

*Godrej*

INDIA  
CULTURE  
LAB

# Corporate Engagement with Culture in India

a white paper



## **Part 1: Introduction**

In an increasingly intercultural and diverse global environment, a commitment to culture is not just good ethics but good politics and good business as well. While enterprises remain committed to assigning funds towards more directly charitable Corporate Social Responsibility ventures, they have also realised the invaluable contribution of the arts in stimulating conversations and creating healthier and more humane societies.

In an environment where there is growing interest in corporate funding of culture in India, this paper provides an overview of the sectors to which such funding is currently directed while simultaneously pushing for greater and more diversified investment in the arts. Addressing corporate misgivings and apprehensions about funding culture, we provide a number of concrete benefits of such sponsorship by providing examples of successful funding ventures both within India and across the world.

Given the limited scope of research conducted in the field of corporate philanthropy and corporate sponsorship towards culture, we hope to use the experience of the Godrej India Culture Lab as an inhabitant of the liminal space between a corporate and a cultural institution to explore a new Indian approach towards corporate funding for the arts. Bridging global strides made in the field with best practices currently employed in India, we have created a list of funding models that have the potential to bring in a new dynamism to cultural spaces across the country.

We firmly believe that corporations need to fund arts and culture, both as part of direct efforts at achieving greater visibility and as philanthropic

engagements that provide no tangible benefits, to allow for a symbiotic relationship between the cultural and the corporate world within India. In contributing to and working towards cultural advances in the country, corporations not only build a robust and ethical brand image but also develop into more diverse and holistic workspaces with more engaged and productive workforces.

Our experiences at the Godrej India Culture Lab have demonstrated that a sustained and consistent engagement with art and culture can transform organisational cultures. We hope that the frameworks and models suggested within this paper will enable other enterprises adopt similar strategies while simultaneously helping cultural institutions navigate the terrain of corporate sponsorship to reach out to the most viable sponsors for their projects.

## **Part 2: Overview of Cultural Funding in India**

Historically, India has had a rich tradition of cultural patronage (both official and personal) directed towards art, music, literature, and architecture. From the treasure trove of Sangam poetry that flourished under the Chera dynasty to the exquisite bronze sculptures that marked the pinnacle of artistic achievement under the Chola dynasty, works of art thrived under monarchies within the country. The court often became a refuge for artists, with musicians like Tansen and painters like Ustad Mansur achieving both fame and recognition within the Mughal Diwan-e-Khas. Lavish expenditure on architecture also meant that innovations in design and sculpture received the funding required for the execution of large scale projects like the immaculately carved Kailasa Temple in the Ellora Caves complex.

While these endeavours were often hampered by the whims and fancies of rulers and their respective social and political agendas, a culture of giving to the arts without expecting any tangible benefits did exist. Even when works were commissioned for a specific purpose, like within Ashoka's regime, artists were given the freedom to experiment with aesthetics – a freedom that resulted in diverse motifs and architectural styles being explored across the country. Moreover, the long standing networks of trade and commerce that connected India to parts of the world ranging from Egypt to Iran meant that artistic works (like Gandhara sculptures) often responded to, developed in tandem or collaboration with, and contributed to global aesthetic movements.

The advent of the British Raj formalised hitherto unstructured forums for sponsorship of art and culture. A distinct, bureaucratic funding of arts and culture emerged from the various cultural bodies set up under the government like the Archaeological Survey of India. However,

explorations of culture were carried out through a Eurocentric lens that treated Indian artefacts as “traditional” objects to be seen as part of an exotic Orient. There were instances of syncretism, through architecture and literature, which allowed for innovations to take place in artistic fields but funding for these was based on personal connections and existing patronage systems.

On becoming independent, the mechanisms of the Raj’s bureaucracy were transferred to Indian hands. With the advent of Nehruvian economic model of socialist industrialization in the 1950s, the role of the government assumed a welfare-oriented and nationalist transition. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad’s efforts were instrumental in the process of institutionalization of art and culture through forums such as the Sahitya Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, Sangeet Natak Akademi and International Council for Cultural Relations. Azad affirmed that they would function autonomously without the direct control or interference of the government. While such autonomy allowed for the development of films like *Syzygy* by Akbar Padamsee, it was compromised over the years through political interference – creating monolithic government entities that ceased to be drivers of innovation in art and culture.

Post the liberalisation of the economy, and the large inflow of funds into the private sector, government spending on culture reduced considerably. Today, at the apex level, the policies of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, National Culture Fund and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting have important ramifications on the cultural ethos of the country. The Ministry of Culture is involved in multiple initiatives in the country, ranging from offering fellowships and grants to setting up of entities such as the Sahitya Kala Akademi. Its subsidiaries, like the Lalit Kala Akademi, are involved in a range of

activities: they hold exhibitions, give scholarships, provide sponsorships and fellowships, create assistance schemes, bequeath lifetime achievement awards, and publish documentary material.

However, the existence of a vast number of subsidiaries under the Ministry – ranging from the National Research Laboratory for the Conservation of Cultural Property to the National Archives and the Archaeological Survey of India – has meant that the meagre funds allocated to the Ministry are often too thinly spread out to contribute significantly to the resource requirements of any single sector. Currently, the Ministry of Culture is allocated Rs. 1755 Crore (USD 258 Million) under Plan Expenditure and Rs. 745 Crore (USD 109 Million) under Non Plan Expenditure under the Union Budget for 2016 - 2017. This is negligible compared to the USD 3.2 Billion allocated by France towards culture and USD 1.7 Billion allocated by the UK towards Culture, Media, and Sport. It also pales in comparison to the USD 790 Million allocated by Brazil towards culture.

In light of the lack of funding available from the State, cultural institutions across the country have turned towards international organisations and foreign government institutions for resources. Private entities like the Ford Foundation have been actively promoting efforts to develop arts resources in the country, contributing to fields ranging from conservation to music. Moreover, Consulates and institutions like the British Council have used the resources available to them to fund innovations in art and culture. However, given the limited country-specific knowledge of these organisations, and their own bureaucratic hurdles, funding is often directed towards large scale ventures and towards partnerships with foreign cultural bodies. Limited efforts can be made through these

sources towards ecosystem development or towards sustained initiatives that add to the cultural resource pool of the country.

This has led to cultural movements within the country turning to resources from local NGOs, corporations, and wealthy patrons to fund their activities. Organisations like the Tata Trusts and the Pirojsha Godrej Foundation have contributed – in varying degrees – to funding of cultural institutions on a national level. On a smaller scale, art collectives like KHOJ in New Delhi have developed models that allow for autonomy in curation and programming through resource generation via crowdsourced fundraisers or independent donations. Individual artists and performing groups, too, are increasingly turning to the internet to source donations from small contributors across the country. However, such efforts are impeded by a lack of space in major cities, the high costs of rent and property leasing, the complexities of tax regulations around funding for art and culture, and limited manpower to run both cultural programs and fundraising efforts.

### **Part 3: Corporate Sponsorship of Culture – Benefits and Roadblocks**

Given the myriad challenges facing cultural institutions in the country today, it has become more important than ever for the private sector – especially corporates and business houses – to step in and contribute to the development of art and culture in India. The large availability of space, the legal and technical expertise in fundraising and fund collection, the presence of vast corpuses dedicated to CSR funding, and the business expertise of marketing and organising events all come together to make corporations ideal patrons of culture in a rapidly changing economy. Such patronage yields valuable benefits for corporations too: in an increasingly competitive business environment, where consumer choice hinges upon company reputation and public perception, funding of art and culture leads to an accrual of goodwill for corporates. Moreover, such funding – when directed in the right manner – allows for the creation of ecosystems that feed an increasingly valuable and high budget cultural economy.

Corporates across the country have realised the value of such an investment in culture, and have slowly but steadily increased their funding of the arts through varied initiatives. Companies like Godrej have set up centres like the Godrej India Culture Lab within their campuses, while those like ESSAR have created bodies like Avid Learning, which organises workshops, panel discussions, and other programs to foster creative learning across cultural fields. Other companies, like the Apeejay Group, have incorporated culture into their commercial activities: the Oxford Bookstore chains routinely have book readings, while the new Park Hotel chain conducts an annual cultural festival. Similarly, other companies like Mahindra have sponsored festivals like



the Mahindra Blues festival and set up awards like the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) to maintain a sustained engagement with the cultural sphere.

### **Benefits of Corporate Sponsorship of Culture**

The growing interest in cultural patronage and sponsorship of art and culture stems from the increased awareness of the tangible benefits of such funding. These include:

1. **Visibility:** Sponsoring art and culture allows corporate enterprises to reach out to both their target audiences and newer demographics. Events, exhibitions, performances, and cultural institutions enable large scale outreach, giving corporates access to tens of thousands of prospective clients. Moreover, such funding establishes enterprises as leading names in the industry. However, in the pursuit of visibility, aggressive branding is not important (and can, in fact, be counterproductive).
2. **Conversion:** Performance Research, one of the world's leading think tanks on research in the cultural sphere, found that over one-half (56%) of those with an interest in the Arts say they would "Almost always" or "Frequently" buy a product sponsoring Arts or Cultural events over one that does not. In contrast, according to previous Performance Research studies, only about one-third (36%) of NFL fans, one-third (34%) of America's Cup yachting enthusiasts and less than one-fifth (17%) of the 1996 Olympic Games audience chose products based on corporate sponsorships of these events. This proves that conversion ratios from visibility to purchase are higher in the arts than for several well-funded industries like sport.

- 3. Regional Development:** Funding the arts has a multiplier effect because it indirectly spurs the tourism industry and other affiliated industries, allowing for a circulation of funds that contribute towards the holistic development of a region. Such funding has been carried out by the Infosys Foundation, which contributes towards the arts in Bangalore to increase local goodwill while promoting the image of the city as a global hub for commerce and culture. This allows for the development of long term growth prospects of a company with a strong regional focus, especially in sectors such as real estate and retail.
- 4. Corporate Social Responsibility:** Under Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013, companies with over Rs. 5 Crore net profit or Rs. 1,000 Crore turnover or Rs. 500 Crore net worth have to spend 2% of their three-year average annual net profit on CSR activities in each financial year. The Act allows for sponsorship of art and culture to be counted as CSR, giving corporates an effective and worthwhile cause to invest in. By instituting a comprehensive CSR strategy that addresses long term goals and investment priorities of the company, corporates can use their CSR funds towards patronage of culture that does not accrue any direct benefits in terms of branding but provides valuable reputational perks and visibility benefits.
- 5. Multiplier Effect:** Funding of art and culture, especially on the small scale, yields greater value per rupee than funding of other socially beneficial enterprises. The conversion ratio from seed funding to finished products is incredibly high in a nascent cultural market within India: initiatives that manage to raise enough capital do well enough to develop into self-sustaining enterprises that can eventually generate funds for corporate sponsors rather than

taking funds from them. Such an effect can be observed in the transformation of anti-Social, funded by Impresario Hospitality, which has today turned into a robust business operating within the cultural economy and generating profits for the restaurant chain it is housed within.

- 6. Consumer Trust:** Another piece of research conducted by Performance Research found that almost one-half (48%) of Americans with an interest in Art and Cultural events indicated that they hold a "Higher" trust in companies that sponsor these events compared to those who do not. In contrast, only 16% of Olympic Games enthusiasts claimed a "Higher" trust in companies that sponsored the Olympics. This goes to demonstrate that funding of art and culture is seen as a more honest and a more committed indication of support to a cause, thus yielding higher trust benefits. However, such funding must be autonomous to be seen as trustworthy by patrons of the art, and must be extricated from corporate PR strategies in order to be effective.
- 7. Change in Organisational Culture:** The funding of art and culture by corporate organisations can reap enormous positive benefits for the corporation's workforce. Through the encouragement of participation in cultural events, companies can provide valuable perks for employees and create a working environment within which respect and appreciation for culture is valued. Victor Lipman, writing for Forbes, describes how ROE (Return on Environment) is exponentially higher when fine art is present in workspaces. Our own experience within Godrej's Vikhroli campus which contains contemporary art in almost all office spaces, only goes to prove Lipman's claims that cultural integration in office

spaces boosts productivity and helps reduce stress – creating a healthier and more motivated workforce.

**8. Resource Creation:** By becoming patrons of art and culture, corporations gain access to niche cultural circles. When seen as friends of the arts, corporations are also respected by the artistic community at large: a valuable accrual of respect, given the highly creative demands of a swiftly developing competitive economy. A contribution to art and culture – not only directly through initiatives like sponsoring or artists but also through promotions of conversations and discussions around culture – gives corporations and their employees access to intellectuals and creative pioneers. Not only does this yield valuable reputational perks through the development of positive brand perception but also tangentially infuses culture and creativity into design teams and other creative arms of the company.

### **Roadblocks to Corporate Sponsorship of Culture**

Despite the wide range of tangible benefits to corporate sponsorship of culture, there are several misgivings and misunderstandings that prevent effective corporate-cultural collaborations. While the list below is not exhaustive, it gives a brief overview of impediments to partnerships that exist within India today and serves as an effective benchmark against which one can judge the models we provide in the section following this exploration of hurdles.

1. **Structure of Corporate Giving:** The nature of support extended through a corporate setup cannot be compared to individual philanthropy since the money at stake does not belong to a single individual. Gayatri Divecha from Dasra, an Indian philanthropy consultant firm, explains that funding was a lot more easily

available to the arts a few decades ago, when patrons from older generations felt a strong affiliation to culture and supported it through their independent funds. However, today decisions are no longer made by individual heads of the company but rather by a board of trustees or directors who decide to fund an initiative depending on a wide range of issues ranging from brand image to long term strategic goals.

2. **Global Nature of Corporate Enterprises:** Today with globalization, businesses have shareholders who are dispersed over a wider geographical area than decades ago. As a result, the current shareholders may not identify as much with the relationship that the corporation has with local citizenry.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the global identity of the company overshadows the local one. This in turn has a domino effect on the local art community. Often, decisions are made at a national or regional level – leaving independent funding of local cultural events in the lurch, and preventing best practices learnt at the grassroots level from being implemented swiftly and effectively. This, in turn, prevents long term ecosystem development of artistic enterprises – wrapping up arts funding in a never-ending network of bureaucracy and coordination.
3. **Creative Freedom and Autonomy:** Michael Kaiser, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts states that “one cannot take any corporate gift for granted; it is hard work to receive a major corporate gift in today's environment. Those organizations that work actively to create visibility for their corporate partners can still develop strong and profitable relationships. But if an arts organization does not work aggressively to create an effective, implementable visibility plan for a major corporation, it is likely not to receive funding.”<sup>14</sup> This puts

cultural institutions in a situation that requires them to compromise upon their artistic output to receive funding, raising ethical and moral questions that often prevent an effective partnership with corporate organisations. An unreasonable imposition of branding or visibility targets on cultural partnerships is direct result of an erroneous understanding of the nature of such partnerships: excessive branding is in fact ineffective, and takes away from the goodwill that such a partnership would have garnered for both the corporate enterprise and the cultural institution.

## **Part 4: Models for Corporate Sponsorship of Culture**

Taking into account the various tangible benefits and the potential hurdles to effective corporate-cultural partnerships, we have endeavoured to put together a list of models that can multiply the positive impact of corporate sponsorship of culture. These models are a reflection of our experiences within the cultural sphere in Mumbai as well as our experiences as an institution nestled within a large corporate enterprise. They are particularly modified to suit the diverse cultural, social, and economic dynamics of India (particularly urban India) and are aimed at giving both corporate enterprises and cultural institutions new forums and new approaches towards an effective use of funds.

The models are categorised into entry-level, mid-range, and large-scale projects, with each segment reflecting both the funding capacity and strategic priorities of the corporate enterprise. These models reflect certain basic value addition parameters for the corporation including footprint and visibility, employee satisfaction, and scalability. Moreover, they also reflect parameters for successful cultural funding, including a consideration of longevity, ecosystem building, and autonomy. While we refrain from including specific figures or growth estimates, given the lack of systemic research conducted in this field, we have tried to introduce successful models from across the world that have worked in niche sector within the country and can be expanded upon further to create a more tangible and sustained impact.

The slotting of certain segments within certain scales is based upon our estimation of the highest value per rupee of funding into a particular sector: for instance, we feel that smaller corporations funding large scale festivals as minor sponsors is less effective than them funding a smaller theatre company or artists collective. However, while reaching beyond

the scale of available funds is unadvisable, we firmly believe that usage of funds for smaller scale initiatives by corporations with larger arts funding corpuses can be incredibly effective. Thus, a large company like Godrej should not shy away from creating scholarships or hosting artist-in-residence programs because they fall under entry-level or mid-range segments.

### **(A) Entry Level Models**

1. **Event Sponsorship:** This is often the simplest and most effective way of sponsoring art and culture. Corporations can choose to be sponsors for a variety of events, ranging from dance performances to art exhibitions, which take place locally, regionally or nationally. This provides direct visibility and outreach in terms of visitors to these events and indirect visibility through presence on social media and the press. There are certain perks to sponsoring these events too: sponsors often get the best seats for the performance or exclusive walkthroughs of the exhibition, which can be leveraged as benefits for employees. Currently, a large number of corporations (ranging from banks like ICIC Bank and Axis Bank to consumer products companies like Everest Spices and Gold's Gym) sponsor cultural events on a small scale.
2. **Company Sponsorship:** Another way of promoting cultural sponsorship is by affiliating with one particular cultural organisation and funding their initiatives. For instance, Junoon Theatre is currently supported by a large number of organisations and individuals, including Mahindra Holidays and Resorts India. This allows for a more sustained relationship with a particular institution and with a particular form of culture (like art, dance, theatre, or digital media). Such funding is usually annual in nature, with a



fixed amount being given to the company towards all its activities. Additional grants may be given for larger events or programs that require additional funding. Sponsorship of cultural organisation yields similar benefits to that of sponsoring events, but on a more regular and pre-determined level.

3. **Direct Funding:** Such funding is more nuanced in nature, and requires a small degree of effort on the part of the corporate enterprise. Through scholarships, grants, or fellowships, corporates can fund individuals or collectives. This requires a determination of which field the corporation wants to fund: for instance, the Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation funds students who want to complete their postgraduate education and the Dara Shikoh Fellowship funds artists and scholars conducting research on Kashmir. Funding of fellowships, scholarships or grants also requires a minimal level of bureaucracy – one must be able to accept applications, review them, and distribute funds accordingly. Such funding generates resource pools of individuals that corporates can tap into (for instance, musicians who corporations can later invite to perform at a large event) and also generates a sustained relationship with individuals or institutions that have been sponsored through a grant.
4. **Skill Based Assistance:** Corporate assistance to cultural institutions is essentially a subsidy provided to or pro-bono services rendered towards a cultural institution. This can take varied forms depending upon the company undertaking such funding: a web design firm can choose to design a website for the institution, a law firm can take on an advisory role for fundraising and legal concerns, a tax firm can assist the institution with tax exemptions, or a marketing firm can help institutions spread the

word about their events. Assistance in the form of services rendered can establish long-term sustainable partnerships at a relatively low cost to the sponsoring organisation, with added visibility and reputational perks that accrue from such a sponsorship. Currently, a large number of law firms like Thomson Reuters support organisations like Tisser Handicrafts in developing legal fundraising and tax management strategies.

5. **Direct Acquisition:** While this does not technically qualify as sponsorship or philanthropy, direct acquisition (or the direct buying or commissioning of works) is a major reason for the vibrancy surrounding the arts in countries across the world. A corporate culture that encourages investment in the arts is necessary to allow for a strong demand for works created by artists. Such procurement of art or other cultural commodities should be seen as an investment that profits from the booming art market in India. Today, companies like Godrej have dedicated curatorial wings that look after the buying of art and look at art (specifically the fine arts) as valuable cultural and economic investments. Other companies like RPG have commissioned the Chintan Upadhyay statue on Marine Drive as part of a larger public art initiative. Such acquisition and commissioning provides visibility while establishing the reputation of the company as a patron of the arts, gathering valuable reputational perks for investments that reap direct economic benefits too.

6. **Exhibition Spaces:** Another way for corporates with landholdings to contribute to the cultural sphere is by the creation of exhibition spaces. Art galleries and cinema theatres are two of the possible forms of exhibition spaces that can be created at a small cost within a corporate establishment. Smaller retail or hospitality

establishments like Bagel Shop in Mumbai have created boutique galleries within their restaurants, while larger properties like Claridges have created exclusive art exhibition spaces through collaborations with organisation like Saffronart within their premises. Not only does this increase footfall to the physical location of an enterprise, adding to visibility and translating into greater sales for the corporation, but also establishes the corporation as a cultural player in cities wherein there is a tangible shortage of cultural spaces.

### **(B) Mid-Range Models**

1. **Venue Sponsorship:** Just as corporations can fund individual cultural organisations, they can fund venues for cultural events too. Such sponsorship makes the corporation a partner of the venue, giving the corporation access to premier seats or exclusive previews of its productions. Moreover, such a partnership results in long term ecosystem building, providing outlets for art and culture to be showcased. This helps in the aim of place-making too, since an increase in funding and programming at a cultural venue adds to the reputation of a particular area being a hotbed for art and culture. However, for such funding to be effective, it must be large in scale and must meet substantial needs of the institution being sponsored. Currently, spaces like the NCPA and the Bhau Daji Lad Museum are funded by corporations ranging from the Tata Trusts to the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation.
2. **Fundraisers:** Corporates have access to large workforces and influential contact bases that allow them to effectively organise successful fundraisers. The fundraiser model has been used in the past towards a certain cause (like AIDS awareness or poverty

reduction) by corporates through partnerships with NGOs. This model can also be used for creating awareness for and raising funds for cultural initiatives across the country. Recently, Arts for India organised a fundraiser in association with the British Film Institute at BAFTA, garnering funds to support young and underprivileged artists in India. Such a model not only provides a large degree of visibility because of the high profile guests who attend and contribute towards fundraising efforts, but also establishes the organiser as a patron of culture and utilises the multiplier effect of the corporation's position in the business community to make the maximum impact possible.

- 3. Residencies:** Programs like artist residences or scholar-in-residence programs allow for artists and creative individuals to receive both funding and accommodation to pursue their profession. These programs, although in a nascent stage in India, are incredibly effective in promoting and nurturing talent in an age wherein funding for art and culture is scarce. While they do require a certain bureaucratic and organisational framework to allow for the review of applications, residences are often highly cost effective: for organisations with large amounts of property (for instance in real estate or hospitality), such residencies merely require a setting aside of a certain area for artists to live in. The perks that come out of creating such residencies are immense too: one of the pieces created by the artist over the course of the residency is usually given to the organiser as goodwill and a sustained relationship is established between the artist and the organiser that allows for continued patronage of culture. This also allows for investment into human capital: a careful and well executed curation of the program can reap economic benefits in

the long run if the corporation nurtures the growth of a particularly talented yet relatively lesser known artist. Residences like the Piramal Art Foundation Residency, which runs at Piramal's realty project in Thane, and the Dara Shikoh Fellowship, which takes place at the Almond Villa in Srinagar, not only provide artists with a studio space but also allow them to interact with other artists, curators, critics, and gallerists from across the country.

4. **Incubated Spaces:** While programs like residencies allow for a short term, quicker turnover based approach towards cultural funding, incubated spaces created within corporate enterprises allow for the creation of cultural properties that have a long term impact on the region within which they are located. The Godrej India Culture Lab is one of the first incubated spaces within India, and works towards exploring conversations around what it means to be modern and Indian through film screenings, panel discussion, performances, and art installations. Housed within the Godrej campus in Vikhroli, it uses the spaces within the enterprise for its activities (ranging from the auditorium to outdoor open spaces). Through collaborations with other organisations across the city, and through a network of global artistic and cultural connections, the Lab has managed to establish itself as a major cultural institution within Mumbai. The creation of such cultural properties allows for high visibility, along with high footfall for events hosted at these properties, multiplying the impact reputational perks and brand image of the organisation within which these properties are hosted.

### **(C) Large Scale Models**

1. **Festivals:** With the growing demand for cultural events across the country, a large number of festivals and experiences have come up in the past few years. Ranging from music festivals like Mahindra Blues to biennales that spread across months like the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, these events are grand productions requiring large-scale funding from varied sectors. Sponsorship of such events is often multi-layered: the Kochi-Muziris Biennale has over ten levels of funding options and receives funding from government organisations, embassies and consulates, foreign NGOs, and global corporations. It boasts of corporate partners like BMW and DLF, which receive large scale publicity for contributing to the biennale. Funding for these festivals provides global visibility for sponsoring corporations and also provides them with benefits like exclusive previews and priority seating that can be valuable additions for patrons of the enterprise.
2. **Awards:** The increasing interest in art and culture across the country also requires mechanism that support its critique and promote its appreciation. Just like commercial cinema has a range of award functions that are theoretically conducive to constructive feedback, the arts need forums wherein they can be celebrated and given due recognition. Award functions allow for artists and other creative individuals to receive credibility for their work, especially on an international scale, and are necessary to allow for healthy debate and discussion around the arts. Mahindra currently organises the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) annually, which promote pioneering theatre practitioners across the country. Award functions are often large scale, highly publicised events with a range of high profile attendees and awardees. They allow for an engagement with the artistic

community at large, and allow corporations to be stakeholders in the conversations around culture in the country.

3. **Foundations:** For corporations that want to engage with the creative arts on a large scale, the creation of foundations or trusts devoted to promoting the arts is a more organised way to distribute funding across varied sectors. Foundations are the traditional mode through which art and culture has been funded across the world, ranging from the Rockefeller Foundation in the United States to the Tata Trusts in India. They allow for a centralised collection of funds from the parent corporation, reducing paperwork necessary for tax exemptions and other legalities when funds are distributed independently, and create an infrastructure through which funding can be directed towards certain strategic and organisational priorities in an organised manner. Activities can range from small scale funding for scholarships to large scale funding for festivals: the Reliance Foundation has, in the recent past, simultaneously organised both the MAMI Film Festival and sponsored “Mummy: The Inside Story” at the CSMVS Museum in Mumbai. However, the creation of a foundation requires significant investment into manpower and other allied administrative activities, and is a viable option only on a large scale.
4. **Space Creation:** Often, the creation of a foundation can be followed by the building of physical spaces that allow for the activities of the foundation to be carried out within the premises of the foundation itself. The Piramal Art Foundation has opened its own gallery in Lower Parel, allowing visitors access to its exhibitions while also providing the city with a space to host workshops and other cultural events. The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), created by the Tata Trusts, is another

example of how foundations can create cultural properties that promote the development of the region as a cultural hotspot. Such properties can take varying forms: galleries, theatres, museums, and even parks or open air recreational spaces. Moreover, in an increasingly digitised world, they need not be confined to the physical realm: companies like Jindal have launched publications like Art India that allow for sustained interaction with culture in a print and digital form. In the creation of both foundations and cultural properties, it is important that corporations allow for complete autonomy in the function of these entities: without the freedom to curate and program in accordance with the trends of the cultural sphere in the country, such entities will lose their credibility and become obsolete. A lack of direct publicity accruing from foundations or cultural properties should not be seen as a failure of corporate-cultural sponsorship – instead, while creating such bodies, corporations should be aware of the long term intangible benefits like increased brand respect that are not immediately visible.

### **Part 5: Conclusion**

There is a dire need for a revitalisation of the cultural scene within the country today. Despite rapid advances being made by talented individuals across India, the progress of art and culture is being impeded by a lack of funds being directed towards the sector. Given the small scale of resources available through the government and through international organisations, it has become necessary for corporate enterprises to step in and create valuable partnerships that will allow the nascent cultural economy to grow in a dynamic manner. Once these partnerships are created, both corporate enterprises and cultural



institutions will develop symbiotic relationships based on mutual respect that will slowly dispel the stigma attached to corporate funding while simultaneously protecting the autonomy of cultural production in the nation.

Through our experiences at the Godrej India Culture Lab, we have witnessed first-hand the enormous multiplier effect of funds channelled into cultural enterprises. Combining the organisation and technical expertise of the corporate sector with the creative driving force of varied artists and collaborators, the Lab has striven to cross pollinate ideas and best practices from diverse fields to create a holistic cultural institution that interacts with its surroundings. Over the course of five years of our existence, we have hosted over a hundred events and spearheaded efforts to make our space in Vikhroli a viable model for suburban cultural institutions. Moreover, we have demonstrated the tangible benefits that accrue to corporate enterprises that fund cultural institutions: ranging from higher visibility to greater brand recognition and respect.

This paper is an attempt to collate our experiences and present them to other corporate institutions across the country to start conversations around the effectiveness of funding culture. By providing a starting point for a range of models and practices that can be employed in the corporate sponsorship of culture, we want to create a resource pool that allows corporates across diverse fields and sizes to contribute towards the regeneration of cultural spaces and institutions in India. This paper is also an attempt to start the conversation around the need for increased research around the sponsorship of culture and the benefits of cultural sponsorship to corporate enterprises: while we have tried to bring together a number of tangible and intangible benefits that are a product of sponsorship of culture, we believe that further research can yield even

more heartening results that will make the case for such sponsorship stronger.

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