

Preservation and Promotion of India's Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage

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There are 3685 centrally protected monuments/sites under the jurisdiction of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in the country. Conservation, preservation and maintenance of these centrally protected monuments/sites is a continuous process and is taken up as per the requirement and availability of resources subject to the Rules and terms of National Policy for Conservation, 2014.

Government of India has set up 7 Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) with headquarter at Patiala, Nagpur, Udaypur, Prayagraj, Kolkata, Dimapur and Thanjavur to protect, promote and preserve various forms of folk art and culture throughout the country. These ZCCs organize various cultural activities and programmes on regular basis. The major activities/programmes conducted during the last three years are Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsavs, Kashi Tamil Sangamam, Vande Bharatam, Madhavpur Ghed Fair, Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam, Vividhhta ka Amrit Mahotsav, Bhartiya Kala Mahotsav etc.

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, has undertaken several initiatives in the past three years for the preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Key activities include:

- Digitization and conservation of manuscripts, rare books, and archival materials under the National Manuscripts Mission (NMM).
- Documentation and promotion of folk and tribal arts through research projects and publications.
- Execution of Bharat Pavilion at World Expo, Dubai and ongoing work for World Expo, Osaka 2025 to showcase India's cultural heritage.
- Implementation of the National Mission for Cultural Mapping (NMCM) involving cultural asset mapping of artists, art forms, and heritage practices in respect of 4.5 lakhs villages of India.
- The Janapada Sampada Division continues extensive fieldwork and audio-visual documentation of vanishing traditions, rituals, performing arts, and oral histories.

Scientific treatment and preservation is taken up as and when required by adopting key steps such as chemical treatment, consolidation, biocidal and hydrophobic treatment for mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. ASI takes all necessary measures to protect and preserve the protected heritage sites from the growing pressures of urbanization under the provisions contained in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and Rules framed thereunder.

The Government announced Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (BharatSHRI) on 01/02/2023 for digitations of estampages. In this project so far 27429 estampages have been digitized by ASI.

IGNCA has made significant progress in digitization under the National Manuscripts Mission and its own archival projects:

- Over 5.5 crore folios of manuscripts have been documented across India.
- Digital Library and Kalasampada portal of IGNCA provide online access to thousands of manuscripts, rare books, audio-visual materials, photographs, and ethnographic collections.
- IGNCA's Cultural Informatics Lab is actively working on metadata generation, OCR, and archival management.

The National Archives of India (NAI) holds approximately 34 crore pages of public records. Out of these, around 12 crore pages have been digitized and made available on the Abhilekh Patal portal.

ASI conducts 'World Heritage Week' and 'World Heritage Day' celebration every year and undertakes

Heritage Walks and various cultural awareness programs in co-ordination with other government and non-governmental agencies to engage youth and local communities to create awareness for preservation of our cultural heritage.

ZCCs actively engage youth by organizing a variety of programmes that bring India's artistic heritage closer to them. These include the Guru Shishya Prampara Scheme which facilitates direct mentorship from master artists in traditional forms to young learners and Shilpgram festivals also create live cultural villages showcasing crafts, folk art and performances. ZCCs also conduct regular youth-centric festivals, workshops and competitions with interactive elements like hands-on training in folk dance, music and painting. Through these initiatives, ZCCs aim to inspire cultural pride and nurture artistic skills among the younger generation.

Besides, Ministry of Culture also organizes Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsavs at National level through ZCCs where a large number of folk & tribal artists from all over India are engaged to showcase their talents to spread awareness about rich culture amongst the masses/youth of the country.

IGNCA has undertaken various initiatives to engage youth and communities, including:

- Organizing workshops, lecture series, exhibitions, and internships for students and researchers.
- Regional cultural events and festivals under NMCM and Janapada Sampada division to promote traditional practices and languages.
- Collaborations with universities and schools to introduce cultural modules and promote awareness.
- Use of social media, YouTube, and digital platforms for wider dissemination of regional culture, including webcasts and cultural education campaigns.

This information was given by Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

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