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Understanding any sort of heritage requires having a certain definition of it. UNESCO defines cultural heritage as any kinds of monuments, groups of buildings and sites which are significant objects to history, art, architecture, archaeology, science, ethnology or anthropology of an exclusive culture which are of Outstanding Universal Value. (UNESCO, 1972, World Heritage Center, 2008). In the Faro Convention the cultural heritage is defined as " a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time". (Council of Europe, 2005: 3) In fact, the cultural heritage is a valuable and irreplaceable treasure inherited from our ancestors, that we possess today and will pass to the future generations. In the same document, a heritage community is defined as " people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations". (Council of Europe, 2005: 3)

Yet, in a broader context, the World Heritage is an extended concept of cultural heritage, it belongs to a larger group of people, regardless of borders and territory; the humanity. Moreover, what makes the World Heritage an exceptional concept is its universal application; its Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity. On the contrary, these three significant and beneficial factors put a strong pressure on the custodians of the World Heritage. On the one hand, belonging to a broader international community of appreciation brings wealth and prestige for the nations who have sites

inscribed on the World Heritage List, on the other hand, it raise issues and challenges of management and conservation for the local community.

" Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole". (UNESCO, 2012: 14)

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972), mainly delineates the definition for the cultural and natural heritages which are acceptable for the inscription on the World Heritage List. It also defines the role of the State Parties[2]in identification and protection of cultural and natural heritages and presents a plan of how the World Heritage Fund will be spent on the protection of cultural and natural heritages.

To be inscribed in the World Heritage List, the properties should indicate an Outstanding Universal Value as well as meeting one of the ten selection criteria[3]mentioned in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention[4](UNESCO, 2012). As a nominated property for being inscribed on the World Heritage List, Kathmandu Valley met three out of ten selection criteria in 1979;

" bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared,

be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history,

be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance". (UNESCO, 2012: 20, 21)

Moreover, according to UNESCO, the properties which have been nominated under criteria (i) and (vi) must meet the conditions of authenticity. The judgments of the credibility and the authenticity of the cultural heritage are linked to multifarious sources of information depending on the context and the nature of these heritages.

The Nara Document on Authenticity defines these information sources as "all material, written, oral and figurative sources which make it possible to know the nature, specifications, meaning and history of the cultural heritage". (ICOMOS, 1994: 48) "The ability to understand the value attributed to the heritage depends on the degree to which information sources about this value may be understood as credible or truthful.

Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, are the requisite bases for assessing all aspects of authenticity".

(ICOMOS, 1994: 46, 47, UNESCO, 2012: 21)

Using these sources of information enables the examination of the detailed aspects of the cultural heritage from the artistic, scientific, historic and social dimensions. According to the Nara Document on Authenticity, these sources

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may include; " form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, language, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors". (ICOMOS, 1994: 47) The Hoi An Protocols emphasizes that a credible source of information is not necessarily a written record. For instance, an inherited continuous craft tradition, skills or a traditional ritual transmitted from an expert to only his/her children can also be included as the truthful information sources. (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009) Laurajane Smith in her book (Smith, 2006) mentions the family stories she has been told when she was a child. She states that these stories might be associated with the material objects but the real sense of heritage is not that much engaged with these heritage objects. She believes that the act of passing on and receiving memories and knowledge is the real sense of heritage.

In addition to the OUV and the authenticity, all the properties which have been nominated as a World Heritage Site must meet the prerequisites of integrity. According to the UNESCO, " integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes.

Examining the conditions of integrity therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property:

includes all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value;

is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance;

suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect". (UNESCO, 2012: 23)

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The Convention obliges the state parties to develop a proper integrated management plan for ensuring the effective protection to retain and enhance the OUV, integrity and/or authenticity of the World Heritage Sites.

Setting out the boundaries for the World Heritage Sites is an essential requirement for achieving a proper management framework. According to UNESCO, " boundaries should be drawn to ensure the full expression of the Outstanding Universal Value and the integrity and/or authenticity of the property". (UNESCO, 2012: 25) In the Plan of Action for Bauddhanath monument zone (Department of Archaeology, 2007c) the identification of the elements which contributes to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site is considered as one of the primary objectives of the Integrated Management Plan.

Moreover, if the development process of the surrounding areas of the World Heritage Sites influences the World heritage property, an adequate buffer zone must be defined. " A buffer zone is an area surrounding the nominated property which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection". (UNESCO, 2012: 26)

## **WHOSE HERITAGE?**

YOUR MONUMENT, OUR SHRINE[5]

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972) begins with these lines regarding the protection of the World Heritage Sites; " Considering that the existing international conventions, recommendations and resolutions concerning cultural and natural property demonstrate the importance, for all the people of the world, of safeguarding this unique and irreplaceable property, to whatever people it may belong". (UNESCO, 1972: 1)

When we speak of the conservation of the World Heritage properties we shall give a transparent definition of the heritage owners. The most important convention for World Heritage protection (UNESCO, 1972), states that the safeguarding of the World Heritage properties belongs to all the people of the world. " Whilst fully respecting the sovereignty of the States on whose territory the cultural and natural heritage is situated, and without prejudice to property right provided by national legislation, the State Parties to this Convention recognize that such heritage constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate". (UNESCO, 1972: 4) In other documents the responsibility of the heritage properties has been identified to be undertaken by the heritage community.

The Nara Document on Authenticity is a right-based document concerning the conservation of cultural heritage. It develops a broader acknowledgment of cultural heritage by considering the diversity in culture and heritage while demanding respect for all the cultures, belief systems, values and intangible and tangible expressions of the heritage. (ICOMOS, 1994)

In the Nara Document, the responsibility for management and conservation of the cultural heritage is acknowledged to be undertaken by the cultural heritage community who has generated it. While ironically at the same time it emphasizes on the obligation of the cultural heritage communities in considering the principles and the international charters. However according to Sinding-Larsen, compare to the type of the text used in the World Heritage Convention 1972, the authoritative language in the latter conventions and charters have become gentler and " less commanding or normative", " changing from must and shall to may". (Pound, 2008 Cited in Sinding-Larsen, 2012: 80)

" Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. However, in addition to these responsibilities, adherence to the international charters and conventions developed for conservation of cultural heritage also obliges consideration of the principles and responsibilities flowing from them. Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values". (ICOMOS, 1994: 46)

The Burra Charter[6]emphasizes on the process of the conservation and provides guidelines for conservation of the places of cultural significance. " The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analyzing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in



accordance with the policy". (ICOMOS, 1999: 4) In the Article 12 of the same document it notes the importance of the participation of people who have special attachments to the place or have social, spiritual or cultural responsibilities for the heritage site. (ICOMOS, 1999)

The Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005) preserves the right for everyone to " benefit from the cultural heritage and contributes towards its enrichment". (Council of Europe, 2005: 3) The convention obliges everyone to show respect towards the cultural heritage regardless of borders and nationalities.

## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLACE INCOMPLETE**

" Phenomenology argues there is no objective world external to and separate from ourselves. Hence, what 'the environment' represents is a function of our own subjective construction of it - in other words, what matters is how we 'come to' a place". (Carmona et al., 2010: 120)

## **THE LIVING SACRED HERITAGE**

" The intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - those communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides

them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity". (UNESCO, 2003: 2)

" Sacredness is the inherited value that makes religious heritage different from other types of heritage". (Wijesuriya, 2005: 3) Dealing with the living heritage might be interpreted in two different ways. When referring to the living heritage, often it is defined as the Intangible Cultural Heritage; the dimension of heritage which is still constantly in use, such as the traditional practices, rituals and special skills. " Intangible cultural heritage is by definition not linked to specific monuments or places, but is stored in the minds of tradition bearers and communities and conserved in the continuity of practice". (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009: 11)

Yet, sometimes it is referred to a type of heritage which is located in a living context that is entirely new. According to Rohit Jigyasu (Jigyasu, 2005) the living heritage is about dealing with the " present context". It includes the communities which face the rapid pace of transformation and change in their physical and the socio-economic context. " Some use the word 'living' as an antonym of 'dead', meaning to indicate a type of heritage still in use. Others use this concept for heritage sites where people actually live in or around the site. The usage or the definition of the concept differs, depending on the objectives of the discussion. It is certain that we are currently in the middle of a larger effort to explore a new, holistic approach to conservation, giving attention to human-related/non-material aspects of heritage value and trying to link with the surrounding societies and environments, going beyond the classical material-oriented conservation practice of monumental heritage". (Inaba, 2005: 45)

In the case of the Bauddhanath, when it is referred to the living heritage it is pointing at the stage of being located in the heart of a rapid changing environment which is totally different to its sacred and peaceful context in the past. Despite holding a rich intangible cultural heritage including the religious practices and rituals which are constantly recreated by the local heritage community, Nepal is not inscribed on the list of countries with the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. INCOMPLETE

For the conservation of such living heritage, it is important to understand the main relationship between all the heritage components. In other words, to have the best outcome of the conservation, it is important to look beyond the physical monument and heritage objects and be able to consider a broader area; the surroundings, the cultural or religious context, values and more importantly the local heritage community which according to Rohit Jigyasu (Jigyasu, 2005) are " the bearers" of the cultural heritage.

According to ICOMOS, when the properties are associated with the religious or spiritual values such as mosques, churches, monasteries, shrines, sanctuaries, temples and sacred landscapes, they are normally categorized as the sacred properties. (ICOMOS, 2005) In fact, living religious heritage " is the tangible and intangible embodiment of the many and diverse faiths which have sustained human life through time. [It] is of particular importance, given its vital role in conveying, expressing, and sustaining the faiths which give spiritual identity, meaning and purpose to human life". (Jokilehto, 2010: 9)

The religious heritage discourse is an extremely sensitive area which is associated with the faith, religious values and the religious laws that might challenge the professional conservationists in intervening with the religious properties. In fact, the understanding of the living religious heritage " requires recognizing that the intangible significance of the tangible religious objects, structures, and places is the key to their meaning. The tangible and intangible cannot be separated since all cultural material has intangible value". (Jokilehto, 2010: 9)

Therefore, there is a difference between the sacred living heritage and the cultural heritage. However the conservation of the living sacred heritage is being practiced mostly by following the international principles of cultural heritage conservation while the conservation of the living sacred heritage properties shall be performed exclusively. There are scarce written literature sources on the topic of sacred living heritage. This type of heritage is very sensitive to be dealt with because it is mainly originated from the certain religious beliefs. In this regard there should be literature sources independently written on this topic acknowledging the authenticity of each religion and its traditions.

Herb Stovel argues that the existence of common misunderstandings about the responsibility towards the religious heritage conservation might create some difficulties in the conservation process. Many in the international community believe that this responsibility lies within the local heritage community (Stovel, 2005). However, by labeling the properties as the World Heritage Sites, we transform them into a vaster category. Consequently, the

heritage becomes 'our' heritage and would result in the creation of a shared responsibility in the protection and conservation of such heritage.

To support any future efforts in the conservation of the living religious heritage and especially in cases which the ritual practices are dependent on a physical object, the conservation of the monument form seem of a particular importance. As a result " in ensuring the continuity of forms, in effect, 'living' heritage values are being elevated above more familiar 'documentary' or 'historical' heritage values. The primary goal of conservation becomes continuity itself, based on processes of renewal that continually 'revive the cultural meaning, significance...and symbolism attached to heritage'". (Stovel, 2005: 1)

## **CONSERVATION**

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972) is considered as one of the most important documents written about the World Heritage Sites. While giving the definitions for cultural and natural heritage sites, it does not provide a certain definition for the conservation. However the Convention constantly refers to the importance of identifying, conserving and transmitting the heritage to the future generations. " Article 5[7]of the Convention makes reference to a number of 'effective and active measures' that can be taken by States Parties in ensuring the 'identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission'". (UNESCO, 1997: 11) Whilst the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2012) gives continual references to the conservation of cultural properties, it does not provide a definition for the conservation either.

On the contrary, the other international charters and documents have tried to cover this deficiency. The Nara Document on Authenticity defines conservation as " all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement". (ICOMOS, 1994: 48). The Burra Charter with reference to the cultural significance defines conservation as " all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance". (ICOMOS, 1999: 2)

" Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects". (ICOMOS, 1999: 2)

The Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practices in Asia reaffirms the definition given by the Burra Charter through emphasizing on the authenticity and by fully ensuring that all the intervention and conservation activities meet the authenticity of the heritage. It counts the retention of the authenticity as the aim of a good conservation practice. (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009) Gamini Wijesuriya who has done various conservation projects on the Buddhist cultural heritage in South Asia, argues that despite retaining the materiality as a goal in the conservation of the heritage, the protection of the values, meanings and symbolisms attached to the heritage should be the primary aim of conservation. (Wijesuriya, 2005) " The experts hold that successful and authentic conservation of monuments, buildings and sites can best be achieved by giving them a contemporary context. They should be

accessible to the community, both physically and in terms of interpretation and display". (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009: 36)

What is fundamental to any conservation activity is the recognition of the context in which the cultural properties are situated. Above all, the conservation is not merely about the protection of the values and meanings embedded in the heritage, but it is an asset which enhances the quality of the heritage properties, retains their identity, ensures their continuity and most importantly improves the life quality of the heritage community.

## **THE LOCAL PRACTICES OF CONSERVATION**

### **BAUDDHANATH AND THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF BUDDHISM**

" Present conservation practices are mainly based on western ideologies and western-trained professionals, yet similar principals have existed in this part of the world [South Asia] for centuries. The ever-increasing needs of the users, from the monks to the devotees who congregate around the temples are all taken into account in developing heritage management strategies". (Wijesuriya, 2000: 102)

The constant conservation is practiced as a long-established tradition in the context of the Buddhist societies in South Asia. This has been the reason which the Buddhist heritage has survived till today. These local conservation practices have been inherited from the ancient artists and skill workers who have passed down their skills to their next generations. In the South Asian context the conservation tradition is associated with the fundamental concepts of Buddhism such as spirituality, continuity, impermanency, symbolism, samsara[8], merit and pilgrimage.

Left: pouring the yellow saffron color on the dome, Right: repainting the outer wall - The author's photographs

The discussion of the conservation of the sacred living heritage is highly challenging, mainly because the sacred heritage is sensitive in case of religious ethics and the meanings embedded in them. Firstly, these types of heritage are the spiritual core of the communities which they belong to. Secondly, there are laws and ritual traditions in these types of heritage which demand certain kind of care and behavior. Based on that, the local religious communities have developed certain practices depending on the context which are passed down to their next generations through centuries.

In the actively used Buddhist site of the Bauddhanath, the traditional practice of the conservation of the stupa is consist of the monthly rituals of whitewashing the dome, pouring the yellow saffron color, cleaning the gold plates, reinstalling the prayer flags replacing the clothing round the spire and repainting the eyes of the Buddha. All of these actions are being performed through certain sacred rituals to conserve the overall form of the stupa and to retain the symbolism of its structure.

Generally, in the conservation of the stupas, there are religious rituals associated with the process. In the Bauddhanath, there is a limitation and a hierarchy for people who are eligible to step on the upper platforms of the stupa. The people who are chosen to do the maintenance are in fact the sons of the men who used to do the same task and had learned it from their own fathers. The hierarchy requires the Newars to go up to the highest point of the structure and clean the gold plates, install the prayer flags, repaint the



eyes of the Buddha whenever necessary and change the clothing around the spire. Then for the lower levels of the stupa's structure such as the dome and the periphery niches, the platforms, inner parts of the circumambulatory path and the walls, the Tamangs take the responsibility. By implementing the whole process, the continuity of the monument is ensured.

Except for the religious purposes of the monument conservation, the economic enhancing purpose is another factor in the conservation of the Bauddhanath. As long as the Bauddhanath is protected and conserved the economic viability of the heritage community is ensured.

The relic stupas such as the Bauddhanath are holding the relics of the Buddha or an important religious character. According to the Buddhist beliefs, the stupas are the symbolism of the Buddha. Wijesuriya discusses that for taking part in the spiritual practices associated with the stupas, the Buddhists shall be able to see the structure in its complete form. (Wijesuriya, 2005) This statement justifies the need for the conservation and constant renewal of the stupas structures.

The start of the monthly maintenance begins with pouring the white color all over the dome to wash away the previous color. Longer gaps between the two repainting days or continuous rainy days transmit the white color of the dome into the dark green color. When it seems like the stupa is covered with moss, an additional procedure is added to the whole process. To wipe away the greenish color, the local method comes forward; scraping the surface with a thick bristle brush or a shovel. In the lower periphery of the dome there are 108 stone sculptures of the Buddhist deities, so not only the

structure of the stupa but also the other associated statues around it is being treated in the same way. In the perspective of the international doctrine, the cleaning and scraping the surface and the continuous actions of pouring the paint colors are considered as threats to the physical conservation of the Bauddhanath stupa.

Scraping the surface of the stupa's dome with a shovel - The author's photographs

A religious concept in the Buddhism tells about the impermanency of all the things on earth. Buddha in his last words[9] had pointed at the vanishing nature of all the things on earth, that everything is subjected to decay and death; " decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!" (T. W. Rhys Davids, 1881 Cited in Jayarava, n. d)

The yellow color and the niches around the dome - The author's photograph

Wijesuriya in his paper (Wijesuriya, 2007b) discusses that despite the acknowledgement of the impermanency concept, Buddhists have a constant desire for maintenance and renewal of the objects. He argues that in the Buddhist South Asian context the importance is placed on the meanings and symbolisms embedded in the overall forms of the objects rather than emphasizing on the material remains of the past. " The addition of new materials, repainting, and repair of broken elements can therefore be continuous practices that may contradict with some of the modern thinking on conservation". (Wijesuriya, 2007b: 75) According to him, the constant maintenance practices have become a part of the Buddhist traditions.

For the Buddhists the past is an undeniable and inseparable part of life. As the Buddhists believe in the concept of Samsara, their lives are affected by this notion. Wijesuriya states that this highly influential factor encourages the Buddhist followers to constantly perform religious practices, rituals, festivals, pilgrimages which are linked to the material expressions such as temples, sculptures and their continuous renewals. (Wijesuriya, 2004)

For instance, the monument of Baudghanath is located at the center of the community who despite having differences, value the heritage and the spiritual meaning associated with it. As a result volunteer actions are being observed everyday. Small groups of women voluntarily lubricate the prayer wheels and clean them to minimize their friction. They also clean the remaining ashes of the incense sticks. Performing the volunteer actions and the religious activities are the means to gain the spiritual merit for the followers of Buddhism. This also can be the reason behind the construction of temples, monasteries, stupas, sculptures and their renewals and religious services associated with them.

Description: G: November 26, 2012PicsBoddhaDSC\_0364. JPG

An old Tibetan lady is lubricating the prayer wheels to maximize their smooth spinning - The author's photograph

Merriam-Webster[10]Dictionary defines the spirituality as the sensitivity or attachment to the religious values. " The spirituality of a place is one of the most fundamental values in religious traditions". (Wijesuriya, 2007b: 72) In fact, spirituality can be seen as the experience of self-exploration for finding the sacred truth. It has the capability to be transferred into a place and shift

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the place into a sacred site. " According to Buddhist traditions, some [places] were personally consecrated by the Buddha himself or by his disciples. Others are places created for people to practice religion. Among them are many world heritage sites; these are either with or without tangible remains and are places created for Buddhists to enter into a spiritual dialogue with their faith through the performance of various rituals, practices and festivals". (Wijesuriya, 2007b: 72) According to him, the built structures and objects located on these sites facilitate the process of experiencing this state.

Offering foods and butter lamps to the Gods - The author's photographs

Gamini Wijesuriya (Wijesuriya, 2005) identifies an inherent livingness in the Buddhist heritage. He believes that the conservation of the physical form is the only way to conserve the value and the fact that the stupa is holding the relics of the Buddha. " The id