

ABHILEKH

SOLAPUR ARTS REGISTRY PROJECT

Arts practices are the pinnacle of creative ideals in a society. When a society has achieved a certain level of economic and political stability it seeks its identity in its achievements in art. Indian society which has innumerable such instances of complex and breathtaking art shows that the society enjoyed tremendous stability for long periods before colonisation. Even until a few decades ago some of the greatest festivals of music and dance used to be held in and around small towns and villages of India. But more recently we see a great decline in the access to classical arts and recognition to regionally entrenched art forms especially in non-urban areas. This loss of awareness about indigenous traditions in art could be due to increased exposure to global entertainment and modern education leading to migration for work.

In an attempt to revitalise the arts scenario beyond the metropolis, the Centre for Art, Society and Policy, Pune (CASP) has designed a unique project to create a current and district wise registry of traditional art forms which combines the interests of arts researchers, archivists, historians, local artists and *rasiks* of arts.

This project will be categorised not only by forms and genres but also by ritual significances of the art forms. The idea is to archive and curate the regional legacy in music, dance, theatre, storytelling and ritual arts which can then be used to boost local awareness especially among the youth.



PERFORMING ARTS - MUSIC, DANCE, TRADITIONAL THEATRE & RITUAL ARTS

Total Project Period - 18 months

A. WORKSHOPS - 2 MONTHS

1. Presentation to the community : The idea of Abhilekh for Solapur - July
2. Introduction to the project at the Solapur University - Pre Hiring:
Beginning of August
3. Orientation for selected Project Coordinator and Interns: 2 day workshop on music, dance, theatre, and ritual arts : 6 people Sachin Sachar, Sushruti Santhanam, 4 resource people who will speak on local music, dance, theatre and ritual arts.

B. SURVEY - 10 MONTHS

1. Archival survey - 2 interns - 1 month

The practice of survey and archiving of particular cultural practices district wise was prevalent under the British administration and then carried on by the Government of India.

2. Literature survey - 2 Interns - 1 month

Survey of regional literature with reference to local art forms eg.

Somanatha's Manasollasa records unique art forms of the ancient region of Kalyan which now corresponds to Thane district.

3. Ethnographic survey - 9 months

Interviews with living practitioners of traditional art forms of the region.

C. REGISTRY PRODUCTION - 6 MONTHS

Editing, Designing and Production

PROJECT TEAM

1. Project Director - Dr. Sushruti Santhanam
2. Academic Consultant - Dr. Radhika Seshan
3. Resource Expert - Sachin Sachar
4. Project Coordinator -
5. Interns -
6. Project Coordinator from Precision -



DR. SUSHRUTI SANTHANAM

Sushruti Santhanam, brings together three very different worlds of inquiry and practice which include her over 3 decades long immersion in Carnatic music, a PhD in History and a deep and long engagement with artists and artisan communities. Her special focus is on the form and use of 'tradition' in Indian knowledge systems especially in arts & craft practice.

For her thesis work done at the Department of History, Savitribai Phule Pune University, she theorized the concept of tradition in Indian musical practice through the study of two musical genres - the Manganiyar music from western Rajasthan and nataka tradition in the Carnatic genre from southern India. She has trained intensively since childhood in Carnatic music, in the rigorous Gurukula system under her mother, Guru Smt. R. Vedavalli and is currently a teacher and a practicing Carnatic musician in Pune. She is the Director of Centre for Arts, Society and Policy (CASP), where she brings together works of scholars and practitioners of India arts and crafts and is currently involved in building a digital archive of art historian and philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy. She has degrees in Sociology and Journalism and is happiest doing field ethnography studying embedded practices in Indian art and craft.

She teaches Heritage Studies at IDSS, Savitribai Phule Pune University and Co-teaches a course on Design Thinking and Innovation at IIT, Delhi. She extends this journey to include diverse audience through workshops, lectures and publications. She also mentors younger researchers in the field.



DR. RADHIKA SESHAN

Dr. Radhika Seshan, is the former HOD, Department of History, Savitribai Phule University, Pune and a visiting faculty at the Symbiosis School for Liberal Arts, Pune. Her area of specialisation is medieval Indian history, within which she has concentrated on economic history, especially maritime and urban history.

She is the author of three books, Trade and Politics on the Coromandel Coast (2012), Ideas and Institutions in Medieval India, 8th to 18th centuries (2013) and The Construction of the East in Western Travel Narratives, 1300-1800 (2020). In addition, she is the editor/co-editor of eight books, of which the most recent, co-edited with Professor Rila Mukherjee, is Indian Ocean Histories: The many worlds of Michael Naylor Pearson (2019-2020)



SACHIN SACHAR

Sachin is a practising exhibition designer, archivist, pedagogue and a storyteller. Based out of Delhi, his studio and research lab are passionately involved in looking at exhibitions, fairs, festivals, and other allied storytelling domains, as a means of making an inquiry into design, heritage, craft and culture. Sachin actively engages in archiving and documentation of material and object-based nuances, which are slowly evolving into a repository and a formal archive of material culture, both traditional and contemporary.

With his active interest in indigenous knowledge systems and traditional ethos/ values of India, his ongoing research (of past 2 decades) titled "Paribhasha, paddhati, aur Siddhant" is a collation of several definitions, study of processes, and articulation of underlying (yet unsaid) principles, shedding light on an Indian Idiom of doing and being.

He is a visiting faculty at NID, Ahmedabad, and few other design schools since 2012. All his courses entail a unique learning of several design nuances (material, form, structures et al) through making and storytelling-based engagement. His current passion is expressed in his initiative called MY STORYEUMS, which entails the creation of mini travelling museums (on several aspects of traditional knowledge and materials culture) supported by his unique storytelling.