

# You are not alone makes a difference



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It was 1981 summer vacation in the Sultanate of Oman and almost every adult around me was talking about the Royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana.

And finally I saw 'Television, video cassettes and newspapers. It was a fairy tale with a real princess and with the absence of social media... there was quite a bit left to our own imagination. Was fascinated with her wedding dress and her hairstyle became iconic.

Wanted to know everything about her so did the whole world. Princess Diana had no choice but be part of world's fascination. Maybe she never wanted it but that probably was the most intriguing part.

Years passed by and was at a birthday dinner, yet again another summer in Oman but a different decade and just establishing a career... so not a school kid anymore, when the news came in about the demise of the Princess. Smiles disappeared instantly and the sadness was indescribable. Did not know her but the gloominess could have felt across the globe. Once again for the one who didn't seek attention, the photographers and commentators were readily available. The paparazzi became a key terminology.

The fairy tale had ended with a jolt. But not quite so. Sitting at the Oman National Museum, it is 2022, I was listening to Tessa Ojo CBE, Chief Executive Officer, speak about Diana Awards. She said, Princess Diana was known all around the world for her compassion. The award is her legacy and today the award recognises youth across the globe who have made a difference with their social action towards humanity. So in many ways the fairy tale continues. But most intriguing part

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was that school kid of 1981 could do the report on one of the legacies of Princess Diana. The Princess had proven that it is not the titles that matter but the quality of the personality that makes lasting impression.

At the National Museum, the 'Not Alone Campaign' celebrating its eighth year, played the video of Princess Diana's visit to the Sultanate of Oman with Prince Charles as guests of late Sultan Qaboos. Once again the school kid popped her head while watching Princess Diana sit elegantly at a meeting and later sitting down on the majlis with the ladies, listening to children and delicately scoop Omani halwa with a spoon.

What a lovely journey of memories and nostalgia.

Was brought back to reality with speeches that reminded us about the importance of month of May — month of mental health. This year feeling about loneliness again tell us how this feeling can conquer the mind no matter who one is. Feeling alone in the crowd and does not matter how busy one can be.

The founder of 'Not Alone campaign', HH Sayyidah Basma al Saïd said, no matter how many therapists one meets and how many medications, the will to change has to come from within.

So the solution is from within. To reach the will we have the 'want' and for that we must realise the beauty within the gift of life. Each life is important and it is how we shape and channelise life.

In case there are obstacles that is when a letter from a loved one saying, "You are not alone," would make all the difference.

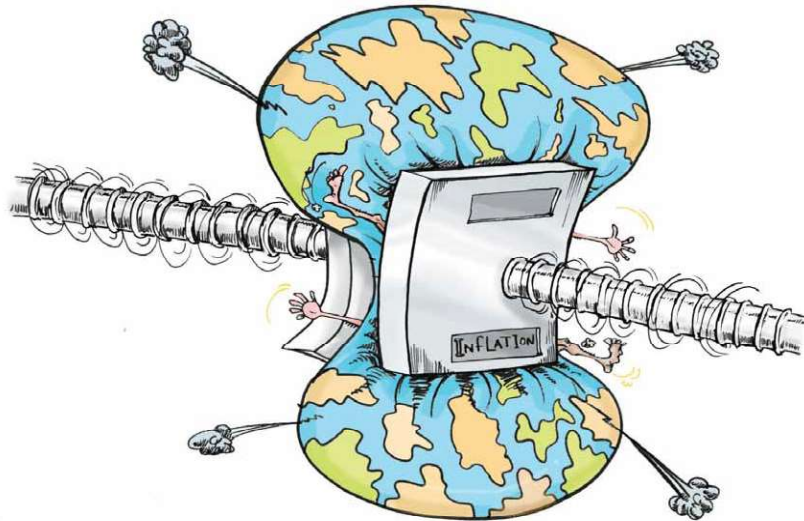


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# Intangible cultural heritage as an effective tool as soft power!



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Heritage is what we inherit from the past and is of use and value in the present day. In broad terms, heritage consists of cultural assets (cultural heritage) and nature (natural heritage). Cultural heritage is the past created by humankind and its various tangible and intangible elements. And comes in the form of material objects (tangible cultural heritage) such as archaeological remains, villages, buildings, cities, landscapes, museums, handicrafts, art collections, historic gardens and antiques.

However, it also encompasses non-material elements of culture (intangible cultural heritage) including folklore, beliefs, music, rituals and dance. Intangible cultural heritage is playing an important role in soft power of the country. It also contributes to the government's international cultural strategy and creates robust cultural tourism that secures long-term economic growth and heritage preservation.

Power in general is the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one prefers. And that can be achieved by payment, coercion, or persuasion and attraction. "Soft power" is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attracting others rather than payment or coercion. Countries use military power to issues which are related to threats or fight and to achieve desired results within a reasonable period.

While economic power is frequently a straightforward matter with some possible acts from the governments such as bank account freezing, bribes distributing or aid promptly. In this type of power, economic sanctions could take a long time to produce desired outcomes.

Soft power is more difficult to wield than military and economic powers. Many of soft power's critical resources are outside the control of the government, because they work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and occasionally take long time to produce the desired results (Nye J, 2004). It is difficult to talk about hard power without touching on the soft power.

Despite building up the capabilities of hard power is unavoidable, countries should pay more attention to soft power and make it their ideal tool of nation

branding. This anecdotal comment recounts the origins of the concept as an analytical tool, and its gradual development as an instrumental concept used in political discourse in the United States, China and Europe. Nowadays soft power plays an important role in building of a nation's brand image, identity, value, influence and attractiveness (Global Soft power, 2021).

Nye (2007) states that soft power is based on three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign policy. However, culture either tangible or intangible is one of the pillars of soft power. Nowadays, countries attempt to use them effectively to accomplish outcomes they wanted.

Over its long history, the Sultanate of Oman has been something of a cross-

and its cultural heritage.

According to the World Soft Power Index by (Brand Finance, 2022), Oman was ranked the 49th globally comparing to 51st in 2021. The index was determined through a series of measures across seven 'pillars' in which pillar research explores various aspects of business and trade, governance, international relations, culture and heritage, media and communications, education and science, and people and values. The study also measures the contribution of the favourable or unfavourable perception of the nation brands. Furthermore, Omanis are characterised by tolerance and generosity. The warmth and kind nature of the Omanis are the main characteristics that visitors can feel it in the country.

Thus, how Oman gained benefits from using intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as a soft power. And does the strength of ICH indeed reflects and directly influences the soft power of a country? Also, how does the indicator of ICH influences the outcomes achieved by any country in the given ranking of soft power?

The Sultanate of Oman, which has already launched the government initiative programme "Tanfeedh" in 2016 which is leading to Oman's Vision 2040. This programme aims generally at linking the main vital sectors' strategies with the purpose of diversify the national income resources. There are many examples of countries using cultural heritage as an effective tool to strive for soft power.

Assuming that cultural heritage in Oman today is well-maintained and has good soft power sources, but it needs more efforts. However, by enhancing the cultural heritage, Oman will increase the international cultural relationships as this will get more benefits economically and socially.

However, does the strength of cultural heritage indeed reflect and directly influence the soft power of Oman, or could it be compensated by others such as non-cultural elements? Also, how does the indicator of cultural heritage tourism influences the outcomes achieved by any country in the given ranking of soft power?

**OVER ITS LONG HISTORY, THE SULTANATE OF OMAN HAS BEEN SOMETHING OF A CROSS-CULTURAL ENTREPOUT; AN OUTWARD-LOOKING AND HIGHLY EVOLVED SOCIETY INTERACTING FREELY WITH OTHER CIVILISATIONS BOTH AT HOME AND ON ITS EXPLORATIONS OVERSEAS. OMAN IS PROUD OF ITS DEEP-ROOTED HISTORY AND ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE**

cultural entrepot, an outward-looking and highly evolved society interacting freely with other civilisations both at home and on its explorations overseas. Oman is proud of its deep-rooted history