CASE STUDY 2

Awareness raising: the Amul Surabhi TV series and the Surabhi Foundation in India

For many years, an Indian television programme raised awareness about ICH in India: *Amul Surabhi*, also known simply as *Surabhi*, a cultural magazine that showcased aspects of Indian culture, was a very popular show on an Indian State-run television channel. For almost ten years (1993–2001), *Surabhi* travelled all over the country, recording tangible and intangible heritage and cultural activities. Voted one of India’s top ten TV programmes, *Surabhi* was the longest-running cultural series on national television and received the largest measured audience response in the history of Indian television.

The hundreds of topics explored by the programme included Kalaripayattu, a martial art of Kerala; the traditional glazing techniques of the Rathwa groups; traditional fabric-colouring techniques from Gujarat; and techniques of water harvesting in Rajasthan. It followed artists and art events and explored current issues such as whether Vedic mathematics or ancient Indian mathematics have a place in modern teaching methods.

#### Surabhi Foundation

After *Surabhi* ended its run on Indian television, the Surabhi Foundation for Research and Cultural Exchange continued its work. The Surabhi Foundation is a non-profit organization involved in the ‘documentation, preservation and dissemination of India’s cultural heritage at the national and international level’. The director and presenter of *Surabhi*, Siddharth Kak, is a founder member of the Foundation. The television series left behind the largest private collection of video material on India, which is now catalogued and maintained by the Foundation. The Foundation organizes festivals, symposia, workshops and lecture demonstrations on Indian heritage and is creating the world’s first theme park based on India – the Living Heritage Centre – incorporating a cultural archive and museum on Indian heritage in Navi Mumbai.

The Foundation is currently making a new series of documentaries in collaboration with UNESCO, with public, private and corporate support. Called the India Heritage Series, it explores various facets of India’s contemporary cultural and natural heritage. One of the films already produced, *Souvenirs in Metal*, explores the skills, songs and stories associated with three metal-crafting traditions in India: intricate *dhokra* work from Bastar, brass and copperware from Assam and the Buddhist figurines of Sikkim. The materials produced will be accessible to the public through the Living Heritage Centre. Other themes explored include mirror work from Kutch, appliqué work from Rajasthan, *phulkari* (an embroidery technique) from Punjab, the making of the pashmina (a shawl of fine cashmere wool), iron-smelting techniques used by the Agarias and the traditional healing of the Oraons.

The broad reach and depth of the television programme and the Foundation’s activities have helped to spread the word within the general public in India about the value and diversity of its cultural heritage, in particular its intangible heritage.