Digital inventories on Cultural Memories and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Case study of Yadav community of Haryana, India

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Abstract

Across the Globe, all communities have their own social and cultural memories such as ritual, customs, traditions and folk lore. These are being practiced over a long period using folk music, folk dance, chanting and other oral methods. In India almost every community has its own oral (*Shrutiltihaas*) history and intangible cultural heritage. We, the Indians are losing our oral history, traditions and intangible cultural heritage at a very fast rate. There is an urgent need to connect our cultural heritage memories with digital technologies such as digital documentation of cultural memories.

Yadav is one of the oldest and most prominent castes in Indian society. It's a warrior clan originated from the era of Lord Krishna. Their oral history and Intangible cultural heritage is not passing out to next generation in a proper manner. Once our old generation is gone, we will lose the links of socio-cultural memories. 'Globalization' and 'Modernization' have affected the Yadav community in terms of Oral History and Intangible Cultural Heritage. The advent of technology has enabled us to support and save the cultural memories of the communities.

Introduction

India is a country of multi-cultural forms and values. There is a phrase in Hindi "Kosh-Kosh pe badle paani char kosh pe wani" i.e. "In India water changes after every two miles while Language changes after each four mile".

India, when you think of India as a country the first thing comes in mind is lot of colors, spicy food, voice of chanting, different sounds, languages, costumes, ritual, customs and festival. All these things represent the multi-cultural and multi facet population of India. India is a very rich country in terms of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Here we can see the living cultural traditions all around the society in forms of festivals. These festivals and ceremonies have different tangible and intangible values. Both these festivals and the way they are celebrated differently by each community, increases its significance and value related to culture and social context.

Digital Media or digitalization is the very know terms in day to day life. Where we go, we record our memories in a still photograph or video mode. These digital memories can also be shared in a very less time period. This modern technology is helping the cultural institutions to record and preserve the cultural heritage. Especially in the case of intangible cultural heritage these digital

technologies can help the community/society to transmit the non material cultural in to material format. Digital techniques not even help into preserving but also it help in transmitting this heritage accros generation. The aim of this article is to explain the need of the digitalization of ICH by understanding *Gowardhan Puja* In Yadav community as a case study.

In her article "*Museums and Intangible Heritage*: The dynamics of an 'Unconventional' Relationship", Marilena Alivizatou[1] has written about the how can Intangible Cultural Heritage gives the overall view and perceptive to the cultural heritage though acknowledging the significance and importance of oral and living practices, languages and expressions that are related to objects, monuments and cultural spaces. Communities are living together within their cultural space and these spaces are the source of their collective or cultural memories. It's also helping them to sustain their social-cultural identity.

Every community has its own customs, traditions, rituals, fair and festivals etc. If I am allowed to say this in a comprehensive manner, I must say that each and every day has its own celebrations going on in some form or other within these different communities.

In *Kua pujan*[2] ritual, Jachha[3]is making the design of *Jhabadi design*[4] and *swastika*[5]

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[1]Paper from the Institute of archaeology 17 (2006): 47-48 http://pia-journal.co.uk/article/view/pia.268/361 (Accessed on 16th June 2009)

[2]*Kua pujan* ceremony is performed (after 45 days of birth) only when a boy take a birth. It does not happen in birth of a girl child.

Cultural memories and Intangible Cultural Heritage is very important part of our cultural life. But there is one unfortunate factor that most of these rituals, traditions, and customs are celebrated in families by the elders in Yadav community. Although younger generation is involved in these rituals and tradition but they are not actually aware of the importance and significance of these rituals and traditions. Usually pre-modernization era family members used to spend time together and discuss about rituals and traditions. India has very rich history of folk lore. Be it *Holikadehan*(Reason behind celebrating Holi) or *Home coming of Lord Rama in Ramayan* (Reason behind celebrating Diwali). I must say that Modernization has affected the cultural identity of the Yadav community as a whole in some way or other. These days, families spend very less time together (both young and old generations). Young generation is busy in watching TV, chatting over social networking sites or coping up with pressures generated either from schools or organizations. As a result we are spending very less time with our elders to know our own family values and memories. The link between young and old generation is getting diluted day by day. The old generation has the collective memories and the significance or values of oral traditions with them are not able to pass on it to the young ones.

Sample of Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Name of the Ritual:	Gowardhan Puja
Date and Years of the Recording:	18th October 2009
Name of the recording Place:	Bawana Village
Name of the recording State:	Delhi
Name of the Community:	Yadav Community
Name of the Head of the Family:	Family head name is Lt. Bhrama Nanda Yadav. Its joint Family five Brother and their family lives together in one big house.
Number of Members in Family:	Ten Males (three male are not married) Ten Females Eight Children's (four girls and four boys)
Background of the ritual:	Load Krishna lifted the Gowardhan Mountain to save the people of Virdhavan from the anger of Indra Dev. After that day all hindu community celebrate the Gowardhan puja day after Diwali festivals. (In India the days of festivals and rituals are not same in any year because we celebrate our rituals and celebration on basis of Hindu calendar or Panchang). Yadav are supposed to be direct descendants of Lord Shri Krishna.
Name of the Recorder or scholar:	Shashi Bala (Research Scholar)

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[3]*Jachha* is a mother of an infant

[4] Jhabadi design is a traditional design of a *Yadav* community. In *Kua Pujan* ceremony this design is also draw on entrance wall of *Jachha's r*oom.

[5]*Swastika* is a religious symbol in Hinduism

Medium of the Recorder: Photography and Audio and video recording

Name of the equipments: Digital Camera and tape-recorded

Assistant/Cameraman: Recording done by Vinod Kumar

S.No.	Ritual recording	Photographs	Remarks
1)	On Gowardhan puja's day women make a small mountain of cow's dung and decorate with the flour. After that they put earthen lamps on the cow dung mountain and light those. The ritual is performed in the evening. Women decorate the plate for puja and put essential things in that like turmeric, seven Baal (paddy kernels), Khir-Puri (tradition meal for festivals), khil-khilone, sweets and sugar cane (this season being the season for sugar cane crop)		The photograph shows four different puja plates arranged by this joint family. This big Indian joint family has four nuclear families and all of them are performing a joint puja.
2)	In the family all men and boys bring 'Musala' (pestle) with him for this puja. Musal is symbolizing the shri Balram (elder brother of Lord Shri Krishna) After that they all do prayer of Lord shri Krishna.		There is a tradition in Yadav community that only the men and boys perform the ritual in this puja. But in this photo there are two girls sitting in the ritual because of modernization. Most of the members of Yadav community do not believe in this male domination of rituals anymore.
3)	After that they all get up and sing an Aarti (hymns) of Lord Ganesha (In India every sacred ritual of Hindus start with prayers of Lord Ganesha) and Lord shri Krishna and take seven parikramas (rounds) of Gowardhan Mountain and do prayers for family and themselves.		When they stand up the put the Musal on their shoulders (like Shri Balram do in mythology).
4)	When the all seven parikramas		

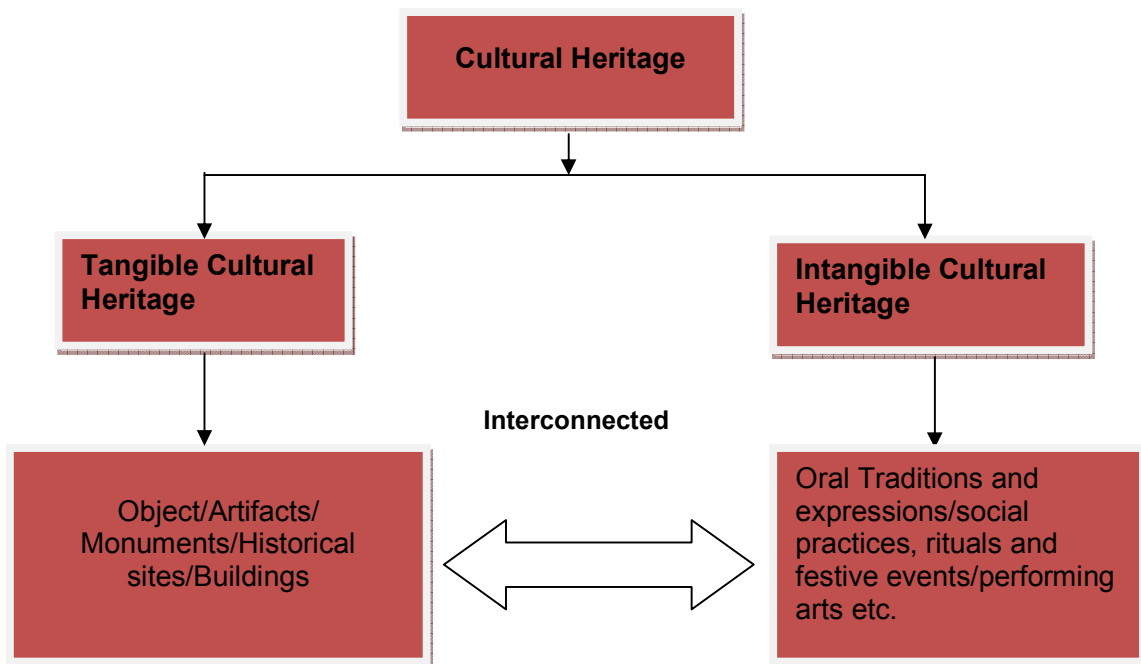|		
and prayers are done then the old woman (usually grandmothers) of the family come and give bhog (first baits of sweets and meals) to the shri Krishna on Gowardhan mountain. After that all the women of family come and do prayers and the children fire crackers and have fun.		

Advantages

There is an urgent need to record and make digital inventories of these memoirs before we lose them. In my informal interactions with both the generations (i.e. old and young) of *Yadav* community of *Haryana,* I found that above predictions are almost correct and we are losing our intangible heritage and oral customs. Both the generations are aware of this but the same time they have not recognized the consequences of losing this.

Once the old generation is gone, we will lose the link between the social cultural knowledge and memories. For safeguarding the ICH it's required that we translate it into material form with the help of available   methodologies such as audio-video recording, still photography and inventories etc.   Idea behind to materialize the ICH is not to convert it in to a dead or still documents but to **create a strong** medium to spread awareness and make more active and participatory heritage between the two generations. Every object, historical site, monuments has symbolic meanings, memories, significances and values in terms of intangible elements. Mounir Bouchenaki6 has written in "The intangible heritage must be seen as a broader framework within which tangible heritage take on its shapes and significance."

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[6] Editorial note, 'Museum International' ,ISSN 1350-0775, no 221-223 (Vol 56, no 1-2, 2004)

Flow Chart of the Cultural Heritage

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                      ┌─────────────────────┐
                      │  Cultural Heritage  │
                      └─────────────────────┘
                 ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
                 ▼                             ▼
    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
    │ Tangible Cultural   │        │ Intangible Cultural │
    │ Heritage            │        │ Heritage            │
    └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
                 │                             │
              Interconnected
                 ▼                             ▼
    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
    │ Object/Artifacts/   │ ◄────► │ Oral Traditions and │
    │ Monuments/Historical│        │ expressions/social  │
    │ sites/Buildings     │        │ practices, rituals  │
    │                     │        │ and festive events/ │
    │                     │        │ performing arts etc.│
    └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
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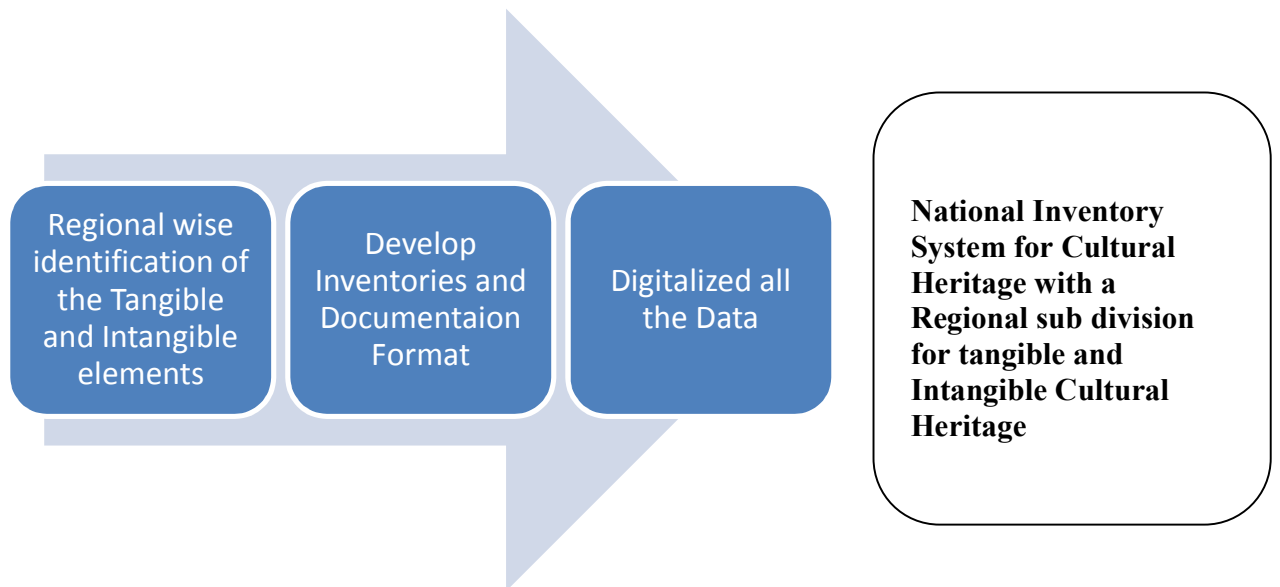
National Inventory System and Ongoing Initiatives

In India Nation Mission on Monuments and antiquities is doing work on National cultural inventory on tangible objects though Ministry of Culture.

Janapada Sampada, IGNCA is playing major role in documenting intangible cultural heritage of India. IGNCA has done inventories of 30 elements of intangible cultural heritage of India. National Folklore support Centre (NFSC) is a non-government organization in Chennai is working in lines to promote the Indian folklore. From last year Department of Museology, National Museum Institute is running a research project of Documentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Ladakh and Western Utter Pradesh, two culturally rich regions of India.

The use of Digital technologies has helped us to promote, preserve, revitalize and protect the ICH. For Example Madubani paintings of Bihar, the cultural motifs are digitalized and commercialize. We have seen the journey of Madubani art from wall to paper to T shirts and saris. In some cases digitalization of ICH is very helpful to make an inventorying before it's all disappears.

In developing countries like ours we have to develop a collective digital database for all communities. This can be led by government organizations with help of NGOs and individual researchers.

Regional wise identification of the Tangible and Intangible elements

Develop Inventories and Documentaion Format

Digitalized all the Data

National Inventory System for Cultural Heritage with a Regional sub division for tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Limitation

Being a member of this community I should ask myself that "Are we preserving our beliefs, values, rituals, traditions in terms of ICH for future generation"?

If yes, than is it collective efforts by a nation, society or community?" In Indian context many NGOs or individuals are working on these lines. As far as communications is concerned, yes, it's very less. In absence of proper communication medium findings/outcomes or the results of these works are not shared. As a result duplication of work and efforts is happing. The big questions are how can we make collective efforts to preserve our Cultural Heritage? How can we make these efforts useful for community and involve in these activity?

Lack of educations and awareness about ICH in Yadav community is a major hindrance. The elders of Yadav community are not aware of the grave situation they are going to face. It's must for them to pass this knowledge to next generation and much work is needed to achieve that.

Conclusion

We have to have a national inventory system through which we can identify the categories to document the ICH of Yadav Community on regional level. This type of inventory system helps us to identity the urgent safeguarding list and makes collaborative efforts to develop the National inventory.ICH is an ongoing process which always adds something or removes something. The change is initiated within community by the community members. Digital documentation can help in this situation as we can record all the procedures step by step.

There is an urgent need to spread awareness and motive to pass the old rituals and traditions and cultural memories to their future generations.

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