

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2015

REPORT

Intangible Heritage Festival -2015 was organised by National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady (SSUSK), Centre for Environment and Development (Thiruvananthapuram), Kochi International Book Festival and Moozhikkulam Sala from 03-05 December 2015 at SSUS, Kalady

Intangible Heritage (IH) is a term increasingly used while discussing about Heritage. The term has been in circulation only during the last decade or so. Before the arrival of the term IH, Heritage in general has been restricted to the tangible aspects only. However, it has been felt during the last decade or so that restricting Heritage to the tangible/ materialistic aspects alone excludes a large percentage of heritage efforts, especially from the Asian countries including India. The World Heritage tag, which was earlier restricted to sites of materialistic / tangible heritage (TH) such as forts, monuments, national parks etc were expanded to include IH as well by efforts such as the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes five broad 'domains' in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language;
- Performing arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Traditional craftsmanship;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

The domain on "Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe" may generally be called INH (Intangible Natural Heritage) in contrast to all other domains generally grouped under ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) even though it is difficult to distinguish between the two.

Eleven forms have been inscribed in to the UNESCO List of ICH of Humanity from India so far. Three forms (Kutiyattam, Samaveda and Mudi yettu) were highlighted in IHF15.

This Festival was organised with the aims and objectives to suggest safeguarding measures on IH in India in general and to undertake documentation of one of the UNESCO representative list inscribed in to the ICH of Humanity: Mudi yettu which has immense role in INH. Also to discuss about a methodology for long term documentation of IH in India as a method of its safeguarding involving panchayathiraj institutions and to act as a capacity building training programme for young students/ researchers in Museology/ Heritage.

The 3 day festival had sessions on intangible cultural heritage, intangible natural heritage, intangible heritage and museums, workshop on Mudi yettu and presentations on UNESCO ICH of Humanity: Mudi yettu, Kutiyattam & Sama Veda. The inauguration of the Festival was held on 3rd December at Kanakadhara auditorium of SSUS, Kalady.

Dr. M. C. Dileepkumar, Honourable Vice Chancellor, SSUS presided over the inaugural function. Dr B Venugopal Director of NMNH and the General Coordinator of the IHF15 gave the theme presentation. Shri T. P. Srinivasan, Former Ambassador & Vice Chairman, Kerala State Higher Education Council delivered the inaugural address. Dr Babu Sebastian (Honourable Vice Chancellor, M.G. University, Kottayam) was Special Guest of Honour. Dr Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri (Director of IGRMS was the Guest of Honour). Dr T. Sabu (Director Extension, Centre for Environment and Development, Thiruvananthapuram), Dr. T P Sankarankutty Nair (DG, Centre for Heritage Studies, Thripunithura) Shri Premkumar, Moozhikkulam Sala gave felicitation addresses.

During the function Primary performers of UNESCO ICH of humanity viz. V. Shankaranarayana Kurup (Koratti), V.N. Narayana Kurup (Koratti) and Unnikrishnan Marar (Keezhillam) were honoured with Uthariya and local traditional lamp during the occasion by Thulasi teacher (Kalady Panchayat President) and Soumini Babu (Rayamangalam Panchayat President).

Professor Srikala Nair, the Local Coordinator from SSUS welcomed the gathering and Dr T P Ravindran, Registrar of the SSUS gave vote of thanks.

After the inaugural session, Prof. Amareswar Galla, Executive Director, International Institute for the Inclusive Museum, Australia; delivered the key note address on the topic: “Fluidity, Resilience and Sustainability in Safeguarding Intangible Heritage”.

The inauguration was followed by academic sessions after lunch break on 3rd December and on the forenoon of 5th December in which total 17 papers were presented by different scholars on varied topics of IH.

A field visit to Koratti for workshop on Mudi yettu on 4th December 2015 was organised with the help of Jnanodaya Vayanasala, West Koratti where doyens of Mudi yettu viz. V. Shankaranarayana Kurup (Sree Bhadra Mudi yettu Sangham, Koratti), V.N.Narayana Kurup (Varanattu Mudi yettu Sangham, Koratti), Unnikrishnan Marar, (Keezhillam) and Bindu (Pazhoor) were honoured by Mrs. Tessy Titus (President of Annamanada Panchayat). The doyens also dwelt at length on the measures to be taken to safeguard Mudi yettu. The teams also visited the Schools of Mudi yettu of the two doyens, VSNK and VNSK and interacted with the team and family members.

An exhibition on intangible heritage was also organised by the NMNH at Kochi International Book Festival which was inaugurated by Honourable Governor of Kerala on 4th December, 2015.

In the valedictory function of the Festival held on 5th December which was presided by Dr.M.C. Dileepkumar Hon. Vice Chancellor SSUS, Dr. B Venugopal presented a report about IHF15. A team led by Prof. Amareswar Galla (Father Joseph Puthenpurakal, Ms.Sayanthini Raychaudhury, Mr. Kuldip Kothri and Ms. P S Sabeena) presented the Kalady Charter.