

---

## The Role of the Social Enterprises in Creative Transmission and Value Creation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

**Amitava Bhattacharya**

Founder and Director of Banglanatak dot com

---

Let me start with 3 reference points.

- The CEO of Singapore once said, without culture a city is a dead city.
- Hillary Clinton once said, it takes a village to bring up a child.
- American Philosopher Dr. Martha Nussbaum said, you need a pond to develop a village.

If we combine all three, what we get: Pond – Village – Culture - Future. ICH has the key to provide a solution and play the most effective role in bringing all stakeholders together to work towards this.

### How?

Let me share a case study, i.e, our work on ICH and Development for the last 2 decades, where we clearly see that if investment is made in people & their culture, it helps in strengthening community engagement, economic improvement, increases pride and of course, safeguards traditional culture. We have initiated our model 'Art for Life' in 2004-05, streamlined through European

Union support in 2009-11, and finally the model got adopted by West Bengal Government in 2013, when they in association with UNESCO New Delhi took up their flagship project Rural Craft & Cultural Hub. Art for life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J-4GkF00iE>

It's not the art-labours, but the community artists who need to be understood, protected & promoted, because they hold the key of the traditional aspect & knowledge and they are the backbone to transmit to others including next generation, and thus safeguarding happens. They also need to be encouraged and an eco-system needs to be developed to create grass root micro-enterprises, which strengthens the creative economy. The important things are empowering the communities with a framework of building capacity, IP/ GI type of tools to ensure rights, negotiable skill, giving confidence to face the world and of course, digital knowledge.

We have noticed also a few interesting by-products through this process – vulnerable migration stops, villages become clean & hygienic, cultural villages evolve as cultural tourism destinations. In this tourism, the artists are at the nucleus of tourism, not a by-stander. Thus, ICH based tourism is Responsible, Ethical and Inclusive.

Interestingly, as per need of the process, we also created a World Peace Music Festival, Sur Jahan, a decade back, to create a platform for rural talents to share with Int'l artists and also to be showcased to the city elite. Now this is one of the major festivals in Kolkata, attracting thousands of people everyday and the festival also travels to 2-3 other big cities in India for the last 5 years. Sur Jahan <https://youtu.be/hgcqMw3DrNs>

## So what we get?

The model is tested and proven. We want to spread it across the world, wherever there is a need. But, certainly we need the local partners (can be Government/non-Government), who will champion it. And of course, we are happy to invite them to come over, see it, get trained and then if need be, we can do little hand-holding and help in monitoring & quality assurance. In late 2019, Rajasthan, the state located 1700 km away from us, on the western border, adopted this model for its desert artists community, which unfortunately got stopped after the first year itself, due to ongoing Corona crisis, but the recently done external evaluation shows extremely positive feedback of community and their urge to resume it asap. I think, this is simply because probably for the first time the community rights & pride get the first priority and 'village, artists and art' are seen together, rather than the usual way of appreciating art without investing in artists or villages.

I feel, ICH is the **pond**, 'artists village & neighborhood' is the **village**, community is the child and together it ensure a **living** city.

Thus, my urge to the world is to encourage and build capacity of Social Enterprises, who can play this role of Innovators and ensure a significant contribution to ICH including in creative transmissions and value creations.