

Sorathi: A Folk Music of Sikkim

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Abstract

Sorathi folk music is a vital component of Sikkim's cultural identity and is only one of the many traditional art forms that make up the state's rich cultural history. However, there is a critical need to maintain and protect this musical culture in light of the digital era and shifting societal dynamics. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the difficulties associated with maintaining Sorathi traditional music in Sikkim and to provide practical solutions to ensure its survival in the digital age.



This case study focuses on Sikkim, a state renowned for its cultural richness, and the preservation of Sorathi folk music. Traditional art forms encounter difficulties with continuity and preservation in the digital era. Folk music from the Sorathi region of India is of great cultural significance since it is so ingrained in the life of the Sorathi people. The project examines how technology and digital platforms might be used to record, preserve, and spread this musical history. It looks for ways to get young people interested in and supportive of Sorathi folk music. The report provides information about programs including community engagement, online archives, and digitization. It attempts to advise on how to keep conventional artistic traditions alive across the world. The instance of Sikkim's Sorathi folk music emphasizes the significance of utilizing technology while upholding tradition to preserve cultural heritage in the digital era.

Keywords: Sorathi, folk Music, Sikkim, Nepali music, Traditional Music

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Introduction:

Folk music is an essential component in preserving the distinctive identities and customs of communities all over the world in the enormous fabric of human cultural history. Traditional cultural forms, like Sorathi folk music, run the risk of being overshadowed and eventually forgotten in the age of digital transition. The development of technology and the ease with which it is now accessible have fundamentally altered how we produce, listen to, and store

music. The promotion and preservation of folk music face both potential and problems as a result of this paradigm change, notably in the context of Sikkim.

Sikkim, which is located in northeastern India, is a region recognised for its vibrant folk customs and rich cultural variety. A vital component of Sikkimese culture, Sorathi folk music has been passed down through the centuries, encapsulating the spirit of the neighborhood's history, beliefs, and daily life. It is essential to look at cutting-edge strategies to preserve and share this priceless cultural legacy as the globe becomes more linked through digital channels.

With a focus on Sikkim as a particular case study, this dissertation seeks to analyse the complex link between Sorathi folk music and the digital era. The goal of the research is to provide practical strategies and interventions to conserve, record, and promote Sorathi folk music for next generations by examining the potential and problems brought about by digitization.

The way we distribute and archive cultural information has undergone a change in the digital era. Sorathi folk music has the ability to spread beyond geographical limits because to digital channels like social media, streaming services, and online archives. The paucity of resources, the possibility of cultural dilution, and the requirement for community involvement are just a few of the major obstacles that must be addressed. In order to guarantee the preservation and promotion of Sorathi folk music in the digital era, this study analyses these issues in order to offer an extensive framework that combines technology, community engagement, and cultural sensitivity.

In the end, Sikkim's efforts to preserve Sorathi traditional music have wider consequences for preserving cultural variety across the world. By comprehending the difficulties this particular case study experienced, we might create insights and best practises that might be applied to other globally endangered folk music traditions. We can prepare this priceless cultural treasure for a sustainable and bright future by embracing the opportunities provided by the digital age while maintaining the distinctive spirit of Sorathi folk music.

Narrative for Sorathi:

The narrative is about King Jaisinge, who had no children with any of his first six wives. After that, he wed for a second time, and his youngest wife gave birth to a daughter. This made the six more senior queens envious. They bought the astrologer's predictions about the baby's future. The King was informed by the bribed astrologer that the child's destiny was not good and that she would cause problems for His Majesty. The astrologer's suggested remedy was to drop the infant into a river in a golden box. The King instructed blacksmiths to create a golden box, in which the infant would be dumped into the river, after learning of the infant's gloomy future. Two fishermen's nets, however, caught the box, and one of them adopted the infant as his daughter. Years later, while on a hunting expedition, the King stopped by the home of a fisherman to request water. When he saw the fisherman's gorgeous daughter, he instantly fell in love. He desired to wed the young woman. Finally, he learned that the lovely young woman he was going to marry was his daughter. The girl and her mother are reunited in the story's happy conclusion (Moisala, 1989)ⁱ

The story of Sorathi folk drama popular in Tharu society is somewhat different. There was a Besa Pandit (Vyasa Pandit) in the court of King Rodmal of Cuttack. The king had no children. One day when the king was asked how he would have a child, Besa Pandit said - If you plant a flower, the king will have a child. After panphool, the queen became pregnant and one day a girl was born. A foal was also born from the mare on the same day. But Besa Pandit said by looking at the calendar that the maiden would be a Rakshasani. Said the filly would be more destructive. According to Pandit himself, the girl was put in a golden box and floated in the river. A potter raised a girl. Many years passed. The girl was very beautiful and virtuous. After listening to the description of the girl's appearance and qualities, the king gave Kumal(potter) a lot of money and brought him to the palace. The king wanted to marry the girl and made arrangements. But the girl said that she was the king's daughter. She lived in the palace as the king's daughter and Besa Pandit was kicked out by the king.

Pandit also said that I am Bahun's child and I will not leave Sorathi without sending her to another state. Besa Pandit reached the court of Khadkhadmal, king of Khanhar. Khadkhadmal also had no children. The Pandit said that if he were to marry the princess of Cuttack, he would have children. When the meeting was held to decide how to bring Sorthi, Vrishman, the nephew of the king, prepared to bring Sorthi. When the king heard Vrishmana's decision, he did not believe it at first. But later he was happy.

Vrishman succeeded in bringing Sorathi from Cuttack after many hardships. In the end, the king himself did not marry Sorathi. The marriage of Vrishmana happened to Sorathi.

Sikkim Culture History:

Sikkim's history is a tale of independence, cultural richness, and transition. From its early origins to its integration into India, the state has undergone significant changes while retaining its unique identity. Today, Sikkim stands as a vibrant and picturesque state, showcasing the harmonious coexistence of tradition and progress (R. Guptas, 2023)ⁱⁱ

North-eastern India's Sikkim is a region with many different cultures and a long history. Sikkim's history dates back to the time when it was inhabited by many indigenous tribes. It has experienced the impact of nearby nations throughout the ages, including Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal, which has helped to form its cultural legacy. The Lepcha tribe is said to have been Sikkim's first known residents. They spoke a unique language and had unique traditions. Later, in the 17th century, the Namgyal dynasty, led by Phuntsog Namgyal, established the kingdom of Sikkim.

The existence of Nepali communities is another crucial component of Sikkim's culture. Immigrants from Nepal began to settle in Sikkim in the late 19th century, bringing with them their language, customs, and holidays. The Nepali community has contributed to Sikkim's cultural variety and now makes up a sizeable portion of the population.

Sikkim's festivals are lively and colorful, displaying the fusion of several cultures. Both Losar, the Tibetan New Year, and Saga Dawa, the occasion marking the birth, enlightenment, and demise of Lord Buddha, are joyfully observed. Traditional Nepali holidays Dashain and Tihar are also frequently commemorated. Sikkim's only festival, Pang Lhabso, honours Mount Kanchenjunga, the state's protector god.

Sikkim has made tremendous efforts to protect and promote its cultural heritage in recent years. The government has launched several initiatives to preserve traditional ways of life, aid regional craftspeople, and promote tourism that highlights Sikkim's rich cultural heritage.

Sorathi as a folk Drama:

Sorathi has evolved as a genre of folk drama rather than the name of a specific folk drama. As a genre, there are dances, characters and leelas that are popular in central Nepal. The story of Sorathi Rani is especially about Magar and Gurung society and it is sung in a long rhythm. This is called laskevaka.

Sorathi based on mythological stories like Krishna charitra, Ramayana is called Chhoti Taal ko Sorathi and it is sung in vertical lines. Both these types of Sorathi have some similarities. Maruni's role is important in both types of performances. Both types of sorathi have dhantuware and garra brothers. Dances are performed in between and the audience is entertained. At the beginning of both types of performances, prayers are offered to God and the organizers are also blessed at the end. However, the difference is evident in the lyrics and dance rhythm of both types of narrative songs and the sentiment of the song.

Sorathi as a Dance Form:

Male vocalists, two to four drummers, four dancers, and an actor all perform the Sorathi. Two of the male dancers are wearing feminine attire. A Jogi, a man in a mask, also performs in the drama and takes on a variety of roles. He is the astrologer who forges the golden box, the blacksmith who finds the baby, and the fisherman who finds the baby. Instead of taking part in the dance, he plays his parts by employing various tactics that are relevant to the song's text. Every performance begins with a prayer to the Hindu goddess Saraswati from the performers. People are said to tremble when they are touched by the Goddess Saraswati. Thus, the audience can tell that the Goddess is present when a chosen, sensitive individual begins to shake. After the performance, the shaking is made to stop. The male chorus sings in a heterophonic way. There is vibrato. The dancing is more animated; two pairs of dancers move around a very big dancing space while creating mirror images on the floor. They dance with rapid feet and exaggerated arm gestures.

This study focuses on Sorathi which is a religious oral style predominantly practiced by Gurungs in Nepali communities. According to several experts who study Maruni dance and its branches, Sorathi dance was also founded by the Mangers community. Sorathi is known by numerous different names depending on where the Mangers are well. Srandi is also claimed to have inspired the name Sorathi. It is also known as Nachya or Karang in some locations. To dress the Maruni in the Sorathi dance, all participants gather in the courtyard of the dance leader's residence (Sharma, 2021)ⁱⁱⁱ

This essay aims to clarify that another traditional item that has attracted investigation is the Sorathi Naach. Each local and distinct "Magar" culture has developed in a broader context, playing a particular geopolitical niche. Two Chitwane Magar cultural dances stand out among all of these cultural performances as the area of body politics cultural exhibition to Chitwan tourists. The Sorathi (a dance for sixteen people) combines the flavor of current global flows and socioeconomic impact with the stories and recollections of the ancestors. Young boys in a

circle primarily do the dance, which is accompanied by the rhythmic sounds of instruments such the Maadal and Jhurma. They spin and bump into each other (Rishiram Adhikari, 2022)^{iv}

According to this article, before Nepal was founded, in the fourteenth century, the Sorathi is thought to have first appeared. It is said to have been imported from the Indian peninsula by Aryans. It is performed by the Magars, another ethnic group in Nepal in addition to the Gurungs. Additionally, it can be spread orally. The Sorathi may be sung in an archaic form of Nepali. This can suggest that the latter is an older genre or that the languages of the two works differ (Moisala, 1989)^v

Nepalese folk music expresses the artistic sensibility of the people and has been passed down orally. Many scattered contributions can be found in the literature, but a concise and precise study on the subject remains untouched. This paper aimed to investigate Nepalese culture as a whole, as well as folk music and dances (Baral, 2019)^{vi}

Nepalese folklore is rich in sorathi. It collects folk life's experiences of joy and sorrow as well as religion, culture, history, and tradition. It would appear that Sorathi's collection and research span nearly five decades. Some people refer to Sorthi, which is performed primarily in the Magar and Gurung communities, as a folk song, a folk tale, a folk drama, a folk dance, or both. Nepal is a diverse nation in terms of its geography. As a result, only four main characters are visible in the group: Guru Ba (main Madale), Madale, Maruni, and Gidange. it is also known as plot (Acharya, 2016)^{vii}

Gurubabu is the speaker in Sorathi, just like in Sutradhar. The garra is tied by Gurubabu, who is wearing a white feta. When a husband dances endlessly on the sorthi while dressing as his wife, it is Maruni. Because Maruni plays the main role, it is also known as MaruniNaach. Additionally, there is a clown-like clown and a pursane who dances while assuming the persona of a man. To make the audience laugh, there is a lobber pandey. Bhojpuri sorathi is merely a folk song performed by mature men with tambourines and bells in terms of presentation. However, Nepali Sorathi is presented as a folk drama in which music and dance instruments play equal roles (Bandhu, 2001)^{viii}

Strategies for Preserving Sorathi Folk Music in the Digital Era:

The preservation of Sorathi folk music in the digital age necessitates a careful and comprehensive strategy. While there are new opportunities for recording, distribution, and involvement in the digital era, there are also issues that need to be resolved. Following are some tips for successfully conserving Sorathi traditional music in the age of digitization:

1. Systematic documenting and digitalization of existing recordings, manuscripts, and other pertinent resources is one of the crucial tasks in maintaining any traditional music. Researchers, performers, and aficionados may easily access the music thanks to this procedure, which also guarantees its life. Traditional musicians, archivists, and musicologists may work together to build extensive digital archives that protect the integrity of Sorathi folk music.

2. **Online Platforms and Streaming Services:** To reach a larger audience, it is crucial to make use of online platforms and streaming services. To compile and exhibit Sorathi folk music, specific channels or playlists may be made on websites like Spotify, SoundCloud, and YouTube. To make the music widely available, artists and organizations should actively upload performances, interviews, and instructional content to various sites.
3. **Collaborations & Exchanges:** The digital age has made it possible for Sorathi folk musicians to collaborate and share ideas with artists from other genres and cultures. Creating initiatives that unite traditional and modern performers can revitalise Sorathi folk music while preserving its core. These partnerships may manifest as collaborative performances, recordings, or even fusion projects that combine conventional and contemporary aspects.
4. **Online Learning Resources:** Developing online learning materials is a good way to include young people and spread Sorathi folk music. The traditional instruments, vocal skills, and repertory of Sorathi folk music may be taught through video tutorials, online lessons, and interactive platforms. This not only encourages involvement but also cultivates a new generation of musicians and fans, ensuring the music's continued existence.
5. **Social media and online communities:** Creating active online forums and Sorathi folk music-related social media groups may encourage participation, debates, and teamwork among fans, performers, and academics. Facebook, Instagram, and specialised forums can be used as venues for disseminating information about Sorathi folk music, as well as news, performances, and updates. Encouragement of conversation and involvement may foster a feeling of community and support for the preservation efforts.
6. **Community Outreach and Education:** It is essential for maintaining Sorathi folk music to include the local Sorathi community through educational and outreach programmes. To raise awareness, promote participation, and honour the rich musical legacy, workshops, seminars, and cultural festivals might be held. By working with educational institutions, Sorathi folk music may also be included in the school curriculum, guaranteeing that future generations will continue to enjoy it.
7. **Traditional musical instruments are important in Sorathi traditional music, hence they should be preserved. These instruments should be preserved and kept in good condition, especially the rare or in danger of disappearing ones. The long-term preservation of Sorathi folk music can be aided by establishing instrument preservation programmes, holding workshops on instrument construction, and allocating finances for repairs and upkeep.**

In conclusion, it takes a mix of documentation, distribution, education, and community participation to preserve Sorathi folk music in the digital age. Sorathi folk music can flourish and continue to be loved by a worldwide audience while being anchored in its traditional roots by making the most of the possibilities of digital platforms and technology while addressing issues like intellectual property rights and fair pay.

Case Study: Preservation Efforts and Initiatives in Sikkim:

In-depth exploration of Sorathi folk music preservation initiatives in Sikkim. In the Indian state of Sikkim, Sorathi folk music is of utmost significance culturally. To protect and advance this ancient art form, several preservation-related projects have been launched over time. To learn more about Sikkim's efforts to preserve Sorathi traditional music, I've recommended the lines below:

Research and Documentation: In Sikkim, efforts have been undertaken to study and record Sorathi folk music. The music, lyrics, instruments, and related dancing styles have all been the subject of fieldwork by academics, ethnomusicologists, and cultural organizations. This documentation aids in conserving Sorathi folk music knowledge and repertoire for the next generations.

Preserving and Digitising: Efforts to preserve Sorathi traditional music have greatly benefited from archiving and digitalization projects. The audio and video formats of traditional songs, compositions, and performances have been captured and preserved. To ensure that the music is not lost or forgotten, these archives are important resources for academics, musicians, and aficionados.

Competitions and Cultural Festivals: Folk music from the Sorathi region is featured in festivals and contests that Sikkim organises. Local performers can display their skills, provide information, and protect the traditional music at these gatherings. Additionally, it aids in educating and arousing interest in the younger generation, inspiring them to study and take part in Sorathi folk music.

Workshops and Training Programs: Aspiring musicians can learn Sorathi folk music through various seminars and training programs. The younger generation is welcome to learn from and be inspired by seasoned artists and musicians. These courses emphasize teaching the finer points of singing, playing traditional instruments, and comprehending the social and historical background of Sorathi folk music.

Cultural Institutions and Academies: Sikkim's cultural institutes and academies are essential to the survival of Sorathi traditional music. Traditional music, dancing, and other art forms are taught in schools and through official training programs. Through organized teaching methods, these institutions offer a structured learning environment and guarantee the survival of Sorathi traditional music.

Government Support and Policies: The Sikkim government has put laws in place to encourage the preservation of Sorathi folk music because it recognises the value of this music. Artists, cultural organizations, and institutions engaged in the preservation and promotion of Sorathi folk music are given financial assistance in the form of grants, subsidies, and financial help.

Cultural Exchange Programs: Programmes for exchanging cultures with various areas and nations aid in spreading awareness of Sorathi folk music outside of Sikkim. The visibility of Sorathi folk music is increased and artists are given the chance to perform, cooperate, and learn from many cultural situations.

The protection, promotion, and transmission of Sorathi folk music in Sikkim are all facilitated by these preservation efforts. By preserving this ancient art form, Sikkim makes sure that future generations may enjoy and appreciate its rich cultural heritage.

Recommendations:

The proposals for preserving and promoting Sorathi folk music in the digital era are highlighted here for decision-makers in politics, cultural institutions, and community stakeholders. The proposals stress the necessity for a thorough framework for cultural policy that acknowledges the importance of Sorathi folk music and offers assistance for its preservation and promotion. To guarantee the preservation of Sorathi music in digital formats and the construction of searchable digital archives, advanced digital documenting and archiving procedures are advised. To successfully utilize digital platforms, collaboration between cultural organizations, musicians, and technical specialists is encouraged.

We have to improve intercultural understanding and appreciation of Sorathi folk music, and international cooperation and exchange programs are encouraged. For preservation projects to be effective and sustainable over time, adequate financing and ongoing assessment are essential. By putting these suggestions into practice, Sorathi folk music may be preserved and promoted in the digital era, promoting cultural variety and heritage preservation

Songs and Notations:

1. LYRICS NO: 1

धरती राम्रो यो हरियाली मान्छेको बोली वचन राम्रो
जोवन राम्रो वैशालु भन्छन् जुनी त राम्रो एकै बारको
छमछम सोह सय रानी बीचैमा राम्रो जयसिंहे राजा
रूपैमा राम्रो हेमन्ती रानी नाचगान राम्रो सोरठी भाका ।
हिमचुली राम्रो हिउँको थुप्रो हृदय राम्रो गङ्गाको पानी
दिनको घाम जयसिङ्गे राजा पूर्णको जून हेमन्ती रानी
मायाले छेक्यो दुवाली राम्रो पिरतीले लायो चरी कै गुँड
राजा र रानीको यो माया पिरती भई दियो राजै एकै सुर ।
छोपी हाल्यो चुनरीले हेमन्ती रानीको मुहार
सोरठी भाका गुञ्जीमा उठ्यो
जयसिङ्गे राजाको दरवार
शिरै लाउने शिरफूल हेमन्ती रानीको गहना
राजा र ज्यूको चन्द्रमा दाहिनो
भावीले जुरायो लहना

Summary of Song:

This song is about King Jai Singh who celebrates life dancing and rejoicing in his youthfulness amongst hundreds of queens including beautiful Hemanti Rani in sorathi form and praising to have a heart of mountains, where the pure river Ganga flows. Describing himself as the king of the bright day and considers Queen Hemanti to be the queen of the full moon. Praising the world will be good if will utter a word of wisdom, dance and rejoices all again chanting to live the life which will be lived only once.

Notation:

S-	--	--	I DN-	N-	DN	P-
Ha	SS	SS	I HaS	HaS	HaS	SS
P-	P-	D	I S-	R-	GP	PD
Dhas	raS	tiS	I RaS	SS	mroS	SS
DŚ	Ś-	Ś	I Ś	--	Ś-	--
YoS	HaS	riS	I yaS	SS	liS	SS
ŚR-	Ś-	N-	I(P)-	P-	PN	DN
Maan	cheSS	ko	I BoS	SS	liS	SS
(D)-	PM	GR	I (G)-	-R	SN	D-
BaS	chaS	naiS	I RaS	SS	roS	SS
D-	D-	N-	I R-	-G	PD	N-
JoS	baS	naS	I RaS	SS	mroS	SS
(D)-	PM	GR	I (G)S	-R	SN	DS
BaiS	shaS	luS	I BhanS	SS	chanS	SS
D-	D-	N-	I R-	G-	MG	M-
JuS	niS	TaS	I RaS	SS	mroS	SS
(G)-	R-	GR	I D-	--	S-	--
EhS	kaiS	SS	I BaS	SS	raS	SS

S-	--	--	I --	--	--	--	--
KoS	SS	SS	I SS	SS	SS	SS	SS
G-	R-	S-	R-	I G-	P-	DN	SS
ChoS	piS	HaS	lyo	I ChuS	naS	riS	SS
P-	--	--	--	I --	--	--	--
LeS	SS	SS	SS	I SS	SS	SS	SS
G-	G-	--	PD	I N-	-D	P-	R-
HeS	manS	SS	tiS	I RaS	SS	niS	koS
Ś-	-Ř	N-	D-	I G-	-M	R-	--
MuS	SS	haS	SS	I rS	SS	SS	SS
D-	D-	--	D-	I D-	-N	P-	D-
SoS	raS	SS	thiS	I BhaS	SS	SS	ka
Ś-	-Ř	N-	D-	I P-	-M	RG	R-
GunS	SS	jiS	maS	I UhS	SS	thyoS	SS
G-	-D	P-	M-	I G-	R-	S-	R-
JaiS	SS	singS	gayS	I RaS	SS	jaS	koS
G-	-R	S-	--	I S-	--	--	--
Dar	SS	baS	SS	I raS	SS	SS	SS
P-	D-	S-	D-	I S-	R-	G-	P-
JaiS	SS	singS	gayS	I RaS	SS	jaS	ko
D-	ND	P-	M	I GM	R-	--	S-
DarS	SS	baS	SS	I raS	S	S	S

G- -D P- M- I G- R- S- R-
JaiS SS singS gayS I RaS SS jaS koS

G- -R S- -- I S- -- -- --
Dar SS baS SS I raS SS SS SS

Sorathi Taal:

Taal Parichay:

Matra: 14

Bibhag: 6

Chanda: 3 I 2 I 2 I 3 I 2 I 2

Sign: 0 I 1 I 2 I 3 I 4 I 5

Tik Tik Thum I Tang Dhing I Tang Gheney I Dhang – Dhing I

0 2 3 4

Tang Gheney I Tang Gheney I

5 6

Instrument used in sorathi:

1. **Madal;** The Madal is a two-headed, cylindrical drum. The two hands are used to play it, and each head generates a separate tone. In Nepali traditional music, such as Sorathi, the Madal serves as a primary percussion instrument and a source of rhythmic accompaniment.



2. **Flute;** In several types of Nepali folk music, the Bansuri, a bamboo flute, is employed. It is an essential tool for solo performances and melodic improvisation. The Bansuri is a distinctive, sweet-toned instrument that is frequently used in Sorathi folk music.



3. **Sarangi**; A stringed instrument called the Sarangi is played with a bow. It has a hollow wooden body with sympathetic strings in addition to its three or four primary playing strings. The Sarangi is played by the performer by pushing the strings against the fingerboard and producing melodic notes with the bow.

**Dress and Ornaments:**

Kulli(topi), Palu (Thutey Bhoto), Heda (Shawl), Phagi (Patuka), Kasha (Skirt), Kapsya (Shoe) are examples of traditional dress for males. Nyoyae (Gunyeu), Thutey Cholo (Palu)Ghalek, Patuki(MhinduFagi) Lungi, Tikkis (Tamlā) are traditional dresses worn by women.

Conclusion:

Overall, the research's conclusions highlighted how digital technology may help Sikkim preserve and promote its Sorathi folk music. The study focused on the profound effects of digital documentation, accessibility, cooperation, and educational applications on the resuscitation of this ancient art form's cultural relevance and public awareness. The findings highlighted the necessity of legislative backing and tackling issues to ensure the long-term viability of digital preservation programs for Sorathi folk music in the digital era.

According to the study's conclusions, digital technology might considerably aid in the promotion, resuscitation, and preservation of Sorathi folk music in Sikkim and elsewhere. These technologies may be used to preserve cultural heritage, disseminate information, and increase awareness of traditional art forms, guaranteeing their continuous relevance in the digital age. In conclusion, Sorathi folk music's promotion and preservation in the digital era are essential for preserving Sikkim's cultural legacy. A thorough framework for properly utilizing digital technology in this endeavor is provided by the suggested activities for policymakers, cultural organizations, and community stakeholders.

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