

# Integrating Culture in Various Initiatives for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

Bharati Garg<sup>1</sup> and Anupama Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, <sup>2</sup>PhD Research Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Punjab, India  
Email id: <sup>1</sup>[gargbharati99@gmail.com](mailto:gargbharati99@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[anusitar1994@gmail.com](mailto:anusitar1994@gmail.com)

Received: January 29, 2020; Accepted: May 17, 2020

## ABSTRACT

*Culture is not only the treasure of knowledge, values and meanings that affect everyone's life but also describes the way humans live and interact with each other. Cultural rights, diversity and creativity are core components of human and sustainable development. Placing Culture at the heart of sustainable development will ultimately develop a relationship between culture and sustainable development in two ways: firstly it will involve the development of the cultural sector (i.e. heritage, creativity, cultural industries, crafts, cultural tourism); and secondly, it will ensure that culture has its rightful place in all public policies, mostly those related to education, the economy, science, social inclusion and international collaboration. So there is a need for integrating culture in the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Although none of the 17 SDGs emphasizes exclusively on culture but its various targets has clear references to cultural aspects like • Target 4.7 ensures that all learners attain the knowledge needed to promote sustainable development through education • Target 8.3 addresses the promotion of development-oriented policies that support creativity and innovation. • Targets 8.9 and 12.b refer to the need to plan and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, including through local culture • Target 11.4 highlights the need to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.*

*This paper is based on secondary sources like government websites, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reports, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions, journals (national and international accessed online), books, articles etc. and aims to compile such efforts of the UNESCO and Government of India for integrating culture in various initiatives for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Some of such initiatives included in the paper are UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Scheme, Government of India's Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan's component of culture education, HRIDAY Scheme, Swadesh Darshan Scheme and PRASAD Scheme.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Initiatives, Schemes, Sustainable development goals, Sustainable development

## **SECTION I**

### **INTRODUCTION: CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Culture and Sustainable development are interlinked as culture improves our understanding regarding the society and helps us in making public policies that are inclusive in nature and therefore plays a vital role in the economic progression of any society (Opoku, 2015). Culture shapes our identity i.e. who we are. It describes the way we live. It is the way we express our thoughts through art, music and writing. Culture is also about our roots through which we are attached (Kalman, 2009). Culture not only shapes the personality of the individual but also decides the characteristics of any society. So, culture has the revitalising power to bind each and every member of the society (Nations, Culture and Sustainable Development | General Assembly of United Nations, 2019). Specially, the role of culture is to connect person to his environment on one side and to create a harmonious relationship between humans on the other side (White, 2007).

Culture is not only the treasure of knowledge, values and meanings that affect everyone's life but also describes the way humans live and interact with each other both at the global as well as local level (UNESCO, The power of culture for development-UNESCO Digital Library, 2010). Cultural rights, diversity and creativity are core components of human and sustainable development (Governments, Culture In The Sustainable Development Goals: A Guide For Local Action, 2018). Placing Culture at the heart of sustainable development will ultimately develop a relationship between culture and sustainable development in two ways: firstly it will involve the development of cultural sector (i.e. heritage, creativity, cultural industries, crafts, cultural tourism); and secondly, it will ensure that culture has its rightful place in all public policies, mostly those related to education, the economy, science, communication, environment, social inclusion and international collaboration (Governments, Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development, 2010). So there is a need for integrating culture in achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Prior to the adoption of SDGs 2030 Agenda there were resolutions and initiatives that were focussing on integrating culture in the policies for their successful implementation like United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/166, 2011 and India's Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009) made culture education an integral part of learning process.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/166 titled "Culture and Development" recognises culture as an essential element of human development. It also acknowledges culture as a source of enrichment and significant contributor to sustainable development. It states that there should be linkages between the cultural and biological diversity and the constructive contribution of indigenous traditional knowledge should be used in addressing environmental challenges in a sustainable manner (Nations, A/RES/65/166 - E - A/RES/65/166, 2011).

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Policy Statement titled “Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development” recalls UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO’s Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and Agenda 21 for Culture and affirms that culture in all its diversity can prove to be a solution of present challenges of humankind (Governments, Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development, 2010).

In the Hangzhou (China) Declaration 2013, the role of culture has been acknowledged as the fundamental enabler of sustainability and as a driver of sustainable development. It states that culture should be included in all developmental policies and programmes as it will ensure the inclusive policies which will further help us to achieve the sustainable development goals as its motto says nobody should be left behind. (UNESCO, The Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies, 2013). 40% of the world tourism revenues comes from the cultural tourism. The cultural heritage both tangible (museums, galleries, forts, cultural buildings etc.) and intangible (kumbh mela, music etc.) attracts tourists. The revenues generated through cultural tourism involve local communities in a sustainable way. All this directly relates with sustainable development goals particularly goal number 4 (Quality Education), goal number 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth), goal number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and goal number 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) (Hosagrahar, 2017).

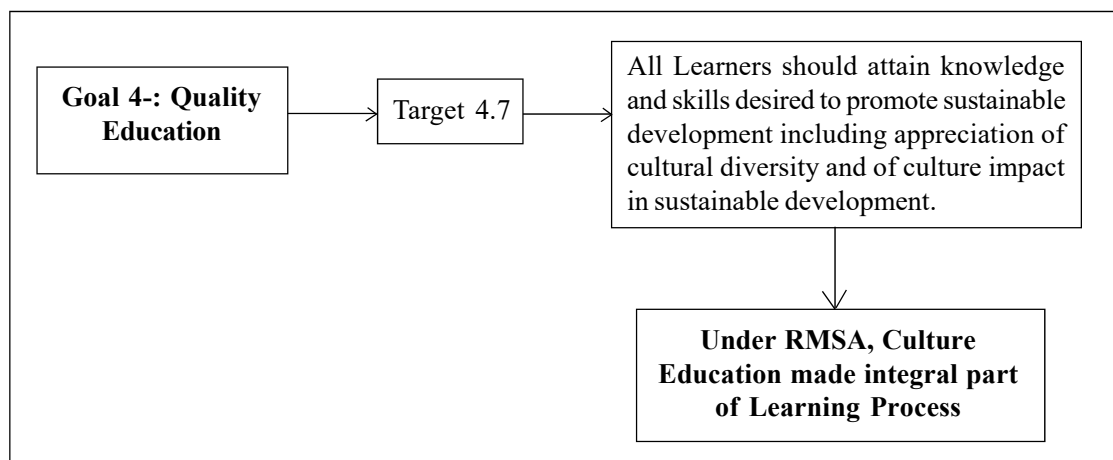
Cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and cultural infrastructure can serve as strategic tools for revenue generation, particularly in developing countries given their often-rich cultural heritage and substantial labour force. Promoting this sector requires limited capital investment, involves low entry barriers and can have a direct impact on vulnerable populations, including women. Furthermore, the tourism sector has become one of the world’s fastest growing economic sectors. Today, many cities use cultural heritage and cultural events and institutions to improve their image, stimulate urban development, and attract visitors as well as investments. Most Middle-Income Countries are developing vibrant cultural sectors through various initiatives and are requesting assistance in this area. Culture proves to be an essential element of development for human race as it is considered as the source of identification, innovation and creativity (Nations, Culture and Sustainable Development | General Assembly of United Nations, 2019). So, Culture can be acknowledged as the booster for the achievement of sustainable development goals. This has been recognised and accepted in SDGs 2030 Agenda. It can directly contribute to some of the specific sustainable development goals like decent work and economic growth (goal number 8), reduced inequalities (goal number 10), safe and sustainable cities (goal number 11), the environment, peaceful and inclusive societies (goal number 16) (Hosagrahar, 2017).

Number of initiatives have been taken at the international, national and local level to integrate culture with development. Culture has been widely recognised as an enabler and driver of sustainable development. The Government of India being signatory to SDGs 2030 Agenda has also initiated measures towards integrating culture with SDGs.

This paper is based on secondary sources like government websites, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reports and documents, UNGA resolutions, journals (national and international accessed online), books, articles etc. aims to compile some such initiatives of the Government of India for integrating culture in achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (Quality Education), goal number 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth), goal number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and goal number 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The paper has been divided into three sections. Section 1 gives the introduction, Section II discusses various initiatives or schemes of Government of India and UNESCO that portray the efforts towards integrating culture in achievement of sustainable development goals, and the last section gives the conclusion.

## SECTION II

Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India launched Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) in 2009. In this culture education was made an integral part of the learning process. Figure 1 shows that though the scheme was launched in 2009 but it also fulfils the criteria of target 4.7 of goal number 4 (Quality Education) of SDGs 2030 Agenda which says that all learners must attain the knowledge and skills which are desired to promote the appreciation



**Figure 1: RMSA related to Goal Number 4 (Quality Education) of SDGs 2030 Agenda**

of cultural diversity and helps us to understand the impact of culture in sustainable development. RMSA provided training to the teachers on heritage and culture education. It also provided the funds for art and cultural camps in the school at the block and district level. Cultural study tours were organised for the students within and outside the state. Culture and heritage mapping was made the part of the school curriculum which ultimately resulted in understanding, appreciating and protecting the local as well as national cultural heritage.

## **RMSA INCLUDING CULTURAL COMPONENT**

The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan is a leading scheme of Government of India that aims to increase the enrolment ratio at secondary school level by providing universal access to schools within reasonable distance of every home. It also aims at improving the quality of secondary education by conforming to suggested norms, socio-economic and disability obstacles, removing gender gap (India, 2009). Under RMSA, one of the aim was to make culture/heritage education a fundamental part of the learning process. Following were the different clauses that was sanctioned under Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in the Annual Budget of 2011-12 that emphasises on culture and heritage education:

***Cultural Study Tour within and outside the state:*** In this the students were provided with the opportunity of understanding the environmental and historic characteristics of their own state and other states as well. It provided the students with the opportunity to understand their own culture in comparison with the culture of the other district or states. For Example: The students of North Eastern state Meghalaya have to visit different districts so that the students are able to learn about the culture of the different tribes that will ultimately help them in understanding the diversity of their own state.

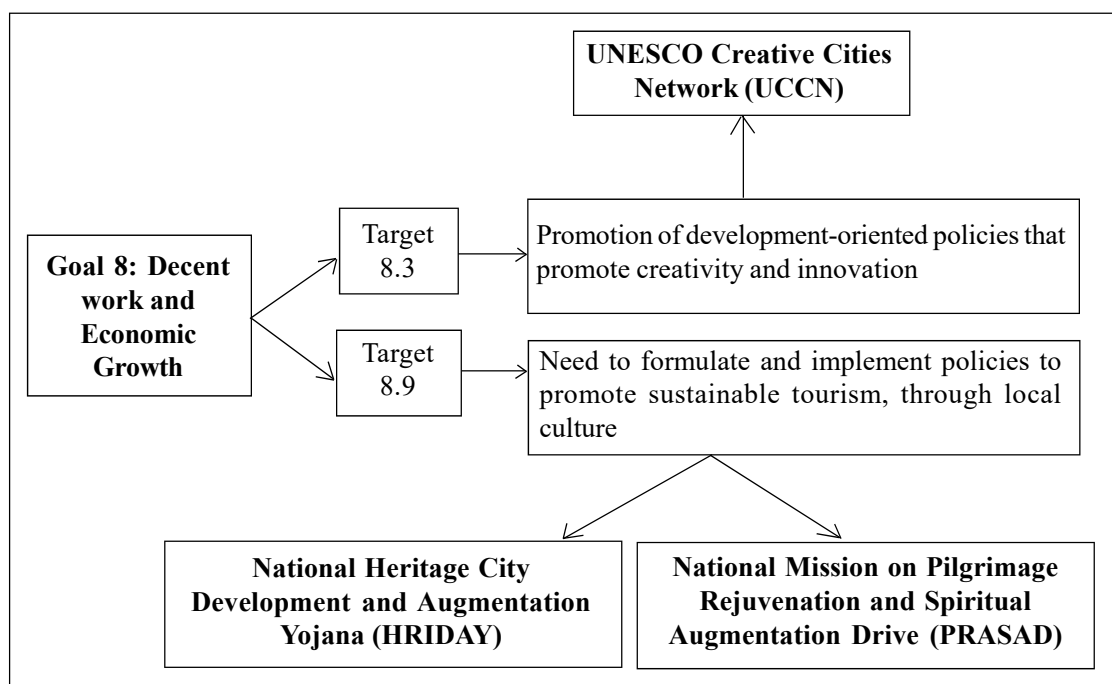
***Art/Culture Camps in the schools at the Block and district level:*** The Art/ Culture camps will provide students an enjoyable environment and will also provide the platform to showcase their talent. For Example: In Uttarakhand students are exposed to local craftsman and experts who are part of the community to promote their local art and craft. 45 days training Camps will be organized in certain selected school of each block. All the sample models made by the students in the training camps will be retained in art and craft room of the school to which student belongs for demonstration and other students will also get opportunity to see the arts which are on the edge of elimination.

***Training of Teachers on Heritage and Culture Education:*** One of the fundamental component under RMSA is providing on-the-job training to the teachers on Culture and Heritage Education. The training would help teachers in understanding the viewpoint, beauty and aesthetics inherited

in Indian culture and would focus on framing methodologies for integrating a culture component, in course teaching (MHRD, 2012).

One of the key elements of RMSA focused on making culture/heritage education a fundamental part of the learning process. And for this various steps have been taken like Cultural Study Tour within and outside the state, Art/Culture Camps in the school and at the Block and district level and Training of Teachers on Heritage and Culture Education(MHRD, 2012). The enrolment ratio was significantly increased under RMSA scheme(Sachdeva, 2016).

Figure 2 shows that for integrating culture in achieving sustainable development goals the Government of India, Ministry of Tourism launched Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme and Ministry of Urban Development launched National Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) which relates with the target 8.9 of goal number 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) that focusses on formulating and implementing policies that promote sustainable tourism through local culture. UNESCO launched UNESCO Creative Cities Network that relates with target 8.3 of goal number 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) that focusses on promotion of development oriented policies that promote creativity and innovation.



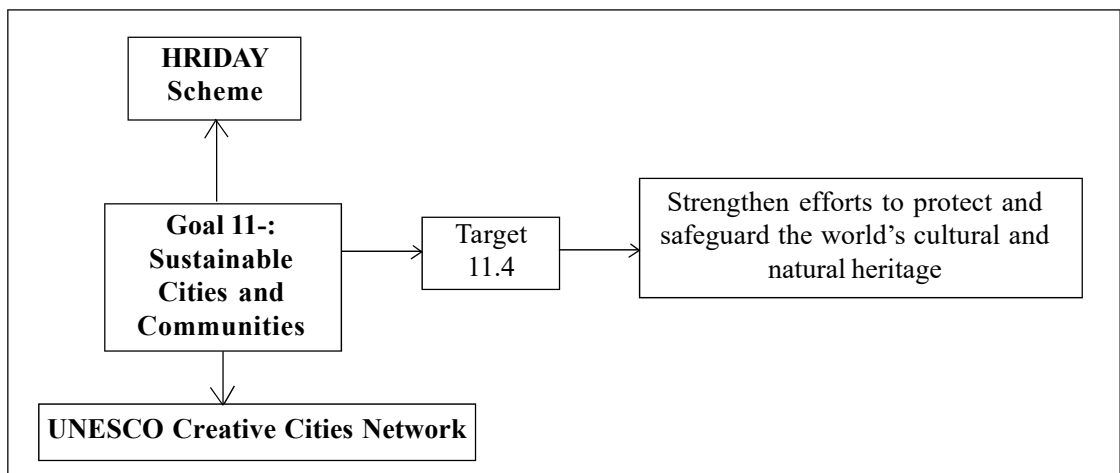
**Figure 2: Schemes related to Goal number 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) of SDGs 2030 Agenda**

## **PRASAD SCHEME**

Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme was started by Union Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in 2015. This scheme identifies and develops the pilgrim destinations in prioritised, planned and sustainable manner throughout the country and enhances the experience of religious tourism. 12 cities have been included in this scheme namely Kedarnath, Ajmer, Amaravati, Amritsar, Kanchipuram, Dwaraka, Mathura, Varanasi, Vellankanni, Puri, Kamakhya and Gaya. In this scheme 100% fund will be provided by the Central Government. This scheme focusses on generating awareness amongst the local inhabitants about the relevance of tourism as tourism provides various means for generating income, it improves the living standards of the people and it also involves inclusive development of the area (Ministry of Tourism, Scheme Guidelines for Prasad | Ministry of Tourism, 2015).

The objectives of PRASAD scheme focuses on enhancing sustainable tourism by creating world class infrastructure at the religious sites. This schemes also aims at promoting local art, culture, handicraft, cuisine, etc. (Ministry of Tourism, Scheme Guidelines for Prasad | Ministry of Tourism, 2015).

It can be concluded that PRASAD scheme has helped in improving the sustainable tourism through promoting local culture. Figure 3 shows that HRIDAY scheme and UNESCO Creative Cities Network relates with the goal number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) of SDGs 2030 Agenda as they also focuses on making cities sustainable for future. These schemes extend their efforts to strengthen and protect the cultural and natural heritage.



**Figure 3: Schemes related to Goal Number 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) of SDGs 2030 Agenda**

## **HRIDAY SCHEME**

The National Heritage Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) launched on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 aims at preserving and rejuvenating the rich cultural heritage of India. India is a country of various languages and cultures, so there is a need to preserve the heritage of all kinds. HRIDAY was the step towards uplifting the soul of the cities having such rich heritage. HRIDAY strived to endorse an inclusive, integrated and sustainable development of heritage sites. It focussed not only on maintenance of various monuments but also promoted the sustainable development of entire ecosystem including its local businesses, tourists and its citizens (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015). HRIDAY was implemented in 12 cities- Amritsar, Amaravati, Ajmer, Dwaraka, Badami, Gaya, Mathura, Kancheepuram, Varanasi, Puri, Warangal and Velankanni. Around 20 projects have been completed in the cities of Amaravati, Amritsar, Dwaraka, Puri, Badami, Ajmer and Varanasi amounting to Rs. 140.14 Crores in 2018 (Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2018). 59 roads were upgraded that lead to various religious sites of Varanasi, Amritsar, Ajmer and Amaravati. Upgradation of roads was directly related to the satisfaction of the religious tourists as it made the journey safer and comfortable. Three public parks were rejuvenated in the cities of Ajmer (Subhash Udyan), Amritsar (Gol Bagh) and Puri (Banki Muhana) (Times E. , 2019) Following is one of the success story of HRIDAY project:-

***Conservation and Development of Town Hall as Heritage Centre:*** Under the HRIDAY scheme the grand heritage building Town Hall located at Maidagin, Varanasi was restored. It has been converted into a multipurpose urban open space (Cultural centre) both for the tourists and for the citizens. The project not only included restoration and lighting of Town Hall building but also repaired doors and windows, plastered the wall surface. Cladding of stage with granite stone, installation of acoustics were also done. In August 2018 the project was completed. Through the completion of this project, Varanasi citizens has got an additional site for their cultural activities (Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2018).

The scheme ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India has hired the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) to analyse or study the impacts of HRIDAY scheme (Times, 2019).

## **UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN)**

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) that was launched in 2004 at the time of Millennium Development Goals aims at strengthening cooperation between the different cities that have recognised creativity as an important feature of sustainable development. The cities which join this network recognise their commitment of sharing best practices, developing



partnerships that can promote cultural industries and the creativity. It also strengthens participation of citizens in cultural life and integrate culture as an important element in the urban development plans. UCCN aims at creating the cities which are sustainable in nature and that are relevant not only today but tomorrow also. There are various challenges that are being faced due to uneven growth of urbanisation. So this scheme puts forward creative solutions for international challenges. UCCN is based on encouraging collective and creative intelligence and it works towards promoting, demonstrating and strengthening the role of creativity as a binding element for structuring more flexible, sustainable and inclusive cities. Today creative cities are made for various purposes for example:-

- Creative cities are made for promoting sustainable growth and entrepreneurship i.e. shifting from heavy industries to creative industries. The polish city Katowice is focussing on building a sustainable future with the help of its creative sector. Today there is an economic transition of Katowice as instead of focussing on coal production (In 19<sup>th</sup> century, Katowice was the prosperous centre for coal production) it is focussing more on creative industries particularly Music. Creative industries or cultural industries are those industries which are related with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information. These mainly comprises of advertising arts, film, fashion, music, performing arts, R&D, architecture, crafts and design etc.
- ***Creative cities for knowledge and Skills:-*** What will be the look of our jobs tomorrow? The labour market today is undergoing transition. About 60% of all jobs have at least 30% of activities that can be managed by machines. So, there is a need to shift our focus towards developing of creative skills from the school level itself. As the creative economy will may become one of the leading sector for job creation in the future which will ultimately open up new opportunities for the weaker sections of the society. Digitalisation of this development will make it more accessible to all the people of the society.
- ***Creative cities for Inclusion, equality and Dialogue:-*** It focusses on leaving no one behind. This is the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well. It will offer equal opportunities to all the members of the society which will result in their development. Creativity and culture are the sides of the same coin which will act as a medium to achieve this motto or vision. Culture is one of the ways which can lay various possibilities of dialogue and mutual understanding. Creative industries can lead to inclusion and will help in achieving gender equality.
- ***Creative cities for Urban Regeneration:-*** By 2025 approximately 1 billion new homes will be required. Uneven growth of urbanisation has led to various challenges including

environmental crisis, unhygienic conditions and planning issues. At the global level there is a call for the cities to find out sustainable solutions for building up of new houses and transport etc. to accommodate the increasing population. This will help us to reduce carbon foot print. Creativity can be one of the solutions to the problem of uneven growth of urbanisation as it has the potential to inspire new innovations. Involving culture and creativity into urban policies will help us to interact with the urban environment easily (UNESCO, Creative Cities | Creative Cities Network, 2019).

- ***Creative cities for ecological transition and reliance:-*** In 2019, Earth Overshoot Day was observed on 29<sup>th</sup> July. It means that the humans has exhausted all the biological resources for that particular year. To face these kinds of environmental problems, creative cities can play an active role in the sustainability of the earth. It can help us in encouraging ecological transition. It can promote creative thinking or new innovations that can deal with the issue related to climate change and will help in sustainable use of natural resources (Mead, 2019).
- ***Creative cities for Social innovation and citizenship:-*** In this there is participation of the citizens. The use of digital technology that promotes user friendly systems that helps in gathering creative ideas of the citizens. This further helps in making of public policies effective. This will ultimately promote citizen centric and inclusive urban societies (UNESCO, Creative Cities | Creative Cities Network, 2019).

The UCCN Network also supports the United Nations Charters, specially the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development. The UCCN selects seven creative fields like Design, Literature, Crafts and Folk Art Film, Media Arts, Gastronomy and Music on the basis of which it select the cities. (UNESCO, Mission\_Statement\_UNESCO\_Creative, 2004). In India 5 Cities till now have been included in UCCN list:- Jaipur (Crafts and Art Folk), Varanasi (Music) in 2015, Chennai (Music) in 2017, Mumbai (Film), and Hyderabad (Gastronomy) in 2019. Around the world total 246 cities have been included in this network (Ministry of Culture, 2019).

Figure 4 shows that for creating jobs that promote local culture and products Ministry of Tourism, Government of India launched Swadesh Darshan scheme and UNSECO launched the UNESCO Creative Cities Network that relates with the target 12.b of goal number 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) of SDGs 2030 Agenda.

## **SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME**

India's culturally and naturally rich diversity provides a huge potential for growth of tourism and jobs in the country. In 2014-2015 Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has launched Swadesh

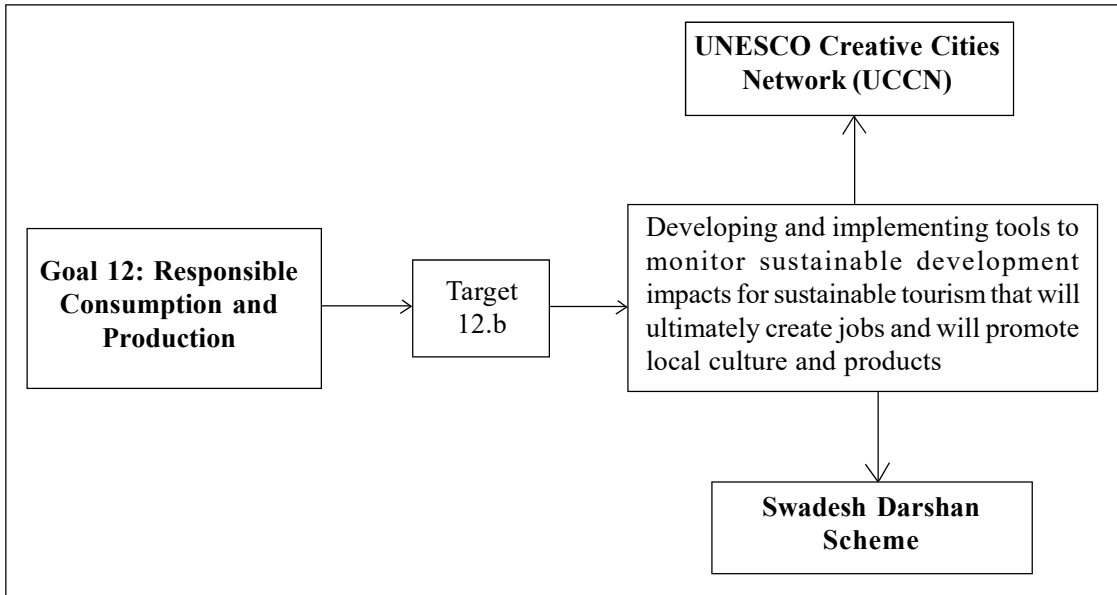


Figure 4: Scheme related to Goal number 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) of SDGs 2015

Darshan Scheme that aims at unified development of theme based tourist circuits. It is a Central Sector Scheme. These tourist circuits are based on specific themes to attract the tourists who have special curiosity in visiting such places. Various themes which are distinctive and specific to the area includes Coastal, Buddhist, Beaches, Dessert, Eco, Sufi, Himalayan, Krishna, Heritage, North-East, Ramayan, Spiritual, Wildlife, Tribal, Trithankar and Rural. These theme based tourist circuits are being developed in a manner that it should support communities, bring up social integration and provides employment without comprising upon the environmental concerns (Ministry of Tourism, Swadesh Darshan, 2015). Till now 6,061.56 crore rupees and 79 projects has been sanctioned under this Scheme (Ministry of Tourism, Swadesh Darshan, 2019).

A social Audit of Swadesh Darshan scheme was done and it has been found that there is a lot of opportunities for improvement in the scheme. So, the Ministry of Tourism has decided to renovate the scheme (Times, 2019).

### SECTION III

#### CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that culture is an important element of human life and if we include it in our policies we can achieve sustainable development goals. The country like India has vast potential

of cultural diversity. India can use its cultural diversity in achieving sustainable development. So to develop a culturally oriented sustainable city, the role of culture must be distinctively acknowledged, supported and integrated into planning. The culture can be integrated into governance which can ultimately lead to justifiable, comprehensive and sustainable development; Cultural sector or culture industries can contribute in economic development of any nation and traditional knowledge and culture can help in environmental sustainability. Various initiatives that have been taken by Government of India and UNESCO proves that the role of culture in sustainable development can be viewed through various lenses like we can see Culture IN sustainable development where culture can be considered as the fourth pillar of sustainable development; Culture AS sustainable development where culture becomes the basis of sustainable development and Culture FOR sustainable development where culture mediates between the other three pillars. All the schemes that have integrated culture are promoting creativity, innovation, sustainable tourism and jobs. This has led to the advancement of local culture, products and has increased awareness among the local people regarding sustainable development.

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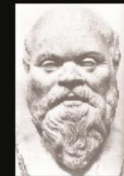
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**How to Cite:** Garg, B., & Sharma, A. (2020). Integrating culture in various initiatives for achieving sustainable development goals. *SOCRATES*, 8(1), 40-53. Retrieved from <https://www.socratesjournal.com/index.php/SOCRATES/article/view/422>



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