

Press Release

‘Indigenous Wisdom 3.0’ hosted by Kolkata Centre for Creativity

A talk session on the Wancho community and their culture

Kolkata, October 2020: Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC), the multidisciplinary creativity centre for art & culture recently hosted a webinar titled **‘Indigenous Wisdom: Talk 3’**. The panellists at the session were **Ms. Tara Purnim Villiers Douglas**, *Researcher and Filmmaker* and **Mr. Jatwang Wangsa**, *Representative from Wancho community* in conversation with **Ms. Reena Dewan**, *Director, Kolkata Centre for Creativity* who spoke on ‘The Wancho’ upholding the tribal tradition of Arunachal Pradesh to discover their culture, world and experimental animations.

Indigenous Wisdom is a series launched by Kolkata Centre for Creativity to raise the importance of Indigenous/ethnic wisdom that is being passed on intergenerational by the native communities of our country. The subject of discussion in Indigenous Wisdom 3.0 was the cultural life and sustainable living practices of Wancho community from the North Eastern region of India. The Wanchos are the natives inhabiting the Patkai Hills of Longdong district in Arunachal Pradesh and are best known for their vibrant indigenous cultural heritage. The talk session streamed live for one and a half hour on zoom on 3rd October, 2020.

During the session **Jatwang Wangsa**, a representative of the Wancho tribe, said that their tribal origins have not been researched extensively. The Wancho tribe still hold assumptions regarding their origin and there is potential for research in different aspects of their lives including their history, food habits, traditional attire, ritual and festivals, which are some aspects that could be meticulously documented.

A part of the discussion during the talk focused on the day to day living of the Wancho tribe and their survival. The tribe subsists on purely organic food i.e. Maize, Millet, Tapioca, which they grow for themselves without any use of chemical fertilizers. Their attire is made of a specific kind of thread found in their region. The headgear Jatwang wore during the session had a hornbill feather and long strands of synthetic ‘enemy hair’, though the tribe no longer has wars or enemies, but the tradition of wearing the ‘enemy hair’ still exists from their ‘head hunting’ days. The Wanchos are also known for their traditional healing system though Jatwang explains that due to lack of research most data regarding the traditional healing system has been lost.

Tara Purnima Villiers Douglas, had been introduced to the Wancho Art and Folklore in the books of Verrier Elwin. Tara a trained professional in animation was always drawn towards folklore and is currently collaborating with Jatwang Wangsa and his team to produce a bilingual book in English and Wancho on the Wancho folktales that were recorded in Kamhua Noknu and neighbouring villages during her research trip to the area in November 2019. This series will be a part of the *Stories of Our Ancestors* project that has been supported by North Eastern Council (Shillong).

About Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC)

A unit of Anamika Kala Sangam Trust (AKST), Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) is a multi-disciplinary interactive art and creativity Centre located in Kolkata, West Bengal. It is the first in Eastern India to make Art accessible to visually impaired and differently abled under their 'Art for All' initiative. Spearheaded by Richa Agarwal as it's Chairperson, the 70,000 sq. ft. Centre champions the art and cultural landscape of contemporary India since November 2018. It comprises of an Amphitheater, Exhibition & Learning Spaces, Dance studio, Conservation Lab, Books & Materials Library, Creative Culinary space, Craft & Design outlet and a Skill Development Maker's section. Integrating several expressions of art and design to highlight their common creative core – KCC encourages visitors to explore, interact and design ideas on various art forms. KCC works in the areas of Capacity Building, Well-Being, Conservation & Restoration, Craft & Design, Culinary, Visual and Performing Art. It acts as a catalyst for Artistic enhancement through Displays, Presentations, Fellowships, Laboratories, Residences, Conservation, Research and Discourses.

The programs at KCC are designed on the principles of Cultural Diversity, Gender Equality, Conservation of Environment and Inclusion of people with different abilities.

The Centre offers free entry to the public and is open between 11 am to 6 pm from Tuesday to Sunday. For more information about exhibitions and the conferences, please visit www.kolkatacentreforcreativity.org
