



2011 – 2021
Working Together
for Rural India

VISION FOR THE FUTURE THE NEXT TEN YEARS

**Presented on the occasion of ITRHD's 10th Anniversary
23 June 2021**



The Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years

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**The Indian Trust for Rural Heritage
and Development**

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VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years

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TEN YEARS MILESTONE: THE VISION

On 23 June 2021, ITRHD completes ten years of existence. In the difficult and challenging times we are facing, our team, our members, and the residents of our project communities have all been suffering. We have diverted resources to providing aid and sustenance wherever possible, and this is of course our current priority. However, looking forward, we have prepared this document, planning for our future in light of achievements and activities to date. This, then, is our vision, presented with confidence in a brighter future for all.

In 2011, ITRHD started with no finances and no resources at all, except for a group of dedicated individuals with a mission to bring about a change in the lives of our rural residents by helping to conserve and ensure the viability of their tangible and intangible heritage, and to explore the potential of the heritage as a resource for overall rural development.

This was enshrined as our basic objective, as stated in our Memorandum of Association:

“Identify those areas of tradition and heritage in rural and tribal India whose value in historical, cultural or economic terms is intrinsic to the identity of the residents of those areas and whose preservation and conservation can play a substantial role in enhancing the quality of life.”

This objective, spelled out in greater detail in the full Memorandum, has determined our priorities in taking up projects and activities in rural areas of various states, and in working to increase awareness and appreciation of India's rich rural heritage. We have been gratified that our activities have earned us goodwill, confidence, and support from the Government of India, State Governments, corporate sponsors, and our dedicated members and trustees. We were especially gratified that the XVth Finance Commission, constituted by the Government of India, in their recommendations recognised the expertise of ITRHD, and not only recommended funding for conservation of heritage projects in Punjab and Haryana but also specified that these be entrusted to ITRHD for implementation.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels. We have to move forward in a planned and systematic manner with a broad vision guiding us. Our trustees and senior officers have all contributed to formulating a Vision Document for the next 5 to 10 years, and this is detailed in the following pages.

THE MISSION

Our goal is to develop ITRHD as the foremost player in the preservation of India's rich rural heritage in all its manifestations, tangible and intangible. These include built heritage, living artistic and cultural skills and traditions, natural heritage, oral heritage, and, in fact, the entire gamut of things that encapsulate our sense of identity. Someone once said that sustaining heritage means not just preserving the ashes, but keeping the flames alive. This, perhaps, best summarizes ITRHD's mission.

VISION AND STRATEGIES: General

Consolidation: The first and foremost task is one of consolidation. The activities in which we are already engaged are in different stages of completion. We must ensure that they create a long-lasting effect and are sustainable. In this regard, we must work to ensure the involvement and commitment of the communities that own the heritage, and to actively engage the interest, understanding, and participation of the younger generation. This should be our priority number one.

Field Staff: For an NGO whose projects are spread across so many states and areas, the motivation and involvement of the field staff is a pre-requisite to success. Our representatives in different regions, designated as HARTS (Heritage Ambassadors of Rural Tradition), with a few exceptions, have not lived up to expectations. Our small central office staff has not been able to maintain the close and regular interaction required. We are now in the process of increasing the level of communication and guidance, to ensure that all HARTS become our major assets. A separate cell is being created at headquarters, headed by a very experienced person, who will ensure that each HART will make full use of his or her strengths in the interests of the organisation.

Youth Involvement: As mentioned above, it is important to develop a sense of ownership and pride in their heritage among the younger generation in project communities, and an increased awareness of the importance of our rural heritage among urban youth. A good beginning was made by establishing youth clubs in the three villages making up our "Creative Cluster" in Azamgarh, U.P. Activities have included tree planting and follow-up, cleanliness and awareness programs, essay and poster making, and numerous events. Plans are now being drawn up to organize such clubs in other project areas, and to develop new creative activities and programs.

VISION AND STRATEGIES:
“General”

At the request of the villagers in the Azamgarh “Creative Cluster,” we established a primary school in one of the villages. Children from all social and economic classes are included, and we put special emphasis on girl students and those from poorer families. The results have been extremely heart-warming. The school has been supported by our Trustees and Members; we are now involved in raising funds for a corpus for permanent support.

Image Building: We have been aware for some time of the need to earn publicity for the various activities that we are engaged in and the impact that is being made in the village communities. We have recently engaged a professional for social media, and are in discussions regarding television coverage. Both short-term and long-term plans in this regard are being developed. We realize that we need to focus and demonstrate end to end success of identified projects as a lead to confidence building in increasing domestic and international participants.

Finance and Professional Growth: ITRHD functions in rented office space, with a small salaried staff, and senior officers who all work on a voluntary basis. Professional consultants are taken on for specific projects when project budgets permit. We have great potential for expanding our activities and creating a much larger impact, but to do so we must add professional project management staff, and acquire a long-term and more suitable headquarters office. For this, the challenge is to build up our corpus.

We have received some Government corpus support, for which we are grateful, but it is not adequate. Projects function on funds raised for that specific purpose. Interest from an enhanced corpus would enable us to add required staff, and give us seed money for project development, reports, and administrative expenditure.

We have had successful partnerships with some State Governments, and are hopeful of establishing similar links with others. The need is to create a cell, with a full-time staff person, exploring all relevant schemes and provisions in various States. This cannot be left to HARTS in the field, as it requires communication and follow-up with the State Governments from the senior level at headquarters.

VISION AND STRATEGIES: Focus Areas

ITRHD's main project activities to date fall into the following focus areas:

- Built Heritage Conservation
- Living Heritage: Crafts and Visual Arts
- Living Heritage: Music, Dance, Performing Arts
- Heritage for Youth
- Cultural Festivals and Publications
- Community Development in Project Areas

VISION AND STRATEGIES:

Focus Areas

Plans are underway for future projects in:

- Documentation
- Rural Tourism
- Climate Change

Summary of project activities in each focus area and the vision for the future in each follows.

FOCUS AREA: Built Heritage Conservation

VISION, The First Ten Years. ITRHD's objective has been to expand the scope of the management of India's cultural heritage. It has done this by following two strategies, one, to focus on areas that have not received due attention, to wit, the rural areas, and two, by developing new paradigms for conservation of cultural heritage by aligning it with the imperatives of development; these strategies are foregrounded in the construction of its name as an entity as the Indian Trust for "rural heritage and development". This objective, therefore, also defines its vision to engage with architectural heritage.

STRATEGIES, The First Ten Years

To pursue this vision for architectural heritage, four strategies were identified:

1. To define what is the nature of rural architectural heritage;
2. To list rural architectural heritage and its attributes, particularly with the view to understanding its potential to contribute to enhancing the welfare of local residents;
3. To assist stakeholders of rural architectural heritage by accessing resources and professionals in various disciplines to implement the vision of ITRHD;
4. To promote awareness about its agenda in the public domain and advocate necessary changes in official policies to achieve its ends for conserving rural built heritage.

In the first decade of its activities, ITRHD has undertaken the following major initiatives in pursuance of its vision:

1. Strategy 1.

- 1.1. Rural built heritage is loosely categorized as vernacular architecture. With a view to define and explicate its meaning and significance more effectively, ITRHD partnered with the School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal and The Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sanghralaya, Bhopal, ("The Museum of Man"), to conduct the South Asian Vernacular Architecture Conference in Bhopal from December 11-13, 2015. The participants drafted and adopted a Charter for Promoting Vernacular Architecture in South Asia.

1. Strategy 2.

Proposal submitted to the Government of U.P. to undertake a district-wise listing of heritage buildings.

Model survey undertaken in one cluster of five villages in Kerala for listing heritage buildings that could be converted for home-stays to promote rural tourism.

2. Strategy 3.

- 3.1. Restoration of Sheik Musa's Dargah and beautification of its surroundings, in Nuh, Haryana;
- 3.2. Restoration of 42 Terracotta Temples in Maluti village, Jharkhand, and upgrading infrastructure and facilities to attract tourists;
- 3.3. Restoration of the historic Birsa Munda Jail in Ranchi for accommodating a Tribal Museum;
- 3.4. Proposals for relocating submerged temples in Bilaspur and developing the new site as a pilgrim-cum-tourist centre, is under active discussion with the Himachal Government;
- 3.5. Proposal to document the temples in Uttarakhand and prepare conservation proposals to expand the scope of pilgrim tourism in the State.
- 3.6. The Belgian Chapter of ITRHD has undertaken a detailed survey of the Royal Gardens of Rajnagar in the Bundelkhand Region of Madhya Pradesh and initiated projects to restore heritage buildings, develop local infrastructure to promote cultural and agri-tourism in this region and introduce organic farming in conformity with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals;
- 3.7. HART Ranchi has engaged with local administration to identify and conserve heritage structures in the region to promote local tourism.

3. Strategy 4.

- 4.1. Conducted several conferences on Rural Tourism, Agri-Tourism;
- 4.2. Conducted Public Lectures by experts on various occasions like World Heritage Day and World Tourism Day;
- 4.3. Lobbied with the 15th Finance Commission to promote the conservation of Rural Heritage.** As a result three conservation projects have been identified in Punjab and Haryana which have been allocated to ITRHD for implementation.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years

1. To continue with the projects, events and activities initiated earlier and wherever possible extend their scope.
- 2. To establish a Rural Heritage Conservation Institute and Resource Centre.** To initiate this project to conduct an international conference in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India and related agencies looking after Buddhist structures in South, South-East and East Asia. The initial objective of this exercise will be to train Indian crafts people to conserve/restore the neglected remnants of Buddhist structures in rural India by establishing an international network of cultural

Built Heritage Conservation

“Continued”

institutions for mutual benefit. The long-term goal would be to widen its ambit and include all rural heritage.

3. To create a viable financial structure for sustainable institutional activities under the umbrella of the Rural Heritage Conservation Institute and Resource Centre.
4. To promote the vision of ITRHD as primarily an inclusive and therefore an appropriate ideology for developing a large section of Indian society. This ideology offers the opportunity to map the contours of an indigenous modernity and thereby make a difference to Indian society materially and intellectually.

This vision is significant to mediating both the rural *and* urban habitat. The paradox of Indian urbanity is that the characteristics of traditional urbanism are manifest in both cities and villages. The rural site perhaps offers a more authentic version of traditional urbanism, therefore the focus on the rural in ITRHD's agenda has the potential to be useful to inform urban planning as well.

This, in essence, is the architectural vision of ITRHD. It is predicated on transforming the paradigm of settlement planning by linking the imperatives of conservation and development. Thus, any conservation issue is viewed through the lens of benefitting the welfare of local society, and any habitat development project is viewed through the lens of establishing continuity with the elements of local heritage.

FOCUS AREA: Living Heritage: Crafts and Visual Arts

VISION, The First Ten Years. ITRHD's vision for the living heritage of our rural arts and crafts has been to help preserve and create sustainability for our traditional craft forms, and to develop the means for them to provide economic stability for the artisan communities.

India is truly unique in her number of surviving craft traditions. And in spite of increasing urbanization and increasing globalization of consumer tastes, crafts are still a living, breathing part of Indian culture and Indian life. The skilled artisans who produce them are rare and irreplaceable resources, living links to the past and a means of preserving cultural meaning into the future.

In addition, handlooms and handicrafts are one of the most important cottage industries in India, forming the second largest employment generator after agriculture. One of the anomalies in this major sector is that it has never been properly enumerated. According to the [2011 Census](#) there are over 68 lakh artisans in the country, of which 55 percent are women. However, a sector analysis prepared for The World Bank in 2001 by one of our Trustees, working with a specialized economist, estimated conservatively that there were at

least 90 lakh handicraft workers in the crafts sector. Another recent study puts the figure as 200 million, including ancillary and unpaid labour. Regardless of the exact number, the products created by these skilled artisans brought into the country Rs.126 billion (US\$ 1.7 billion) in exports last year. And that does not include the booming domestic market. India's greatest advantage is that, unlike many South Asian and African countries, we do have a huge domestic demand.

The greatest part of these impressive returns, however, is never seen by the craftspersons, but rather benefits vast networks of middlemen. The reasons for this are many and complex, but the main ones have to do with lack of direct access to markets, lack of the skills necessary to surmount the hurdles, and lack of knowledge of markets and customers. Thus, many if not most craftspersons struggle to survive, and this is especially true for rural artisans.

Another crucial issue is the social status of artisans. This is a major reason for young artisans abandoning their ancestral skills and crafts sector, even in cases where they are relatively well paid. Age old attitudes to craftspeople prevent them from being seen as the skilled professionals they are.

STRATEGIES, The First Ten Years

To date, ITRHD has been involved with traditional crafts in Azamgarh (U.P.) and Barmer (Rajasthan). In Azamgarh, activities have involved two villages, **Nizamabad**, with an unusual black pottery tradition, and **Mubarakpur**, with a famous silk weaving tradition. Both villages have been known for these traditions for several hundred years. It is only in recent decades that various forces have destroyed the traditional markets, made it difficult to maintain the traditional quality, and reduced formerly proud and respected artisans to poverty and struggle.

In **Barmer**, the traditional crafts were closely intertwined with village life, sustained by local markets and patronage, and filled with vibrant design and colour. As in Azamgarh, the decline of local patronage (as local markets flooded with inexpensive mass-produced goods) and the inability to access new markets have led not only to economic disaster for many artisans, but also to the disappearance of some formerly extremely refined skills and products.

The Azamgarh villages were among ITRHD's earliest ventures, and continue to be a focus area. The major interventions have been in the area of design input (with the weavers), in technical innovation (with the potters), and in direct marketing by organisation of Azamgarh Festivals in Delhi and Lucknow. The Barmer project is new, and had barely begun before the COVID crisis. However, successful exhibitions and sales were held in Barmer, in Jodhpur and Delhi. In both areas, artisans have become “Rural Members” of ITRHD (with a token fee of Rs. 100) to develop a sense of involvement and participation.

Living Heritage: Crafts and Visual Arts
“Continued”

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years

Sustainability of Crafts Communities. The overall vision in all ITRHD projects relating to living crafts traditions is to ensure the survival of the skills and the traditions, and to make them the foundation of comfortable and confident lives for the communities to which they belong. At the base of this lies a fundamental resource -- the skill, often inherited, of the artisan. And in addition to this, the traditional products often contain within themselves layers of meaning as well as history. Strengthening and retaining these authentic cores of both skill and meaning, while creating sustainability in the contemporary world, is the challenge.

ITRHD's overall strategy for achieving the vision is three-fold:

- to preserve the traditional skills and the meaning inherent in many of the products;
- to provide the design and technical interventions necessary to ensure that the products, while retaining authenticity, can compete in contemporary markets;
- to provide the artisans with the skills and facilities that will enable them to interact directly with their markets, reducing the role of intermediaries, and increasing income and recognition for the craftspersons.

Specific strategies fall into the following areas:

- **Assistance in procurement of raw materials.** Traditionally artisans worked with locally available materials (mud and clay from village ponds, local woods and stones, locally available fabrics and fibres, etc.). As local sources have declined, artisans become dependent on materials that must be procured from faraway markets, or that are provided to them by middlemen. The USP for the future of handicrafts depends on authenticity of materials, so artisans must be helped to obtain these, rather than switching to more easily available, often artificial, raw materials. Developing structures for this is a work in progress.
- **Design and Product Diversification.** While remaining true to the core of their inner vision, artisans can be helped to adapt products to current market realities. Many traditional craftspersons are artists at heart, and are able to respond creatively to new inputs. They have, after all, responded to the tastes of their patrons for centuries. The key is collaboration, between the designer/mentor and the artisan, not simply the imposition of new designs and new concepts. In this regard, ITRHD design and product diversification interventions strive to involve sensitive as well as technically proficient professionals.
- **Marketing.** Helping craftspersons to access their markets is a major thrust. The opportunity to interact directly with their customers is a major benefit of actual exhibitions. The Mubarakpur weavers, for instance, say that communicating with visitors at the Azamgarh Festivals not only results in sales, but provides them with

useful market intelligence regarding contemporary tastes. The role of exhibitions – rural craft-based festivals, exhibitions held in conjunction with established fairs and festivals, exhibitions in villages involved in rural tourism – will remain strong, as the opportunity to interact with the craftsperson and to actually examine the products remains a strong positive element in craft purchasing.

The role of aggregator platforms (of which Amazon is the prime example) is a new development in handicraft marketing. It has the advantages of reaching vast and diverse potential customer bases, and of providing transparency (and exposure to competition) in pricing. The disadvantages are that, for the rural craftsperson, the processes of photography, packaging, production of quantities, etc., are all hurdles. And although Amazon's craft marketing has been fairly successful, most of the products are being sold through companies, not by the individual maker. So, the role of the middleman has not diminished. ITRHD's mission in this regard is to develop platforms and channels that are easily accessible to both artisan and client, and serve both equally well.

- **Integrity of Product and Process.** In all of its exhibitions, ITRHD insists that products being displayed and sold are authentic handmade items, using natural materials (i.e., handlooms rather than power loom copies, wood and stone rather than plastic, etc.). We realise that craftspersons are not museum exhibits; they of course move with the times. Certain technological innovations (such as computers for use in design, improvements in kilns used for pottery, replacement of hazardous materials with safe alternatives, etc.) can be very helpful and are appropriate interventions. Additionally, the introduction of cost-effective and eco-friendly technology using natural dyes, organic materials, new yarns from bamboo fibres, food-grade pottery – can all add to sustainable development of production. Still, the actual skilled hands of the artisans are the central component in all craft products featured in all ITRHD events and projects, and this will remain so.
- **Development of ancillary community skills.** Not all members of crafts families and communities possess, or desire to possess, the actual skills of hand production. It has always been true that family members would participate in all aspects related to the production. In contemporary times, there are many more potential ancillary activities and professions. Training programs in raw material procurement, computer usage in many areas, photography, packaging, marketing, etc., all offer opportunities for craft-related employment. Educated younger members of crafts families can be trained to interact effectively with domestic and foreign buyers, to represent their communities at trade shows and exhibitions, to engage with social media, etc. **ITRHD** training programs in these areas will continue to increase and diversify, so that entire communities can evolve economically fulfilling crafts-based activities.

Living Heritage: Crafts and Visual Arts

“Continued”

- **Partnerships with professional institutions.** Long-term partnerships with design institutions can ensure continuity and development, and ITRHD is working on these in several areas. In addition, a potential project has been discussed with a university whose faculty have been involved in academic studies of Mubarakpur weavers. The business school of this university is being looked at for long-term mentoring in business and marketing skills, as well as undertaking the academic studies that will eventually analyse and document intervention strategies.

The above areas of activity are ITRHD's vision for the future. Being able to develop them depends on funding. We thus need to actively solicit new corporate, government, and institutional sources of support, and this is a priority.

FOCUS AREA: Living Heritage: Music, Dance, Performing Arts

THE VISION: The First Ten Years. India is a culturally rich country, enriched as it is with diverse performance traditions. Each region has its own identity and personality, but these are not necessarily demarcated along political boundaries. For example, the folk music of the Punjab and Rajasthan are very similar. In both classical and folk performance traditions, India possesses a wealth of resources. Many of these, especially in the rural areas, are in danger of disappearing. ITRHD has felt a responsibility to nurture these traditions and carry them forward, so they will not be lost to future generations.

STRATEGIES, The First Ten Years

To date, ITRHD's involvement with living performance traditions has been focused on the village of **Hariharpur**, in Azamgarh District of U.P., where practically every Brahmin family has a tradition of a musical lineage. Some of the legendary artists who can trace their roots to this small village include Pt. Chhanulal Mishra (Padma Bhushan), the late Pt. Samta Prasad, Pt. Sarda Maharaj, and relatives of Pt. Birju Maharaj (Padma Vibhushan).

All the boys are taught music from an early age, from their fathers, uncles or grandfathers, learning to play tabla and sarangi, and to sing classical as well as folk genres. The girls traditionally were not given any formal training in music. However, they often learned informally, as a result of the constant exposure, and some are now being trained. A number of the contemporary musicians are extremely proficient, and earn tremendous appreciation from their performances in Delhi and Lucknow during the **ITRHD Azamgarh Festivals**.

Except for the ITRHD Festivals, however, these talented musicians have few opportunities to perform, and suffer great economic hardship. The younger generation is thus increasingly

leaving the village, and the tradition, with its lineage of the Benares gharana, is in danger of being lost. In addition to the absence of economic returns, the musicians were suffering from lack of professional training, shortage of musical instruments, few performance opportunities, and general lack of awareness and appreciation for their talent. Our focus so far has been on restoring and renovating the performance space, providing training to young musicians by visiting eminent masters, and providing performance opportunities for sophisticated urban audiences at major venues in Delhi and Lucknow in the annual ITRHD Azamgarh Festivals.

We have also partnered with the Government of Punjab in presenting multi-faceted **Heritage Festivals in Patiala**. Spread over 10 days each February, the festivals include a plethora of events, including polo matches, cricket matches, exhibitions, and sports events. ITRHD has been entrusted with the responsibility of organizing musical performances by some of India's greatest masters, presented in Patiala's extraordinary heritage properties. The emphasis here is on exposing audiences to the beauty of their architectural heritage, and demonstrating how heritage can remain excitingly alive in a contemporary context. The results are mesmerizing.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years.

As with crafts communities, the overall vision in all ITRHD projects relating to living performance traditions is to ensure the survival of both the skills and the traditions, and to make them the foundation of comfortable and confident lives for the communities to which they belong. At the base of this lies a fundamental resource -- the talent of the musician/dancer/performer, and his or her mastery of the form (usually taught within the family or the community). Equally important, the forms themselves often resonate with meaning as well as history. Strengthening and retaining these authentic cores of talent, skill and meaning, while creating sustainability in the contemporary world, is the challenge.

Future strategies fall into the following categories:

Documentation. Before they are lost to us forever, our performance traditions must be carefully and fully documented, through visuals, audios, and manuscripts. Areas in which we plan to work include:

- Collecting and collating historical sketches of the different styles and of the artists themselves. There are artists who represent old “lineages” and it is important to recognise and record them.
- Research and documentation of various “life-style” forms of music of different regions, for example, those relating to childbirth, entering student life, marriage, and death; those associated with the seasons of spring, summer, and monsoon; those

Living Heritage: Music, Dance, Performing Arts
“Continued”

- related to the festivals of Holi, Diwali, Baisakhi, Lorhi and others; and songs of the of the harvest. These songs are all in the local languages, they must be transcribed so that they are available to all.
- Identification, detailed description, and cataloguing of traditional instruments. Their makers must be encouraged and helped to sustain the refined craftsmanship of production of these treasures, so the art does not disappear.
- Research and documentation of religious music, significant amounts of which are still alive and vital.
- Another important area is the classical and dance music of the rural areas where some of our most renowned artists have their roots. A strong network system should be created to identify the beginnings of these now famous masters who began their lives in the rural areas, and to convince them to help in nurturing the traditions.
- Research and documentation of the rich but hardly known traditions of theatre music.
- The work done by the Academies must not be duplicated as otherwise this would be a waste of time and energy. However, there are various schemes set up by the Ministry of Culture and the Academies, which can be identified and whatever is suitable should be made use of.
- Dissemination of all documentation should be done as widely as possible.

Ensuring survival and sustainability. The younger generations of rural villages with strong performance traditions are increasingly leaving the traditions and the villages in search of more fulfilling and economically viable lives. To counter this, means must be found of ensuring economic returns as well as appreciation and awareness of the traditions. Some of the areas in which we plan to continue to work towards this and to expand our efforts include:

- Continued organisation and support of performance opportunities in urban areas, to sophisticated audiences, such as the Azamgarh and Patiala Festivals. These exposures not only provide income, but give the performers pride and confidence as they bask in the appreciation of these new audiences.
- Encouragement of local performance opportunities, both as part of rural tourism initiatives and as participation in local and regional events, fairs, and festivals.
- Assistance in arranging performances that will bring the Artists and the Art-forms to the notice of Organisers and Government agencies. The local DCs should be encouraged to organise these public performances at the District level, and similarly at the State and National level.

Contemporary Explorations. Some traditional rural performance forms, in areas that are popular with tourists, have survived by developing new manifestations which can be presented in hotels and other tourist locales. Others have been moderately successful with foreign tours or in providing tracks for films. These all, however, involve a decontextualization, and more often than not a “dumbing-down” of once proud traditions.

Living Heritage: Music, Dance, Performing Arts ***“Continued”***

Some other means of keeping the flames alive have been experimented with in events such as the annual RIFF (Rajasthan International Folk Festival) at Jodhpur's Mehrangarh Fort. Here, for several days, Indian classical and folk musicians perform, sometimes alone, sometimes with groups and individuals from different parts of India and the world, in sets that are sometimes pure and traditional, and sometimes innovative or experimental. At times there is unrehearsed, spontaneous performance with groups from other genres or other countries, when musicians effortlessly communicate across the different dialects of their universal language of music. These moments are dazzling and often mesmerising, and prove that cultural identity can indeed have contemporary relevance.

In this vein, we are working to bring together musicians from different rural areas, and to establish programs within which young urban and rural musicians communicate with and learn to appreciate each other. These are works-in-progress, but we feel they are important.

FOCUS AREA: Heritage for Youth

THE VISION: The First Ten Years. From the beginning, ITRHD realized that involving youth in our activities was crucial to ensuring sustainability into the future.

STRATEGIES: The First Ten Years.

To begin, a Youth Club was formed in **Hariharpur**, on guidelines similar to Nehru Yuva Kendra Sansthan (NYKS), of which it is a registered member. Subsequently we set up two more youth clubs in the pottery village of **Nizamabad** and the weaving village of **Mubarakpur**. Three Delhi college students established the club in Hariharpur, and made an inspiring video: (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hariharpur+youth+club).

Although funds were limited, from August 2017 until the pandemic crisis began in early 2020, under the guidance of our small ITRHD team a number of activities took place in the three Azamgarh villages. These included:

- Creation of Youth Clubs in all three villages;
- Annual tree plantation programs. In Hariharpur, 100 saplings have been planted, each named after a child who then takes personal interest in it;
- More than 300 trees were planted in the villages in last three years, protected by bamboo mesh, and children were instructed in their proper care;
- Village Cleanliness Awareness Program was instituted; awareness session was conducted on correct method of hand washing. The children then imparted this lesson to their families.

Heritage for Youth

“Continued”

- Essay writing and poster making competitions were organized by team when visiting the villages;
- Games and activities were organized (Kabaddi Match Competition, Kho-kho, Badminton Competition, 200 meter race, and others);
- Events were organized for World Heritage Day, World Tourism Day, Independence Day, Yoga Day, Republic Day, and Adopt a Monument;
- Lack of funds was compensated for by our Trust officer in charge, who arranged donations like school bags, fruits, and stationary for the school students.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years.

Our basic vision is to encourage awareness in both rural and urban youth of the role that heritage can play in their lives, both by creating appreciation for the heritage resources in their own communities and families, and by making them aware that there are exciting and interesting career opportunities in heritage field. In this way, heritage should become an accepted part of their lives, something that is appreciated and nurtured.

Overview and Immediate Strategies: In the current pandemic situation, the main idea is to develop programmes that are practical, manageable, consistent, and cost effective. This means that for the time being, the focus will be on **digital**. Meanwhile, we are working out both short-term and long-term plan, but all focusing on the core ITRHD value of India's rich and diverse rural heritage. We are continuing Membership drives among village youth, and also exploring the potential for collaborations and partnerships.

Future Strategies. The above activities have kept the movement going in a modest way, and the Youth Club members are eager to start new activities. In this regard, we are considering expanding in creative new directions. The vision is for a **RUG Connect** program linking **Rural, Urban, and Global**. It is envisioned that this will focus on collaborations for socio-cultural engagement between youth in all three spheres. This is a work in progress, but the vision includes such potential activities as:

- Link performances by young musicians to **AirBnb Experiences**. This can be an exciting venture – possibly bringing some income to the artists, and giving global exposure. One of our Advisors, a successful young heritage entrepreneur, is helping to develop this;
- A pilot program with our HARTS, encouraging rural youth to make short films/videos on their smart phones relating to life in the village and local heritage;
- The resulting videos will be screened on our ITRHD digital platforms and our social media;
- Possibilities will be explored for sharing the videos with schools and youth organizations;

- Crafts collaboration between young rural craftspersons and design students;
- Music collaborations between young rural musicians and young urban musicians, exposing each to the other's musical world. With online collaboration, they can produce a short performance that will be recorded; a music production person will be engaged to coordinate, and the resulting performances can be shared via YouTube, or other online platforms.

We are also working on plans for creating awareness of career opportunities in heritage fields, possibly be commissioning a series of lectures by successful young heritage professionals. We envision these being shared with schools, made available as zoom meetings, posted on our social media platforms, and shared with our HARTS and collaborative organizations.

FOCUS AREA: Cultural Festivals and Publications

THE VISION: The First Ten Years.

In addition to helping rural communities preserve and sustain their heritage and see it as a resource for general development, the ITRHD vision includes encouraging awareness and appreciation for India's rich rural heritage in the larger world, both India and abroad. The primary ways in which this is being accomplished is through **Cultural Festivals** and **Publications**.

STRATEGIES: The First Ten Years

Festivals. Since 2013, ITRHD has organized an annual Azamgarh Festival in Delhi, and since 2017, in Lucknow as well. These events showcase the rich heritage of the area, and the elegant and central venues (in Delhi these have included the Ashok Hotel, the India International Centre, and for the last several years Alliance Francaise) not only lend credibility, but draw large crowds of sophisticated buyers and audiences.

- **Azamgarh Festivals.** All three villages in Azamgarh's "Creative Cluster" are represented in these Festivals. The **Mubarakpur** weavers display dazzling collections of beautiful silks, at which - to urban visitors - are throwaway prices. Similarly, the beautiful black pottery of **Nizamabad** enjoys substantial sales. And performances by

Cultural Festivals and Publications

“Continued”

the talented **Hariharpur** musicians, sometimes accompanied by fellow villagers who have achieved international renown, draw appreciative connoisseurs.

In recent years we have included “guest artisans” from other crafts communities in these Festivals; these have included the Thathiar artisans (from near Amritsar) with their UNESCO-listed craft of making hammered brass and copper utensils, and textile, leather and jewellery craftspersons from our Barmer crafts initiative.

Generous support from our members and some corporate sponsors, as well as from the Government of Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow, enables ITRHD to pay all expenses for these festivals and for the artisans. Entire proceeds of sales go directly to craftspersons. In addition to the economic benefits, the artisans absorb much market intelligence from direct interaction with their customers, and all are able to enjoy the tremendous appreciation of new, sophisticated audiences for their skills and their traditions.

- **Patiala Festivals.** For the last two years, ITRHD has coordinated with the Government of Punjab in presenting multi-faceted Heritage Festivals in Patiala. Spread over 10 days each February, celebrating the culture of the city of Patiala, the festivals include a plethora of events, including polo matches, cricket matches, exhibitions, and sports events. ITRHD has been entrusted with the responsibility of organizing musical performances by some of India’s greatest masters, and fashion shows involving talented designers, all presented in Patiala’s extraordinary heritage properties. The emphasis here is on exposing audiences to the beauty of their architectural heritage, and demonstrating how heritage can remain excitingly alive in a contemporary context. All events are funded by the Government of Punjab.

Publications

- Beginning in 2013, ITRHD began publishing **Explore Rural India**, a journal dedicated to rural heritage, with articles from specialists, scholars, and activists working in related fields, both in India and abroad. To date, 11 issues have been published. These are distributed free of cost to our Members, and are made possible by revenue from advertisements, and by the generous contribution of their time and efforts by the authors and by our dedicated Director Projects, who is also our Editor.
- In addition, since 2017 we have published 5 extremely attractive specialized volumes, on **Cuisines of India; Oral Traditions, Myths and Legends; Rural Sports and Games; Tribal Cultures;** and **Traditional Healing Systems.** Again, these are distributed free of cost to Members. Costs have been covered from our own funds and, in one case, by the Ministry of Sports, GOI, and have been made possible by the contribution of time and effort by the authors and our own Editor.

All the above publications can be seen and read on our website, www.itrhd.com.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years

Festivals. Our plans are to continue these festivals and to expand the Azamgarh event to other locations as well. In addition, we plan to develop “mini-festivals” in conjunction with other major fairs and festivals. We explored this with an exhibition and sale of Barmer crafts at a major performing arts festival in Jodhpur last year; the results were extremely encouraging.

Publications. We plan to continue with the above publications, as they have received much acclaim. For the future, plans are underway to produce a special volume reprinting some of the articles from the past. In addition, we are exploring ways in which we might begin producing our publications commercially, both to ensure wider distribution, and to earn revenue for our corpus.

FOCUS AREA: Community Development in Project Areas

VISION: The First Ten Years. ITRHD was established with the belief that rural heritage should be preserved not only for its own intrinsic value and meaning, but as a potential asset for overall rural development. In this regard, we have embarked on various programs in our project communities. These have included:

- Establishment and ongoing operation of a primary school in the musicians' village of Hariharpur;
- Teachers and Nurses Training for young residents of the Azamgarh “Creative Cluster” villages;
- Tailoring training in the weavers' village of Mubarakpur;
- Skill development training in Bhiwani, Haryana;
- Design, development and installation of a complete waste management system in the Indus Valley excavation site villages of Rakhigarhi;
- Civic infrastructure development in the living temple village of Maluti, Jharkhand;
- Experimental solar energy installation in the potters' village of Nizamabad.

Community Development in Project Areas

“Continued”

The above initiatives have been supported by donations from our Members and Trustees, and by funding raised from Government agencies and corporate sponsors under CSR. Complete descriptions of all can be found on our website (www.itrhd.com)

VISION FOR THE FUTURE: The Next Ten Years. is to continue and expand these efforts, according to the unique needs of each individual project area.

VISION AND STRATEGIES: FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

As we plan for the future, we are intending to add three important new Focus Areas to our agenda:

- Documentation;
- Rural Tourism;
- Climate Change.

Plans are in process in all these areas, and we are embarking on fundraising to make them into reality.

FUTURE FOCUS AREA: Documentation

The vision is to eventually document all of India's rural heritage resources, tangible and intangible. Some of this is being accomplished within specific existing projects; some has been done through publications. At present ITRHD is partnering with our Belgian Chapter, which has compiled a listing of Khajuraho heritage resources. This will be published shortly under ITRHD auspices.

Eventually the vision is to compile a complete directory of rural heritage documentation, written, recorded, or digital, and to make this accessible to scholars and researchers, as well as for planning future priorities.

Combining documentation with rural tourism planning, a pilot project was completed in the Anjunad Valley (northern Kerala), an area with more than 5000 years of history. ITRHD signed an MOU with the Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies (KITTS), to produce an "Anjunad Rural Heritage Tourism Development Plan". The area was studied and heritage was documented for its conservation. The plan is intended to make Anjunad a model for

rural heritage tourism, and one that can be used in other rural villages of India as well. The project description and full report can be seen on the website, www.itrhd.com.

FUTURE FOCUS AREA: Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is one of the most effective means of bringing income into rural areas, and of bringing the experience and richness of rural experience to visitors. An ITRHD Task Force has been constituted, preliminary proposals have been drawn up for several areas, and priorities and strategies are being formulated. This is a long-term venture, but we have a number of very experienced professionals on board, and hope to get moving soon.

To date, the Task Force has agreed that the long-term goal of developing rural tourism needs to be addressed keeping in mind that:

- The local communities need to be involved at all stages and serve as custodians of the project;
- The benefits must accrue to the community, thus encouraging residents to preserve their authentic heritage and traditions;
- All aspects of the area's heritage should be included in the experience, such as agriculture and farming, water conservation, vernacular architecture, flora and fauna, festivals, rituals, cuisine, crafts, performing arts, to name the obvious.
- Residents need to be trained in basic requirements for hosting visitors, in terms of civic infrastructure, comfortable and hygienic accommodation.

Action Plans are being developed in 4 areas: Azamgarh villages in UP; Royal Gardens Of Rajnagar In Madhya Pradesh; Barmer region in Rajasthan and Maluti village and surrounding areas in Jharkhand. Plans will include at least the following:

- Identification of villages to be included with unique characteristics of each;
 - Project proposal for each village including development of infrastructure, facilities; amenities, attractions, etc.;
 - Plan for community involvement structure for each village;
 - Plans for related ancillary ventures, such as Living Museums, Artisan and Craft Training Centres, marketing of local products;
 - Partnerships: NGOs, professional organisations, hospitality training organisations, Government bodies, etc.
 - Budgets: Complete budget projections with possible sources.
-

Future Focus Areas

“Continued”

FUTURE FOCUS AREA: Climate Change

It is evident that climate change will have strong impacts on all areas of life, and the heritage of our rural areas will not be spared. A Task Force is being formed, and an Action Plan will be developed.

An amendment has been introduced in our Memorandum of Association enabling us to take on activities to bring about awareness of the impact of climate change in agriculture and life in general and measures needed to meet the challenges.

As part of these activities, we plan to launch a massive tree plantation campaign on a sustainable basis on the lines of the Vana Mahotsav campaign launched very successfully in the 1950's. Much work has already been done in the Azamgarh villages by our Youth Clubs, and a project is underway in Barmer, to be completed before the monsoon. The vision is to spread this movement throughout the rural areas in which ITRHD is involved.



Indian Trust for Rural Heritage
and Development

Photograph

**APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBER
(VOTING CATEGORY)**

INDIAN TRUST FOR RURAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT (ITRHD)

“Just as the universe is contained in the self, so is India contained in the villages.” Mahatma Gandhi

1. Name of the Applicant
2. Address of the Applicant
.....
.....
3. Educational Qualifications
.....
4. Profession/Present Employment
.....
.....
5. Date of Birth
6. E-mail
7. Mobile No.
8. Landline No.
9. Experience with Rural
Heritage/Development
Or
Area of Specialisation

Turn Overleaf

Category of Membership	Membership Fee	
	Indian Resident (Indian Rupees)	Others (US Dollars)
Life Member Individual	5,000	500
Life Member Corporate	10,00,000	25,000
Life Member Institutional	25,000	1,250
Associate Member, Individual (5-year term, renewable after 5 years at same fee)	2,000	
Associate Member, Corporate	1,00,000	
Associate Member, Rural	100	

Note:

1. Unless otherwise specified all fees are one-time payment only.
2. Any academic or cultural body, including a University, Department or Registered Society engaged in cultural, academic or social work is eligible to apply for Life Member Institutional.
3. Associate Members will not have any voting rights.
4. Any person residing in a rural area, who is interested in rural heritage and development, can become a member on paying a token fee of Rs. 100 only.
5. The Membership Fee once paid, is Non-Refundable.
6. The Fee shall form part of the Corpus of the Society.

I am enclosing cash / cheque / demand draft for Rs. / USD as
admission fee for(category of membership)
and I agree to donate the fee to Corpus Fund.

Signature of the Applicant

I recommend the application of for membership.

Signature of Trustee / Life Member

Name of Trustee/Life Member

(The Membership Committee appointed by the Trustees reserves the right to reject any application for membership of the Trust).

Donations to ITRHD are eligible for deduction u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961. Cheques should be made in favour of:

INDIAN TRUST FOR RURAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT and sent to the Registered Office address below:-

Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development

C-56-Nizamuddin East, New Delhi – 110 013

Or through Bank transfer, details as under:

Name of beneficiary: Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development

Bank name : State Bank of India, Nizamuddin Branch, Nizamuddin West, New Delhi

Bank account No : 31738466610

IFSC CODE : SBIN0009109

Bank Code : 9109, MICR Code No. 110002177



**The Indian Trust for Rural Heritage
and Development**

www.itrhd.com

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