

LIBRARIES INVOLVEMENT IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN INDIA: OBSTACLES AND APPROACHES

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Abstract :

This article explores the pivotal role played by libraries in India in safeguarding cultural Heritage through an exploratory approach. The study begins by establishing a conceptual framework that underscores the interconnectedness of culture, people's identity, and the imperative for preserving cultural Heritage. It delves into the challenges faced in this endeavour and elucidates the methods libraries employ to overcome them. The research underscores the crucial role libraries play in the preservation of culture, shedding light on the encountered challenges and proposing effective strategies to surmount these obstacles. Through comprehensive findings, the study emphasizes the significance of understanding and acknowledging a community's history, as it aids current inhabitants in cultivating and sustaining national identity while appreciating the intrinsic value of their cultural Heritage. The paper highlights the critical importance of preserving the cultural Heritage of communities libraries serve to benefit future generations. It emphasizes that the erosion of cultural Heritage poses a risk to a community's identity, making it imperative for libraries to participate actively in safeguarding these cultural assets. The literature suggests that libraries must document and preserve cultural Heritage in India, recognizing both the strengths and weaknesses of the communities they serve. In conclusion, this fundamental study underscores the urgent need to prioritize documenting and preserving cultural Heritage in India. By addressing the challenges faced and proposing effective strategies, libraries can contribute significantly to protecting and promoting the rich cultural tapestry that defines the nation.

Keywords: Libraries, Conservation, Cultural Heritage, and Intellectual Property Rights.

Introduction :

Heritage of culture encompasses the both material and immaterial remnants of a group or society passed down from previous generations and upheld in the present for the well-being of future generations. Prott. & O'keefe (1984) outlined the elements comprising cultural Heritage in their definition. According to their perspective, cultural Heritage includes movable objects (artworks), Immobile cultural artifacts (monuments and sites), expressive pursuits (language, music, dance, and drama), along with intangible practices and traditions like proverbs, rituals, and intellectual norms. The majority of cultural Heritage finds its inspiration in the manifestations of religious beliefs and rituals (Otagburuagu and Omena, 2009).

Our current Community is a cumulative result of generations contributing their knowledge and experiences to the reservoir established by preceding ones. A significant portion of this wealth of knowledge and experience has been documented, published, or conveyed through various cultural mediums like music and paintings. Today, these invaluable records are preserved in the accessible library collections and archives.

Heritage of culture is a fundamental origin for comprehending how humans adapt to and interact with their environment. Goodland and Web (1992) argue that a people's

understanding of their past aids in developing and sustaining national identity, fostering an appreciation for their culture and Heritage among present inhabitants. This knowledge enhances empowering citizens to better tackle current challenges in their lives. Beyond artistic endeavours, cultural Heritage encompasses non-movable artefacts and knowledge shaped by social constructs ingrained in craft or technological methods, encompassing both traditional and modern technologies that enhance the quality of life for communities. Taboraff (1992) emphasizes that the conservation and comprehension of African cultural Heritage are integral to cultivating a sense of African identity.

Quoting Kawunda (1987) through Taboraff (1992), the inauguration of the Railway Museum in Livingstone highlighted the importance of preserving national identity by safeguarding aspects cherished by the people—monuments and relics. These elements serve as witnesses to our history and past achievements. Understanding the past is crucial for adaptation and continuity, providing modern individuals with a foundation for cultivating moral values, spiritual regeneration, a feeling of connection and belonging.

According to Okpoko and Okpoko (2002), culture constitutes a way of life ingrained within a society and passed down through generations. They assert that culture encompasses both tangible and intangible components. Material culture, as they describe it, comprises all tangible entities created and utilized by humans in society, encompassing products of industry, technology, arts, and more. Non-material culture, conversely, encompasses the aesthetics of nature, belief systems, and cultural expressions that align with roles, rules, and norms. Similarly, Nwaezeigwe (2009) views culture as a collection of norms and practices that delineate the lifestyle of individuals, establishing their distinctiveness compared to other groups. Each community adheres to specific norms and practices governing their conduct. While the cultural traits of one ethnic group may bear similarities to another, they inherently possess distinctions that render them not exactly identical.

A community's culture or cultural Heritage serves as a safeguard for its identity. Cultural practices are not inherent but acquired primarily through informal education. Acquiring knowledge and understanding of a community's history aids current residents in cultivating and sustaining national identity, fostering an appreciation for their own culture and Heritage. This awareness enhances the existence of individuals, empowering them to navigate modern-day challenges more effectively. The challenges associated with industrialization in sub-Saharan African countries today stem largely from the imposition of foreign cultures on their Heritage of culture and native technology. Heritage of culture plays a pivotal role in establishing a sense of identity. Examining a specific group's everyday beliefs and practices becomes more comprehensible when considering the past. It offers a temporal dimension to understanding changes in people's daily lives.

Conserving the cultural, historical, and scientific legacy of various nations worldwide has been a longstanding commitment of libraries and information centres. Their primary responsibility involves collecting, documenting, and disseminating information about their communities' cultural Heritage. A well-managed library system is essential to provide everyone with a real chance to explore the history of their society and promote individual development. This, in turn, enables individuals to actively participate in a democratic society (Lone, 1995). In many communities, the library serves as the sole neutral public space accessible to all members of society, irrespective of religious or sectarian divisions. Libraries play a

multifaceted role, gathering materials related to their community or written in the community's dialect. Furthermore, they act as an entry point to the community in the age of information technology.

What makes it important to safeguard and record cultural heritage :

The library is a central public institution integral to the country's life (Kom, 1996). Its engagement in the documentation and preservation of cultural heritage is evident through the following methods:

1. Heritage of culture is essential to every society, representing the accumulated knowledge upon which new insights and understanding are constructed (Lone, 1995).
2. Heritage of culture assumes a vital role in fostering self-respect and pride, motivating individuals to uphold social standards when interacting with other groups.
3. Failing to safeguard the materials of one's heritage can result in a loss of identity and diminished influence within the global community (Ezeani and Ezema, 2009).
4. Documenting and preserving heritage of culture contribute to understanding its numerical strength.
5. The challenges brought about by globalization underscore the importance of preserving and maintaining cultural Heritage and identities globally. Utilizing new information and communication technologies for documenting and preserving cultural Heritage enables people worldwide to electronically access and explore our cultural Heritage, extending its reach for research on a global scale.
6. It can function as a technological means through which the distinct characteristics of each cultural perspective, belief, and interaction system can be conveyed and transmitted.
7. It adds to the sustainable development of local and national areas, such as incorporating modern agricultural implements in farming and using herbs in pharmaceuticals.
8. Enhances the recognition of the commercial value of culture, exemplified by talents showcased in film exhibitions.
9. It would motivate amateur and expert artists to enhance their talents and skills by seeking patronage from the library, which serves as the organizer, client, and executor of cultural activities.
10. It aids in raising awareness about the presence of tourist attractions within a specific locality.

The Contribution of Libraries to the Conservation of Cultural Heritage :

For centuries, each generation has endeavoured to document its labour for revision and study by subsequent generations. Libraries have played a central role in gathering and recording these legacies through the following methods:

1. Supplying cultural materials for all segments of the local community, not just the largest or most influential, entails offering cultural products from diverse ethnic minority groups.
2. Allocating space for cultural works accessible to both the affluent and less privileged.
3. Supporting local cultural activities, such as arranging and hosting storytelling events.
4. Conducting lectures and seminars to share insights on political, economic, cultural, and societal occurrences.
5. Ensuring that library collections and services aid individuals in comprehending their

- local environment, whether characterized by homogeneity or diverse culture.
6. Capturing the cultural heritage of the community, it ought to encompass valuable elements. compilations of local history, stories, puzzles, Conventional technologies and pharmacopoeia. These assets can be utilized by the community in shared listening sessions.

Challenges encountered in safeguarding Cultural Heritage in India :

Funds: Securing funds continues to be a formidable challenge confronting libraries in India. Among all public institutions in the country, public libraries stand out as one of the most inadequately funded. Adequate funding is essential to support traditional library services and other essential functions. Unfortunately, funds are frequently unavailable, and even when accessible, they may be challenging to obtain. Adequate funding is crucial for libraries to effectively fulfil their roles. Adebayo (2004) emphasized that libraries must be adequately funded to ensure continual growth and development.

Insufficient skilled or experienced workforce: Librarianship remains a relatively new profession in India, with limited awareness of its viability. Consequently, many individuals do not actively promote or encourage their children or wards to pursue it as a career. This has led to a scenario where those who eventually choose librarianship often lack a genuine interest in the profession, often considering it as a last resort. Consequently, the number of professional librarians in India remains significantly small compared to the tasks at hand. As a consequence, various aspects of the work are often delegated to clerical officers, particularly within libraries.

Safeguarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Safeguarding intellectual property rights has posed challenges, particularly in many Asian countries, notably India. In India, the prevalence of counterfeit copies of creative works for sale in markets is frequently overlooked without significant attention. Consequently, there is a pressing need to address this issue to protect our cultural Heritage, particularly in domains such as traditional agricultural practices and medicine. The owners of these valuable practices are compelled to guard them vigilantly to prevent their unauthorized use or exploitation.

Strategies to address challenges related to preserving cultural heritage within the library

- **Funds:** The progress of many library activities in India is hampered by insufficient funds, leading to the stagnation of various mobile library services operated by Indian libraries. It is imperative that the government, through the overseeing body of library services, takes measures to ensure that libraries receive adequate financial support. In recognizing the evolving landscape of library services compared to previous years, librarians should explore internal revenue-generating strategies to ensure their sustainability.
- The design of curricula for library schools should be more influenced by the daily experiences of professionals in the field of librarianship. This approach ensures that the knowledge acquired in the classroom closely aligns with practical experiences in the field.
- Libraries should collaborate Involving traditional leaders, elders, women's groups, and cultural entities to gather relevant information using modern technological equipment.
- **The majority of cultural heritage materials lack patents:** The library should assist the owners of such Heritage in obtaining patents for their intellectual property. Additionally, there should be a fee associated with the use of such materials. This approach would contribute to gaining the trust and confidence of the owners of these

materials.

- **Committee for Cultural Diversity:** Libraries operating in regions with cultural diversity should strive to establish cultural diversity committees. These committees are essential to guarantee that no culture in the area is marginalized, and simultaneously, they play a vital role in safeguarding the interests of each cultural group.

Conclusion :

In conclusion, this article has shed light on the indispensable role of libraries in India in safeguarding cultural Heritage. Through an exploratory approach, the study revealed the intricate connection between culture, identity, and the imperative for preserving cultural Heritage. Libraries play a crucial role in this preservation effort as repositories of knowledge and guardians of information. The challenges faced by libraries in this endeavor were comprehensively examined, and strategies to overcome these obstacles were proposed. The findings underscored the importance of understanding and acknowledging a community's history for cultivating and sustaining national identity. Moreover, the paper emphasized the significance of preserving the cultural Heritage of communities served by libraries for the benefit of future generations. This study underscores the notion that a community is at risk when it loses its identity due to the erosion of its cultural Heritage. Libraries, as custodians of knowledge, are responsible for actively participating in documenting and preserving cultural assets. The article highlights the urgent need for libraries to prioritize this role, recognizing that cultural Heritage encapsulates the strengths and weaknesses of the communities they serve. By addressing these challenges and implementing proposed strategies, libraries can contribute significantly to protecting and promoting India's rich cultural legacy, ensuring its transmission to future generations.

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