

HERITAGE MATTERS

One of the challenges of India and especially Andhra Pradesh is the safeguarding of its living heritage. Change is happening fast. Globalisation of all kinds is a tsunami that is drowning precious local heritage resources. Educational system does not include heritage learning of any kind. Nor is history taught. Parents are too busy seeking wealth accumulation. Children are sent to English medium schools. They are encouraged to speak in English only. Arts, culture and heritage rooted in Telugu are not valued. It is a major challenge for the new government. The Acharya N. R. Subbanna Heritage Centre and Museum (AHCM) is working across Amaravati.

It is a major challenge for the new government. Amaravathi Heritage Centre and Museum (AHCM) is addressing this challenge. It is working across Amaravathi-Dharanikota twin Panchayats. Ecomuseology methodology is used. The challenge is to bring people and their heritage together. Context is the key word for creating an experience for visitors. The focus area is 300 acres of the Panchayats. The territory where people live is the Ecomuseum. The residents are the community curators. It is through their heritage awareness and cultural action that the historical cultural landscape is reanimated as an Ecomuseum. Storylines, heritage neighbourhoods and partnership interventions are critical. Mapping is an integral part of understanding and managing them. The AHCM

Memory mapping is an integral part of understanding the local heritage values and promoting them. The AHCM has extensively studied this historical cultural landscape through the first voice of the local resident population. Their ownership in the conservation and revitalisation of both tangible and intangible heritage is the key indicator. This effort also extends to the surrounding 23 villages and their hinterlands. It is all part of a demonstration project entitled Memory Mapping of the Andhra People under the auspices of the AP Creativity and Culture Commission (APCCC) and coordinated and implemented by the AHCM. On the anniversary of Raja Vasireddy Venkatadri (the Chief Secretary of

The birth anniversary of Raja Vasireddy Venkatadri Naidu was recently highlighted by the Chief Secretary of AP, LV Subramanyam. The emphasis was that unless we focus on our culture and heritage at the village level it would soon disappear. Facilitated every alternate Sunday between the two temple hubs, Kodandaramaya temple in Dharanikota and Amaralingeswara Swamy temple in Amaravathi, as civic spaces that are associated with the Zarahavathi, as civic spaces that are associated with the Zarahavathi, a range of intangible heritage forms are being brought back. These include classical and contemporary dance, Hari Katha, Burrakatha, Janapada Sampada, subaltern village theatre, leather puppetry, folk performances and more. The temple trusts take care of all the expenses for hosting while the APCCS sponsors the performers. Intangible heritage, forgotten over the past 60 years, is being revived. On the other hand, Mother Goddess temples such as Balusulamma Thalli Gudi are now totally managed by the local potters and farmers. It attracts an average of 30,000 people per month.

Amaravathi struggles to benefit from tourism. Almost all visitors make trips often bringing their own food and water. Friends and relatives rarely contribute to the local economy. There is very little to do after hours for both the visitors and locals, especially young people. The revitalisation of living heritage is welcome as we are witnessing the younger generation joining others enjoying the performances. Demonstrated interest in Telugu language learning among the youth is heartening. Memory Mapping would also result in creating more experiences for visitors so that they would stay overnight and add to the local economy.

The Hsuan-Tsang Centre for Creativity and Culture Education is being established in the AHCM. It is developed in the past year through meetings, focus groups and systematic planning in partnership with the Mandal Education Office and 56 government schools and 21 private



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ANDHRA'S HIDDEN WEALTH



Tejasree born in Dharanikota looks into the future. Andhra Memory Mapping project aims to ensure that she and her generation will experience the Village Atmosphere or Palleturi Vathavaranam as she grows up.

Classical dances and their contemporary renditions attract a large number of people. One of the stages is in front of Sri Krishnadevaraya Mandapam (1515 AD) conserved as part of the PRASAD Scheme.

3 Several *Rachchabandalu* or meetings under Banyan and Neem trees facilitate community ownership of the developmental activities and intergenerational transmission in Amaravathi Heritage Town.

Amaravathi Heritage Town has one of the busiest calendars of festivals throughout the year bringing in most of the visitation - domestic, interstate and even international.

5 Village cuisine as intangible heritage varies from place to place. Anganwadi women from the 23 villages of the Amaravathi Mandalam make special heritage dishes for various occasions.

Kolam and associated songs vary from village to village. Periodically farming land is prepared for the gathering of Kolam groups from the surrounding villages in Amaravathi Heritage Town. Young people take part enthusiastically and sing along, an important part of cultural exchange and language rehabilitation through the arts.

schools. Major partners are Sri Ramakrishna Hindu High School in Amaravathi and Raja Vasireddy Venkatadri Naidu Junior College in Dharanikota. All educational programming and local developmental activities are planned by certain core principles informing the ongoing Memory Mapping project.

Inclusive design - improving lifestyles and livability through creativity sourcing its essence from local knowledge systems is the bedrock of the spirit of resilience in sustainable and responsible tourism. Dynamic and adaptive capacity building is essential for selectively and responsibly absorbing and benefitting from the positive opportunities and minimise the negative homogenising impacts of globalisation. Creativity through the villages as the hidden wealth of Andhra provides for quality and substance for 'authentic' and signature local experiences in responsible tourism and nurtures local sense of place and self-esteem in a connected world.

Experimental tourism - based on local tangible and intangible heritage contributes benefits to cultural diversity and biodiversity conservation. It ensures sustainable development and engaging futures for the next generation through an appreciation of intergenerational ethics and responsibility. It must be embedded in integrated local area planning.

Transparent governance - enables qualitative and quantitative benefits that are evidence based and derivative from shared visioning of relevant stakeholders, without compromising the benefits to the primary creator communities, especially in the villages. Safeguarding the living heritage and creativity of the carriers and transmitters of intangible values is invaluable.

Value driven leadership - There is widespread consensus that sustainable tourism development pays dividends for posterity. However, the faultlines in responsible tourism developmental processes call for us to rethink methods and approaches with honesty, transparency and integrity. Deep research needs to inform the complexity of social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism growth through inclusive local leadership beyond administrative competency.

Productive Diversity - through diverse teams bring diverse perspectives from different stakeholders and contributes to fostering a sense of ownership. It offers a deeper understanding of the needs of creator communities and expectations of visitors, mediators of experiences and managers. Effective communication is an essential part of management, ethical community engagement and everyday life. Diversity pays dividends and mandates intersectorality of race, ethnicity, gender, faith, class, age, sexuality, language, different capacities, regionalism and more. It provides for safeguarding of local values, heritage, experiences and creativity as good business.

It provides for safeguarding of experiences and creativity as good business. The ultimate foundation for cultural and heritage tourism in Andhra and its accruing benefits to local communities through job creation and quality of living depends on the pyramid of the 14,000 villages that make up AP. A bottom up approach is sustainable in the long term, critical for valuing Andhra arts, culture, heritage and environment. The rural urban migration of young people in search of low paid jobs in the service industry, especially hospitality is demeaning and alienating youth from their language and culture. More jobs at the village level help with families, decreases exploitation and builds strong resilient communities. Memory of Andhra people though its future multiplier effect across Andhra offers hope of revitalisation of both language and culture and hence the content for community-based tourism. It is what UNESCO advocates - culture in development and poverty alleviation approach to address Sustainable Development Goals. The spirit of delving into Andhra's hidden wealth of creativity and culture through Memory Mapping builds on the Navaratna manifesto of the new government in the State.

NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will bring you from Paris the efforts of UNESCO to minimise illicit import and export of cultural property