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## A Study on Methodological Problems in Conservation of 'Shantinath Temple' at Khajuraho through Living Heritage Perspective

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### **Abstract:**

*Shantinath Temple of Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh is a major temple among one of the Jain group of temples. The local community people of surrounding villages as well as visitors pay homage to God in this temple throughout the year, apart from those other sacred events and ceremonies also done in this temple on special occasions. Depending on its historical significance and stories behind the temple it is believed to be the temple as living or alive. Although, in recent times for the sake of protecting the monuments in materialistic way, the ethical value of conserving the living heritage is being somehow affected in broader context. From prevention of entering to the temple grounds to restriction of entry to a limited area visit which causing a barrier between the direct interaction of communities and intangibility of the heritage. Some other factors are also affecting the conservational ethics of living heritage, which are also tried to highlight through a study on the particular temple. Visiting the temple, observing the current situations, and collecting other necessary data from both field and online, this research study will try to highlight some of the methodological problem in conservation on the certain living heritage site as a whole.*

**Keywords:** *Tangible heritage, Intangible heritage, Living heritage, Khajuraho, Heritage Conservation*

### **Introduction:**

'The conservation of cultural heritage refers to the measures taken to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening transmission of its significant heritage messages and values' (UNESCO). On the other hand, 'living heritage' defines those heritages whether tangible or intangible having community involvement actively on any particular culture or religion (Poulios, 2014). Any kind of religious place, house, ceremonial ground where practices or rituals still being done on a regular basis can be designated as a living heritage, for an example- Dakshineswar

Kali temple<sup>1</sup> at Dakshineswar, Kolkata, west Bengal is a great example of a living heritage where the continuous involvement of community is found on a regular basis in the heritage temple through various religious practices. These living heritage sites hold both the tangible and intangible components which need to be conserved prioritizing both values side by side. The living heritage is characterised by 'continuity', particularly those historic places which are still living part of a community<sup>2</sup> (Wijesuriya, 2015). 'It consists of various continuous elements such as community connection, cultural expression, long term care, original function' (Yiran, 2018).

In living heritage conservation approach (Poulios, 2014) the key element is to safeguard both cultural value of tangible and intangible value as a whole. Contribution and engagement of the local communities in the conservation is also valued in the living heritage sites. Detaching a community interaction and involvement from a heritage site nullifies the value of a living heritage. There will be no difference between tangible cultural heritage and living cultural heritage without the communities' involvement. In the temple of Tooth Relic in the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka (Wijesuriya, 2000) (a world heritage site) to safeguard the both tangible and intangible values people centred approach applied (ICCROM, 2012) to conserve the temple which was demolished in 1997 in a bomb attack. It was one of the most significant international Buddhist pilgrimage centres constructed in seventeenth century. The restoration of the temple was done under the supervision of the conservation professionals but any decision would be subjected to the approval of the monastic community which is the core community of the site as expressed by two high priests and the officer of the temple (guardian) (Poulios, 2014). The first priority of the restoration project was the revival of Living function of the temple which is basically the religious cause.

On the above-mentioned case the integrated approach for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage stated in Yamato declaration<sup>3</sup> prosperously implemented without any of both culture of the heritage site. Although to implement such process proper steps of methodological framework should be done which will bring the fruitful result, in some cases the procedure can work, and some might not. Issues may arise in some cases during the process which can be community based, communication based, financial based, analytical based in the context of conservation of living heritage. As an example, a case study is described below indicating some methodological problems in the conservation of living heritage.

### Methodology:

To carry out the research, field study has been done in the Shantinath Temple of Khajuraho

<sup>1</sup> Dakshineswar Kali Temple is a Hindu navaratna temple in Dakshineswar, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Situated on the eastern bank of the Hooghly River, The temple was built in 1855 by Rani Rasmoni a zamindar, Philanthropist and a devotee of Goddess Kali.

<sup>2</sup> Wijesuriya, 'Living Heritage: A summary.', ICCROM, 2015

<sup>3</sup> 'Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage' International Conference on the Safeguarding of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards an Integrated Approach, 20-23 October 2004, Nara, Japan.

Group of Temples, in the district of Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. The study includes observing the temple architectures, the current modifications done on the architecture, on-going conservation work in the temple, observing the daily rituals in the temple, taking photographs and videos of the necessary areas of the temple and its surroundings, and also talking with the locals and the priest there.

### **Case study:**

For the above-mentioned topic Shantinath temple (Figure-2) among Jain group of temples in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh will be a great example of living heritage dated back to 1028 AD. This temple is the part of UNESCO world heritage site, Khajuraho Group of Temples situated at Chhatrapur district of Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh. At the south-east of Khajuraho village the Jain temples are located which are the Parshvanath temple, Adinath temple and Shantinath Temple. These temples are part of the UNESCO world heritage site of Khajuraho Group of Temples. The Jain Temple complex of Khajuraho includes three main temples, which are the Parshvanath Temple built around 954 AD, the Ghantai Temple (960 AD), and the Adinath Temple (1027) AD<sup>4</sup>. Around that time around eighty other temples were created of both Hindu and Jain religion in Chandela dynasty.

### **History as living heritage:**

After the Muslim conquest of the region in 13<sup>th</sup> century, many of the Khajuraho temples were destroyed while other temples were neglected and abandoned. There were other 34 temples at Khajuraho but among them Adinath temple, Parshvanath Temple and Shantinath temple are most notable ones. The Shantinath Temple is famous for his 14 feet high standing idol of 16<sup>th</sup> Jain thirthankar (Figure-1). Nearly 400 years ago when the Muslims invaded in the Shantinath temple they blew a strike on the feet of the Jain idol, a little finger broke and from there flow of milk started to come out and at the same time flock of honeybees attacked the invaders and pushed them ran away from there. This incident grew a faith among devotees for the temple having supernatural power and from then they started worshiping full of faith. From that time the temple considered as alive and religious rituals still happens every day inside temple complex. Although entering inside the main temple complex is prohibited and touching the idol is fully prohibited.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the Muslim invasion most of the temples and its structures were destroyed, the Shantinath temple which is standing today is the reconstructed temple on the ruins of the destroyed ones. During the time of my visit in Khajuraho at Shantinath temple on the walls and gates of the temple broken structure found. The timeline photos of history of the temple are framed inside the entrance hall of the temple, also there are separate chambers or rooms of praying hall and chanting area situated inside the temple. The main attraction of the temple is the 14<sup>th</sup> feet standing idol of 16<sup>th</sup> Jain Tirthankar whose one of the fingers in the right feet is broken.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.khajuraho-india.org/khajuraho-temples/jain-group-temples/index.html>



Figure-1  
14 feet idol of 16<sup>th</sup> Tirthankar (Shantinath)  
(Source- Google images)



Figure-2  
Shantinath temple (Source-Google images)

Entering inside the chamber is completely prohibited for the visitors, only designated people can do so. Offerings can be given through the designated priest or people

there and prayers can be done from the courtyard of the temple.

### Findings and Discussion:

#### Methodological issue in conservation-

- Conserving the heritage value of this type of monument, certain methodological frameworks should be followed which can ensure the safeguarding both tangible and intangible part of the living heritage. As the 'living heritage' term of a heritage site basically relies on the intangible value of a physical existence, the intangible part of the culture should be given priority same as the tangible part. Although during the process some methodological issues might come which might be the cause of dilemma of the intrinsic value of the site. In this particular case, inside this Jain temple complex only Shantinath temple is in daily use for rituals and offerings to God. Other temples are prohibited from interacting with the visitors, which are the Adinath temple, Parshavnath temple and Ghantai temple due to conservation purpose. Also, the other chambers of the Shantinath temple where idol of other Tirthankars remain remained closed (Figure-4). Although here designated priest performs chants in regular basis throughout the day which kept the intangible part of heritage going through. There is a barrier created between the community and the cultural heritage. Community participation, involvement and enjoyment is one of the vital aspects of living heritage conservation. In the vision of conservation, the main adage is to preserve and restore the site, while at the same time the other ethics of the conservation of the living heritage site should be maintained. Somehow in Shantinath temple the conservation part was done fruitfully, although the value of intangible part hugely affected in due process.
- As stated earlier this temple was reconstructed on the ruins of the destroyed ones in 19<sup>th</sup>

century several changes have been done with the mutual collaboration of the governing body and local stakeholders. Here with the excavated idols of the Jain Tirthankars, some new idols also implemented inside the 18 separate chambers of the Shantinath temple. The reconstruction of the temple was indeed necessary to safeguard the idols and also keep the place alive with religious rituals in present time. Although implementing new idols recently might affect the authentic value of the temple's history and of the other idol as a whole. Authenticity is an important part of a living heritage site which signifies the place's originality and ethical of heritage itself.

- The Khajuraho temples are mainly famous for its' delicately carvings on the temple walls and structure of the temples. Temples have rich display of intricately carved designs on the walls and have distinct brownish colour which is natural colour-built materials. In Shantinath temple the outer colour of the temple complex is newly painted and the distinct colour maintaining is being done by the temple authority time to time. Although it is natural to do so as it is reconstructed because of the destruction of initial structure during the historical event of invasion. Because of the newly done colour several areas such as walls, pillars inside the temple found splashed over due to lack of care (Figure-3). The pillars and the walls were a part of the initial structure before the destruction having the same carved structure and shapes as the other Khajuraho temples of other complexes. Here also come the issue of authenticity during conservation. Due to lack of care the remaining of excavated parts of temple being affected overtime.



Figure-3 Inside wall of Shantinath temple showing over painted on carvings (Source- author)



Figure-4 Padmapram temple No.2 remains closed for visitors (Source- author)

- In this temple the exquisite 14 feet standing statue of 16<sup>th</sup> Jain Tirthankar is older than the whole building structure. Prayers and chants done here on regular basis by the priests and holy water is being poured on the feet of the idol during the ritual. At a certain height if on a regular basis on stone surface water being poured on droplet form it damages the surface.

Being nearly 1000 years old the idol of the temple is affecting by this kind of daily practice. It also might not seem serious in naked eye but this water pouring mechanism may be harmful for the stone sculpture in a broader sense (Figure-5).

### Conclusion:

Conserving living heritages include different type of methods and techniques which varies in different cases. In some cases, some methods might not be applicable based on the situation of a particular site. Although by keeping the main elements intact of a living heritage site while constructing a methodology for the particular site can be fruitful for the sake of both the community and heritage site. Thus, the solution of this type of heritage conservation demands a holistic strategic approach where both the tangible and intangible part of the heritage can be safeguarded and also the continuity part of the site can also be protected in due process.



Figure-5 Pouring water on the feet of the idol (Source-Youtube)

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