over centuries, are involved and take pride in local conservation efforts, we will continue to see our antiques and artifacts smuggled out of the country, and our traditional knowledge patented in the West.

### 3.7. INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASE

In most international forums, India and her culture are not showcased to the extent that it can be to depict its richness in all its glory. Through the network of Embassies of India and Consulates, regular dissemination of cultural artifacts of India, the best of the performing and visual arts, films and documentaries, books and literature should be periodically organized. Festivals of India which were in vogue earlier in other countries have to be revived and an independent and unbiased team to accredit the artists being a part of it to preclude favouritism that has crept into the selection process.

The soft power of Indian culture can and must be used to create jobs, not necessarily always IN India, but **FOR** Indians across the world. The demand for Indian cuisine across the world itself is a market that waiting to be explored. Instead, what we find is that in most countries, so-called Indian restaurants are run by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis!

International Co-operation should be sought for setting up India Studies Chairs in major universities abroad where Indian scholars are invited to research and teach about India, her history and culture rather than leave it to Western scholars to create a warped view of Indian history and religions. Cultural cooperation agreements with various countries to get the best of what is happening world-wide to administer and disseminate culture is the need of the hour.

Like the recent inclusion of World Yoga Day, more art forms –classical music, dance, classical languages and traditional knowledge etc. should receive international recognition considering they are more than 5000 years old.

An important aspect of international cultural co-operation is a sizeable programme of scholarships/fellowships in different disciplines given to foreign scholars and artists to come to India and to Indian scholars to visit foreign countries. Most of these scholarships programmes need to be on a reciprocal basis. Cross-cultural projects and interdisciplinary studies can herald new ideas and avenues in the field of culture and can act as a soft tool for international cooperation and diplomacy.

Rabindranath Tagore had said “Everything comes to us that belongs to us if we create the capacity to receive it.” The time has come now to build this capacity in the culture industry of India and make it a robust and streamlined one that not only provides jobs and revenue to millions, but creates a sense of national identity, self-esteem, pride and lasting legacy for posterity. This document is by no means an exhaustive list of action items but merely a vision document that charts a roadmap for further steps. The devil, they say, is in the details and so it is in this case too. A detailed analysis and plan of action needs to be created for each and every idea suggested if we indeed intend to make tangible and positive changes in this important field of our nation’s life.

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