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ASEM Workshop on Techniques and Instruments for Conservation of Monuments and Artefacts, New Delhi (February 6-7, 2017)

(February 07, 2017)

The Ministry of External Affairs in association with INTACH organized the ASEM Workshop on Techniques and Instruments for Conservation of Monuments and Artefacts in New Delhi from 6-7 February 2017.

ASEM stands for the Asia Europe Meeting which is a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe - two of the oldest and most dynamic continents on the planet. The grouping was created out of the mutual recognition that both continents would benefit immensely from further strengthening their multifarious relationship, especially in the context of the new challenges and exciting opportunities of the contemporary world. The ASEM dialogue process encompasses political, economic and socio-cultural cooperation, which is undertaken in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

The workshop was attended by more than 80 participants from Asia and Europe including practitioners and policy makers, museologists, conservationists, archivists, students and researchers etc. Maj.Gen. (Retd.) L.K. Gupta, Chairman, INTACH gave the welcome address which was followed by an Inaugural Address that was delivered by Ms.Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), MEA. Ms. Pooja Kapur, Joint Secretary (ASEAN ML) delivered the Valedictory Address.

The workshop included a number of technical sessions covering various aspects of Conservation techniques and technologies with eminent speakers from India and ASEM countries sharing their expertise. The panel discussions featured subjects such as Advancements in Art Conservation and Training, use of Modern Technology for Cultural Heritage and Phased Acquisition of Conservation Paraphernalia. The discussions were followed by Field visits to the INTACH Conservation Laboratory, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site. There is an increasing awareness among countries in Asia and Europe on the need to focus on obtaining an understanding of our cultural heritage and taking due measures to ensure its conservation. Each country has certain core competencies and has evolved certain technologies and techniques post research in the field of Conservation. There is recognition, therefore, of the fact that there is ample scope of collaboration among nations within the multilateral framework provided by ASEM.

The two days technical sessions have highlighted the strengths as well as the further requirements in the field of techniques and equipment used in conservation of monuments. Art conservation in India had a slow start but is

now progressing fast to keep pace with other nations. The Globalization and rapid and easy communication in the internet age has enabled a very fast and easy transfer of materials as well as technical know how. The discussions will contribute to bringing ASEM countries on a common platform towards the process of conservation of monuments and artefacts, as these practice vastly different techniques and technologies.

<http://mea.gov.in/press-releases>

Launch of 104 satellites by ISRO on PSLV C37 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota

(February 15, 2017)



At 0928 hrs IST today morning, ISRO successfully launched the 714 kg Cartosat-2 Series Satellite along with 103 co-passenger satellites on board ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C37, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. It is the highest number of satellites launched in one single mission anywhere. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the space scientific community and the nation for this proud feat. This is the

thirty eighth consecutive successful mission of PSLV. All the 104 satellites were successfully separated from the PSLV fourth stage in a predetermined sequence. The total number of Indian satellites launched by PSLV now stands at 46. The imagery from the Cartosat-2 series satellite will be useful for cartographic applications, urban and rural applications, coastal land use, utility management like road network monitoring, water distribution, change detection to bring out geographical and manmade features and various other Land Information System (LIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) applications. The data sets could be used for urban planning of 500 cities under the Amrut Planning Scheme. ISRO Nano Satellites, INS-1 and INS-2, were also launched. In addition, 101 foreign nano satellites from six countries were launched in a significant international dimension. Of these, 96 were from the United States, and 1 each from Israel, Kazakhstan, UAE, the Netherlands and Switzerland. With today's successful launch, the total number of customer satellites from abroad launched by India's PSLV has reached 180. This mission involved many technical challenges such as realising the launch of a large number of satellites during a single mission within stipulated time frame. Besides, ensuring adequate separation between all the 104 satellites during their orbital injection as well as during their subsequent orbital life was yet another complexity associated with this mission. With this launch, ISRO has further bolstered its impeccable scientific credentials as a reliable partner for space initiatives.

<http://mea.gov.in/press-releases>

Visit of Vice President to Rwanda

(February 19-21, 2017)



The Vice-President of India Shri M Hamid Ansari, accompanied by Smt. Salma Ansari, visited Rwanda from 19-21 February 2017. He was accompanied by Shri Vijay Sampla, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment and four members of Parliament, senior officials and a media delegation. India-Rwanda relations are marked by cordiality, convergence of views and cooperation on major international issues, an increasing trend in bilateral trade and investments, greater people to people contacts and a deep sense of mutual respect. During the official visit of President Paul Kagame to India from 9-11 Jan 2017, a decision to give strategic content to our partnership was taken. During this visit, the Vice President met H.E the President of Rwanda and H.E. the President of the Senate and deliver an address at the University of Rwanda. The Vice President paid homage at the Genocide Museum, interacted with the Indian community in Kigali and attended a banquet hosted by the Prime Minister of Rwanda.

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Visit of Vice President to Uganda (February 21-23, 2017)



The Vice-President of India Shri M Hamid Ansari, accompanied by Smt. Salma Ansari, visited Uganda from 21-23 February 2017. He was accompanied by Shri Vijay Sampla, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment and four members of Parliament, senior officials and a media delegation. Bilateral relations between India and Uganda are characterised by historical cultural linkages, extensive economic and trade interests, and a convergence on major bilateral and international issues. H.E. President

Yoweri Museveni had attended the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit held in October 2015. The visit by Vice President was expected to deepen and expand the bilateral relationship. During this visit, the Vice President met H.E the Vice President of Uganda and H.E. the President of Uganda. The Vice President also interacted with the Indian community in Kampala.

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India-UK Dialogue on Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance (February 21, 2017)



A new round of dialogue on matters related to Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance was held between the officials of India and the UK in New Delhi on 20 and 21 February 2017. The Indian delegation was led by Joint Secretary, Consular, Passport and Visa, Ministry of External Affairs and had representatives from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice and investigating agencies, including CBI, Enforcement Directorate, and the state authorities concerned. The UK delegation was led by the Head of the UK Central Authority for Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance, the UK Home Office and representatives from the Crown Prosecution Service, and the UK High Commission in New Delhi. The meeting was held pursuant to the decision taken during the visit of the UK Prime Minister to India in November 2016 wherein the two leaders had directed that the officials dealing with extradition matters from both sides should meet at the earliest to develop better understanding of each countries' legal processes and requirements; share best practices, and identify the causes of delays and expedite pending requests so that fugitives and criminals should not be allowed to escape the law. Both sides held detailed and fruitful deliberations on the legal processes and procedures in either country and reviewed the requests for extradition

and mutual legal assistance pending on either side. Both sides reiterated their determination to strengthen legal cooperation and expedite the pending requests. It was agreed that the Central Authorities of both the countries would review further progress in these cases every six month through Video Conference.

<http://mea.gov.in/press-releases>

Visit of Foreign Secretary of India Dr. S Jaishankar to Bangladesh (February 23–24, 2017)

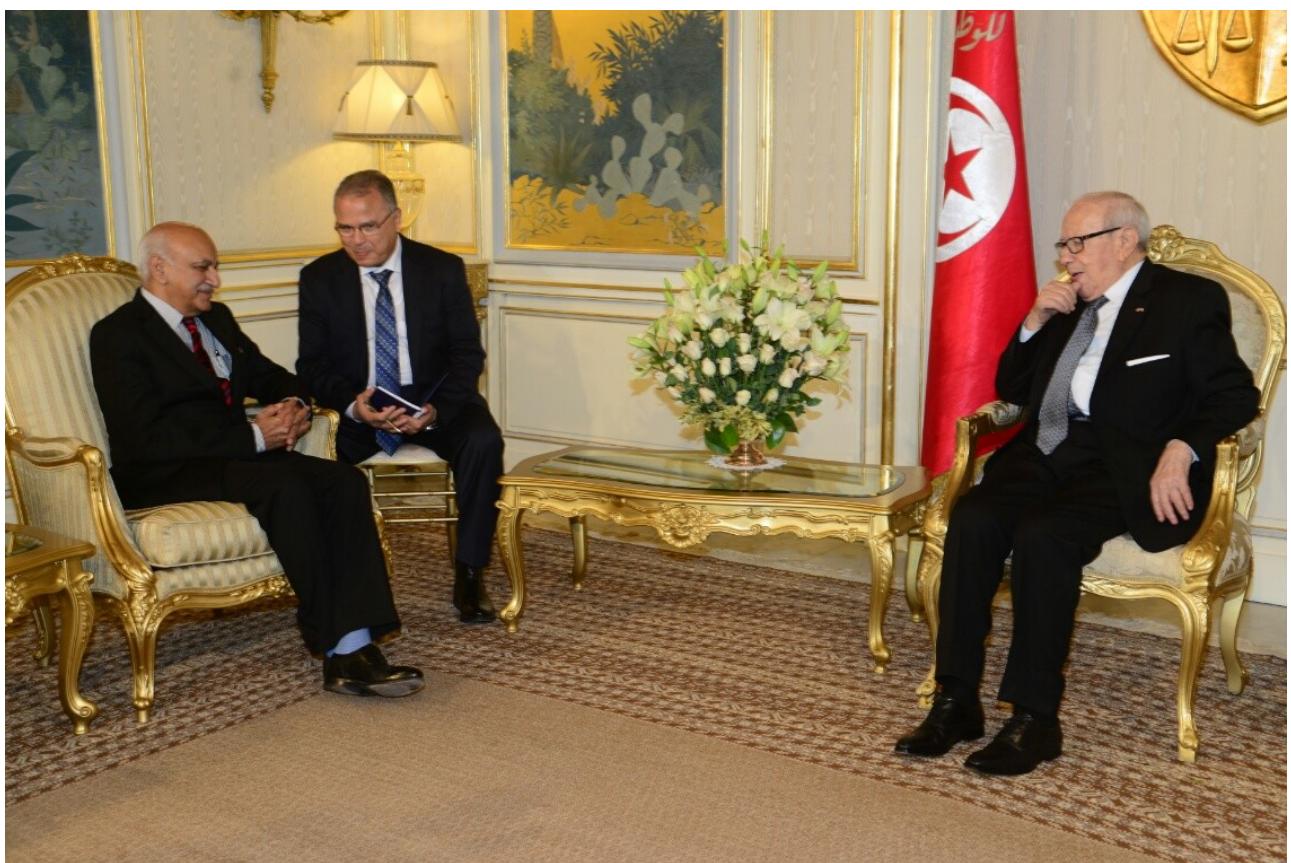


DR.S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary of India, visited Bangladesh on 23-24 February 2017 at the invitation of the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque. During his stay, Foreign Secretary called on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh H.E Sheikh Hasina and met the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh. Foreign Secretary briefed the Prime Minister on recent developments in India-Bangladesh relations and the region. He also discussed preparatory aspects of the proposed visit of the Prime Minister to India at the invitation of the Prime Minister of India H.E Mr. Narendra Modi. The two Foreign Secretaries reviewed the areas of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Both sides noted with appreciation that there has been excellent implementation of decisions taken during the visit of the Prime

Minister of India to Bangladesh in June 2015. Both sides also took stock of decisions taken during the recent meetings of various bilateral mechanisms in the areas of Security & Border Management, Trade and Commerce, Power, Energy, Shipping, Railways etc. Both Foreign Secretaries also shared their perspectives on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

<http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm>

**Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M J Akbar to the Republic of Tunisia
(February 26 – 28. 2017)**



Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Shri M. J. Akbar was paying an official bilateral visit to the Republic of Tunisia from 26-28 February 2017. During his visit, the Hon'ble Minister met with H.E. President of the Republic Mr. Beji Caid Essebsi, H.E. Foreign Minister Mr. Khemaies Jhinaoui, H.E. Minister of Energy, Mining and Renewable Energy, Mrs. Hela Cheikhrouhou and H.E. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. Sabri Bachtobji. He also interacted with the business community organised

by the apex chamber of commerce and industry, UTICA to identify potential areas of trade and investment. He also delivered a keynote address on India's foreign policy to organised by the Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies. During the visit, the MOS discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of shared common interest including the strengthening cooperation in the fertilizer sector; India has very cordial bilateral relations with Tunisia. The economic cooperation between the two countries is deepening with Indian investments in the fertilizer sector. The visit took place in the context of further strengthening the bilateral relationship between India and Tunisia.

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India's Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Civilisational Legacy To The World

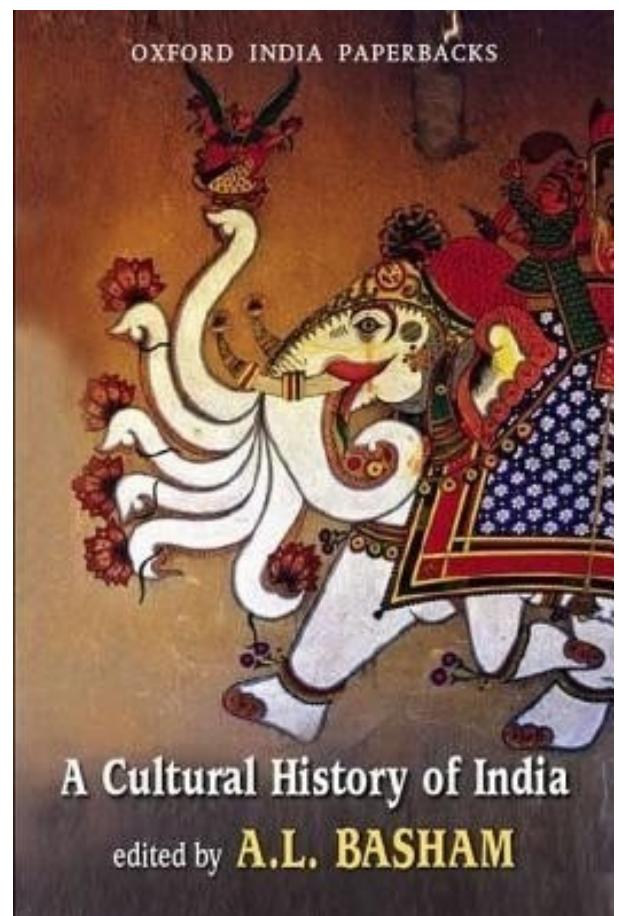
(January 29, 2015)

By- Bhaswati Mukherjee

Background

India's intangible cultural heritage flows from her 5000 year old culture and civilisation. Dr. A.L. Basham, in his authoritative "Cultural History of India", has noted that "While there are four main cradles of civilisation which, moving from East to West, are China, India, the Fertile Crescent and the Mediterranean, specially Greece and Italy, India deserves a larger share of credit because she has deeply affected the cultural life of most of Asia. She has also extended her influence, directly and indirectly, to other parts of the World."

2. The civilisation that developed in the Valleys of our two great river systems, the Indus and the Ganges, although in a sharply demarcated geographical region due to the Himalayas, was complex, multi-faceted and was never an isolated civilisation. The notion that before the impact of European learning, science and technology, the 'East' including China and India changed little if at all, over the centuries is false and should be rejected. Indian civilisation has always been dynamic, not static. Settlers



and traders came to India from the land and sea routes. India's isolation was never complete, from the most ancient times. This resulted in the development of a complex pattern of civilisation, demonstrated so clearly in the intangible art and cultural traditions ranging from Ancient to Modern India, whether in the dancing Buddhas of the Gandharva school of art which was strongly influenced by the Greeks, to the great tangible heritage seen in the temples of North and South India.

3. It is no surprise that India's diversity has inspired many writers to pen differing perceptions of the country's culture. These writings paint a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India. The best definition has been provided by Dr. Amartya Sen, the Indian Nobel Laureate in Economics. According to him, the culture of modern India is a complex blend of its historical traditions, influences from the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Western culture - both collaterally and dialectically. Western writers usually neglect, in important ways, crucial aspects of Indian culture and traditions and its diversities. The deep-seated heterogeneity of Indian traditions, in different parts of India, is lost in these homogenised descriptions of India. India is not and can never be a homogenous culture. The best example is her intangible heritage.

4. A pen sketch on this subject cannot be complete without recalling E.H. Carr's chapter 1 on 'What is History'. Carr pointed out that facts do not speak for themselves. They speak only when the historian calls on them to speak. It is the historian who decides which fact to give and therefore the historian is necessarily selective. Thus Carr concludes that "History is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and past, a dynamic, dialectical process, which cannot be limited by mere empiricism or love of facts alone". This demonstrates the complexity of the task of interpreting this intangible heritage historically and in an objective manner.

5. It is clear that Intangible Cultural Heritage such as the Indian example, is difficult to explain or interpret, because of its complexity. Tangible heritage on the other hand, being more visible is much better understood. The best definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage is contained in the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH which defines it in a manner broad enough to include diverse experiences and expressions across the globe such as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognised as part of their cultural heritage". This is an excellent definition of India's great spiritual and cultural intangible heritage.

Definition of ICH

6. What is Intangible Cultural Heritage? Heritage does not end at monuments or collection of objects of arts. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, religious and cultural festivals and traditional crafts. This Intangible Cultural Heritage, by its very nature, is fragile and needs protection and understanding since it is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalisation. Developing understanding of the ICH of different communities, such as in India, helps the process of an international, inter-cultural dialogue and promotes, in the long run, international peace and security.

7. ICH is best defined as:

- Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time, since it is a dynamic process;
- Inclusive since it contributes to social cohesion, encourages a sense of identity and helps to preserve communities and community life;
- Representative since it prospers on oral skills passed on from generation to generation;
- Community based since it can be defined as heritage only when it is recognised as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it.

ICH therefore, based on the above definition, is important not as a cultural manifestation as such but rather on the wealth of knowledge and skill that are transmitted through it from one generation to another. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is as significant for developed countries as for developing countries.

Festivals such as Holi : A Case Study of ICH

8. Holi's historical origins date back to pre-Christian times. Paganism and Pagan festivals, based on pre-Christian rituals



and ‘Bacchus’ traditions were frowned upon by the earliest Christians and soon disappeared. Only the Christian mistletoe traditions have survived. Similarly, the rituals of Holi date back to the earliest times based on social traditions. Hindu rituals, myths and legends came later. Religious and cultural festivals, such as Holi, express the heart of the people, reflecting their culture and identity. Several of the world’s best known festivals exist in India. Many of them are rooted in India’s diverse culture and civilisation. Thus the historic origins of Holi, originally known as ‘Holika’, find detailed description in India’s earliest religious epics and works such as Jamini’s Purvamimamsa-Sutras and Kathaka-Grhya-Sutras. Eminent Indian historians believe that Holi was celebrated by Aryans who came to India from Central Asia in 5000 BC. Thus, Holi existed several centuries before Christ. There are also many references to Holi in India’s ancient archaeological remains.

9. Since ICH is a dynamic process, the meaning of the Festival has changed over the years. It also has different manifestations in different parts of India. Even these myths and legends are diverse and reflect India’s fascinating intangible heritage. All over India, the festival celebrates the victory of good over evil and also the triumph of devotion to God.

10. Holi is thus linked with folklore and folk culture and binds communities together. One example is the Chhau dance. This dance form is a tradition from the Eastern part of India, specially Bihar, which enacts episodes from the Epics, including Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes. Its three distinct styles hail from the regions of Seraikella, Purulia and Mayurbhanj, in Eastern India. Chhau dance is intimately connected to regional festivals, notably the spring festival Chaitra Parva. Its origin is traceable to indigenous forms of dance and martial practices. Its vocabulary of movement includes mock combat techniques, stylized gaits of birds and animals and movements modelled on the chores of village housewives. It represents a transitional stage in the development of unsophisticated forms of folk dance to highly stylised forms. The Chhau is one of the earliest indigenous form of dances in India. These practices demonstrate that in India, living continuity with the past, is an important criterion for its heritage. These folk cultures, therefore, are part of India’s age-old intangible cultural heritage.

Some Concluding Reflections

11. In India, we are the repository of an astounding wealth of living patterns and modes of heritage. With about 1400 dialects and 18 officially recognized languages, several religions, various styles of art, architecture, literature, music and dance, and several lifestyle patterns, India represents the largest

democracy with a seamless picture of diversity in unity, perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the world.

12. Through a history of changing settlements and political power, India's living cultural heritage was shaped by centuries of adaptation, re-creation and co-existence. The intangible cultural heritage of India finds expression in the ideas, practices, beliefs and values shared by communities across long stretches of time, and form part of the collective memory of the nation. India's physical, ethnic and linguistic variety is as staggering as its cultural pluralism, which exists in a framework of interconnectedness. In some instances, its cultural heritage is expressed as pan-Indian traditions not confined to a particular locality, genre or category, but as multiple forms, levels and versions inter-linked yet independent from one another. Underlying the diversity of India's heritage is the continuity of its civilization from the earliest times to the present and of the later additions by different influences.

13. In concluding, it may be pertinent to recall that Swami Vivekananda had said:

"If anyone dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and culture, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out that upon the banner of every religion and culture will soon be written in spite of resistance, "Help and not Fight; Assimilation and not Destruction; Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".

This symbolises what India brings to the world, its living intangible heritage which is its global civilisational heritage. This heritage would help to maintain a cultural and civilizational dialogue between peoples and societies and cultures. This in its turn would be a powerful lever for renewing the international community's strategy towards development and peace.

The author, a former diplomat was Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO (2004-2010). This article has been written exclusively for 'In Focus' section of Ministry of External Affairs website, www.meainfo.mea.gov.in]

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