

Analysing the “Festival Les Cultures Du Monde” of Gannat as site for Celebrating Cultural Diversity!

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Abstract:

Over the last few decades (especially since 1970s) international folklore festivals across the globe have been showcasing, promoting, publicizing and safeguarding traditional cultures (specifically dance, music and art) from different parts of the world. Prominently, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) supported organizations such as CIOFF (International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Art), IOV (International Organisation of Folk Art) and CID (International Dance Council) has been focused in terms of the promotion and protection of folk and cultural heritage. A significant number of these international folklore festivals are organized by various cities, towns and villages across the world, for example, *Festival Les Cultures du Monde* in Gannat, France, *Parade Brunssum* in Brunssum, Netherlands, *Mondial Des Cultures* in Drummondville, Canada and *WOMAD* in Adelaide, Australia. On an average ten to twenty folk music and dance groups are invited from various parts of the world to participate in these festivals that run for several days/weeks, thereby not only providing an opportunity to the groups to showcase their culture, but also, to mingle with other folk groups and local people. Utilising first hand interviews with the organizers of the festival, folk group members and volunteers conducted during the 39th edition of *Les Cultures du Monde* - the international folklore festival of Gannat in France 2012, this research paper will examine, how the Gannat festival has become a venue for celebrating cultural diversity and in what ways it attempts to promote and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords

Intangible Cultural Heritage, International Folklore Festival, *Les Cultures du Monde* - the international folklore festival of Gannat in France, Cultural Diversity, Intermingling, Folk Culture, Zorenka

Introduction

In recent years, there have been many discussions and debates around the intangible cultural heritage, as to what is its actual definition, which particular forms of human expression are to be included in it and why, the legalities involved, and the approach and understanding of different nations towards this concept. Jane Harrington (2009, p.19) in her article on managing intangible cultural heritage states:

One of the more commonly accepted principles we now embrace is that heritage is not just the material 'things' around us, but is inclusive of aspects that are intangible. This intangible heritage includes language, myth, ritual, custom, dance, arts and crafts, oral traditions, practices, dissemination of knowledge, food and festivals. It embraces processes and cultural activities that transmit ideas, beliefs, values and emotions. Intangible heritage can represent the general values and worldview of a society, and enshrine a community's character and identity.

Certainly, people are now realizing the importance of the cultural heritage of humanity, and trying to find ways not only to preserve the tangible heritage but also attempts are being made to preserve the intangible cultural heritage. Folklore festivals across the world have been actively working towards promoting, disseminating and preserving the folk, traditional and ritualistic cultures.

CIOFF (International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Art) and

IOV (International Organisation of Folk Art) two of the leading bodies working towards the preservation and protection of the intangible cultural heritage, in its mission statement specifically mention about the importance of preserving and maintaining the intangible cultural heritage and its aim 'to foster understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity amongst all... and enhance the prospects of world peace' (CIOFF, IOV 2014: online). The IOV mission (2014: online) statement further stresses, "We recognize that in order for folk culture to benefit future generations, it must not survive only as recorded memories of past generations, but in the living traditions of people today". This particular approach IOV and other folklore festivals is based on the guidelines provided by the UNESCO (2012: online) that outlines:

Intangible cultural heritage should be considered as a progressive process of which the main characteristics are creative activities based on tradition. In accordance with the definition of the Convention of Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, a program will be considered as representing traditional culture if its content comes from or is inspired by intangible cultural heritage, namely:

1. Transmitted from generation to generation
2. Constantly re-created by communities and groups in response to their
3. Environment, their interaction with nature and their history
4. Provides a sense of identity and continuity
5. Promotes respect of cultural diversity and human creativity

While many agree and laud the manner in which the UNESCO has been working to safeguard and promote the intangible cultural heritage, few find it a bit problematic, Olwen Beazley (2009, p. 12) in his case study of Auschwitz-Birkenau finds that "one

of the biggest challenges for the identification, protection and management of intangible cultural heritage value is its mutability and its multiplicity.” In the late 1980s, scholars such as Janet Blake raised concern on the economic and cultural impact of globalization on the folk culture and how there were some limitations in the UNESCO’s draft on intangible cultural heritage. Of course later on Blake worked as the consultant for UNESCO and was instrumental in writing the “Draft Preliminary Study on the Advisability of Developing A Standard-Setting Instrument for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage” published in 2001, where Blake was able to address some of the points that she had raised (Blake, 2007). Amanda Kearney (2009, p. 209) contends, “for the vast majority of indigenous peoples, existing legal arrangements concerning their heritage remain under the control and definitional power of the state, rather than the distinct Indigenous nations that own, enact and assert these heritages in specific cultural terms”. Celestina Sagazio (2009, p. 3) points out that the Australian Council of National Trusts (ACNT) also had raised issues and concerns about the intangible cultural heritage, while giving their view on ratifying the 2003 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, but ACNT acknowledged that those concerns could be “addressed, worked through, and a system of checks and balances introduced. If there is enough good will and consultation in the community such concerns can be overcome”.

I concur that there are many legal and ethical issues in relations to the intangible cultural heritage that still needs much clarity of approach and legal provisions; but at the onset I would like to make it clear that this article does not delve into the issue regarding the complexities that the protection of the intangible cultural heritage poses. This article aims to look at the manner in which the *Les Cultures du Monde* - the international folklore festival of Gannat celebrates the cultural diversity

and how it promotes the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage by utilizing first hand interviews with the participants, organisers and volunteers.

I will start with providing a historical overview of the international folklore festival of Gannat, France and then use the interviews with the organizers, participants (members of the Russian group Zorenka and Mexican group El Charro) and the volunteers in the festival to discuss how the folklore festival in Gannat is able to celebrate the diversity of different culture group, strengthens the understanding of the safeguarding of the traditional culture, and how it provides the participants and volunteers in the festival with an opportunity to understand and value the culture of each other.

***Les Cultures du Monde* - the international Folklore Festival of Gannat**

The International Folklore Festival of Gannat has been celebrating the folk culture of the world '*Les Cultures du Monde*' for last 40 years with much pride, fanfare and pageantry. The 10 days long festival of Gannat is organized by the Association Nationale Cultures et Tradition (ANCT), which is led by Jean Roche, the founder of the Festival of Gannat and a permanent representative of International Council for Folklore Festivals in the UNESCO. While, Roche is happy overseeing the selection of the groups and overall functioning of the festival as the honorary president and artistic director, the current president Christine Huaulme oversees the administration of ANCT and Emanuelle Fosse is the director of the International Folklore Festival of Gannat.

With more than 400 artists participating in the festivities, the International Folklore Festival of Gannat is among one of the largest gathering of folk performers in the world. On an average, groups from ten to fifteen countries participate in the festival

each year; the organisers are careful enough to select participants from all over the world, thereby representing an eclectic mix of folk culture, especially music and dance.

ANCT makes it a point to give preference to the folk cultures that are facing the threat of extinction, so that they utilize the festival as a platform to create awareness and try to get some individuals, groups, NGOs and government to notice and discuss about safeguarding these dying intangible heritage of humanity¹.

For the International Folklore Festival of Gannat, it is just not about showcasing folk dance, music and art; it is also about the passion of people towards celebrating and safeguarding their culture; no wonder the town and village folks in and around Gannat have been supporting the festival unconditionally. Every year more than 500 volunteers descend in Gannat in the month of July from all over the world to make this festival a reality and provide the participating groups with the best possible experience. The volunteers ranging from the age group of 10 to 90 can be seen enthusiastically participating in the work they are assigned, be it managing the groups, organizing lunch and dinner, setting up and cleaning the festival arena, working as chauffeurs or simply running a food or drinks stall.

Jean Roche (pers. comm. 2012) states, “the focus of this festival is to appreciate the authentic folk and traditional groups, as well as the stylized ones; and I think this really is a wonderful chance to demonstrate and experience the concept of ‘universal brotherhood’.” Roche further points out that the festival programme is designed in such a manner that the groups from the various countries not only get a chance to showcase

¹ See <http://www.cultures-traditions.org>

their culture to the audience but also mingle with other groups and audience as well as the local supporters of the festival.

Anne Rozier (pers. comm. 2012), the vice president of ANCT adds, “for example, Zorenka, the folk group from Russia was invited by a local village council to perform; after the performance the group members were divided in smaller groups of four to five and were invited by the local families at their home for dinner. Rozier finds this kind of interaction between the “performers” and the “audience” as one of the best examples, where the local people embrace the invited folk groups members, which leads to a better understanding, camaraderie and bonhomie. No wonder many of these local villages end up endorsing or rather in a way adopting one or two particular invited folk dance groups during the festival and follow the group’s performance throughout the festival and be their ardent supporters. Rozier finds that very few folklore festivals provide such an intimate setting and direct meeting of the artists and the audience, which often results in a long lasting friendly relations between people from different cultures and countries.

The history of ANCT and the International Folklore Festival of Gannat dates back to 1965, when Jean Roche with his group “Lo Gars D’cheu Nous’, started his mission for the revival of the traditional festivals and thus creating an interest in the region regarding folk dance and culture. In 1970, the group changed it name to "La Bourrée Gannatoise" and participated in the National Conference of Folklore in Nevers. 1970 was also the year when Jean Roche started envisioning of organizing a world folklore festival and started his work towards it by traveling to different festivals and meeting various folk dance groups².

² See http://www.cultures-traditions.org/Une-histoire-associative_a27.html

It was in the year 1974 that the first Festival of Gannat was organized, which saw the participation of groups from France, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Romania and Turkey. Marie Agnes Jacque (pers. comm. 2012), the programme coordinator of the festival observes, “the first festival was only for three days, but because of the phenomenal response that it received, we decided to continue with the festival as a yearly event; by 1978 the festival had to be made a 10 day long affair due to its success and popularity.”

The 39th edition of the international folklore festival of Gannat *Festival Les Cultures du Monde* was celebrated in a grand scale, which were held from 20th to 30th July showcasing an interesting mix of folk cultures from all over the world that included dance, music, cuisine, art, masks, sculptures, film screenings and international seminar. Marie Agnes Jacque finds that the festival in its 39th edition has witnessed phenomenal support from people in and around Gannat. Jacque (*ibid.*) tries to summarise how the Gannat festival is different:

The people in the local area who are now 30 or 40 years old, they have a special bond with the festival, as they have grown with the festival all these years... they always try to share their summer in Gannat to support the festival. I find it overwhelming when one local lady told me that the ‘festival makes me travel the world sitting at home’. Another gentleman who had visited France on many occasions, was ecstatic when he visited Gannat festival, as he confessed he never had the chance on his earlier visits to France to make people to people contact, but Gannat provided him a chance to visit villages and meet the families and be hosted by them.... For him that was an experience he could not gain in his earlier visits... and that is what we try to do in

Gannat festival... give people the experience of understanding our own local French culture, while we celebrate the culture of the other countries.

The festival organisers had selected a good mix of groups from across the world for the 2012 edition. The European tradition and culture were showcased by groups such as Zorenka from Penza, and Aiylgan Dyakoutsk Yakutia from the Russian Federation; VTV Alt-Miesbach from Munich, Bavaria represented Germany, folk group Loch Lao from Ireland, "Bursa Nilufer Folk Dance Ensemble" from Turkey, Akademiduka from Guadeloupe and the local group from Gannat, "The Bourrée Gannatoise" represented France.

Ensemble of Capiata from Paraguay, Guamanique group from Puerto Rico and Viva Xalisco from Mexico displayed the folk culture of South America; while the group "Komenka" from New Orleans, USA, evocatively expressed the North American culture. From the Asian continent— "Folkland Trikaripur" group from India, and traditional Sasandu musician Jakob Hendrich A Bullan from Timor, Indonesia presented their age-old treasured folk dance and music.

Indigenous groups such as Himba, Oshiwambo, Setswana and San from Namibia, and the Tahtib stick fight performers of Medhat Fawzi Center, and Mallawi from Egypt represented the African continent.

The chief of the Gannat Festival's video team and a French folk musician Luc Roche (pers. comm. 2012), who has been a volunteer in the festival since 30 years, states:

Each of the editions of the Gannat festival is different as not only new groups are invited but new concepts are also introduced to make the festival interesting. For example in 2012, we have a folk fusion dance, where we invite two different tradition dance group members to dance together in an improvised manner to each other's music. This concept initially catches the group members by surprise, but they are able to quickly learn each other's steps... and are able to create a good partnership.

Luc Roche (*ibid.*) further adds, "these kind of activities or dance performances brings the participating folk groups closer and they also try to learn something about the other groups. This is what we aim with this festival, that people should not only show what their culture is about, but also learn and appreciate what others have to offer. We celebrate the brotherhood of diversity."

Russian Folk Dance Group Zorenka:

One of the largest ensembles in the 2012 edition of the festival was the dance group Zorenka from Russia, which consisted of twenty dancers, eight musicians and a technician. Irina Kolchugina the administrative director and the choreographer Katerina Yanichkina led the Zorenka group.

Zorenka ensemble hails from the city of Penza, and has been quite instrumental in popularizing this quaint city, which is located on the banks of Sura River, 625 kilometers southeast of Moscow. I traveled along with the group for almost a week capturing their performances in various towns in and around Gannat. This was the first opportunity for me to tour along with a group from Russia and to observe them closely and get to know not only about their culture, music and dance but also had a chance

to get to know the group members which was a mix college-going students, working professionals, as well as, veteran dancers and musicians.

The credit for Zorenka ensemble's famed reputation through its national and international performances mainly goes to its founder, artistic director and chief choreographer—Yanichkin Yuri Ermolaevich. It has been Yuri Ermolaevich's dedication since last 50 years towards his dance and choreography and the ensemble that Zorenka has achieved so much of success and popularity, and has won multiple national and international dance and choreography awards. Yuri Ermolaevich has also been bestowed with numerous national awards such as 'People's Artist of the Republic of Mordovia', commemorative award for contributions to the development of the city of Penza, and has been felicitated by Russian Federation for his contribution for the development of folk art³.

The ensemble boasts of skillfully choreographing and managing Russian folk dance, as well as, modern dance forms. The modern repertoire of the ensemble focuses on original and creative pieces that are exclusive; hence the ensemble is quite proud of its various dance and choreographic pieces and is exultant of the fact that their group members strive towards creating a unique style and creative personality in each of their performances. Some of the choreographic compositions are *Gornitsa*, *Penza Matanya*, *Zavalinka*, *Hoprovskie Festivities*, *Nikolsky Glassblowers*, *Abashevskaya*, and *Golden Gate*.

Zorenka particular focuses on teaching children about the Russian heritage, especially folk dance and art. Katerina Yanichkina (pers. comm. 2012) states, "Yuri Ermolaevich

³ See the official website of the Zorenka group: <http://www.zorenka-penza.ru/>

nurtured a generation of young people who have absorbed the traditions of folk art. Many of these students moved on to become professional dancers.” Katerina Yanichkina, who is also one of the leading dancers of the group, has choreographed the modern dance repertoire of the ensemble. The contemporary repertoire includes about 50 different productions and a variety of genres and styles of dance. At the heart of the various dance pieces, the emphasis is on drama and delineation of characters driven by inner philosophy.

I accompanied the Zorenka dance group for their first performances at the Cellule Village council, one of the supporting councils of the Gannat festival on 17th of July 2012. As we traveled from Gannat to the village of Cellule, I found that the group members were a bit shy to open up and talk freely, this was mainly due to the language barrier, as most of the group members could not speak English, therefore, I tried to have a conversation with few of the group members through their translator Anastasia Gribkova, who was well versed in English, French and Russian. I was able to strike a rapport with the various members of the group, who were quite a fun bunch and took initiative to talk about their music and performance.

In Cellule, the village council members had prepared an arena for the performance with a makeshift stage and seating arrangements; the atmosphere was very informal, and the people were very warm and welcoming. The performance started with solo musical performance by the singer Dasha followed by group dance performances that included few folk and contemporary dance forms such as *Zavalinka*, *Gornitsa*, *Barynya*, Golden Gate, *Kamarinskaya*, A Russian village dance, *Penza Matanya* and the Gypsy dance *Lavari*.

For the Zorenka group, the Gannat festival was very different from the other folk and dance festivals. Here they were not simply limited to performing on stage and then moving to their accommodation, but the festival had so many activities planned around the participating groups, that it provided them with various opportunities to mingle with the audiences, share friendly relations with the other participating groups and also do some local sightseeing and reveling with their new friends. Dmitry Yakovlev (pers. comm. 2012) was ecstatic about the opportunity to participate in the Festival of Gannat, he opined:

This festival is great meeting ground for the people from different cultures and parts of the world. We have been trying to understand the culture and language of the other groups that are here, it is so good when someone greets me in Russian and I can greet him or her in their language. I have been trying to pick up a little bit of French and really enjoy when people respond smilingly when I greet them with a “Bonjour”. This festival is not only about having fun, but getting to know the differences and similarities of people from diverse backgrounds, and that is what I enjoy the most.”

Administrative director of the group Irina Kolchugina (pers. comm. 2012) exclaims “the festival is very different from the one’s that we visited earlier. I like the concept of visiting the villages and being hosted by the families at their home... this kind of effort in fostering people to people contact is rarely seen and I very much appreciate that we had this opportunity here in Gannat. Kolchugina further remarks, “the group has been enjoying the festival thoroughly, and we have not had any issue as such... though there has been issues with time management and transport locally for some... thankfully, we have come on our own bus from Penza... it took us five days to reach Gannat from Penza, but having our own means of transport has helped us to manage

our time quite well.” Choreographer Katerina Yanichkina (pers. comm. 2012) points out:

The festival has a great mix of group, be it from Egypt, Namibia, USA or Puerto Rico. I really enjoyed watching the various groups perform... I was mesmerized by the kind of diverse cultures that were presented here in this festival. I was also happy that we were not limited to only perform the folk dances of Russia, but we were also provided a chance to perform our group’s stylized dance pieces that my father and I have designed.

Yanichkina finds that she was able to bond quite well with the group members from Puerto Rico and made some long lasting friendship. Performers Il’ya Nikitin and Anastasiya Novikova became quite fond of their Irish and Mexican friends and opined that the festival certainly is a meeting ground of different cultures and it does foster a feeling of global brotherhood. Anastasia Gribkova (pers. comm. 2012) opines, that the late night cultural performances in the cabaret was one thing which she will remember the most, as it provided an informal atmosphere, where all the groups could socialize and sing and dance together.

A non-profit festival like the one in Gannat cannot be possible without the support of volunteers; therefore the Gannat festival organisers take pride in its volunteers, who not only are from the local region but from various parts of the world. More than 500 volunteers work throughout the festival and make sure that the participants and the audiences are given the best during the festival. The volunteers ensure the smooth functioning of festival, be it in the hospitality department, technical team, creative team, organizing committee and as the guides and translators for the groups. Russian

ballerinas Galina Kondrat'eva and Julia Gorshkova find that the flavour of the Gannat festival is all the more interesting due to the passionate participation of the volunteers, who work round the clock to make the festival a success. Gorshkova (pers. comm. 2012) states, "I was surprised to see so many volunteers from all over the world come to help in the Gannat festival. Our group had two volunteers working as our guide and they were excellent as first, one was Russian and another a French, and second, they both knew how to speak English, French and Russian; they helped us to communicate with the other groups and made our stay really easy in the festival."

Dmitry Yakovlev (pers. comm. 2012) states, "Our guide Khanda Richinova was a great support. She worked really hard to make our experience in the festival as memorable as possible and now as we are at the end of the festival, we find that she is more of a friend of the group than a guide." The administrative director of the group Irina Kolchugina (pers. comm. 2012) finds that the support extended by the festival committee members, especially, the artistic director of the festival - Jean Roche, the programme coordinator - Marie Agnes Jacque, and the director of the festival - Emmanuelle Fosse was extremely encouraging and supportive. The group is quite keen to come back to Gannat Festival in the near future.

The leader of the international work camps of volunteer, Veronique Noel (pers. comm. 2012), who is from a nearby city of Gannat states:

I am a local person and my team of volunteers is comprised from people from various parts of the world such as Korea, Mexico, Spain, Turkey, Canada, and Czech Republic etc. One of the best things about this festival is that most of the volunteers come back

to the festival again and again as the festival provides them with such a great work atmosphere and the volunteers truly enjoy being part of this global brotherhood.

Majority of the volunteers resonated similar opinion as Noel, Elisa Bonamico from Genoa, Italy, who was a volunteer in the festival in 2005, still wants to get back to the festival after nine years since she last worked in the festival. Bonamico (pers. comm. 2013) feels that the connections with various groups and people she made were really good. She was the guide for the Peruvian group and she had a chance to visit her friends from the group when she was on a trip to Latin America. Valentin Al Sayyed (pers. comm. 2012) the guide for the Egyptian group had an interesting story to share; his father an Egyptian and mother a French, both met during the festival of Gannat in 1988, as his father was in the Egyptian folklore group and his mother the guide for the group. They got married soon after the festival. In 2012, Valentin Al Sayyed and his sister accompanied their parents to the Gannat festival to work as volunteers. Valentin enjoyed being a part of the festival and understood why the festival was so important to his parents. He plans to visit the festival again, he feels that “you can’t buy this kind of experience as a tourist, you need to be in the festival as a participant or a volunteer to immerse yourself in the flow of the festival”.

To sum up her experience in the festival Ekaterina Yanichkina (pers. comm. 2012) states, “I really enjoy the atmosphere of this festival, it is warm and vibrant. The audiences are quite appreciative, participants very friendly and the organizers encouraging. For me the festival was more of a party and I enjoyed every moment that I spent in the fest.” Galina Kondrat’eva (pers. comm. 2012) expresses:

I find the festival very remarkable, it has so many different colours and hues... people and culture... my count of friends has gone drastically up and now I have to set-up a Facebook account as everybody wants to be connected online! This festival has certainly made my outlook more international and if I may say—Global!

Viva Xalisco – Mexican folk music group:

During the Gannat festival, I also had a chance to meet an interesting Mexican Mariachi - El Charro Frances, who along with his group Viva Xalisco was invited to perform in the festival. When I was informed that he was not a Mexican but a French, I was quite surprised and amused at the same time, as it was a bit unbelievable that a Frenchman was representing traditional Mexican music and dance in an international folklore festival.

Frances (pers. comm. 2012) informed that he was born in Paris in a French family, but by the age of 14 he became fascinated with the Mexican culture and had fallen in love with the music of Miguel Aceves Mejia. Frances' love for Mejia's music inspired him to learn Mariachi music and thereafter, he has considered himself a Mariachi. Frances also mentions that he was fortunate to meet Mejia during one of his performance in Mexico and thereafter they shared a great friendship. Frances takes pride in saying that "I sing like Mejia, who was also known as the king of falsetto". In Gannat folklore festival, Frances not only mesmerized the audience with his music, especially his unique falsetto rendition, but also with his musical performance along with his group members, who presented a fascinating glimpse of the Mexican traditional culture to the audience. Frances is of the view that we should all appreciate and learn about other cultures, he further adds, "for me it is most important to connect with other countries and their culture." Frances finds that the festivals like the one is Gannat

should be given more prominence and featured in the international media. When asked if he would equate Gannat festival to a carnival? Frances (*ibid.*) vehemently argues:

It is not a carnival... carnival is different; we have many carnivals in Mexico and we would be happy to invite you there. In this festival we are going much inside and this is not just a cosmetic presentation. In carnival you can wear a mask to show something that is not you, whereas, what we are doing in this festival is a reversal of that... here we are taking out the mask and showing our real selves... we want to show the truth of our culture and tradition.

Marie Agnes Jacque (pers. comm. 2012), seconds the view of Frances, and is against the use of the term carnival for the Gannat festival. The aim of the festival is to show the cultural diversity; performance is just one of the aspects of the festival, it is not the only one as in the carnivals. There are various other events such as special dance classes, workshops for adults and children; the interaction between the participants and the public is also very important for this festival. Jacque (*ibid.*) contends, “we also promote people from different culture and country to come together and share their skills be it in music, dance or arts. For example, this year we have four different sculptors from Canada, Rwanda, France and Russia to work on the theme of world peace together. The festival’s aim is also to experiment with doing something creative and new by encouraging the people from different cultural groups to work on collaborative projects.”

Jean Roche (pers. comm. 2012), the founder of the Gannat festival sums up as to what the festival means and how he goes about the selection of the groups for the gannet festival, Roche states:

The festival of Gannat is a human adventure; it is the meeting of the people of the five continents. This is the place where we celebrate the diversity and the authenticity of the cultural groups from across the world. Every culture is different, I handpick the groups personally; I check the groups beforehand... I have selected them like a mother would select ingredients to prepare a meal for her beloved family; she would make it with lots of love... and pick the ingredients carefully... similarly for me, it is about a bit of music, various possibilities, simplicity and lots of authenticity, also a pinch of drama and expressive arts... it is all of those ingredients combined that makes it happen.

Conclusion:

The one on one interviews and discussion with various group-members, volunteers and the organisers in the *Les Cultures du Monde* - the international Folklore Festival of Gannat in 2012 makes it quite clear that the festival is able to bring people together and appreciate each others culture. The festival is designed in manner that provides the participating groups to mingle with the local people in and around Gannat and the volunteers that work in the festival. Many of the group-members and volunteers become aware about the need to protect and safeguard their own cultural heritage, they also become interested in understanding the culture of the other participating group. The seminars and talks on the various aspects of culture organized during the festival provides a platform for the groups to discuss and share their expertise and voice their concerns and create action plans with the officials from organisations such as UNESCO, CIOFF, ANCT, IOV. Many of the groups also attempt at working on collaborative project for example the Russian group Zorenka performed along with the group from Puerto Rico during the festival. To connect with each other the participants,

volunteers and organisers actively utilize Internet and social networking sites. All participating group members and the volunteers who were interviewed were wanting to come back to the Gannat festival again, and one of the most common response from them was that the festival provided them with a new understanding of the culture of the different parts of the world, the festival was not about only showcasing one's culture, but it was about accepting and respecting the other cultures and traditions. Many simply refuse to call the Gannat festival a carnival as they felt that carnival as a term demean the kind of work that is being done in the festival of Gannat; which is much more intensive, laborious, accommodating, respecting and provides an in-depth understanding of each cultural group rather than parading them as a showpiece. Overall, through the interviews and discussions and my own personal observations and participation in the Gannat festival I would like to conclude that the Gannat festival is successfully epitomizing and upholding the values of the UNESCO to promote and protect the cultural heritage, it is undoubtedly a grand festival that celebrates the cultural diversity of the world and creates a feeling of brotherhood among the various cultural groups.

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Bio:

Dr Vikrant Kishore is a filmmaker and an academic. Dr Kishore likes to integrate traditional cultural practices with new media technologies to archive, create digital exposition, collaborate on multi-media media exhibitions and festivals. He has authored and edited books on Indian cinema, celebrity culture, and intangible cultural

heritage. Dr Kishore's areas of research are Indian Cinema, Intangible Cultural Heritage, reality television programmes, and caste issues. Currently, he has been capturing stories of cultural flows and its impact on Indian diaspora in Australia. Dr Kishore is a board member of the Australia India Film Council, a member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Regional Advisory Council, and an advisor in the Scanlon Research Foundation.