Establishing Cultural Significance of Heritage Places through Value Assessments: Insights from India

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Abstract

Cultural heritage builds a sense of belonging and identity. Heritage as a means of establishing identity is acknowledged and emphasized at a global, national, and regional level. Heritage sites are vital assets for deciphering and experiencing the cultural significance of any place. Identity construct, as well as the significance of Heritage places, arise not merely from the physical remnants representing a historical past but out of the range of values attached to it, be it tangible or intangible. So, any efforts towards safeguarding and sustaining heritage to ensure its continuity need to start with a comprehensive value assessment process. This approach is particularly relevant in the Indian context, more so in the case of Living heritage, where heritage does not exist as mere monuments but as living traditions and a way of life.

This paper explores the value-based approach and its suitability to establish the significance of cultural heritage. Two techniques are adopted: Review of selected published papers and case studies through secondary data. It begins with a review of selected papers and national and International Conservation charters for a general comprehension of values in the context of Cultural heritage and methods to assess them. The case study method is then employed to specifically comprehend values associated with Living Religious Cultural Heritage in India.

Through case examples, this paper establishes that the most dominant heritage values arise out of Religion and the multiple ways in which it manifests to enable a two-way connection between the divine and the devout. Religious, Historical, and Sociocultural values are critical to the heritage identity of historical religious sites in India. Both tangible and intangible heritage figure strongly in heritage assessment. Heritage values are not intrinsic but dynamic, resulting from the constant transfer of sacrality in religious heritage precincts.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, Identity, Heritage values, Tangible values, Intangible values.

Introduction

Indian History has been continuous and dates to earlier than 1000BC. Evidence of this ancient history remains embedded in both built heritage as well as socio cultural constructs

carried down through centuries. The built tangible as well as the intangible aspects together holistically represent the Cultural heritage of a distinct group of people. Though cultural heritage is invaluable as a reliable repository of India's glorious historical past, heritage places face constant threats from causes both natural and anthropogenic in nature. Heritage Monuments, sites, and settlements are increasingly threatened by rapid population growth and haphazard development, fragmented planning approaches. "There is an urgency to protect cultural heritage with rapidly increasing urbanization and the projection that 70 % of the world's population will be living in cities by 2020, resulting in pressures on city liveability and retention of urban heritage."(UNESCO, 2020). Further, regulatory frameworks for development in Heritage areas are inadequate and uncomprehensive.

Hence, there is an urgent need to understand, assess, and strategize for Cultural heritage comprehensively. Culture being dynamic in nature, relevant indicators need to be identified to establish its multiple values. This needs to be approached contextually to enable the refinement of methodologies used to establish the significance of Cultural and Natural Heritage in their entirety and thereby appropriately arrive at approaches to safeguard them.

This paper aims to establish myriad dimensions and significance of Cultural heritage in India, especially in the context of Historic religious cores that continue to thrive as living Hindu sacred centers. Its objectives are:

1. To situate Heritage in the Indian context
2. To establish Culture as the underlying determinant in defining the Heritage identity of sacredscapes, and
3. To assess values accrued by tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage in living religious heritage places.

Theoretical Framework

Interpreting Heritage

Heritage, in a broader sense, has been subject to multiple interpretations. Heritage is basically all the features of life, qualities, or traditions that have continued over time and the legacy handed on from one generation to another. Heritage is also considered " the evidence of the past, such as historical sites and the unspoiled natural environment, considered as the inheritance of present-day society and anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition" (Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus).

Lowenthal (1985) talks about the 'conveniently ambiguous' and problematic nature of heritage as it includes everything from buildings to habits, customs, and even ethnicity. "The definition of 'Heritage' has been stretching in the recent decades as a result of the interaction of people and communities with Heritage places." (Byrne et al.2001). The Burra Charter (2000) highlights how Heritage interpretation has moved from focusing on mere tangible aspects to the Cultural significance of heritage places. Torre M (2002) opines that the capacity of a site to convey, embody, or stimulate a relation or reaction to the past is part of the fundamental nature and meaning of heritage objects.

Ahmad (2006) and Yin (2006) point out that the scope went from considering tangible objects to including Intangible Heritage, recognizing formerly excluded Heritage. Harrison (2015) describes heritage as relationships characterized by attachment to places, practices, and objects linked to the past in some way. English conservation principles look at heritage as all inherited resources that people value for reasons beyond mere utility. (Historic England, 2015). Sullivan (2016) looks at heritage holistically as remembrances of the past achievements of man. Thus, the domain of Heritage is vast and encompasses distinct cultural constructs in the continuum, handed down from the past and of significance in the present and the future.

Cultural Heritage

International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) advocates looking beyond interpreting Heritage as mere physical remnants of the past. Cultural Heritage needs to become the focus of Conservation practices. Cultural Heritage is understood to be an expansive concept that includes built environments, continuing socio-cultural practices, traditional

knowledge systems, and living experiences. These form the core of diverse national, regional, indigenous, and local identities (ICOMOS, 2016).

According to Thakur (2002), historic architecture and, thereby, heritage is a cultural product, and its study demands transdisciplinary methods. UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage elaborates that Cultural heritage includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. (UNESCO 2003)

Cultural Heritage resources are our points of reference and identity for communities, groups, and individuals. Cultural heritage includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile, and underwater) and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural and natural heritage artifacts, sites, or monuments. (UNESCO 2009). Thus, both Tangible and Intangible aspects are critical and contingent and are equally significant in ascertaining the heritage value of historic precincts. They are mutually interdependent, and both figure strongly in the Identity of Heritage places.

Cultural Agenda and Heritage Conservation

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network was created out of a concern for sustaining cultural diversity. Consisting of 246 Member Cities, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is committed to placing culture at the core of all their sustainable development strategies. This includes sustaining the world's cultural Heritage. Culture is understood as a dynamic reference point and a robust instrument for guiding growth and change in Heritage places. (UNESCO, 2003)

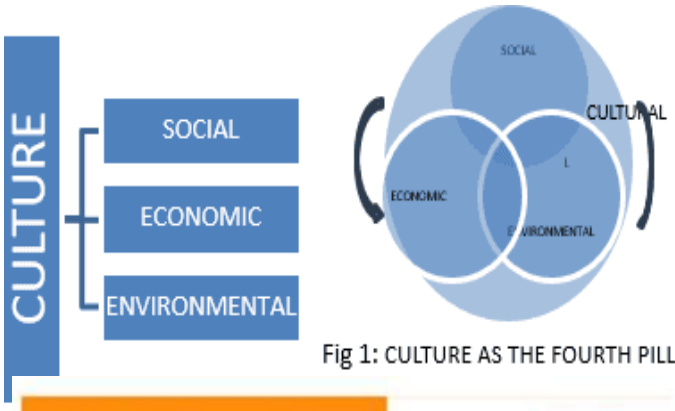

Fig 1: CULTURE AS THE FOURTH PILLAR OF and as foundation of

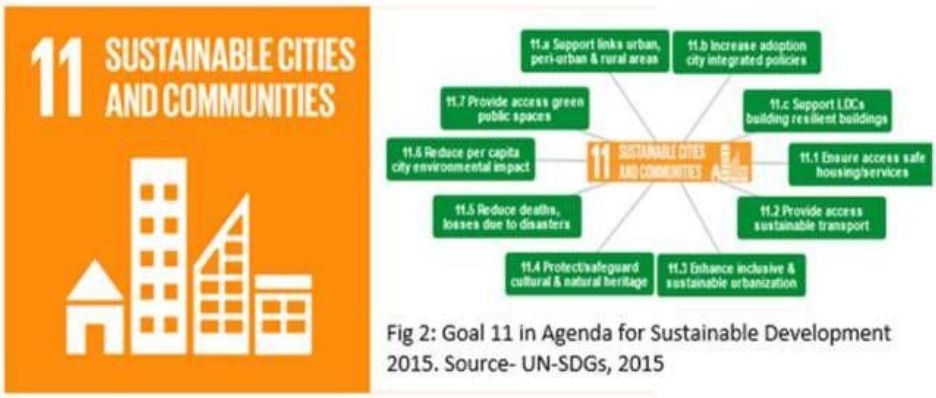

Fig 2: Goal 11 in Agenda for Sustainable Development 2015. Source- UN-SDGs, 2015

Figure 1 illustrates culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development with equal importance of social, Economic, and Environmental parameters as the other 3 pillars. The first charter for cultural development as a worldwide mission is Agenda 21 for Culture. This document encourages establishing the groundwork by participating cities and local governments for cultural development. Here, culture is defined and envisioned as the fourth

pillar of sustainable development and hence lies at the heart of and drives all sustainable goals. The culture as a fourth pillar in Figure 1 is all-encompassing and represents the ever-changing dynamics of culture. (UCLG, Agenda 21, 2004). Culture is recognized as an enabler of overall comprehensive development as it defines humanity's past, present, and future continuum. It also reinforces identify values of communities.

The UN in 2015 reiterated the role of culture as a driver of sustainable development in a milestone document titled 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. 17 goals were laid down, each with culture at its heart. (UN SDGs, 2015) Goal 11, which focuses on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, and target 11.4, calls for efforts to protect the world's cultural and natural heritage. Fig 5 illustrates Goal 11 of the 17 SDGs. Goal 11 describes Cultural Heritage as including "artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific, and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artifacts, sites or monuments." (UN SDGs, 2015). With the adoption of SDGs and Agenda 21, the focus is now on culture-driven sustainable development.

Heritage Conservation in the Indian Context

India has over 6000 years of built heritage. This Heritage is a thriving repository of vibrant phases of History in the continuum. The tangible heritage is present, sustaining the past and co-existing with later developments, which is undergoing growth pressures that pose a severe threat to the survival and identity of these precincts and settlements. This concern is apparent in the positioning of heritage in the Fundamental duties of the Indian Constitution. Under Fundamental Duties, Article 51-A of the Constitution of India states, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture- our cultural heritage is one of the noblest and richest, it is also part of the heritage of the earth. Hence, it is our duty to protect what we have inherited from the past, preserve it, and pass it on to future generations." (The Constitution of India, 1950). The subsequent administrative measures lead to the formulation and establishment of ASI in the year 1958.

The Archaeological Survey of India, ASI, regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1958. Though ASI looks at the maintenance of monuments and Archaeological sites, very limited attention is given to Historic precincts and settlements, as India is home to diverse cultures with vast spatial variations across the country. ASI, (2014).

Since 2006, the Ministry of Urban Development (MOUD) has promoted several capacity- building initiatives to guide development in Heritage areas. As a part of the initiative, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) developed 'The Handbook of Conservation of Heritage Buildings,' a blueprint for safeguarding monuments through conservation techniques and heritage auditing. (CPWD, 2013). In 2019, the Ministry of Urban Development came up with directives for "Conservation of heritage sites including heritage buildings, heritage precincts and natural feature areas"(MOUD, 2016, 2019). At the state and local level, several state and Town planning authorities have laid down their own guidelines for safeguarding Cultural Heritage. However, it is vital that at the national level, there is a set of overarching conservation guidelines that are holistic in their approach and contextual in their application. These limited efforts are lacking in comprehensiveness and are focused on project-specific or Sectoral specific outcomes.

Ongoing efforts are lacking in comprehensiveness and are focused on project-specific or Site- specific outcomes. "The potential of India's unsurmountable heritage remains untapped until now simply because it exists in myriad forms, shapes, and experiences across various states, and no Single Overarching Vision for the Heritage of India has guided its protection /preservation/promotion to date." (NITI AYOG, 2020) This complexity and continuity of heritage sites raised concerns from several Conservation specialists. Menon A.G. K (2013) strongly believes that a monument-centric approach should not be forced upon all

Indian heritage buildings, sites, and precincts, as there is a significant Indigenous still living tradition of building that could be re-energized to undertake the task. Menon A. (2014) reiterates the need to explore the rich and diverse ancient building systems. Rana S. (2020) observes that diverse Intangible Cultural Heritage, as found in India, is challenging to interpret and hence cannot be fitted into the UNESCO conservation framework. Thus, various experts reiterate the limitation and inadequacy of existing Indian as well as international frameworks for conservation in the Indian context.

In line with this concern, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) looks at heritage not in terms of mere monuments, significant because of their age, but as extended zones embodying significant heritage values, both tangible and intangible. "Heritage Zones are sensitive development areas, which are part of larger urban agglomeration possessing significant evidence of heritage" (INTACH Charter, 2004). These zones are nodes of distinct cultural heritage, and hence, all conservation approaches here need to begin with assessing the values of these heritage precincts and sites.

Review of Literature

Majority of India's heritage sites are unprotected. The INTACH Charter (2004) reiterates that beyond its role as a historic document, this unprotected heritage embodies values of enduring relevance to contemporary Indian society. The NARA (1994) document clearly states that the conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Value is the fundamental reason behind conservation processes, as every society will consciously try to conserve what it truly values. Strategizing conservation processes begins with assessing values ascribed to Heritage.

The Burra Charter (1999) states that the categorization into aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social values is one approach to comprehending the concept of cultural significance. However, more precise categories may be developed as understanding of a particular place increases. "As culture is understood as a process and not as objects, heritage, as is the case of any and all other cultural expressions, needs to go beyond safeguarding purely the material manifestation. Socio-cultural values would thus include Historical value, social value, Cultural/symbolic value, Religious, Spiritual value, and Aesthetic values". (Mason, 2002).

The Report on Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage by The Getty Conservation Institute elaborates that Economic value deals with possible monetary returns while Socio-cultural values are values attached to heritage as it holds meaning for social groups due to age, aesthetics, or contributes to processes of cultural affiliation. Historical value refers to the capacity of a site to convey a relation to the past. The aim of ascribing historical value is twofold: as a means of education and as a means of gaining vital know-how about the past. Scientific value indicates the potential of the site to add information that will enhance understanding of the technology, history, and engineering of the period (Mason, 2002).

Over time, several Value sets have been identified. Values are assigned to both tangible and intangible aspects. As Gibson and Pendlebury (2009) point out, value cannot be purely intrinsic, but it is the object, fabric, or environment that assigns culturally and historically specific meanings based on the frameworks of value of the time and place. In the case of tangible physical aspects of heritage, values are attributed to features of the design and evolution of the building, object, or site, such as landmark quality or contribution to streetscape character, representing a significant style and phase of development (Architecture value). All these contribute greatly to the Heritage place identity construct.

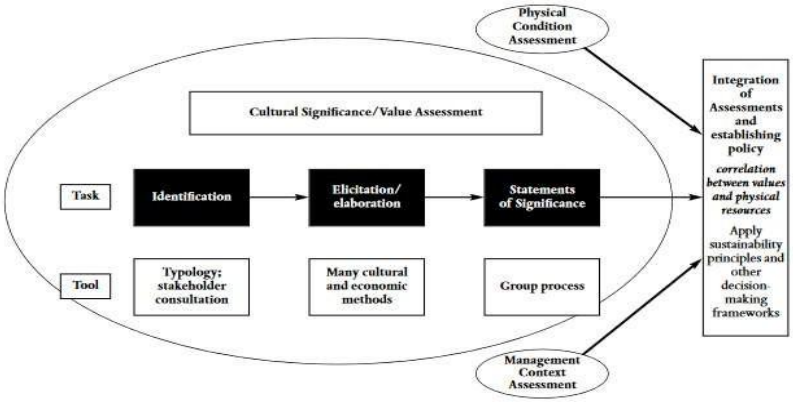

Fig 3: Value-based Conservation planning process
Source: Author

As in the Fig 3, researchers like Mason place value assessment at the heart of all efforts to arrive at policies for handling heritage places. Planners can sequentially collect and collate knowledge about values and use this to drive the overall planning process. (Mason 2002) Several national and international charters have adopted similar approaches. ICOMOS Burra Charter gives a central role to cultural significance and value assessment. "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, 2013).

Ascribing value to heritage stems from the community, both core and extended, and has been done in several ways, as "Every place/ building/ site is distinct and has different values." (Mason,2002). Over the years, appreciable discourse about Heritage values has resulted in the emergence of value sets that are valid universally and yet can be applied contextually.

Table 01: Summary of heritage value typologies devised by various scholars
Source: Author

Reigl (1902)	Lipe (1984)	Fielden (1989)	Frey (1997)	Mason (2002)	Singh (2006)
Historical			Existence	Historical	Historic
	Economic		Monetary	Economic	Economic
Newness	Informational	Use- Functional, Economic, Political and Social	Educational	Educational and academic	Educational
Age	Aesthetic		Option	Aesthetic	Aesthetic
Commemorative		Cultural- Documentary, Historical, Archaeological, Aesthetic, Architectural, Townscape, Landscape, Ecological, Spiritual, Scientific	Bequest	Cultural &symbolic	Cultural
Use	Associative-symbolic	Emotional- Identity, Continuity, Spiritual, wonder.	Prestige	Social	

				Spiritual/ Religious	Ecological
				Political	Scientific
				Craft/work-related	Technological

Conservation professionals ascribe values to heritage based on the context. Jain S reiterates that Cultural significance comes out of diverse values and multiple layers of meaning, both tangible and intangible, added over time for several generations from the past to the future. While using the value-based approach, Thakur (2011) says that the aim is to ensure the safeguarding of the overall significance and values, OUVs, regional and local, which encompass archaeological, historical, architectural, religious, socio-cultural, economic, and usage aspects. Value transforms an object into heritage by giving some significance over the other.

Table 02: Values laid down in various conservation charters.
(Australia 2013, Historic England 2015, China 2015, INTACH 2004, USA 2018)
Source: Author

	Historic	**Historical**	**Historical Educational & academic**	**Historical**	**Historical significance**	**Historical**
VALUES	Life support	Aesthetic	Aesthetic	Artistic	Aesthetic	Aesthetic
	Scientific	Architectural	Economic		Architectural	Economic
	Aesthetic	Scientific	Resource	Scientific	Historical Integrity	Educa tional
	Existence	Regional	Cultural	Cultural	Hist. context	Cultural
	Social (including spiritual, political, national, and other cultural)	Social	Recreational	Social	Archaeological	Inspirationa l
	Spiritual					Energy

Mydland and Grahn (2012) point out that heritage value assessment is an ongoing process. They opine that social and cultural experiences, time, and space play an important role in the possible diversity of valuation methods, thereby making them site-specific.

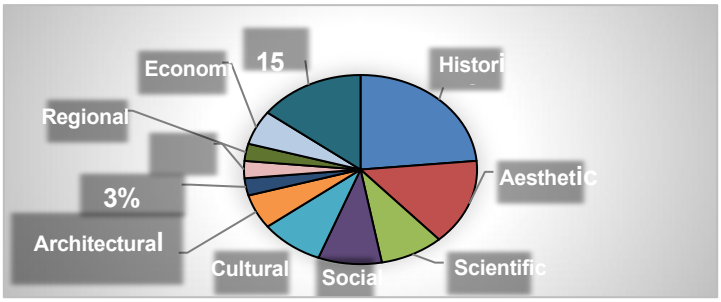

Fig 6: Values laid down in various conservation charters. (Australia 2013, Historic England 2015, China 2015, INTACH 2004, USA 2018)
Source: Author

Though historical, socio-cultural, and scientific values find a place in most conservation charters, several other values do become critical as dictated by the context and case. (fig 6) Heritage Values are thus seen to be diverse, and their relative cumulative significance depends on the assessment first by the communities involved and then the experts. This reinforces the fact that different societies and cultures need to have contextual value sets relevant to their unique and distinct tangible and intangible heritage. This makes Value based approach suitable for application in Heritage precincts in our country.

Research Methodology

The value-based approach involves multiple players, right from the core community to the field experts, and is an effective, primarily Qualitative method of establishing the significance of Heritage places. Value-based approach involves elicitation and assessment of values, their prioritization, and, most often, having to resolve conflicts among them. This research employs a case study method to comprehend the process of application of this method. The case studies selected were based on their Historicity and Religious relevance. Further, they are examples of comprehensive attempts towards conservation. Techniques employed to gather data about the Heritage towns selected include a review of documents, published literature, and details of value assessment done there.

Value Assessment of Cultural Heritage: Learning from case examples.

Stovel (2005) points out that religious heritage perhaps forms the largest single category of heritage in many countries around the world. The holy cities of Varanasi and Puri are sacred places of National importance. As Swan (1992) points out, these places have a unique earth wisdom called the "spirit of place" (genius loci), something human sensuous organisms can easily reveal and accept. Both cities are popular pilgrimage centers and have festivities, rituals, religious precincts, and architecture such as temples, monasteries, institutions, and other structures representing both tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage.

Realizing the pressures exerted on historical sites of religious value, the government of India launched the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) and the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) to sustain the distinct and unique character of heritage cities and promote pilgrimage and heritage tourism efficiently.

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Fig 7: HRIDAY cities.
Source HRIDAY reflections,2017.

The cities of Varanasi and Puri are among the cities identified to implement Heritage management based on cultural parameters as envisioned under HRIDAY The city of Kashi or Varanasi on the banks of the sacred river Ganges in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India is venerated as one the most important 'TIRTH STHAL' (holy place) associated with Hinduism. Varanasi has a unique identity combining the living memory of the communities settled here with the distinct cultural processes accommodated over the years. "The holy city of Varanasi possesses about 3300 Hindu sanctuaries, 1388 Muslim shrines, 45 Sikh sites, 11 Buddhist places, 4 Jain shrines, and countless markers to a multitude of folk deities; altogether emerged

into the formation of sacred shapes." (Singh Rana P B, 2009) Beyond religious heritage structures, Intangibles such as associated symbolism, pilgrimage routes, festivals, and rituals define the Heritage place's significance and the collective meaning of the city.

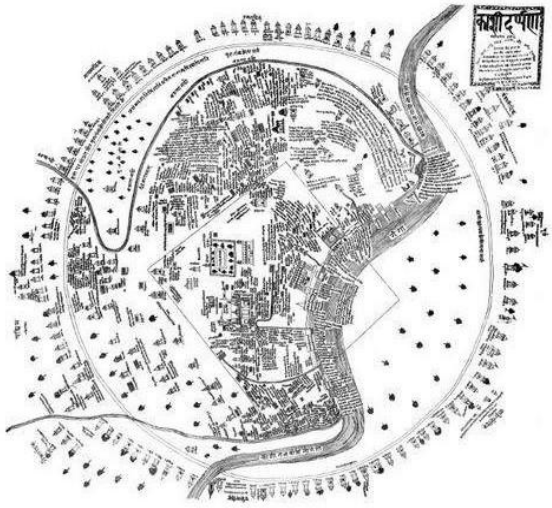

Fig 8: Varanasi Development Plan (left)
Fig 9: Cosmogonic map (right)
Source: KailashnathaSukul,1876 & Singh,2016

Studies for UNESCO, HRIDAY, by MOUD, Ministry of Tourism, INTACH, and by Cultural geographers, Historians, and other scholars on this city have brought to light the following values. The city is of outstanding historic value as it is one of the earliest continuously inhabited centers of the world since at least 1200 BCE and is in keeping with textually described cosmogonic frame and geomantic outlines, which are of immense symbolic value. The city has a layered history and is significant in terms of layers of change and the patina of age (Oldness value). The city holds Religious, sacred, and spiritual values as manifested in its multitude of religious precincts and iconic riverfront and is the core of several pilgrimage circuits that have a long tradition and continuity in India (Living Heritage). River Ganga, at the center of the vibrant religious, traditional, and cultural fabric of the city, is of Socio-Cultural Value as well as Economic and Technological Value. Economic value accrues as the city draws tourists and the devout in large numbers. Varanasi Ghats are a unique organically developed technological form of an interface of the land with the river. This is of Architectural value and Aesthetic value as is the Settlement structure and distinct Architectural style and forms present. (Monasteries, Choultries, Death houses, Vedic learning centers, etc.)

Environmental value is present in the settlement's relationship with its setting, the river, and the continuity of the historical landscape of the site. The numerous ghats that line the river edge are important not just due to their age, aesthetics, and architecture. The religious, ritualistic, ceremonial, and spiritual connotations attached to them render these water-land interfaces with an outstanding value that necessitates and justifies their sustenance for future generations. The last rites performed along the river edge are an intangible dimension of Hindu religious beliefs and, thus, a critical dimension of religious heritage. Other intangible dimensions associated with religion have also been transmitted down from generation and are in need of protection. These include performance arts like traditional dance, music, and theatrical performances (famous Ramlila of Varanasi) on special festive occasions, oral traditions of ritual performances, folk music and songs, and social practices in celebrating festivals and events. The tangible and the Intangible together go on to create the Genius Loci or the unique spirit of the place.

Fig 10 & 11: Balaji Ghat in Varanasi
Source: World Monuments Fund report on Balaji Ghat

"The concept of the holy place in Indian culture (tirtha) is described as a consecration of the cosmic influence in topography wherein culture, geography, and spirituality interact with each other in the formation of meaning, symbolism, and transcendental power within a territory." (Singh & Rana: 1997: 68). The city of Puri in the state of Orissa is a holy place, a prominent center of pilgrimage and religious fervor stemming from Jagannatha culture. Origin of the citie's religious significance can be traced back to as early as the 4th Century C.E., to the Garuda Purana. Puri is also one node in the prominent Chaar Dhaam quadrangle with Badrinath, Dwarka, and Rameshwaram.

Efforts have been made by MOUD (HRIDAY plan for Puri), INTACH Odisha chapter, the Odisha Conservation Center (ICCI), and the Municipal Corporation of Puri in establishing the significance of the Heritage City of PURI. HRIDAY's proposal for the city of Puri focussed on preserving the heritage character of the city along with urban planning and economic growth. The historical and continuity value of Puri accrues as the city is more than a thousand years old. Its planning is based on the Vaastu Purusha Mandala, with many meta-physical aspects driving the town's design. The heritage value and identity construct of the city relies heavily on the myriad religious, ritualistic, spiritual, and vibrant cultural traditions still alive and of immense significance at the local and national levels. This living heritage centered on the numerous temples of the city is of immense

Fig 12 & 13: Puri – Cosmic geography of Shankha Kshetra (conch shell) as Symbolic value
Source: HRIDAY PLAN FOR PURI

The tangible heritage defines the sacred geography of Puri, The Shankha Kshetra (symbolic value). Temples in Puri are of a distinct style referred to as the Kalinga style of architecture. This and the residential areas around the temple, known as 'his,' characterized by a distinctive spatial pattern, open spaces, streetscapes, and street network, are of Architectural and Aesthetic value. The HRIDAY plan for the city also emphasizes the Religious and socio-cultural value of institutions like the Mathas (accommodation for the pilgrims), Akhadas (Wrestling arenas), Goshalas (cowsheds), Jagagharas (institutions for training in wrestling techniques, acrobatics, and various war techniques) as vital aspects of heritage place construct.

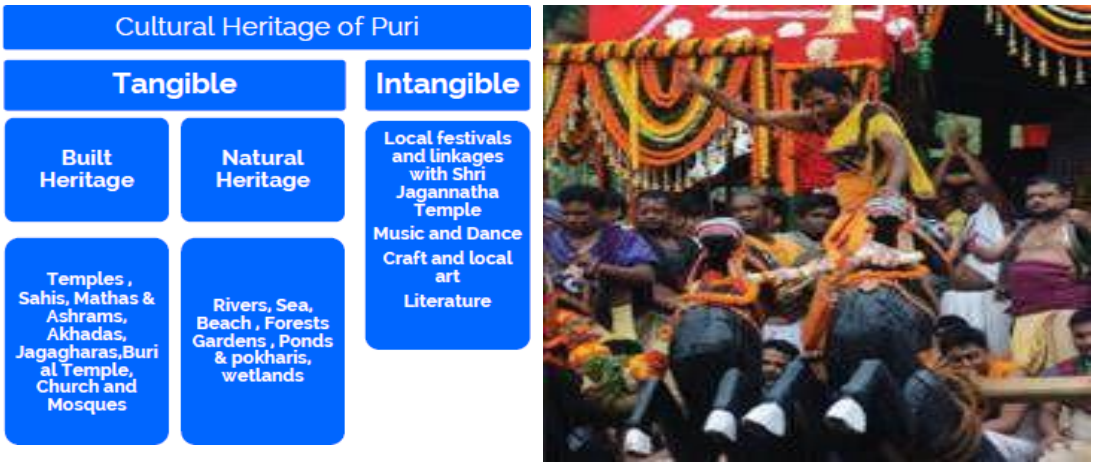

Fig 14: Cultural Heritage of Puri (left)
Fig 15: Rath Yathra - intangible religious value (right)
Source: City HRIDAY plan for Puri (2016)

Rituals, religious and secular festivals, and age-old traditions such as Yatras or processions ascribe heritage value to their venues and routes by creating identity through the representation of the Spirit of the place or Genius Loci. (fig10,11) Transfer of sacrality occurs, thereby creating new sacred zones. The annual Rath Yathra is of special significance. Arts and crafts associated with Shri Jagannatha temple's age-old customs represent another dimension of living heritage. Stone sculptures, the dance form of Odissi, Patachitram – a tradition of hand painting fabric and Patta – the painting of Gods on palm leaf manuscripts are of immense Artistic value.

Conclusion

Sustaining cultural identity through Heritage conservation requires systematic processes aimed at assigning values to all dimensions of heritage. Historic religious cores are extremely complex as they continue to thrive as living Hindu sacred centers. This paper explores the value-based approach and its suitability for establishing the significance of such cultural heritage places.

The two studies examined establish evidence that the ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve just tangible material heritage but rather sustain the values embodied by Heritage. As religious heritage places are living thriving centers of faith, an in-depth analysis of the wide range of values associated with built heritage has been undertaken. Community (both the core and extended community) driven approach in value assessment is seen as essential in steering heritage processes in the context of living heritage as many a times myriad, sometimes even contentious values emerge from the users. The case examples of pilgrim sites studied prove that both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage are interdependent and equally critical in establishing the significance of heritage places.

Culture, as the primary determinant, drives all tangible and intangible aspects of cultural significance. Religious value is dynamic and manifests in constantly varying spatial

and structural configurations (rituals, pilgrimage, processions, festivals, etc.). Hence, value sets are not fixed and need to be arrived at on a case-to-case basis. This paper has reasonably demonstrated that Religious, Historical, and Sociocultural values are critical to the heritage identity of any sacred shape. All development initiatives must address the needs entrenched in these values. Indeed, the Indian conservation guidelines and charters need to include a value-based approach similar to that in the Burra Charter. This will effectively steer all processes for incorporating the uniqueness of Indian Religious Heritage sites. It will also help evolve conservation policies that respond strongly to value analysis and sustain the essence of the past for future generations.

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