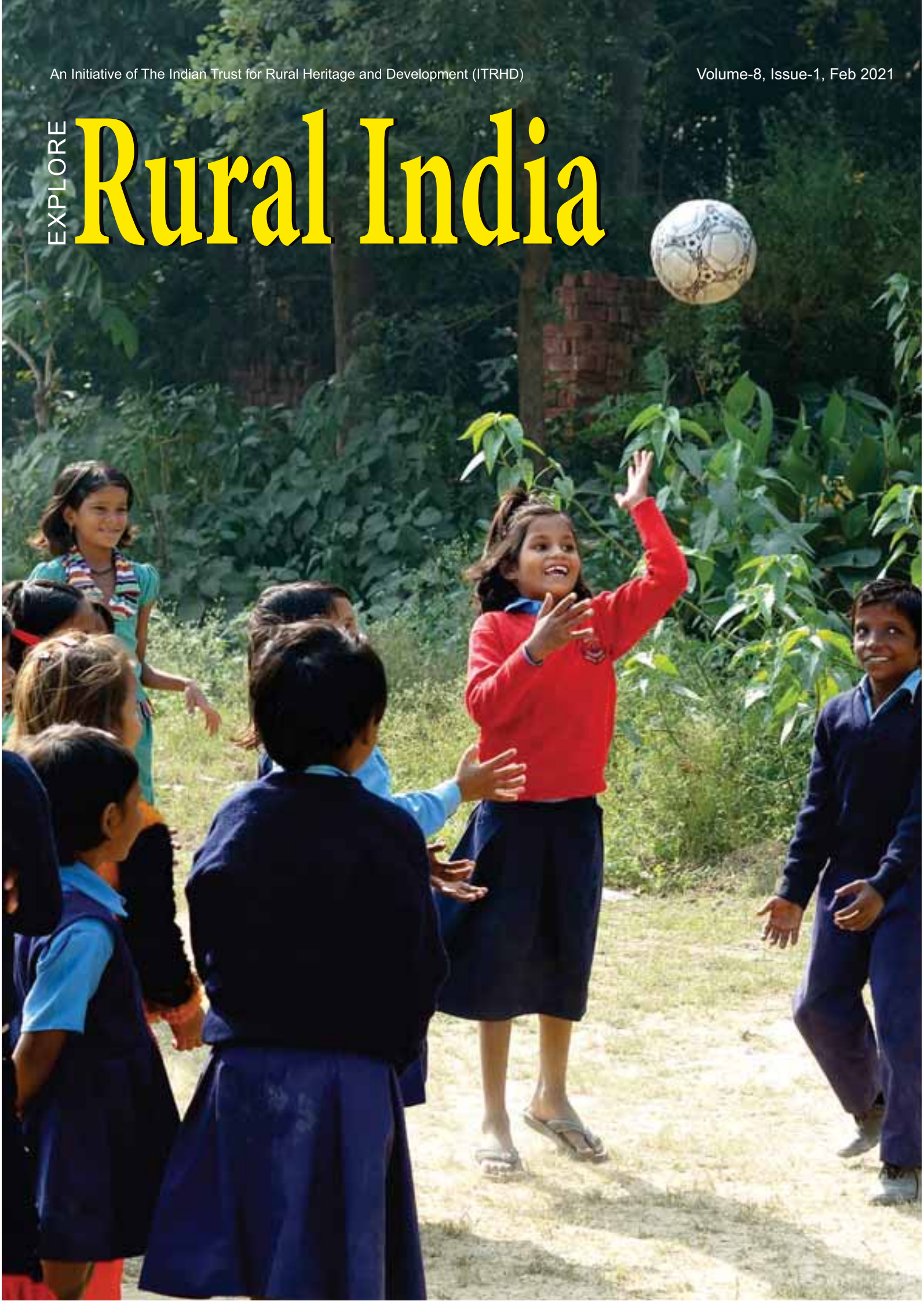


An Initiative of The Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD)

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EXPLORE

Rural India





“A nation’s culture resides in the hearts
and in the soul of its people”

-Mahatma Gandhi



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and Development

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From the Chairman's Desk



This has been a most unusual year. The situation that we are faced with is unprecedented and one does not know when we can heave a sigh of relief. However with the availability of vaccine we can look to the immediate future with hope. The pandemic was responsible for slowing down of our activities and our publications, which in the past were brought out on time have been delayed. The present publication should have been launched in July 2020, and it has not been an easy task getting the requisite number of articles. We are very grateful to those authors, who in spite of everything have given us some excellent articles. To meet the shortfall we have reproduced a few exceptional contributions from past issues, which some of our readers may have missed. As you know we also bring out an issue taking up a specific theme every year. This year the publication on '*Traditional Healing Systems of India*' was formally launched on our online AGM in November 2020. It can be viewed on our website www.itrhd.com, which can be checked on for our other activities and future programmes. All of our ongoing projects have continued, although with some slowdown in activities. I would, however like to highlight some activities that we would be taking up or completing during the current year 2021.

Documentation of folk music - the project was initiated last year and we will be completing it this year

Rural Tourism- needs to be given a thrust. Already we have had a seminar to set the ball rolling and have been dedicating every January 30th, Gandhiji's Martyrdom Day for highlighting unique contributions in the field. We plan to encourage Farm Tourism - to begin with in the villages where we already have a presence. The inspiration for this has come from Pandurang Taware from Maharashtra, who can justifiably be called the father of Farm Tourism in India and who made an impressive online presentation on our January 30th seminar this year.

We had decided last year to set up an academy for training of persons in conservation of Buddhist architecture in rural areas, as a start also from countries having a significant Buddhist tradition. In order to give it shape it was thought necessary to organise an international conference with experts to advise on the modalities. Discussions were initiated with some knowledgeable persons and with the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which was to be followed by interaction with State government officials dealing with archaeology. Before we could move forward covid intervened but we now plan to resume dialogue and make up for lost time.

Our basic objective, is to focus on conservation and sustainable preservation of rural heritage both tangible and intangible as an asset and resource for rural development. To move forward in a meaningful manner it would be desirable to initiate a detailed documentation of such assets all over the country. This would enable us as well as the government and other NGO's to identify those that need to be taken up for conservation in a phased manner. Apart from bringing this matter to the attention of the Finance Commission we approached some State governments to support our initiative by providing the required funds. U.P government has agreed to our request and we will take up a few districts for implementation. In order to demonstrate how very detailed the documentation was intended to be, we undertook a pilot project in the Munnar region of Kerala at our own expense. We are hopeful of taking on a pioneering role in this field.

Crafts Development remains an area of prime activity. As a result of our efforts the crafts persons -potters and handloom weavers of two villages in Azamgarh district of U.P received a stimulus to their marketing efforts and new ideas in regard to diversification of products and design inputs to meet changing demands. We then

extended our efforts to Barmer region in Rajasthan which has very unique crafts traditions but many are suffering for want of marketing and brand recognition as well as innovative design input. With CSR support a project was launched with the active involvement and guidance of Maharaja Gaj Singh. Results have been encouraging although progress has of course been affected because of covid. As this year looks promising we are hopeful of retrieving lost ground

Involvement of youth in our activities particularly in rural development programmes will get added attention.

The Prime Minister had indicated interest in the conservation of a large number of temples in Varanasi and the matter was left to the U.P government for implementation. In discussions with U.P government officials we have been given encouragement to believe that some temples may be entrusted to us. If it happens and a decision is expected soon it will further strengthen our credentials. As we feel that the flow of ideas should not be within confined limits, we are planning to have a brain storming online session soon, with our members to discuss the way forward. I am confident that extended participation will help the organisation to break new grounds.

As we are being advised from time to time by our members, friends and well-wishers that the commendable work that is being done by ITRHD was not sufficiently publicised, we have appointed a young professional to make our presence felt on the social media. Please do look at our new Facebook page - facebook.com/ITRHD1 and our Instagram account - [ruralheritageindia-ITRHD](https://instagram.com/ruralheritageindia-ITRHD). Our existing website has had a good response but we felt that the time had come for not only updating it but giving it a new look. In another couple of months it will be before you.

I may mention that when the 2021-2026 Finance Commission was constituted last year we took the opportunity of making a presentation before it, of our activities and requirements. As a follow up we submitted conservation projects for implementation by ITRHD in Punjab and Haryana. I am glad to report that the Commission accepted our proposals and has recommended allocation of Rs 38 crores to the State governments concerned for these projects and specified that they are to be implemented by ITRHD. Not only, will we be able to take up these projects but it also confirms our growing reputation and our credentials.

For the next issue of Explore Rural India, which we shall try to bring out in the next six months we welcome suggestions and articles from contributors in India and abroad on subjects relating to any aspect of the rural scene. The articles accompanied by photographs in high resolution should be between 1500-2000 words in word format and may be sent to me at skm810@gmail.com. Our contributors for the publications, during the last seven years have not asked for any remuneration and we are very grateful to them for that.

I must put in a good word of thanks to our Editor and Director, Sangya Chaudhary who has persevered and managed to bring out an issue of our usual high standards, in spite of all the unusual challenges.

With my belated good wishes for the new year hopefully free from the corona virus and with our return to a happy and relaxed way of life.

S.K. Misra
Chairman
Indian Trust for Rural Heritage & Development (ITRHD)

Editorial



We have experienced a bizarre 2020 which has been quite difficult for most of us. No life has remained untouched this past year and we have all had to come to terms with a flow of tragic information concerning people we know and those we don't. It was as if life itself was teaching us all lessons in empathy. The society has had to adjust to the new scenario with individuals being required to reach an equilibrium with the new normal of 'virtual' presence. Though it has not been easy, the ITRHD has persisted with its work on all the projects with the tenacity that is the hallmark of its work-culture inspired by the Chairman. In that spirit, we are happy to present the 11th issue of "Explore Rural India."

This issue encapsulates a distinctive set of articles that captures the true essence of our life, society, history, architecture, culture and heritage. Our heritage distinctly influences the way our society develops, it is the anchor that gives stability and the beacon that gives direction to the society. It is therefore critical that we consciously create greater awareness about our heritage in our society and "Explore Rural India" has been all about creating greater awareness. It's been a labour of love for our team and it is extremely satisfying to take note of what we have documented in a short amount of time. The requests that we receive for past issues, special issues and the suggestions we receive for topics for future issues are both equally gratifying.

In terms of the concept of sustainable development with regard to life in rural India, the current crisis has highlighted many of the challenges. All our project communities have been affected by the pandemic, in regard to such things as loss of markets for craft products, cancellation of festivals and performance events, inability to travel, etc., in addition to the normal problems of rural life. This has reconfirmed our dedication to unlocking the potential that rural heritage resources have to serve as engines for overall rural development, and to making our rural communities economically viable for all their residents, in addition to conserving the heritage for its intrinsic meaning and beauty. Right from its inception, ITRHD has attempted to work with different aspects of rural heritage with a view to have a holistic approach to sustainable development with an attempt to create or mobilise a viable model that may be replicated elsewhere.

We are fortunate to be a part of the community that is intent on preserving our heritage. We thank our contributors deeply. If it was not for their selfless approach and their contributions, which often requires them to put their own work on the back-burner, the publications would not have had the impact that they do. This issue also brings a wide range of articles contributed by the thoughtful people passionately giving back to the society in their respective fields. As Margaret Mead put it, "A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We thank each and every one of them for contributing to this issue and hope that we have managed to bring to you another informative issue and one that you all enjoy reading. Best wishes for a happy and peaceful 2021 !

Sangya Chaudhary

Editor and Director

The Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD)



The Abha Mahal

The Garden Palace and Paintings of Maharaja Bakhat Singh of Nagaur

Giles Tillotson

Situated to the north of Jodhpur, half-way to Bikaner, Nagaur stands plumb in the centre of Rajasthan. Of ancient origin, the city became in the 12th century one of the first strongholds of Muslim power in northern India. Located on a major caravan route, it was also (like Ajmer) an important centre of Sufism. Clustered around a fort at its centre, Nagaur contains mosques, tombs and a dargah associated with this period of Muslim rule. But this article looks at the magnificent garden palace built within the fort by a Rathore Rajput ruler, Maharaja Bakhat Singh in the early 18th century, and on some paintings associated with it.

In 1724 Maharaja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur was murdered. There is little doubt that his sons, Abhay Singh and Bakhat Singh, were implicated; but some sources suggest that they were encouraged by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber, and even by the Mughal emperor, Muhammad Shah. Following the murder, Abhay Singh was recognised as the Maharaja of Jodhpur, while Bakhat Singh was put in control of Nagaur. He ruled Nagaur as an independent entity for a quarter of a century, from 1724 to 1751, when he built the garden palace that survives within the fort.

So extensive was his rebuilding that – apart from a few buildings dating from the Mughal era – most of what we see today can be attributed to his patronage. Recently restored, Bakhat Singh's palace in Nagaur has emerged as one of the most impressive garden palaces of its time. A small group of paintings on paper, commissioned by Bakhat Singh, depict him and his court in the palace, in somewhat idealised form. There is also a sequence of wall paintings in one apartment which take the process of idealisation to another level.

The palace complex occupies a substantial area in the centre of the fort. Its entrance is a gate called Dhruv Pol in the north-east – a direction which in vastu shastra is considered auspicious and appropriate for entrances.

As you enter, you face a two-storey pavilion overlooking a broad terrace. This space may have been used for public audiences, with the maharaja seated in the upper level of the pavilion, and his ministers and intermediaries on the platform at the base of the pavilion behind a small pool. The public would be assembled on the terrace, under awnings or shamianas. An open-air scheme is not hugely practical in terms of acoustics, but the maharaja's



Painting of the Bakhat Mahal RJS.2031



Another mural in the Hadi Rani Mahal

appearance in public audiences was largely symbolic. The purpose was to appear before an assembled multitude in the role of the dispenser of justice, to demonstrate his accessibility, and his magnificence. The pavilion is flanked on either side by a solid wall which screens the private areas of the palace from public view. Even if the form is unusual, the threshold location – just inside the entrance gate but both physically and visually separate from the residential area – is typical of Rajput audience halls.

Turning to the right, you pass through the Raj Pol, a small but ornate gate. Despite the platform for the guard on either side, the gate looks more ceremonial than protective, with its florid ornament. Some of its details are typical of Jodhpur architecture in the reign of Bakhat Singh's father, Maharaja Ajit Singh, and not found outside Marwar, suggesting that at least some of Bakhat Singh's architects were recruited from Jodhpur.

Passing through the Raj Pol, one comes next to a part of the so-called Hadi Rani Mahal. The part that is more prominent from the outside served as the entrance to the private or residential palace complex. The lower storey is

an open loggia. This is another guard room: the door in the centre of the back wall leads into the palace courtyards, making the loggia the last point of defence. The storeys above probably served as a naqqar khana: the place from which musicians announced ceremonial arrivals and departures. The inner face of the building overlooks an open courtyard with a central small square pool.

On the western side of this court, to your right as you enter, stands the Bakhat Singh Mahal, the maharaja's main official apartment. This palace was a diwan khana, or private audience hall. An essential component of any Rajput palace, this was often the most prestigious apartment, combining the functions of council chamber and court-room. In this case, the main room is of double height, with a jharokha at an upper level. Although the height is imposing and enforces a certain detachment on the ruler's part, this building is much more functional than the ceremonial open-air public audience hall outside. The height also allows for greater circulation of air in a space where large assemblies would have spent considerable periods of time.

A painting commissioned by Bakhat Singh shows this building in use and reveals a much more colourful interior than we find today. It reminds us in the first place that textiles were the main furnishings, with rich brocades hung over balconies and embroidered canopies extending the space into the courtyard. Cushions, bolsters and chiks provided further comfort and distraction for the eye. The relief panels and mouldings on the columns were also painted in bright colours.

Standing at right angles to the Bakhat Singh Mahal, attached to the entrance gate is a tower confusingly also known as Hadi Rani Mahal. The traditional name might seem to identify this as the residence of a queen from Bundi or Kota (Hadaoti), but it is a misnomer. While it was not unknown for favoured or senior wives to be assigned special accommodation in Rajput palaces, this would be provided within the confines of the zenana – a secluded area – and certainly not in such an exposed position as this. The height and location of this building identify it as the private apartment of the maharaja.

The wall paintings in both of the upper two levels depict palace women worshipping and playing in gardens, but while these give the rooms a feminine theme, the paintings were probably intended for a male viewer. Such decoration is consistent with other private male apartments of the period and region (such as the Gaj Mahal in Junagadh, in Bikaner). The mood is languid and sensual. Like voyeurs, we glimpse women gathering

fruit and collecting water, carrying oblations to a shrine or trays of food to a feast, conversing on terraces or frolicking on a river bank, bathing in ponds or washing their hair, as if unobserved. There has been some discoloration over time but the palette was intended to be subdued. The soft browns, greens and greys evoke a cool world, far removed from the blistering heat of Marwar.

These exquisite and peaceful images of women in gardens mediate between two worlds. The world that they connect with most immediately is the one outside the window. The architectural forms of the painted gardens – the pavilions and pools, the balustrades and flowerbeds – are those of an 18th century palace garden, like the one in which they are set. The artists continued onto the inner walls what the gardeners were achieving outside. But the idyll, part courtly, part rustic, of women in a landscape, also evokes the play of Krishna and the gopis in Vrindavan. It may be objected that there is no figure of Krishna depicted. Indeed there is no male at all apart from one ascetic and an infant. The point is surely that the male who takes the place of Krishna and enjoys the company of all these women, is the viewer of the paintings, the patron, Bakhat Singh.

The Abha Mahal, standing to the east, on the far side of a larger, rectangular pool, is the third of Bakhat Singh's main palaces. Connected with the other two by a long gallery that fringes the pool, it serves a different purpose.

The Bakhat Mahal





Interior of the Hadi Rani Mahal

Neither a residence nor a council hall, it is a place for relaxation and leisure. The palace's name is derived from Ab-o-Hawa, meaning 'water and wind', a reference to its response to the climate.

These three buildings, together with their connecting courtyard and pools, would be sufficient to constitute a traditional mardana of a Rajput palace. But Bakhat Singh did not stop at these three. Abutting this group to the south, is a much larger scheme that includes the Baradari. Nominally, a baradari has three arched openings on each of its four sides; but the term is also used for more elaborate compositions. This baradari has five arches on each side and numerous additional columns and arches within to support the ceiling. It occupies the end of a large open terrace. Its proportions and the grandeur of its setting make it reminiscent of a Mughal audience hall, but it is unlikely that it was meant for that function. As we have already seen, the Bakhat Singh Mahal, placed close to the entrance to the palace, served that purpose admirably here. The more distant Baradari is again a pleasure palace, less confined than the enclosed Abha Mahal and so better suited to an enjoyment of the cooler months of the year.

On its south side it overlooks a large water tank with a central island pavilion, or jal mahal. This again points to the use of the space for relaxation since jal mahals are associated with escape and leisure. On the northern side a regular char bagh occupies the space between the terrace and the rectangular pool in front of the Abha Mahal. Perched on the rim of the pool, overlooking the char bagh, are two pavilions known as Sawan and

Bhadon (the names of the monsoon months) whose exaggeratedly drooping curved eaves seem to suggest the idea of falling rain.

It is possible that all of this was a second phase of building, after the construction of Bakhat Singh's three main palaces. It certainly has a profound effect on the geometry and the meaning of the original design. The Hadi Rani, Bakhat Singh and Abha mahals all stand to the north, defining a space on an east-west axis. The Baradari, tank and large char bagh together open up a new north-south axis that connects with the first, but is even larger in scale. It is disproportionate: an extension that is larger than the core to which it is attached. It also changes the character of the palace, by including much more open-air space and putting a greater emphasis on pleasure – on water and gardens. Gardens were normally considered an alternative to the palace – a place of refuge – but here the palace has turned into a garden. The paradox of this achievement will be apparent to anyone who has experienced the climate of Nagaur. Water and greenery – rare and precious commodities in the desert – have become the very themes of the palace, the emblems of its luxury.

All of this is bound to make one ask where, in the desert, did all the water come from? The city was quite well provided for with a string of six water bodies lying immediately outside its walls and another lake just inside the city wall, which fed the fort's moat. Inside the fort itself the main water sources were three wells, which could draw water from the moat as well as ground water.

The largest is contained within the extended ninth bastion. This is a baoli or step-well, where in addition to the vertical shaft there is a flight of steps, descending through five successive storeys down to the water level.

The wells were connected to the palaces and their gardens by a network of open channels and covered pipes: recent excavation has revealed over a thousand metres of channel still in place and connections with a number of overhead tanks strategically placed throughout the complex. The running streams and fountains of the char baghs were fed from these tanks. The larger water bodies (such as the tanks by the Baradari and the Abha Mahal) would in addition have been able to retain surface water during the monsoon.

By comparison with other parts of the palace, the women's quarter – the Zenana Mahal – which also dates from Bakhat Singh's time, was somewhat dry and dusty. There were no water features in its central courtyard and probably not even a garden, but stone paving (making it comparable to similar zenana courts in Udaipur and Jaipur). The extent to which women had access to other parts of the palace remains a matter of some conjecture. Generally in Rajput palaces, the division between mardana and zenana was a firm one and the seclusion of women was absolute. The paintings from the time of Bakhat Singh show women present in the buildings and courtyards of the mardana; but most of them appear to

be servants or professional musicians, not queens.

Where does this remarkable creation stand in relation to other palaces in the region? Locating a pleasure palace in water was an idea that can be traced back to some of the oldest surviving Rajput palaces in Chittor. The Jal Mahal as a place of retreat had been reinvigorated in Udaipur and most recently in Jaipur. The charbagh too has an established history in the region, including the little known garden at Sur Sagar in Jodhpur, built in the 17th century by Maharaja Jaswant Singh I. The char bagh was used extensively in Jaipur, most notably in Jai Vilas of the City Palace, where its deployment as a context for the temple of Govind Dev realigns the association of the form as a symbol of Vrindavan. This is even more explicit at the temple site north of the city, known as Kanak Vrindavan.

Bakhat Singh's garden palace at Nagaur brings these themes together on an unprecedented scale, rivalling the slightly later and better known palace built by the Jat ruler Suraj Mal, at Deeg in the 1760s. Its restoration by the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, under the guardianship of Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Jodhpur, returns it from obscurity to a position of prominence, redrawing our understanding of the development of Rajput courtly architecture.

Photo Credit: Neil Greentree

The Baradari and tank



Vernacular Architecture and Modern Architecture

An Indian Perspective

Prof. A. G. Krishna Menon

“My observation is that vernacular architecture almost always has good answers to all our problems” – Laurie Baker¹.

Modern architecture is intrinsically resource-intensive, both in terms of the materials it consumes and the financial resource that are required for its construction. It is based on the use of industrially produced materials like concrete, steel and glass, which require considerable energy to produce. In contemporary parlance, modern architecture's carbon footprint is large and unsustainable. It is also premised on the reduction of labour required for its production. Ironically, to mitigate these characteristics, the building industry has formulated 'green building norms', which only mask the inherent environmental problems that the practice of modern architecture creates. Seen in this light, it is an inappropriate option to meet India's tremendous demands to house its people. On the other hand, as Laurie Baker has observed, vernacular architecture almost always has good answers to our problems. But good advice is seldom followed, and so, not surprisingly, in the course of formulation of habitat policy and the development of architectural practice, the positive characteristics of vernacular architecture are invariably ignored.

But interestingly, the ground realities in India tell a different story. The situation is not so hopeless for the cause of promoting vernacular architecture in India. In spite of tremendous efforts to modernize building practices since Independence, the practice of vernacular architecture continues to be practiced as a parallel and equally viable option for the construction of local habitats throughout the country. Consider for example the widely acknowledged fact that the modern construction systems account for only about 10% of the buildings that are built in India, so the majority of the buildings that are built rely on the traditional systems of construction. These traditional systems of construction are manifested in the diverse variety of vernacular architectures of the different regions of the country. These vernacular building traditions always existed but were rendered invisible by colonial construction policies and practices. For example, even at the time of building

New Delhi (1912), when policy makers were debating on the appropriate construction system to employ for constructing the new capital, the common perception was that indigenous construction practices had already been wiped out and the new city would have to be based on European architecture. But a survey conducted at that time by Gordon Sanderson and E. B. Havell documented voluminous evidence to the contrary. Such misleading perception continues even today and policy makers ignore the presence of extensive vernacular traditions or the role it plays in the meeting the building needs of our society.

The continuity of traditional building practices in the contemporary environment may perhaps be on account of the fact that modern construction technologies have not yet penetrated too deeply in our country. The continuity of its practice is also confined largely within the non-formal sector of the economy: after all, India is still considered a developing and predominantly rural society. It may also be simply on account of the fact, as Laurie Baker has often pointed out, that traditional building systems are cheaper and more readily accessible to meet quotidian building requirements of the majority of our society. These factors could, of course, change over time, but for the present they define the continued saliency of vernacular architecture for constructing the majority of the habitats in India and its imperatives should be taken into account while drafting contemporary building codes and policies.

There are hopeful signs that the significance of vernacular architecture is beginning to be noticed more positively in education, government policy and professional practice. These positive developments, for example, are bringing about a change in the colonially-rooted understanding of what constitutes the built heritage of our country. There is an emerging consensus among many academics and practitioners that since vernacular architecture is a living heritage its conservation should focus on both the physical building and the traditional processes of its construction. Such holistic insights about the nature of the country's built heritage are beginning to influence the mainstream policies for the conservation of historic monuments as

¹Gautam Bhatia, Laurie Baker, *Life, Work and Writings*, Penguin Books, New Delhi: 1994, p.48

well, which follow Eurocentric models and practices inherited through colonialism. See, for example, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India, which was adopted in 2004. It will, however, not be easy to translate this complex and dynamic understanding of Indian built heritage into practice, but to begin the process it would be helpful to explicitly nurture two characteristics of India's architectural heritage because it will further reinforce the need for change.

First, the Indian master-mason is still able to build in the manner of his forefathers. His pride, in fact, derives from the difficulty one encounters in distinguishing the new work from the old. The aesthetic benchmark of replication was the norm in India before the British came and introduced European aesthetic sensibilities, which proscribed replication and valorized 'creativity' instead. While the European sensibilities introduced by colonialism were considered 'modern' and 'progressive' the traditional skill of the craftsman were cast aside as 'old fashioned' and 'regressive'. The continued reliance on traditional sensibilities to build in the non-formal sector of society, perhaps, reflects the deep structure of Indian aesthetic traditions and its significance must be valued. Therefore, when the Indian Charter for Architecture is written, it should recognize the importance of these indigenous aesthetic propensities rooted in the principles of traditional construction and maintenance of buildings and incorporate them as policy guidelines for meeting the future spatial needs of our society. In this manner, by nurturing, at least for some time the skills of the master-mason, it would be possible to conserve the unique living traditions of the built heritage that their forefathers produced.

Second, conserving vernacular architectural traditions must be viewed as a political act. This enables us to consider the persistence of vernacular architectural traditions and conserving historic cities in our country as 'theatres of resistance' to the entropic forces of globalization. These forces are pushing construction of the built environment towards resource intensive and unsustainable directions and casting the imperatives of conserving tradition and pursuing modernity as opposing paradigms. Inevitably, the future of vernacular architecture suffers. Under the circumstances, the only alternative is to resist – not the process of development, but the homogenizing consequences of globalization. This can happen if the practice of vernacular architecture is adopted as the lingua franca for constructing habitats in India. It is of interest to note that even the World Bank is promoting the continuation of the living crafts

traditions of the country under the rubric of 'creative industries', by pointing out the positive role that it can play in the economy. This perspective of 'resistance' moreover, allows one to include within its fold other strands of critical contemporary concerns: encouraging sustainable development, conserving cultural identity and the need to adopt appropriate and affordable technologies to conserve the environment. Nurturing vernacular architecture as a 'theatre of resistance', therefore, has many benefits.

At the outset it should be made clear that the argument I am constructing does not fault the historical process of colonization and globalization, because not all aspects of it are suspect. Colonization produced radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. It was unlike any previous period in Indian history as it brought new technologies, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values. The changes included, what Daniel Lerner called a 'disquieting positivist spirit touching public institutions as well as private aspirations ... People come to see the social future as manipulable rather than ordained and their personal prospects in terms of achievement rather than heritage'². All this is part of a universal master narrative and cannot, and should not, be reversed.

Nevertheless, there is need to distinguish between those practices which were relevant in a pre-colonial context and their relevance today. This is particularly important to define the contemporary role of vernacular architecture. We need to undertake serious studies based on conscious hypotheses identifying ends and means in the use of vernacular architecture. Such exercises are rare in the discipline of architecture, but are necessary if one is to understand its role in creating sustainable and culturally satisfying habitats in future. Such studies will offer an excellent opportunity to understand the widely plural characteristics of Indian society and hence establish the agenda for 'resistance' to both the external forces of globalization and the internal propensity towards homogenization. It brings on one platform the agenda to reform architectural practice and architectural education. To achieve this objective one will need to map the variety of vernacular architecture in the country and its linkages to the social and economic characteristics of society.

The study of the vernacular heritage will require the inputs of a multidisciplinary team consisting of archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, architects and urban planners. Academic institutions are best suited to undertake such exercises. To begin, the strategy should consist of the following tasks:

²Gautam Bhatia, Laurie Baker, *Life, Work and Writings*, Penguin Books, New Delhi: 1994, p.48

1. a. Identification and definition of the variety and significance of vernacular architecture in the different regions of the country. This will require the listing and grading of vernacular architecture, analyzing the activity patterns and their spatial ecology.
- b. Definition of the social and economic matrix within which vernacular architecture operates. This will emerge as overlapping zones of several types of significance within the narrative of socio-economic development of society.
- c. Specification of protection of the vernacular architectural practices, spaces and activities by identifying the inter-related networks of human and material resources which are needed to support the practice of vernacular architecture.
2. a. Specification of the instruments needed for effecting the protection of vernacular architecture. These will include inter-alia issues relating to the continuity of crafts skills, production of appropriate building materials, making available adequate finances and the creation of supporting legal structures for the practice of vernacular architecture.
- b. Strategies and phasing the development needs of society including alternatives and other options to meet desired outcomes; the objective should be to accept the hybridization of traditional practices in order to promote and guide development rather than inhibit or forestall it by introducing externally sourced materials and technologies.
3. The people affected by the decision should be involved in the entire decision-making process. Promotion of vernacular architecture is invariably a social-political issue and it cannot be considered a mere technocratic exercise – a 'them' and 'us' situation characterizing the promotion of modern architecture and urban planning in India.
4. It is essential to include considerations of long-term maintenance and evolution of the products and practices of vernacular architecture.

In management terms, such project recognizes the need for negotiated decision-making rather than the adherence to a purely technocratic and technological approach to meet local habitat needs. The right course of action in dealing with vernacular architecture is a matter of choice and not of fact. This will necessitate a more activist-oriented approach to building the habitat, which highlights the role of voluntary agencies such as Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD) in tackling these problems.

Voluntary agencies are able to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of society-based architecture and planning. Of course, this is an empirical approach to problem solving but the fact is that there is little or no history of architectural practices and spatial planning thought in India to guide the adoption of a planned normative course of action. The study of vernacular architecture as an empirical activity brings to the fore an interesting paradox in the search for better or more effective planning practices, which is that the attempts at more comprehensive strategies to produce good plans have only contributed to increasing the gap between the planners and the planned. This is not to undermine the need for scientific approach to planning but to emphasize the positive role of need-based, incremented planning that is characteristic of vernacular architecture. Such insights have emerged from the works of non-governmental agencies like INTACH in the field of urban conservation. While INTACH has not been quite as successful in actually executing conservation works, it has nevertheless, been instrumental in changing the perception of Governments all over the country regarding the cultural value of the living vernacular architecture of the country, through its advocacy of alternate strategies for development. It has brought into focus the dependence between the people and their environment as evident in vernacular practices in architecture and conservation. The second impact of INTACH's initiatives has been in the field of documentation. Scores of Heritage Zones containing a variety of examples of vernacular architecture have been recorded and action plans drawn up proposing their conservation. This process has involved a large number of professionals who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to become involved in the conservation of vernacular architecture. Inter alia this process has contributed to a change in the perception of vernacular architecture within the mainstream in the profession. For one, it has contributed to the self-conscious search for identity amongst Indian architects, and for another, it has led to such flagship schemes of the present government like HRIDAY, to develop historic cities.

Other organizations like the Vastu Shilpa Foundation in Ahmedabad, several Schools of Architecture and the ITRHD have also emerged as advocates of vernacular architecture and there is now a palpable change in perception, which was not there earlier. In the projects of ITRHD, for example, there have been attempts to explicitly link the imperatives of conservation and socio-economic development in the rural areas. The change in attitudes towards conserving heritage is also evident from the fact that Mumbai has a Heritage Conservation Law and several other cities like Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangaluru have followed suit.

Conclusion

British rule transformed Indian society and culture. But this transformation was not complete. The persistence of vernacular architecture is one such 'island'. In fact, so strong is the practice of vernacular architecture in the country that some commentators have wondered if the transformation itself is not the 'island' in the total Indian scene! Nevertheless, in the area of the built environment, the dominance of modern architectural practices has been deeply impregnated in professional consciousness and practice, which has resulted in devaluing the significance of vernacular architecture in our society.

The official dialogue has been dominated by what sociologists have identified as the 'westernized intelligentsia' who wish to do away with traditional Indian architecture and urbanism. The building codes and bye-laws and city Master Plans they have promulgated to ensure better built environments militate against the perpetuation of vernacular architectural practices. It is only with the shift in focus to the conservation of historic cities and architecture that the positive aspects of indigenous patterns of development and building practices began to surface amongst a new generation of professionals and their familiarity is characterized by the self-conscious search for identity in professional practice.

While we may identify several forces that have contributed to the rediscovery of the significance of vernacular heritage, the role of urban conservation projects initiated by INTACH all over the country and the works of other organizations like ITRHD who have focused on rural development, have been important. These initiatives have turned the gaze of professionals towards the continued saliency of vernacular architectural practices, which have put to question the relevance of the museum-like conservation practices of the West in the Indian context. It has promoted the view of Indian heritage in developmental terms. The ideological transformations that have followed have given a new lease of life to the conservation – and production – of vernacular architecture in the country. It is indeed quite remarkable that, in India, at the beginning of the twenty first century, both vernacular architecture and the practice of modern architecture are alive and thriving. It may not have been possible to have predicted this even a couple of decades ago.



Rural Tourism in Rajasthan and Role of Community Museums

Karni Singh Jasol

On the 40th anniversary year of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), it designated 2020, as the Year of Tourism and Rural Development, emphasizing the opportunity to promote the potential of tourism to create jobs and livelihood opportunities in the rural areas. Coincidentally the Rajasthan Government's 2020 Tourism Policy also lays special focus on rural development through Tourism.

With the COVID -19 pandemic situations, where visitors are preferring destinations in non-urban areas, there is a renewed interest in rural tourism in Rajasthan. It is an opportune moment for Rajasthan in particular and other states in India to reassess the potential of rural tourism and devise strategies that will bring out the best of our local culture and heritage.

Studies have reinforced the fact that tourism is one of the fastest-growing socio-economic sectors, creating jobs

and opportunities for sustainable development. Rajasthan has an opportunity in investing in models that will empower and engage local communities and preserve local natural and cultural resources. With 52.22 million domestic tourists in 2019, Rajasthan has tremendous potential for rural tourism; however, it needs to very carefully develop rural tourism models that will not impact the very fabric and integrity of rural and local culture. Presently proposals related to such development do not take into consideration either the impact of such policy on communities or any regulation of its growth.

Mass and unplanned tourism in rural areas can have potentially conflicting expectations and aspirations of visitors and host or local communities, presenting many challenges. The village communities are often complex, heterogeneous places, involving varying levels of socio - economics, multiple castes, cultural identities, and

histories. Villages are no longer closed economic or entirely self-sufficient entities, but have ties to the larger state and national issues. Village communities are not static in terms of function, but are dynamic and changing. These changes however, require that a large portion of the population must leave the villages, either for work or education in larger cities. The result is that multiple generations that once comprised a village are quickly falling apart and traditions and customs are being lost. The change is inevitable, rapid change is destructive. One such village community at the crossroads is the Bishnoi community around Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The travel agents and hotels promote 'village safari' tours that send jeeps filled with foreign and Indian tourists into villages to experience a Bishnoi village.

Tourists enter people's houses, snap pictures, viewing the 'display' in front of them. They listen to a tour guide interpret their behaviour, material culture, and caste, and then depart, gaining only a superficial understanding of the people and their way of life.

The guides and travel agents return few rupees in compensation/tip to the village's occupants. While such compensations provide enough in the way of incentive to continue villagers' cooperation in the tour endeavour as a steady source of income, it encourages a subtle but steady reliance and a change of lifestyle that can only be ultimately detrimental. Also, the compensation/ tip is

only a fraction of what the hotels make on a trip. Villagers are lured into this relationship with little knowledge of the ultimate result of this exploitative practice and invasion of privacy.

As early as 1995, UNESCO declared: "each society needs to assess the nature and precariousness of its heritage resources in its own terms and determine contemporary uses it wishes to make of them, not in a spirit of nostalgia but in the spirit of development".One possible solution to change this exploitative relationship into something positive is to develop the concept of community museums.

The term 'Community Museum' is a combination of both a dynamic vital interaction of people that make a community as well as a method of presenting culture and cultural artefacts to a larger non-community public. This approach changes the way in which villages are put on display or made accessible and combines the sensitivity and ethics as well as provides a more effective forum for combating basic stereotypes held by tourists regarding villages and villagers.

The concept of a community museum is relatively recent and requires a contribution of both disciplines of Museology and Anthropology. It emphasises ethics involved in the tourist relationship and puts the interests and needs of the villages and villagers first. It empowers





them by having them take part in the representation of their own identities and selves. Community museums would provide a platform to address the overtly superficial ways in which village life is presented to tourists, which currently does little to combat stereotypes among the foreign and domestic tourists or deepen their knowledge of the complex functions of a village.

To develop a community museum model in Rajasthan, the government through the Gram Panchayat can select a village near Jodhpur where the tourists are currently going for 'village safaris', identify land up to about twenty acres and design a layout that would include

traditional housing structures, agricultural practices, crafts, and other aspects of the village life. This interpretive model will not only provide the visitors with an engaging, in-depth experience and understanding of the multi-layered and dynamic village society, but can also act as a the model to help the village community to document aspects of life that are disappearing at a fast pace. It has the potential to discuss and provide solutions to several issues that the villages are confronting due to unplanned development and lack of awareness to preserve the traditions of India' rich rural culture.

Photo Credit: Michele Beguin

Rural Development: A Strategy for Urban Heritage Management in India

Dennis Rodwell

Questioning the “Urban Century” Paradigm in the Indian Context

This twenty-first century is widely depicted as the “urban century”. To generalise, however, is misleading. Urbanisation is conditioned by multiple variables in place, time and cultural context. At the scale and diversity of India, the potential exists to leap-frog the received wisdom and historical patterns of urbanism that have led to the destruction of so much urban heritage elsewhere (Fig 1).



Fig 1. Bhopal, Peer Gate area. Mirroring destruction elsewhere, urban heritage is currently under serious threat in cities throughout India. Here, a Moghul influenced former courtyard house has lost its original inner complex and the right hand portion has been demolished pending redevelopment. (Source: Carsten Hermann)

Population Statistics and Forecasts

In May 2020, the population of India reached 1.38 billion, of which 35 per cent is urban and 65 per cent rural, the latter being distributed across upwards of 600,000 villages. An equivalent urban-rural proportionality applies to the Indian sub-Continent as a whole, as well as other countries in the region including Myanmar and Vietnam. For China, also in May 2020, the overall population reached 1.44 billion, of which 61 per cent is urban and 39 per cent rural. The latest predictions are that the population of India will surpass that of China by 2022.

Discrepancies in Urbanisation: India Compared to China

The divergence in urbanisation between India and China is informative, reflecting as it does variables including in the modes of economic production.

The global urban revolution that advanced through the nineteenth century was intimately tied to widespread industrialisation. Cities became important centres of manufacture demanding large concentrations of labour and urbanisation mushroomed. The success of the Chinese economy today is firmly tied to manufacturing industry, providing some 100 million jobs. The current urban population bias in China conforms to a continuation of the historical model into the twenty-first century.

Today's variant of the urbanisation model, gathering momentum since the 1980s, is closely tied to the rise of the information economy and the processes of globalisation, including the mobility of capital and fluidity of means of exchange. India's urbanisation, especially in the southern states, has been driven in substantial measure by fast growth in the software industry. Labour-intensive industrialisation is low, providing some 10 million jobs – a tenth of the figure in China – with ongoing urban growth deriving primarily from natural increase rather than net migration from rural areas.

The substantial and continuing rural population bias in India manifests the potential for a new twenty-first century model of distributed urbanisation.

Contextualising Urbanisation Patterns to India

India's larger cities contain a seemingly bewildering spectrum of economically-connected activities that embrace pre-industrial-age technologies through to today's post-industrial and computer-driven era. This characteristic is allied to a hybrid social structure that sustains strong ancestral traditions, social ties and cultural identities including caste in the urban slums, allows extended families to flourish and remain connected to the myriad villages, and supports fluidity in patterns of rural-urban-rural migration.

As Jan Nijman writes (2012): “We are only just beginning to understand Indian cities in their entirety, this amalgam of human modes of survival and adaptation, of diverse modes of production, historical continuities and ruptures, disparate urban fabric, complex geographies, and vernacular representations of modernity. India seems to be writing its own script.” Furthermore, the notion that accelerating urban transition in India would enable more citizens to live better quality, healthier and better-educated lives as well as lead to less resource-intensive development with lower environmental impacts, needs to be qualified.

India faces enormous challenges of housing and basic services, infrastructure including transportation systems, energy generation and distribution. These issues are magnified in the major cities where acute urban pollution and deficiencies in water supply and sanitation pose major risks to human health and ecosystems.

That “India is very much going its own way and old urban theories may have to be discarded”, concurs with the conclusions of a number of leading authorities, including:

- o The India Institute for Human Settlements (2012): “We will need to understand and deepen the linkages that enable small urban centres to become catalysts for rural non-farm employment, sites of opportunities, and a foundation for eliminating rural poverty and exclusion.”
- o Paul Polak (2014): “The only effective large-scale answer to extreme poverty is to stimulate rapid scalable growth centered specifically in the villages where most poor people live, not urban-centered growth that generates only a trivial trickle-down impact.”

This questioning of the orthodox urbanisation paradigm corresponds with today's environmental awareness and with rapid advances across multiple supporting sectors including digital communications and renewable energies.

Concurrently, this questioning animates a re-evaluation of traditional academic and object-focused definitions of urban heritage, to embrace the broad socio-cultural reality of urban environments at all scales, and in concert with the evolving UNESCO historic urban landscape initiative.

Initiatives and Technologies that Support a De-Centrist Agenda

The challenges facing India's majority rural population are legion. Much attention is focused on poverty-related

issues linked to narratives framed on the premiss that rural poverty is inevitable and migration to conurbations is the solution. Today, local initiatives coupled with rapid technological advances challenge these assumptions.

The Satisfaction of Basic Needs

Water

Initiatives to address the ongoing water crisis at the rural scale are numerous and include:

- o The revival of ancient traditions of rainwater harvesting: collecting monsoon rainwater, settling out the silt and mud, and storage without evaporation.
- o Major programmes of afforestation designed to increase India's forest cover, supporting land water storage, enriching the soils as well as improving air quality and combating greenhouse gas emissions.

Food

Recent innovations in organic farming and sustainable land management are addressing historical issues and additionally opening up national and global marketing opportunities:

- o Vandana Shiva, is a leading champion of indigenous knowledge and advocate of biodiversity in agriculture to increase productivity, nutrition and farmers' incomes.
- o Sikkim was pronounced India's fully organic farming state in January 2016, is additionally the first state to proclaim 100% sanitation coverage, and together these are boosting the Himalayan state's tourism industry.
- o Permaculture, the eco-system-based science and practice of sustainable self-sufficiency that simultaneously addresses environmental degradation.

Shelter

Rural India has access to an abundance of sustainable, climatically adapted building materials whose usage dominates vernacular building across the country including in the older parts of cities. For example:

- o Adobe: sun-dried load-bearing bricks composed of soil types mixed with water and plant fibres. Extremely durable, adobe can be made up on individual construction sites, and is mass-produced for an expanding national market (Fig 2).



Fig 2. Mudiya Kheda, near Chhola in Madhya Pradesh. Commercial adobe manufacture undertaken in a rural context seasonally. (Source: Carsten Hermann)

The Digital and Energy Revolutions

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)

Digital technologies alongside fast internet access provide unlimited opportunities for universal education, skills training and knowledge transfer, global connectivity, exchange, and marketing. Smartphones have the potential to empower all sections of communities and traverse gender and caste barriers.

Localised Renewable Energies

Today's energy revolution removes historical dependence on major power stations (including fossil-fuelled) and large-scale electrical grids, over-coming non-availability and supply shortages especially in physically remote rural areas. Depending on the region, micro-climate and other factors, solar power, wind generation, fast and slow continuous water flows, biomass and other harnessed natural resources, independently or in combination, and including with battery back-up, can serve both individual sites and micro-grids. Location is not a factor in this twenty-first century.

Local Manufacture, Global Markets

Global to local

The Industrial Revolution commenced in small settlements, serving and served by local populations. Expanding industries together with their workforces thereafter concentrated in towns and cities, including for

enhanced physical connectivity to their markets. Today, manufacturing and service industries in India are significantly less dependent on physical location than historically; also, compared to China.

The combination of the digital and energy revolutions provides unlimited opportunities for the establishment and development of enterprises across rural India, of all types and at all scales and levels: from the revival and expansion of manufacturing based on eco-friendly crops such as jute and hemp, including as increasingly favoured alternatives to plastics; through specialist fabrics and crafts marketed to high-end outlets in major world cities; to internet marketing of any product or service by anyone, to anyone anywhere throughout India and beyond.

Such represents industrialisation (together with manifold branches of the service sector) without urbanisation and challenges the mantra of the “urban century”. A place-specific, territorially-balanced approach based on where populations and natural resources are rather than the prescription that people must migrate to often distant urban centres, anticipates new and more flexible ways of understanding urbanisation.

Questioning the Paradigms of Heritage

The pretext to reflect on the multiple opportunities that exist for planning and investment in rural development supports a parallel reflection on the parameters that condition established approaches to the definition and safeguarding of urban heritage and the opportunity to re-visit them.

The Monumentalisation of Heritage

Worldwide, orthodox academic, professional and institutional understanding and practices of cultural heritage are circumscribed by delimited definitions and

categories of the tangible and the intangible: selected objects and manifestations. The apex of this discourse is signalled by the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

The heritage discourse across the major part of the Indian sub-continent has its origins in the primordially European-centered ethos and mores of the international heritage community, and is reinforced through norms and practices assimilated from the colonial period and ongoing associations in academia and practice with Europe, notably the United Kingdom (Fig 3).



Fig 3. Mumbai, Colaba district. Early twentieth-century colonial monumental heritage: the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and tower framing the Gateway of India. (Source: Carsten Hermann)

The 2013 Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) position paper *Socio-Economics of Urban Heritage* encapsulates the orthodox position well:

The official understanding of heritage in India is largely limited to historical monuments and archaeological artefacts which inevitably have led to a narrow institutional and policy framework that excludes a broad spectrum of urban heritage which exists today such as vernacular architecture, historic landscapes, customs, traditional livelihoods, rituals, belief systems.

One of the attendant limitations of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that human habitat is not inherent to the tripartite division of cultural heritage into *monuments*, *groups of buildings* and *sites*, whose focus is on material objects. Urban heritage, comprehended generically as embracing a legion of globally diverse living historic cities and urban districts, in which citizens have and continue to conduct their daily lives in complex

and dynamic relationships with a heterogeneity of physical environments, fits uneasily into this prescription. The human factor – the synergy between the miscellany of human activities and the myriad of physical places – is missing. Anthropologists and sociologists are not incorporated into the orthodox urban heritage discourse.

The traditional approach to urban conservation is manifest in *Urban Heritage in Indian Cities: Compendium of Good Practices* (2015), prepared by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). Under definitions, *urban heritage* ...

Refers to the built legacy of the city's history and includes protected and unprotected monuments, individual and groups of buildings of archaeological, architectural, historic and cultural significance, public spaces including landscapes, parks and gardens, street layout defining

identifiable neighbourhoods or precincts, which together identify the visual, spatial and cultural character of the city.

Urban heritage in this usage does not encompass human habitat, generically or specifically.

The Distinctiveness and Inclusivity of Urban Heritage

Just as natural heritage sites cannot survive as ecosystems without wildlife, historic cities are contingent on human functionality. An integrated approach to the safeguarding of urban heritage is not simply a question of the restoration of buildings, ensembles and public spaces. It subsumes an understanding of the dynamics of everyday life and timelines of socio-economic continuity in communities that host and animate a quantum and diversity of urban districts and neighbourhoods that extends far beyond prescribed definitions of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In established settlements and cities across India, urban heritage, holistically understood, it is the norm; continuity is at least as important as conservation, especially when the latter is interpreted as preservation; and urban values embrace social values alongside the totality of cultural values (Fig 4).



Fig 4. Ahmedabad, inside the historic walled city World Heritage Site. Cooking in public open space between the food market and the *Rani no Hajiro* queens' tombs; typical of the contradictions, complexity and chaos that are a quintessential characteristic of the living heritage of India's historic towns and cities. (Source: Carsten Hermann)

In India, the shoots of intellectual independence from the orthodox monumentalist approach to urban heritage are emerging.

The 2013 IIHS position paper quoted above continues:

... urban heritage, as conceptualised today, includes not only these components [historical monuments and archaeological artefacts] but also their inter-linkages with other facets of the city as a whole; as has been articulated in UNESCO's 'Historic Urban Landscape' approach. Another important dimension of urban heritage in India is its living character, where the past is very much part of the present lives of the people as an evolving cultural resource in which continuity and change are deeply embedded.

One of the major global threats to urban heritage arises from its commodification as heritage. In the Indian context, the emphasis in the same IIHS paper on the economic valuation and exploitation of urban heritage is unfortunate – indicative of the ongoing insinuation of Western precepts in the field.

Counter-balancing both the object-and economic-focused narratives of urban heritage is the 2010 UNESCO/UN-Habitat toolkit Historic Districts for all – India: A Social and Human Approach for Sustainable Revitalisation. Adopting the generic term historic districts, signifying the oldest parts of cities, it provides an inclusive definition:

[Indian historic districts] are typically characterised by traditional houses, streetscapes, water systems, living communities and their associated traditional livelihoods and social practices and so forth. These existing traditional resources are unique features of the historic districts, clearly differentiating them from the rest of the city. A historic district cannot and should not be defined on the basis of the age of its structures, typology of built form, administrative boundaries, or even the presence of heritage buildings, sites or monuments. Historic districts often act as the symbols of the city's image despite having undergone numerous social and cultural transformations. They create the identity and the image of the city and are key geographic factors for the local and regional economy. These are the places wherein the 'culture' has its greatest expression.

A longstanding champion of an inclusive approach to India's urban heritage is Professor A. G. Krishna Menon. Writing in 1989 and comparing the Western origins of concepts in conservation with the growing body of knowledge deriving from indigenous experience in India, Menon characterised the former as defensive, focused on preserving material authenticity in structures selected for survival, with the emphasis in the latter on the creative and dynamic continuity of community

traditions and identity dating back millennia allied to improving the quality of life for citizens today. To re-focus from objects to people, Menon stressed the need for a metamorphosis in heritage orthodoxy:

Conservation in India ... needs to shift its priority to what is becoming of our historic cities rather than on what they were. This shift in values is predicated on an understanding of the current Indian reality and future prospects. There is also a need to understand that the true heritage of our country is in the traditional skills of our artisans and craftsmen and less in the objects they created which they knew would deteriorate in time. Thus, the specificity of the Indian situation is in the fact that authenticity [this author's emphasis] can be created.

Writing again in 2017, Menon argues that “the nascent field of urban conservation in India offers the potential to review the dominant paradigms of urban planning and develop more context-specific and appropriate strategies for tackling the problems of Indian urbanisation.”

For this, Menon recommends re-visiting the pioneering approach demonstrated by Patrick Geddes in the reports he produced for Indian cities in the period 1915 to 1919. Regarding the city as an organic system, each a unique human artefact in its equally unique local and regional environment rather than simply an example of an abstract typology, Geddes insisted on the need for comprehensive historical, geographic, biological, climatic, sociological, economic, cultural and institutional insight and knowledge, and on nurturing the shoots of innovation and creativity rather than restraining the evolution of a city based on its roots at some historical moment in time.

Re-Positioning the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Initiative

The UNESCO historic urban landscape initiative is an academic conceptualisation of the roles of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in pursuit of a binary objective “to preserve heritage and manage historic cities”. Notwithstanding its provenance from within the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the intent behind the formulation of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation is that it should serve as a standard-setting instrument for urban settlements worldwide. It is however founded on two orthodoxies that severely limit this ambition.

First, unqualified adherence to an urbanisation paradigm that predates the digital age and ignores contemporary innovations across multiple sectors.

Second, a heritage discourse that ignores the larger narratives of history and culture and prioritises the

survival of selected material objects and manifestations over the manifold complexity and specificity of people in their communities.

Attempts to normalise both the urbanisation paradigm and the heritage discourse in the 2011 Recommendation imply a misunderstanding of the varying timelines and dynamics of urban development across world regions as well as the realities of cultural diversity, and foreshadow major challenges in the context of the widely plural religious, temporal, cultural and economic complexity of twenty-first century India.

As such, the historic urban landscape initiative's potential is currently limited to addressing prescribed issues across a circumscribed sector, and lacks the strategic vision to position urban heritage mainstream in the geography of urban planning – including to systematise the cross-sectoral tools and hone the interdisciplinary skills to inspire commonality of purpose in the management of historic cities and guide conflict avoidance (Fig 5).



Figure 5. Mumbai, Lower Parel district near the Currey road station. Modern tower block dominating the low rise vernacular. Development conflicts pose a serious threat to India's urban heritage, and the UNESCO historic urban landscape approach is currently handicapped by a lack of coincidence with the geography of urban planning, including at a strategic level. (Source: Carsten Hermann)

Conclusion

The received urbanisation paradigm together with heritage orthodoxy both remain rooted in the perceptions and ethos of the third quarter of the twentieth century. Today, substantially advanced through the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the factors that conditioned the twin orthodoxies are challenged from many directions. These include: a raft of technological advances; maturing articulations of sustainable development subsuming mounting concerns surrounding the causes and impacts of climate change; and, especially in the context of India, a far broader conception of the multiple constituents of urban heritage.

Continuing attempts to universalise historical trends in urbanisation alongside mores in the heritage sector severely limit the ability to recognise that there is no inevitability in the notion that an evolving region such as the Indian sub-Continent will develop in this twenty-first century as a mirror of Europe and North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or indeed China today. As Professor A. G. Krishna Menon has written, new and culturally-rooted processes must be developed to deal with the overwhelming urban and spatial challenges of developing countries, ones that do not repeat let alone aggravate the problems manifested in earlier processes of urbanisation.

This article argues that questioning key orthodoxies from first principles, both in the matter of rural-urban territorial balance and in the comprehension that urban heritage is first and foremost about life quality and creative continuity in established communities rather than the survival and conservation of individual monuments, provides vital indicators both to alleviate redevelopment pressures on surviving urban heritage in cities across India and to address wider societal and environmental issues coincidental with the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic additionally serves to question the orthodox urban agglomeration model and to reinforce the rationale for distributed urbanisation. It is not clear, for example, that the recent exodus from cities such as Mumbai to the rural heartland will be reversed; cities such as Delhi have witnessed a remarkable upturn in air quality; and serious upscaling of the de-centrist initiatives and technologies outlined in this article would support a swift transition from concentrated to distributed urbanisation.

Note: This article is a condensed version of the author's chapter 'Rural Development: A strategy for urban heritage management in the Asia-Pacific region', published in The Routledge Handbook on Historic Urban Landscapes in the Asia-Pacific, ed. Kapila D. Silva, Routledge, 2020, pp. 406–423.



'A horse and its trader'. Attributed to Bagta, Devgarh, Rajasthan, circa 1800. Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Wikimedia Commons.

'The Tale of the Horse: An Excerpt'

Yashaswini Chandra

The romantic ballad of Dhola-Marū sung to date by musicians of the desert evokes an atmospheric picture of travel in the western frontier, at the heart of which is the Thar desert. Composed over time before the tale began to be compiled from the sixteenth century, it is also embedded with insightful references to horse trade in the wider region. It features an estranged husband and wife, Dhola and Maru, as well as Dhola's second wife, Malvani – treated rather like the third wheel. It is a royal romance, even though the flavour is earthy: Dhola is the son of the ruler of Narwar, Maru is the daughter of the lord of Pugal in western Rajasthan, and Malvani is a princess from Malwa. Dhola and Maru were married as infants by their parents, who agreed that they would be united as a couple when they came of age, before returning with them to their respective seats. But, with the passage of time, the marriage is all but forgotten and

Dhola marries Malvani. Meanwhile, Maru dreams of Dhola and is overcome with longing. Maru's friends are incredulous when she first relates her predicament to them: 'That is most strange . . . You have never seen your husband: How then are you in love with him?' But Maru knows better: 'That on which your life depends, do you not find it within? How does a babe learn to draw milk from its mother's breast?' Her parents send word to Dhola to come and claim her, but no response is forthcoming and Maru is left distraught.

It is a horse trader who was able to shed light on the matter. He was clearly a big player since he catered to the rulers of both Pugal and Narwar. He apprises the Pugal family of Malvani's existence and they learn that her henchmen have been accosting the messengers from Pugal and silencing them. More wanderers of the desert,

Dhadhi musicians and Charan bards, act as intermediaries, until Dhola hears of his long-lost wife and becomes as enamoured of her as she is of him. He plans to travel to Pugal and bring Maru to Narwar to install her as his senior wife, but convincing Malvani to let him leave her side is easier said than done, as she is disbelieving of all the excuses he makes. He finally gives her the slip while she is fast asleep and departs for Pugal. In a night of erotic lovemaking, Dhola and Maru consummate their marriage and then leave for Narwar, overcoming numerous obstacles on the way, including brigands. Malvani has no choice but to reconcile herself to her downgraded status as the second wife. Meanwhile, the bigamous Dhola 'live[s] in happiness with his two fair and noble spouses, spending one night with Malvani and two with [Maru]'.

Unlike the epic of Pabuji, a horse is not central to this story. It is in fact a highly spirited camel, even if 'a veritable horse'.⁵ The camel promises to take Dhola to Pugal as fast as lightning and bring the couple back. He even reasons with the jealous Malvani when she tries to persuade him to fake a limp and thwart Dhola's plans: 'If I start limping, they will apply a red-hot iron to me, they'll tie me up and I shall die of hunger, While the two of you will remain tenderly clasped together and I'll be in sorry straits.' Malvani tries to goad him by accusing him of being 'unmated', unable to empathize with her romantic plight, but to no avail. What the tale does in fact highlight in its evocative style are the 'wanderers' of the desert frontier, including horse dealers who traversed vast distances in the process of selling their horses.

Only a horse trader could have seamlessly straddled the divide between Pugal and Narwar, Dhola and Maru. Described only by the generic term *saudagar*, he could have been an Arab merchant bringing in horses through a port of Gujarat or Sindh, or an Afghan or a Turk from Central Asia, travelling along the direct routes from Kabul and Kandahar, if not one from closer home. One of the pretexts Dhola offers Malvani for wanting to leave is that he needs to travel to make his fortune, promising to return with the choicest of gifts. From Multan, he would bring 'Tukhar', perhaps Central Asian Turki, horses. But Malvani is not impressed, reminding him of the dealers who can bring herds of such horses right to their doorstep. If Malvani is suspicious, she has good reason to be, for Maru's father's domain of Pugal lay on the route to the emporium of Multan between India and Afghanistan.

Although the overland trade in horses from Central Asia in general slowed down in the eighteenth century, horses were still one of the main items of import into Rajasthan, along with dry fruits from Kabul – a statistic that does not, however, indicate the volume. But much of the business around Bikaner, on the trade route to Multan, was in the hands of Afghans. Until the turn of the next

century, the horse trader from a distant land was enough of a type to inspire the artist Bagta to paint a portrait of one. Now acknowledged as one of the most individualistic of the painters of Rajasthan, Bagta served the state of Udaipur-Mewar until he left to set up the court atelier of Devgarh, a chiefdom under the state. In Devgarh, he enjoyed a long and prolific career producing stunningly original, idiosyncratic portraits of the Devgarh nobles as well court scenes. No one painted men or horses quite like Bagta. While the men are characterized to the point of caricature, the depiction of horses is as eccentric as it is arresting, consisting of oversize bodies on disproportionately short, weedy legs. The two tendencies aligned in the equestrian portraits he seems to have been fond of painting or his patrons of commissioning. The same distinctive treatment of men and horses is apparent in his painting of 'a horse and his trader', dated to circa 1800.

A dark bay stallion dominates the painting, against a largely pale-blue background. The horse is saddled and adorned in a manner typical of Bagta's horses. This one bears an intricately decorated saddle, the golden body of which is covered with fine pink and green foliate patterns, attached to a matching martingale and crupper. The head collar belongs to the same set. A necklace is wound in rows around the neck of the horse, while his mane is braided and strung with dangling ornaments that look like gold-covered strips with enamel work. He is led by the trader, who appears to be an Afghan. A thin moustache covers his upper lip, while a light smattering of facial hair tips into a pointy goatee. If his long nose curves downwards, his fur-lined conical hat tilts upwards. He cuts a swashbuckling figure, dressed in shades of blue and grey with white and touches of red, orange and green. He wears a short tunic with a baldric over his left shoulder, the scabbard containing a long, curved sword suspended over his right side. A pair of knee-high boots with elongated twirling toes worn over tight breeches completes his outfit. It is possible that this portrait recalls an actual trader who would turn up in Devgarh to sell horses to the nobles, suitably dressed for the occasion, even if his eyes were just a bit bloodshot.

Foreign traders continued to approach major buyers, mostly rulers and nobles, to flog their finest horses well into the nineteenth century. In 1846, Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur-Marwar inspected the three horses brought by a 'wilayati' one up his hilltop fort in Jodhpur from behind the elegant frame of a *gharokha*. It is worth noting that if the term *wilayati* meant foreign in the general sense and was used to describe horses from Afghanistan and Central Asia, in the colonial period, it was also applied to Afghans in India. Since the eighteenth century at least, much of the business in horses was transacted at livestock fairs. Shortly after the maharaja of Jodhpur-Marwar had entertained the foreign merchant, he stood in a courtyard of his fort

examining the nine horses procured by his agent from Pushkar.

The fairs of Rajasthan, many of which linger into the present, took place during a set 'season' when the weather was cool and there was a lull in agricultural activities. It began in the second half of the year and continued into the early months of the next. Within the different clusters of western, eastern and south eastern Rajasthan, they were planned one after the other, so that the same lot of people could travel an entire circuit if required. Of the several fairs which used to showcase horses for sale, most were held in western Rajasthan, including the yearly fairs of Tilwara and Mundwa and the biannual one of Ramdevra. The Pushkar fair was renowned even more than it is today for its display of horses. Many fairs of Rajasthan were dedicated to different folk deities. Tilwara, for example, was associated with Mallinath, the Rathore chief turned Nath ascetic who was deified after his death in the early fifteenth century, and his wife, Rupande. She was venerated as a sati for throwing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The fair was held at Mallinath ka Than or within his temple complex on the right bank of the seasonal river Luni – where the water was said to be sweet, unlike the brackish water of the left bank. Sellers at the fair would seek Mallinath's blessings by making an offering at his shrine before going about their business, and slogans hailing him – 'Jai Mallinathji' – would resound. Other well-revered folk deities who were honoured at different fairs included Ramdev, Goga, Teja and Dev Narayan.



A stone stele with a *bhumiya* or folk hero. The deified dead of Rajasthan were memorialized as horse riders. These 'hero stones' are strewn across the landscape. (Photo by Yashaswini Chandra.)

The similarities between these idolized folk heroes are remarkable and reminiscent of, broadly, the world of Pabuji. However, two of them were not Rajputs. Teja was a Jat whereas Dev Narayan was a Gujar, both their castes

being agro-pastoral ones. Although Ramdev was born a Rajput, he is remembered for having championed the cause of the lower castes and appealing to Hindus and Muslims alike. Such was his egalitarianism that he was claimed as one of their own by his principal followers, the Meghwal community of leatherworkers. Like Pabuji, Goga, Teja and Dev Narayan are identified with the bhumiya cult as protectors of cows. The reputation of these folk deities had grown over time until their own separate traditions developed and spread, but even a local hero could be deified as a bhumiya, becoming basically a village icon. If the broader cult continues into the present, it is because, until the colonial period, bhumiyas were also landholders, the status involving a responsibility to protect property and cattle. At the same time, Rajputs continued to 'grab' land. Needless to say, such a way of life in the boondocks of Rajasthan presented many opportunities for death and deification.

Notwithstanding subtle iconographical differences in some cases, the basic appearance of the major folk deities as well the average deified bhumiya is the same – mounted on a horse and wielding a spear or a sword. Village shrines were often built where the mount of a hero was believed to have dropped dead after the clash that resulted in its master saving cows but being martyred. Indeed, the spirit of the bhumiya was believed to manifest as a horse rider or through hoofbeats. The image of the rider became so powerful that even the folk deities Mallinath and Ramdev, who were in the nature of miracle-working saints, became iconized as such.

Pabuji's mare, Kesar Kalmi, was also not the only horse to inspire myths and verses but so too did the mares of Teja and Goga. Ramdev and his horse became inextricably linked in the rituals surrounding his worship by a process that is ongoing. The installation of his horse's statue at a new temple dedicated to him can be celebrated with a music and dance performance by male and female artists from the Kamad community, which also supplies the priests of deity. The women are trained in a dance form known as Teratali, performed in adulation of him. It is one of the most amazing dances from Rajasthan, daring in its intricacies. The women tie multiple little cymbals on their legs and arms, which they strike with the pair they hold in their hands, while often balancing metal pots on their heads and holding swords in their mouths. Traditionally, devotees of Ramdev used to offer gifts of horses made of cloth to his main temple at Ramdevra in Pokhran, replaced in recent times by the practice of making votive offerings of actual horses! The committee that organizes the fair dedicated to him had to build stables to house the horses of Ramdev.

The gods of certain fairs were classical Hindu ones. While Mundwa was dedicated to Krishna, albeit in the role of a cowherd as Girdhari, Pushkar came to be

associated with Brahma. The celebrated site of Pushkar is centred on the lake that is said to have sprouted from the spot where Brahma dropped a lotus. And from the hallowed grounds of Pushkar, lotus-pink roses bloom – the petals of which are offered at the Ajmer Sharif dargah or tomb of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, who established the Chishtiya order of Sufism in South Asia, and are also ground with sugar into gulkand, a paste for flavouring milk. Ajmer was a capital of the king Prithviraj of the Chahamanas dynasty until the late twelfth century. Following its conquest by Muhammad Ghori, the Turk invader from Afghanistan, the historian Hasan Nizami visited it and declared: 'The dust of Ajmer has the perfume of musk . . . The city and suburbs are exceedingly beautiful, owing to general brightness and light, the beauty and purity of its flowers . . . and the abundance of water and trees; it is a place of inestimable enjoyment and luxury.' In the first half of the thirteenth century, Moinuddin Chishti was laid to rest in Ajmer and his dargah became the soul of the city.

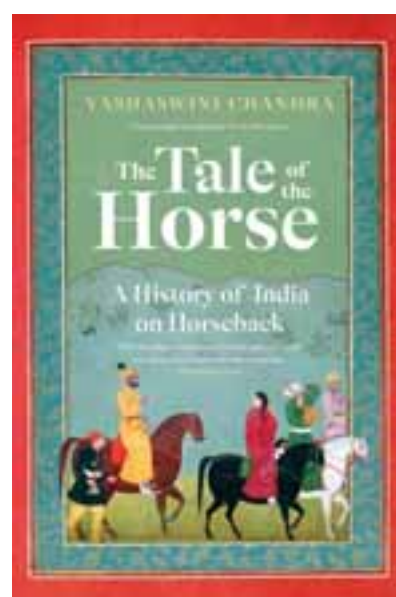
Ajmer was the oasis in the desert from which the Mughals oversaw the province corresponding to Rajasthan. The remains of the fort-palace built by the emperor Akbar, monumental gateways, mosques and tombs bear witness to the transformation of Ajmer into a Mughal city by successive generations of emperors and nobles. Since Akbar trudged on foot to Ajmer fourteen times to pay homage at the dargah, his successors were devoted to the saint. Jahangir visited the shrine before he sent his eldest son, the future Shah Jahan, to overcome the rana of Udaipur-Mewar. He stayed in Ajmer for nearly three years, hunted lions in the area and gave gifts to the dargah. Shah Jahan, the great patron of elegant buildings in marble, endowed it with a Jami or Friday mosque. Even after the decline of the Mughals, the Muslim elite from different parts of India continued the tradition of building mosques and tombs in the vicinity of the dargah, the most prominent being the Eidgah, the open mosque where Eid prayers are still offered.

Jahangir had noticed that the Pushkar lake was surrounded by temples, old and new. His rather anomalous contribution to the built landscape was the hunting pavilions he added to one side of the lake. The Pushkar fair is planned in the build-up to the full moon of Kartik Purnima in November- December when pilgrims congregate on the ghats to take a dip in the gleaming waters of the lake basking in the moonlight. In the same waters, bard-priests of different folk deities of Rajasthan, basically Pabuji and Dev Narayan, immerse the old and faded phad cloth paintings, against which their epics were sung, as a fitting end to sacred objects.

Inevitably, business at the Pushkar fair was combined with pilgrimage, the lake being holy to the Hindus and the Ajmer Sharif dargah drawing devotees of the saint. In the early nineteenth century, William Moorcroft

compiled a report on the major horse fairs of Rajasthan by piecing together information supplied by various merchants he encountered. By then, the fairs as well as the historical networks of horse trade in India were beginning to wane but the account does recall the importance of Pushkar in particular as a cosmopolitan space. Up to 5,000 horses used to be brought for sale, and such was the diversity of the sellers that they were expected to camp in the direction of the 'countries from which they came'. If a horse sold by a dealer from a particular camp was found to be unsound, then it was easier to fix collective responsibility and hence discourage fraud. Buyers from Delhi, Lucknow and the Deccan rubbed shoulders with the men of regional Rajput rulers.

Moorcroft emphasized the participation of Afghan traders, who either took 'the upper road' to north India through Amritsar or the 'lower' one to western India through Multan and Bikaner towards Jaipur. They kept buying horses from Punjab and Rajasthan as they went along, adding them to their existing stock of 'wilayati' horses, the shady ones passing off even their Indian acquisitions as imported ones at the fairs. Afghan horse traders seem to have been quite a tireless bunch, living by their wits as they marched between their highland home and India. In the first half of the nineteenth century, on 'the high road between Ajmer and the Indus', A. H. E. Boileau of the East India Company encountered some Afghan traders at Sodakar in the Jaisalmer area, at the start of their journey into India, with a small batch of horses. Having failed to sell even one horse and finding themselves unable to pay duties, they were attempting to dodge officials, 'walking off without beat of drum'.



Excerpted from *The Tale of the Horse: A History of India on Horseback* by Yashaswini Chandra (published by Picador India).

The Lost Gardens of Khajuraho: Continued¹

Geert Robberechts and Nishant Upadhyay

In the January 2013 volume of *Explore Rural Heritage*, the birth of the project of “The Lost Gardens of Khajuraho” was shown. Today, we’ll highlight the developments since 2013, as put against the principles for rural landscapes as heritage that have been formulated in 2017 by ICOMOS and IFLA². As an introduction, it is useful to describe the essential features of the project.



A Bundeli garden with all typical features - *Rani ka Bagh*. (Plan by Nishant Upadhyay / Viorel Acsințe)

Introduction

In 1998, at the request of the Madhya Pradesh Government, a multidisciplinary team under guidance of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has developed a sustainable development strategy for the Khajuraho Region³. Indeed, since the famous medieval temples of Khajuraho were nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984, a high-end international tourism had developed that left behind the broader interests of the local

population. The 1998 report aimed at formulating an answer to this situation.

Part of this report was a description of six royal gardens in Rajnagar, some 5 km from the Western Group of Temples of Khajuraho. Those gardens all share the same features: they are walled and have a (Shiva) temple, an outhouse (*kothi*), (step)wells, irrigation channels and Samadhi-platforms. The average surface is between 3 and 6 acres. It's a typical kind of garden that can be found all over Bundelkhand, but that has never studied before. Since we started the project in 2004, we found out that these gardens were used by the royal family as a kind of caravanserai, for their visits to the various parts of their land. The exceptional high concentration of 15 such gardens in Rajnagar can be explained by the presence of the nearby temples of Khajuraho. Oral traditions indicate that the gardens of Rajnagar were laid out by the royal family of Chhatarpur, and that each garden was connected with another king or queen. This defines their date of creation between the second half of

¹The project of the Royal Gardens of Rajnagar was formerly known as “The Lost Gardens of Khajuraho”. The new name was adopted in February 2020 as an answer to the consideration of the local people who didn't want to see the gardens as “lost” anymore, but are proud on the connection with the royal family of Chhatarpur. Also, the gardens are effectively situated in Rajnagar, and not in neighbouring Khajuraho. This all shows that the local people have adopted the project as their own.

²ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites, with headquarters in Charenton-le-Pont/Créteil, France. See www.icomos.org
IFLA is the International Federation of Landscape Architects, with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. See www.iflaonline.org

³The Khajuraho Planning Team, *Conservation and Sustainable Development Strategy for the Khajuraho Heritage Region*, New Delhi, December 1998.

the 18th century, and the early 19th century. Architecturally they show an amazing unity of style.

Under the project of the Royal Gardens of Rajnagar, the ITRHD Belgium Chapter⁴ wants to restore them and to turn them into training centres for sustainable agriculture for the local farmers, and also: to enhance the experience of local and international visitors to the Khajuraho region. At this end, a visitors' centre is being built in one of the gardens, *Pateriya ka Bagh*. This centre will also host the training sessions for the local farmers, local gastronomy training sessions and the seedbank of



The Visitors' Center in *Pateriya ka Bagh* nearing completion (Photo credit- Angad Ankala)

the local varieties of grains, vegetables and pulses. For the agricultural aspects, ITRHD Belgian collaborates with the nearby Gandhi Smarak Nidhi Campus at Chhatarpur.

Since ages, the Khajuraho region (as part of Bundelkhand) has essentially known an agrarian economy, and due to historical and climatological reasons, Bundelkhand had never developed in a way that made the region a wealthy region like Punjab. It is a drought prone region, and the monsoon rains more often fail than not. In medieval times, a very efficient water harvesting system was developed, based on artificial lakes, check dams and (stepwells). But as we can see everywhere in the country: unplanned urban development, with excessive exploitation of the water reserves has made this century old technology to collapse.

The ICOMOS-IFLA Principles of Rural Landscapes as Heritage

We knew very little of these gardens. How did they look? What was grown? What was their function in society?

⁴ITRHD Belgium was set up in 2003 as the Belgian Chapter of INTACH. Since February 2020 this organization has been affiliated with the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD) as its Belgian Chapter.

⁵ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage, accepted at the ICOMOS General Assembly, 15 December 2017, New Delhi. See also www.worldrurallandscapes.org.

For the royals? Burning questions that look for an answer. However, there are almost no archival sources, oral tradition is scarce, most of the gardens are in ruins, and their layout is difficult to reconstruct. In order to be able to establish a typology (and possibly a chronology) of these *Bundeli* gardens, one researcher, Ar. Anjaneya Sharma (IIT Roorkee), has completed his PHD on this subject. Another researcher, Ar. Nishant Upadhyay (RLICC-KU Leuven, Belgium), looks at the broader picture, and investigates the possible role of these heritage gardens in the sustainable development of the region.

In what follows, we want to dig a bit deeper into the meaning of these cultural landscapes, with the ICOMOS-IFLA principles concerning rural landscapes as heritage (2017⁵) as a guiding document. We'll touch on some of the "multiple economic and social benefits, multifunctionality, cultural support, and ecosystem services to human societies". We will try to connect those elements with the present state of knowledge we have about the *Bundeli* gardens, and more specifically the royal gardens in Rajnagar.

Rural Landscape

First of all, we have to address the core concept of "rural landscape". When we use the word "landscape" our inner eye immediately sees a large patch of land, only limited by a broad horizon. Can a *Bundeli* garden be a landscape? Following the ICOMOS-IFLA definition, it is surely "a system that encompasses rural elements and functional, productive, spatial, visual, symbolic and environmental relationships amongst themselves and with a wider context." (p.2) Size is no defining element, as a rural landscape can be "huge, semi-urban, small" (p.2). The *Bundeli* gardens can be found in semi-urban environments, mostly a small village, but sometimes also in open field. This is surely connected with the function of caravanserai for the royal family to be used as a resting place after a full day's travel. Bundelkhand being fore mostly an agrarian region, the adjective "rural" is well self-explanatory.

Heritage

The notion of "heritage" (tangible and intangible) introduces the notion of time, of tradition, of lore. Physically, the gardens (with their temple, *kothi*, stepwells, irrigation channels) are testimony of a complex system of values in the social (*kothi*), religious (temple, stepwell) and economic (channels, land) fields, but as mentioned before : the archival sources are quiet on these.

When we look at the role of royal families all over India, we often find that they are the first to introduce a new and advanced technology, new and better varieties of crops and fruits, since they had the connections and the



Farming in Rani ka Bagh (Photo credit - Rajjab Khan)

funds to experiment with pilot projects. As such, they were in the agricultural field a role model for their local farmers. We can assume that the same was true for the royal *bundeli* gardens.

In general, the agriculture in the gardens will have used animal traction (bulls) for ploughing, irrigation (drawing water from the wells) and transport. The fields will have been relatively small, as the gardens were divided by the presence of brick water channels. Local varieties of pulses, grains and vegetables will have been developed during generations by the local farmers, but the novelties from outside will have been introduced by the royals.

Local Wisdom : Navdanya – Gandhi Smarak Nidhi

India had innumerable and regionally very diverse agricultural and farming traditions, many of them being already lost to time (Shiva 2000⁶). All these traditions and techniques very organically deal with the region-specific needs in terms of climate and environment. But in the current rapid urbanization and population

pressure, government and industry policies alike tend to overlook and even endanger this traditional wisdom, sorting to extreme and technology based agriculture which comes with a heavy price on environment (Shiva & Holla Bhar 2001)⁷. A possible strategy to counter this scenario is to exploit this inherent community wisdom and resilience to pave the way for a long term sustainable development. The conservation project of the historical royal produce gardens found all across the region of Bundelkhand attempted to tap into the local agricultural practices and wisdom to create centers of organic agriculture and biodiversity excellence.

For this purpose a collaboration for expertise was setup with Navdanya in 2006. Navdanya is an organization for Indian organic farming movement active in 18 states of the country. Navdanya has helped set up 122 community seed banks across the country, trained over 5,00,000 farmers in seed sovereignty, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture over the past two decades, and also helped setup a fair trade organic network in India (Navdanya 2015)⁸. Since the gardens were privately owned a formal agreement was signed with the owners of two of these gardens namely Rani Bagh and *Pateriya ka Bagh* which allowed us to monitor and direct the development of the two gardens. These two gardens were intended to be as test cases.

This awareness campaign for organic farming and local capacity building was carried out by establishing a local chapter of INTACH (in 2007) which coordinated various training programs for the farmers in the town of Rajnagar within these historical gardens in collaboration with Navdanya. The local chapter helped build faith on the capacity building and encourage community

⁶Shiva, V. 2000. An Ecological History of Food and Farming in India, Diversity: The Hindustan Way. Vol. I. III vols. New Delhi: Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology/NAVDANYA.

⁷Shiva, V. and Holla Bhar, R. 2001. An Ecological History of Food and Farming in India: Sharing Earth's Harvest- Creating Abundance or Scarcity. Vol. II. III vols. New Delhi: Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology/NAVDANYA.

⁸Navdanya. 2015. Navdanya. Accessed February 20, 2016. <http://www.navdanya.org/>.

Nigam, D. and Narula, V.N. 2011. Rural Tourism: Emerging Issues and Challenges. Shree Pub: New Delhi.

participation in the project. INTACH in collaboration with Navdanya started regular training programs for the local farmers in organic farming.

Currently the organic farming and training is being furthered by Madhya Pradesh Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Chhatarpur who hold discussion session for local seed variety conservation with the local farmers. Till date a crop rotation schedule is planned for the two gardens undertaken with a dynamic conservation approach.

Initiatives on Several Fronts at the Same Time

On the social front, educational tours for children from local schools and awareness campaign about the historical and agricultural values of these gardens are organized regularly in the town. The cultural rehabilitation was also undertaken by doing a series of repair work for the gardens which included from soft cleaning, removal of plant growth to a full scale renovation of the *Kothi* in Rani Bagh. The Shiva statue was reinstated in Rani Bagh which brought back a lot of people to the garden for their morning and evening prayers.

Bundeli music concerts are organized regularly in the gardens to engage the community and to support the local music traditions as it must have been organized in the 18th century during the royal stay in these gardens. These concerts are followed by dinner of local *Bundeli* food made from the harvest of these gardens for culinary practice protection. On economic front the gardens undertaken by the project produced organic harvest which was used by the farmers and the family. The long term project also provided food and livelihood security to six families of the workers who are constantly engaged in the project.

Towards Sustainable Rural Tourism

The project overall has yielded very optimistic results on various fronts. But still the immediate economic profit gained by building over these gardens and no level of protection from the heritage authorities, has led three of the gardens to be irreversibly changed.

To counter the urbanization process which includes private owner building shops, gas stations, marriage halls etc. within the gardens, and to provide a long term sustainability to these landscapes, the project envisages to make these historical gardens as part of a sustainable rural tourism.

This tourism track is foreseen as an extension to the existing popular tourist trail of local, national and international tourists coming for the UNESCO listed temples in Khajuraho.

In order to incubate the tourism as well as the seed bank along with organic farming training for local farmers, a visitors' center is being built in *Pateriya ka Bagh* nearer to Khajuraho. The task for us was to design a structure in a

garden where the *kothi* had broken down but the historical temple is existing (i.e. *Pateriya ka Bagh*). The new structure was designed to respect previously existing historical structures in the garden and also to introduce the right proportions of *Bundeli* architecture to the visitors, since the visitors' center will be the first stop out of many *Bundeli Bagh* to be visited near Khajuraho. The challenge was to design a building which has a *Bundeli* soul with a contemporary appearance, constructed using the older lime construction techniques with modern details. The construction in such vernacular and ecological materials was also undertaken to showcase to the locals that such materials can still be used to construct a modern dwelling in that region.

Challenges Ahead and Conclusions

The pertinent lack of rains has also affected the project negative thus the drip irrigation methods and their efficiencies are being explored into.

The impact of the project on society is obvious though the lack of awareness about the long terms benefits of organic farming and traditions poses a big challenge to justify the project outputs especially since the output has not been evaluated on the basis of pure monetary gains.

The project incubates a huge potential and if implemented on a large scale on the series of such gardens all across Bundelkhand can be foreseen to yield remarkable results and understanding among the local population and pave way towards sustainable development of the regions.

We are often asked why the project is evolving at such a slow pace. And we want to refer to the methodology that is promoted in the ICOMOS/IFLA document: the first step is to understand. This not only entails documentation, but also building trust with the local community for a better understanding of all aspects of a given rural landscape. Second step is to protect. "Our" gardens are private property, and no appropriate legislation is in place to protect such heritage. Protection can only be given through awareness campaigns to convince the owners (and the broader community) of the unique value of this heritage. The third step would be to manage. This happens in the restoration campaigns, the training program in sustainable agriculture, etc. with an important role for the Gandhi Ashram as a local body. The fourth and last step is to communicate, and that's where this article finds it's *raison d'être*.

The principles presented in this document seek to address loss and adverse changes to rural landscapes and their associated communities through the recognition, safeguarding, and promotion of their heritage values. Its goal is to promote an appropriate balance between economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects.

Rural landscapes as heritage are expressions of social structures and functional organizations, realizing, using and transforming them, in the past and in the present. Rural landscape a heritage encompasses cultural, spiritual, and natural attributes that contribute to the continuation of biocultural diversity

Sanjhi the Art for the Divine

Katyayani Agarwal

The Lesser Known Traditions of India

India, a land of great mysteries, attractions, surprises and still so unexplored and so unknown. One lifetime is not enough to unravel this great civilization, the explorations can never end. The uniqueness of this land never ceases to surprise. Every turn, every bend has something different and some new experience to offer.

This old saying in Hindi holds really true '*Kos kos par paani badle, Chaar kos par Vani*' which literally means, that food habits change after every kilometer and dialect after every 4 kilometers. But it's not just water and dialect that changes, the entire vernacular changes, the architecture, clothes, rituals, festivals - land so vast, so diverse and so unique.

In the vast heartland there are many hidden jewels, there are many unexplored places, foods, arts and crafts. Every region depending on the local materials and produce has its own heritage, culture, tangible and intangible traditional knowledge systems unique traditional arts that have been practiced for centuries.

Sanjhi is one such art, practiced in Northern India in the regions of Rajasthan and Haryana but finds its soul in Braj or Vrindavan and Mathura, the birthplace and playground of the Hindu Lord Krishna. Sanjhi is a form of divine art and it is a great example of a folk art that was given an exalted position in the Vaishnava temples during the 15th and 16th Centuries. Sanjhi art also known as Vaishnava Yantra, originated out of the cult of Lord Krishna, in Braj. It's a living tradition practiced only by a few families of Brahmin priests and acharyas. The Shri Radharaman temple in Vrindavan is one of the main temples where this unique form of art is still being practiced and has been for several generations. However due to its complex nature, it is on the verge of extinction and there are only five artists in the world who still practice this art.

According to mythology - Radha, Lord Krishna's beloved, would decorate the walls of her house with Sanjhi art to attract his attention. She would do this every evening when the young cowherd would return from the pastures with his herd of cows, and there would be haze of dust created by the hooves of the cows called the '*godhuli bela*'. The walls of the house would be covered with dust and on that dusty surface she would sketch motifs. Soon other *gopis* also started to create Sanjhis, trying to out do each other, for his attention. The word Sanjhi is derived from words like *sajja*, *shringar*, and *sajavat* all meaning decoration.

Traditionally, it is practiced only during the 15 day shraddha period, as that is the only time when there are no festivals and celebrations in the temple and the *acharyas* and priests are relatively free. During this period, the young children of the family were encouraged to learn the art form and it has become an important ritual in the temples during 15 days of '*pitrapaksha*'.

Sanjhi is considered to be a manifestation of Radha. While Krishna plays the flute, dances and performs for Radha. Sanjhi is the only medium through which Radha offers her love to Krishna. She dresses herself every day in the form of a Sanjhi and presents herself to the lord. There are several types of Sanjhi - made with flowers, cow dung, natural pigments, powder and water Sanjhi and there are great traditions and rituals attached to it when it is made in the Radharaman temple.

According to Sanjhi artist Acharya Sumit Goswamy, who belongs to the Radharaman tradition, there are rituals that have been followed for hundreds of years. Sand is brought from the banks of the river Yamuna, and a one ft high and 10 x 10 ft size platform is constructed. The sand is then pounded for several days until it hardens and becomes like concrete. It is then cut into an octagon shape and it is on this octagonal shaped platform that the Sanjhi's are made every day for 15 days. 8 to 10 people guided by the main master artists make the Sanjhi. The platform is curtained from all sides, as it is believed that it is Radha Rani decorating herself for her tryst with Krishna in the evening.

The powder Sanjhi made on a raised earthen platform can be of different shapes like hexagon, octagon, lotus or six or eight pointed star. The Sanjhi is made of extremely intricate, complex and interwoven geometrical patterns, that surrounds the Krishna's motif, which is equally fine and complex. The central design is usually a scene from an incident in the life of Krishna, there may be smaller panels with subsidiary scenes in them. Borders of very complex latticework of floral or geometric patterns surround these panels. Narrow decorative borders frame the entire design and the sides of the platform are decorated with powder. First a graph is drawn on the platform, and then the basic outlines of the pattern are made with the base colors. Small pouches of fine muslin cloth are filled with powdered coloured pigments and the powder is sieved through the pouch and layer upon layers of coloured powder covers the complex design of paper stencils (stencil making is a very complex craft and will need another article to write about!).



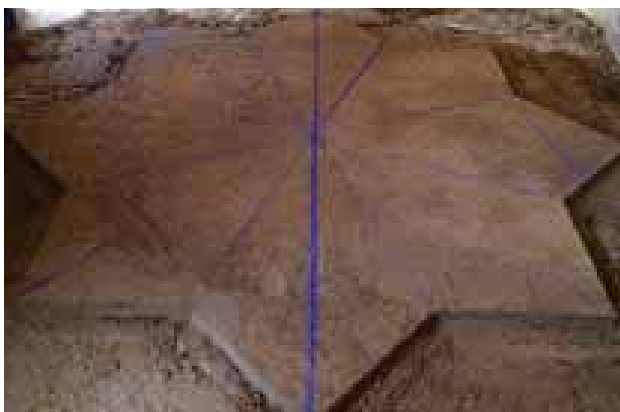
Stencils of different shapes and sizes

The designs are intricate and depending upon the design and colors required, the artist may use up to four different stencils for the same motif to define every aspect of it. This is done with extreme caution and expertise as even the smallest mistake cannot be rectified and the Sanjhi will have to be totally scrapped and redone. It takes about 12 to 14 hours to make a Sanjhi. Finally once it is completed, the curtains open for public view or 'Radha Darshan' an Arti is performed of both the presiding deity and the Sanjhi. 'Sanjhi padas' are sung and prasad is distributed.

Sanjhi padas

साँझ समे जमुना के कूले फूल लेत फल पाये री!
लतन ओट सौ निकसि अचानक नैन सौ नैन मिलाये री !!

*(Sanjh Samaya Jamuna ke phool lait phal paye ri!
Latan aut sau nakisi achanak nain saun nain milaye ri!!)
Translation: Radha was picking flowers in the evening
and just as she stepped out from behind a bush, she
saw Krishna and their eyes met.*



Base platform



Base pattern



Base platform 2



Sanjhi in progress



Completed Sanjhi

Another form of Sanjhi is water Sanjhi, where water is the canvas and is perhaps the most difficult and complicated art forms. The artist makes an artwork on a flat shallow vessel of water, which is left overnight to become absolutely still. Next morning the artists starts his creation, layer by layer, using powdered color pigments and stencils of paper with extreme dexterity and caution. There is no margin for error, as even one extra grain of the color pigment or a slight breeze can sink the entire work. Depending on the size and the design, an artwork can take anything from 4 to 12 hours to be completed.



Water Sanjhi base



In progress



Completed water Sanjhi

Sanjhi artists take several hours to prepare a design and pride themselves in the intricacy with which the borders are interwoven to form complicated patterns. A Sanjhi is made daily and then destroyed, as it is considered to be a form of Radha, who decorates herself every day and also as per the Hindu philosophy - nothing is permanent.

Like many other traditional arts and crafts of our country, that have been practiced for centuries, Sanjhi too is fading away and is on the brink of extinction. We need to act urgently and save this art form and tradition from disappearing forever. Some of our great classical dance forms like Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Odissi were given a new lease of life by bringing them out of the precincts of temples, Sanjhi too needs a fresh lease of life. Let us make it a part of our celebrations, at weddings, during 'Bhagwat Saptahs' or discourses and other special events.

Let us celebrate with and celebrate Sanjhi, which is created as an offering to Lord Krishna, it is truly a labour of dedication towards one's divine and is justifiably called the Divine Art.



Rural Heritage Conservation in the United States

James Lindberg and David J. Brown

The United States of America's heritage is rooted in its rural communities. Although most Americans now live in cities and suburbs, eighty percent of the nation's landscape is still defined as rural by the US Census. America's diverse countryside contains thousands of places that connect Americans to their past, from farms and ranches to Main Streets, courthouse squares, schools, churches, bridges and battlefields.

For decades, the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States (the National Trust) has worked with partners at the local, state and national levels to protect America's rural heritage and encourage preservation-based community revitalization. Some of its best-known programs have focused on rural places, including:

The Main Street Program

Established in 1980, the National Trust's Main Street Program has helped small, historic, commercial districts compete in the changing marketplace through a combination of local organization, heritage conservation, business development and promotion. More than 1,800 communities across the country have used the Main Street approach to uncover architectural

gems, create unique spaces for local business and restore a sense of community identity and pride. Since the program was founded, locally managed Main Street programs have spurred more than 236,000 building renovations and created nearly 110,000 new businesses.

Barn Again!

More than any other building type, the barn symbolizes America's rural heritage. The National Trust created the, "Barn Again!" program in 1987 to help farmers and ranchers find ways to maintain and use historic barns as part of modern agricultural production. A partnership with Successful Farming magazine allowed the program to reach more than one million farmers, offering case studies, demonstration projects and awards that illustrated practical ways to keep old barns in agricultural use. Although no longer active, the Barn Again! program inspired the creation of barn preservation organizations that are now working to document and preserve barns in more than a dozen states across the nation.

Rosenwald Schools

In the early 20th century, Julius Rosenwald, one of the founders of the Sears department store chain, provided

funding to build modern educational facilities for African Americans. More than 5,300 “Rosenwald Schools” were built by African Americans in rural communities across 15 southern states. These modest, sturdy structures became symbols of community pride at a time when African Americans were not allowed to attend “white” schools. After the Supreme Court banned school desegregation in 1954, most Rosenwald Schools were closed. Many were left abandoned and began to deteriorate. In recent years, some African American communities have rediscovered their Rosenwald Schools and are seeking ways to restore them for new uses, such as museums, libraries, event centers and community meeting halls. The National Trust established a program to assist these efforts, providing planning and rehabilitation grants that have helped bring nearly 100 of the approximately 1,000 remaining Rosenwald Schools back to life. Last year, the National Trust organized the first-ever national conference on Rosenwald Schools, bringing together more than 400 educators and community advocates to share ideas and practical advice on how to save these distinctive rural landmarks.

Threats to Rural Heritage

While these and other National Trust rural preservation efforts have produced many positive results, significant challenges remain. Major economic and demographic shifts are transforming the American rural landscape in two distinctly different ways. In areas near cities or natural amenities, sprawling new development is literally consuming former ranches, farms, forests and small towns. A completely different scenario is playing out in rural areas that have long depended on agriculture, manufacturing or mining for employment; the population in about one-third of rural counties is

slowly declining, leaving behind a landscape of abandoned farmsteads, empty factories and struggling downtowns.

Despite these challenges, exciting opportunities are emerging for rural America, and preservation of history has a powerful role to play in the reinvention of rural economies across the country. Through our success with programs like Main Street, preservationists have recognized that saving historic places is much more likely to happen where there is a strong connection between historic preservation and economic development. Kentucky writer and farmer Wendell Berry reflected this sentiment at a National Preservation Conference when he stated, “We can’t preserve historic buildings to any purpose or for very long outside the contexts of community life and local economy.”

Heritage-Based Rural Development

Recently, the National Trust worked to bring together the full breadth of our expertise in rural preservation – main street revitalization, heritage tourism, adaptive use – and apply our resources comprehensively in specific rural areas. We selected two rural locations to test this approach: a 15-county corridor along the Mississippi River in Arkansas and an eight county region in central Kentucky. We provided funding to hire full-time staff who lived in these regions and worked alongside local and statewide partners. The results included a marketing campaign for local crafts and products in Arkansas called “Delta Made” and a new scenic byway in Kentucky linking together sites associated with the early life of Abraham Lincoln.

At the conclusion of our work in these two pilot regions, we developed a handbook that also defines this approach





to rural preservation: Heritage-based rural development builds sustainable communities and strengthens regional economies through the conservation, use, and promotion of historic and cultural assets. These assets may include buildings, structures, districts, Main Streets, farmsteads, and landscapes, as well as regional arts, crafts, music, food, and events. It supports and complements other rural development efforts.

National Treasures

In 2011, the National Trust reorganized our Preservation Division to focus our field services even more sharply on saving threatened places. The centerpiece of this new approach to field services is our National Treasures Program. National Treasures are endangered places of national significance, or are places where our on-the-ground efforts can offer a positive example for preservation nationwide. Two of our 34 current National Treasures projects illustrate how this program is working to save nationally significant resources in rural areas.

I: Texas:

In Texas, we have joined with our statewide partners to highlight the importance of that state's remarkable collection of historic courthouses. As the seat of county government, courthouses are a uniquely American building type, found in virtually all of the more than 3,000 counties across the country. Texas has more county courthouses than any other state in the nation – 234 historic courthouses are still in active use. With their brick and stone towers, cupolas and domes, Texas' courthouses offer some of the most remarkable examples of public architecture anywhere in the nation. A state grant program established during the tenure of former Governor George W. Bush helped restore more than 80 of these landmark structures. But at least another 70 historic courthouses still need critical repairs and funding for the program has been threatened. To highlight the need to continue the grant program, the National Trust organized a statewide "I Love Texas Courthouses" campaign that used local celebrations and social media promotion to engage local preservationists across the state in an advocacy campaign urging state legislators to fund the courthouse grant program.



II: Elkhorn Ranch

Another example of a National Treasure campaign that is helping to save a threatened rural resource is that of the Elkhorn Ranch. Located in the rugged badlands of western North Dakota, the Elkhorn Ranch is where a young Theodore Roosevelt retreated to recover from the loss of both his mother and his wife. It was at this remote ranch along the Little Yellowstone River that Roosevelt developed many of his ideas about the importance of conserving our nation's natural and cultural heritage. Today, however, the Elkhorn Ranch is surrounded by new oil and gas development. Exploration sites, drilling pads, new roads and increased truck traffic are threatening to forever transform the quiet, natural setting of the Elkhorn Ranch. The National Trust is working with land conservation groups as well as Roosevelt family members to keep this development well away from the Elkhorn Ranch site.

Public Lands

The threats to the Elkhorn Ranch site are part of a larger energy development boom that is changing the nation's historic rural landscape. These changes are particularly dramatic in the west, where vast tracts of land are managed by federal agencies. The National Trust has identified the protection of historic and archeological resources on these public lands as one of its top Preservation Priorities. Our work includes on-the-ground advocacy to protect often remote historic sites that are risk from energy development, off road vehicle use and looting. At the same time, we are urging federal agencies and members of Congress to devote more resources to staffing and stewardship of cultural resources on federal lands.

As these examples illustrate, the National Trust has a long and deep commitment to the protection of our nation's rural heritage and the revitalization of rural communities. We are constantly impressed by the creativity and commitment of the partners we work with in rural areas and we are confident that, together, we will achieve lasting success.

Great Plan of Environment Transformation: From the History of Nature Management in Russia

Yuri Mazurov

Introduction

Russia is a country with deep traditions of agrarian culture, with great achievements in agriculture. For centuries, the Russian peasant fed his country and ensured its export. In many ways, the success of Russian agriculture is associated with the presence in the country of a huge territory of black earth soils - the most fertile lands in the world for growing grain and most other popular crops. At the same time, unfortunately, the entire territory of the country is located in the so-called "zone of risky farming". The risks in it are associated with numerous natural disasters, the worst of which is drought - the ruthless enemy of the Russian countryside and its peasants for centuries.

Drought in Russia is not such a rare occurrence indeed. But sometimes its scale reaches the dimensions of a national catastrophe, manifested in the spread of hunger in the places of this disaster and the death of tens and hundreds of thousands of people from it. Such, in particular, were the droughts of 1891 and 1921. But, perhaps, the drought of 1946, which hit a huge part of the country, was the most terrible in its consequences. The situation was aggravated by the dire consequences of the just-ended war with fascist Germany and its European satellites.

In these conditions, the government of the country decides to take radical measures to prevent similar phenomena in the future. It attracts leading specialists in the USSR to develop an unprecedented project of guaranteed provision of favorable natural conditions for the development of agriculture in the main agricultural zones of the country (Fig. 1). In modern times, it could be called a sustainable agriculture program.



Fig 1: Schematic map of the 1948 environment transformation plan on the Soviet post stamp

Plan and its Context

In October 1948, authorities of the USSR adopted a comprehensive long-term plan for the transformation of nature in order to ensure high sustainable yields in the main agricultural regions of the country. In terms of its economic, environmental, and geographical characteristics, this plan had no precedent in either domestic or world history. The project, designed for the period 1949-1965, was developed as a reaction to the consequences of the severe drought of 1946, but in its content it was undoubtedly a strategic document of national importance.

However, despite the noted circumstances, this plan still remains ignored by analysts of the history of environmental management. The initial reasons for this annoying fact are likely to lie in the political aspects of the life of Russian society. It is believed that the named plan was developed and adopted on the initiative of the Soviet leader Josef Stalin. Almost immediately, it received in society the title "Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature", which reflected both its essence and status (Fig. 2). The immediate goal of the



Fig 2: Poster of the end of 1940th "Win the Drought"

plan was to prevent droughts, sand and dust storms in the southern regions of the USSR (Western Kazakhstan, the Volga Region, the North Caucasus, Eastern Ukraine). In accordance with this plan, it was necessary to change the climate on an area of 120 million hectares, equal to the territories of Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands combined.

The central place in the plan was occupied by field-protective afforestation and irrigation. In total, it was planned to reforest more than 4 million hectares of the territory and create state field protection belts with a length of over 5300 km. These strips were supposed to protect the fields from hot southeastern winds - dry winds. In addition to the state forest protective belts, forest belts of local importance were planted along the perimeter of individual fields, along the slopes of ravines, along existing and newly created reservoirs, on the sands (Fig. 3).



Fig 3: Field protection belts

The plan also provided for the introduction of a grass farming system developed by the outstanding Russian scientists P.A. Kostychev and V.R. Williams. According to this system, part of the arable land in crop rotations was sown with perennial legumes and bluegrass grasses. Herbs served as a fodder base for animal husbandry and a natural means of restoring soil fertility.

The measures taken have led to a significant increase in grain yield. As a result of an increase in investment in agriculture and an improvement in the technical equipment of collective and state farms, it was possible to create a solid forage base for the development of animal husbandry.

The plan envisaged not only absolute food self-sufficiency of the Soviet Union, but also building up the export of domestic grain and meat products from the second half of the 1960s. Created forest belts and reservoirs had to significantly diversify the flora and fauna of the USSR. Thus, the plan combines the tasks of environmental protection and obtaining high sustainable yields.

Scientific Support

The most important feature of the 1948 plan was its thorough scientific support, based on the ideas of a whole team of prominent Russian scientists and practitioners of agriculture. The leading place among them rightfully belongs to the professor of St. Petersburg University Vasily Dokuchaev - the founder of modern soil science (Fig. 4). In 1892, a year after a terrible drought that engulfed almost the entire black earth zone



Fig 4: Monument to Vasily Dokuchaev in Moscow

of European Russia, he published the book "Our Steppes Before and Now". In this book, he simply and clearly explained the causes of steppe droughts, which he saw not so much in changes in natural conditions as in the predatory nature management of that time, in the depletion of the natural fertility of chernozem (black) soils. There he also proposed and substantiated a coherent system of measures that could protect the steppe zone of southern Russia from crop failures.

Dokuchaev's system is based on his idea of "harmony with nature" and includes:

- Regulation of runoff of large and small rivers and arrangement of local water basins for irrigation of adjacent lands.
- Securing ravines with the help of forest plantations, wattle fences and hedges, arranging ponds to retain snow and rainwater, in order to irrigate the underlying slopes and the bottom of the gullies, prohibiting plowing of steep slopes.
- Regulation of watersheds using a system of shallow ponds, rows of hedges for accumulating snow and retaining spring and rainwater.
- Afforestation of all sands, mounds and generally uncomfortable plots for arable land.
- Development of norms that determine the relative areas of arable land, meadows, forests and waters, that is, the correct organization of steppe territories.
- Application of the most favorable methods of soil cultivation for the use of moisture and adaptation of varieties of cultivated plants to local soil and climatic conditions.

Having developed a program for combating drought and having organized a number of experimental sites for many years of testing their proposals, Dokuchaev created the basis for that grandiose plan for transforming the nature of the steppes. He understood that the program he proposed to combat drought was a national task. However, it was impossible to implement it in the conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia. The ideas of the great Russian scientist about the radical transformation of the nature of the steppes were in demand only after 50-60 years, under the conditions of a planned socialist economy, with the active scientific support within the framework of a national project.

Implementation of the Plan

The implementation of the plan began almost immediately after the adoption of the government decree. Among other things, this was facilitated by the active work deployed in the country to clarify the meaning of the plan. Prominent scientists, university professors, municipal and regional authorities, cultural figures and the media took an active part in it (Fig. 5). The topic of this plan has become one of the main points in the country's information and educational policy. Nature conservation courses have become ubiquitous in university curricula. In the field of education, the topic of nature conservation and transformation has dramatically expanded its presence



Fig 5: Poster encouraging participation in the implementation of the forest planting plan.

The adopted plan received the broadest public support. Undoubtedly, this was facilitated by its popularization by the state. But even more important was the factor of conscious support of this plan on the part of the country's peasants. As bearers of traditional ecological culture, they saw in this government project a reflection of the popular ideas of increasing the efficiency of agriculture based on centuries of experience. The urban population, most of which at that time were peasants in their very recent past, did not remain aloof from this project.

The most important advantage of this long-term plan was the possibility of obtaining economic results literally from the first years of the creation of its infrastructure. So it actually happened. By 1952, the infrastructure envisaged by the plan was basically created and started to work. The quality of agricultural lands, protected by forest belts and provided with modern reclamation, gradually increased - erosion decreased, water balance was ensured, and as a result, the yield of fields and the productivity of forage lands increased. The measures taken have led to an increase in the yield of grain crops by 30%, vegetables - by 50-75%, herbs - by 100-200%. The situation changed in full accordance with the scientific forecast, which promised the country significant progress in the agricultural sector and environmental well-being.

The Fate of the Plan and its Meaning

However, with the death of Stalin in 1953, the fulfillment of the plan was curtailed. Many forest belts were cut down, several thousand ponds and reservoirs for fish farming were abandoned, hundreds of forest protection stations created in 1949-1955 were eliminated. Instead of the Stalin plan, the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev put forward another plan based on increasing the production of grain crops due to the development of virgin lands. Unfortunately, this plan was not scientifically justified, which led to its negative environmental consequences, without providing sufficiently targeted economic results.

Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature was not fully implemented. However, the very fact of its adoption and partial implementation became a bright page in the history of domestic environmental management and an instructive example of the combination of economic, social and environmental interests. The forest belts created at that time firmly fit into the landscape of a number of the most important agrarian regions of the country, still ensuring their well-being results (Fig. 6).

Despite the decades of the actual hushing up of this grandiose national ecological and economic project, a number of its elements have been in demand both in Russia and abroad. Particularly impressive in this regard is the large-scale afforestation of semi-desert and desert territories in China. At the same time, it seems that many elements of the current forestry policy and environmental policy of this country as a whole are based on the ideas of the scientific heritage of V. Dokuchaev and the lessons of the Stalin Plan for the transformation of nature.



Fig 6: Dokuchaev's heritage, the legacy of the Stalin plan

Conclusion

Stalin's plan for the transformation of nature is perceived in our time as an outstanding event in the history of nature management in Russia. His project received an unprecedented scientific basis, it was enthusiastically supported by the entire vast country. It has become one of the national development priorities. However, the fate of this plan turned out to be dramatic, it was actually curtailed without any real reason.

At the same time, his story is highly instructive. This plan largely anticipated the emergence of the domestic concept of rational nature management and, to a certain extent, the Western concept of sustainable development. This is especially true for our time - the era of transition to a "green" economy as the main condition for sustainable development.



Clydsdale horses

Agriculture Alongside of Heritage Conservation: Teachings from the Past, Lessons for the Future

Anika Molesworth

Abstract

Agriculture is a dynamic and constantly evolving industry, molded by a myriad of social, environmental and economic factors. Adapting our agricultural land management to a rapidly changing world may be a challenge, however it is an essential step towards protecting the natural and built assets of this world whilst providing food and fibre to meet our ever growing needs. Change will occur inevitability in rural communities and the surrounding environment, but what will differ is the acceptance of change, the ease of transition, and the direction of change.

National Trust farms around the world are not only playing a vital role in protecting and conserving rural buildings, rare breeds, traditional skills and local biodiversity but also in developing innovative sustainable practices that reflect the changing environment of the twenty-first century. A greater awareness and mindfulness developed from learning about past agricultural landscapes and practices, will allow change to be approached in a confident,

cooperative manner, and in the context of clear values and a long-term vision.

Stories from the Past

The warble of the Magpie bird in the early morning sunlight is a quintessential Australian sound. Eucalyptus leaves rustling in a warm breeze alert the world to a new day. However, these soothing tones of the bush were alien and unsettling to the early pioneers. As the first European settlers ventured into the vast Australian hinterland they were confronted by starkly different conditions to those that they were familiar with. Moving their sheep and cattle in a search of new grazing land, the immigrants carried precious garden and crop seeds as well as grape vines within their luggage, seeking to acclimatize this foreign yet ancient land so as to reestablish the familiar landscape of their home countries.

In Australia, this approach to changing the land to a more familiar, indeed less confronting, environment was a common story. As an illustration, I will describe just

one heritage property which is in the care of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The fertile flood plains of the Yarra River in the Yarra Glen district, Victoria, was a real attraction for drovers and their hungry grazing animals. Scottish settlers Agnes and William Bell were the first to lease the land upon which the now National Trust owned Gulf Station was established in the 1840s. The original 10,100-hectare (25,000 acre) property was farmed for nearly 100 years by the Bell family. The original owners and their descendants ran Gulf Station as a profitable and self-sufficient pastoral property supplying meat and other produce to gold miners of the district in the then British colony of Victoria, who had been lured by dreams of instant and great wealth. When the 19th Century gold rushes ended, Gulf Station was well established supplying produce to the growing rural and town communities of the Yarra Valley.

The National Trust of Victoria acquired stewardship of the property in 1976. Original building materials and historic artifacts were found around the farm which enabled the National Trust to authentically restore the buildings that had fallen into disrepair. Relying on personal recollections and records, the cottage garden of the homestead was also restored to its original state, largely using surviving plant stock. Gulf Station is now one of the oldest and most intact examples of a pioneer farm complex in Australia. It is also home to a wide variety of rare breed farm animals, including Waler horses (used by the Australian Light Horse Brigade of WWI), Ayrshire cattle and Pilgrim geese. These heritage breeds are maintained to preserve the genetic diversity of animals characteristic of the colonial era, whilst simultaneously adding value to the visitor experience by ensuring there is an authentic connection with the property's heritage.

However, many challenges face this rural property. Urban encroachment is an important issue in the Yarra Glen region, with green pastures rapidly being replaced by cookie-cutter houses characteristic of urban sprawl. City consumers are increasingly disassociated from the

natural environment and food production, and with this there is a growing disinterest in rural issues. Rising maintenance and running costs associated with fuel, electricity and wages reduce profit margins and the increasing volatility of the climate is further challenging land management and production efficiencies. These factors necessitate a continuous evolution of farm management practices in order to overcome, mitigate and adapt to these challenges.

As a means to engage urban populations and empower rural communities, Gulf Station has implemented management programs and strategies to ensure its long-term survival whilst retaining its historical significance. The property hosts interactive workshops and reinterprets pioneer skills in modern ways to engage today's visitors. It showcases artisan and heritage skills, capturing the audience's imagination with traditional costume and stories. Children flock to the giant Clydesdale horses that were once used to plough the earth, and their faces light up at a whip-cracking demonstration, a skill to manage livestock. Gulf Station also provides a country space for weddings and other ceremonies, bringing together friends and families to share precious events. The importance of looking after this piece of pioneer history cannot be overstated. The heritage structures and traditional farming landscape help to tell the story of early European settlers in the region, the hardships faced by farmers and opportunities seized in a bygone era. It is also a place to be enjoyed by the current population and preserved for future generations.

Farming for the Future

There are countless examples across the world where communities have come together to promote sustainable farming practices in conjunction with natural and built heritage conservation. National Trusts the world over are leaders in this area, but there are numerous other like-minded communities similarly respecting the past whilst concurrently showcasing sustainability practices for the present and future.

Clydesdale horses





Hafod y Llan, Wales



Wimpole Estate, England, Highland cattle

Arcadia Farm in Virginia, United States of America, is a community run garden that produces fresh fruit and vegetables for underprivileged neighbourhoods and provides farm and nutrition education. Arcadia Farm helps to connect local farmers to consumers, reducing food miles which means cutting carbon emissions and supporting the community in which one lives.

Hafod y Llan in Snowdonia, Wales in the UK, has tapped into the natural power of water, and generates all its energy from hydropower. Renewable energy plays a vital role in future rural communities, and this farming property demonstrates that it is possible to conserve the natural environment whilst adopting technology at the same time.

Wimpole Estate in Cambridge, England, is undertaking various sustainable actions to ensure its value and longevity. Land managers are proactive in the enhancement of native biodiversity, improving carbon level in the soil, reducing the use of fossil fuels, and reconnecting people with the countryside. The Estate also helps to preserve livestock genetic diversity in heritage breeds, and educates visitors why it is important to save such characteristics of by-gone farming eras for the future.

Community Will-Community Power

Many factors shape our agricultural landscape, both cultural and natural, and some are welcome whilst others unwelcome. Local and regional challenges and opportunities are varied and often unique to a district, having significant influence over agricultural managers. Farming communities have always worked within a dynamic and constantly changing industry, and so it will continue to change, evolving in response to the pressures of today and will continue to do so in the future.

Communities play a vital role in the looking after their local natural and built assets. The values, mindset, outlook and goals of individuals and regional communities will influence what is preserved and what is changed. Ensuring there are significant, meaningful and long-term positive impacts arising from agricultural development requires planned and facilitated strategies. A complete understanding of the operating environment and necessary changes cannot be achieved through laboratory and researcher-driven investigation

alone. There is the need for strategies to incorporate local knowledge and ideas, which calls for stronger community participation. Traditional agrarian communities have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the sustainable management of agro ecosystems to impart. People with common values and goals have the potential to solve complex challenges and we need to foster an environment in which this knowledge can be harnessed, shared and enhanced.

The knowledge of rural communities is founded on the diversity and dynamics of local farming systems, and local communities guide the development of tools to promote and accompany transition and change. This participation at all stages ensures the selection, design, testing and adoption of an appropriate path forwards. In contrast, without farmer participation engendering a real sense of “ownership” of the processes of change, development strategies are at risk of low farmer adoption, loss of community interest, or inappropriate technologies leading to social inequities, environmental degradation, and loss of cultural connections. Engaging rural communities in the conservation of agricultural heritage is necessary to appreciate past achievements, current challenges and opportunities, and realise future directions. Further, such rural communities are the repository of knowledge, often reflecting generations of experience.

Multi-stakeholder alliances can help co-develop sustainable solutions. This collaboration ensures that practices and knowledge are better understood, harnessed and incorporated in farming systems of the future. By empowering rural communities we give them the capacity and confidence to combat the challenges they face. Traditional agricultural systems can teach us a lot about managing rural landscapes and help steer us on a sustainable trajectory.

Realising the Vision

Gulf Station quietly sits, watching the ages pass and the landscape change. The nearby township of Yarra Glen is now a bustling tourist centre where smartly dressed people flock to taste the wine and savour boutique food delicacies of the district, they admire a rural district characterized by the mighty eucalypts framing a foreground of vineyards and verdant pastures. Although



Pioneer skills Gulf Station

the encroach of suburbia is not far away, at this verge or threshold of a rural landscape, the visitor, by taking a moment to listen to the sounds of the bush — the magpie song and the whisper of a breeze through the trees — one can still conjure up images of the early settlers carving out a new life in an ancient land.

There is much that can be learnt from the past. The early pioneers were adaptive, learning to live and work in a new environment with new resources. These stories are captured in the country buildings that now stand with a lean, the horse plough that lies rusted in the stables, and the undulating fields filled with a mosaic of plant and animal species and interactions. The challenges the pioneers faced, their defeats and their successes are stories we must remember and learn from. No one is so idealistic to believe that past ways were all good - some practices were regrettable and many unsustainable - but we do need to understand them in order to learn and improve. A sustainable future is more likely to be achievable if we understand and respect the best of the past whilst embracing the best practices, environmentally and culturally, for the future.



Nehill Farm Pig Sept 2011 009

INTO Sustainable Farms

It is important that rural communities recognise that teachings from the past provide lessons for the future, and it is beneficial to adopt heritage conservation practices into farm business models. The International National Trust Organisation (INTO) Sustainable Farms project disseminates information on issues faced by land managers and management strategies being undertaken at National Trust farming properties around the world to ensure their future is vibrant. INTO Sustainable Farms encourages and supports the conservation and preservation of natural resources, heritage breeds and heirloom species, heritage farming structures, traditional rural landscapes, and the use of traditional farming and cultural practices. Farmers work within a global society, and international awareness is becoming more critical in our interconnected world. INTO Sustainable Farms helps to share ideas and knowledge, identify and discuss changes facing farmers, and form a network of strength to offer support and identify opportunities.



Fig 1: Mubarakpuri silk saree weaved in *garchola* pattern, owned by my family (25 years old). Presently the weave is not continued in Mubarakpur because of its intricate pattern, and heavy designing

Flattening the Curve and Breaking the Chain: Case of Mubarakpur Weavers During the Lockdown

Shaista Perveen

The weavers community have always been looked at with a specific set of problems for past many decades. There has been a huge debate on how middlemen have been the cause of problems faced by the crafts communities across globe. Though, it is true for almost every case in India and other parts of the world, it may not be so simple to draw conclusions. In today's pretext, we are faced by yet another set of problems which is caused by the Noval Corona virus, which makes this problem of middlemen appear a little less small than it was thought earlier. This pandemic and the lockdown has been a reason of economic crisis for almost all sectors

except the online business of calls, meetings and webinars. And from the recent take of *Atmanibharta*, we fall susceptible to understand the role of self-produced goods and their producers in our country.

Among many such examples, Mubarakpur, a small village cluster in Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh) appears to be an interesting example to understand the effects of the lockdown for their weavers' community. Large and small businesses have all been affected by the lockdown, and Mubarakpur is a set of small business which make up larger business in the chain of economics. This chain of

economics starts with a weaver who is provided with raw materials and designs by *gaddedar* (middlemen) to produce a woven silk *saree* with gold and silver *zari* work, the product then is sold in national and international markets. The cluster has been known to weave silk saree for centuries, many owned by families especially as wedding gifts (Fig 1). It is exciting to understand that Indian handwoven products have a huge market base in foreign lands, their demand have grown during the past decades due to their intricate designs and quality products.

Jaya Jaitley in one of her recent webinars on “The Crafts of India” mentions that the craftsmen of India are the most humble and modest people who have always focused on their crafts rather than the marketing aspect of it. Her words bring forth memories of interactions with Mubarakpur weavers, their dedication, focus and modesty towards such a rich cultural heritage. Mubarakpur like other crafts centres, also has a fix template of management and marketing, where the traditional weaver only participates in the production of the crafts. Superimposing the layers of various functions, there is a cycle of event that governs the working of a craft community. Mubarakpur, a handloom weavers settlement has a management cycle where the middlemen is in the centre, the consumer and producer lies at the two ends of the management spectrum. As the name suggest “middleman” is an intersection of producer and consumer, two important components of an economic system. Based on such a template, many have claimed that the major reason for the deterioration of Mubarakpur is the middlemen. Making huge profits from both the ends, the middlemen in the present times is a money-making entity in the lives of the craftsmen. These weavers are exploited in terms of wages and are in return provided with no job security and assurance.

To understand this situation, one may need to analyse the management system more critically. Historically the management system of many crafts centre would be governed by the patrons, the middlemen and the craftsmen. Little hamlets of crafts community would send their products to the markets of a nearby urban centre, in the hands of responsible merchants and traders which are in today's context called the middlemen. In return the traders would not only bring them fortune but also add new ideas, designs and techniques of the market city to the home city. These middlemen were a means of exchange of ideas and cultures among the communities. Thanks to the middlemen, silk reached the world in such a short time travelling through the famous silk route. During the medieval world the patron (king) would ask for various craft centres to be established in and around his kingdom, these centres would supplement his requirements of exquisite turbans, wraps and fabrics embroidered with gold and silver. There are numerous

mentions where these fabrics would be brought from various *karkhanas* to the imperial courts and these *karkhanas* would be a part of their larger empire tucked between markets towns and their feeder craft villages.

Similar *karkhanas* were developed from the times of Tuglaqs to the times of Mughal empire (15th - 18th CE), in the vicinity of Doab region, Mubarakpur was one of them. As described above the middlemen were the integral part of the management chain of production of the silk products that were transported to the royal courts of Delhi, Jaunpur, Allahabad, Varanasi to the far east subahs of Bengal. In today's context also the middlemen play same role of moving the craft through the management cycle, but their role as providers to the weaver's community is superimposed by their exploitative methods.



Fig 2: A traditional handloom set up of a weaver's residence

Understanding Mubarakpur

Mubarakpur comprises of smaller village clusters such as Chak Sikari, Sonapur, Islampur, Amilo, Newade, Rasoolpur, Ibrahimpur, Pura soofi, and many others (fig 3). For each village Mubarakpur acts as centre where weavers and middlemen interact in the local bazaar of Mubarakpur, from here the product is transported to the mandi of Varanasi and is sold in bulk and retail. The local bazaar of Mubarakpur comprises of around 50 to 60 shops which deals in whole sale, where *gaddedars* and *grihast* (middlemen) meet for the exchange. As per a survey of 2007, Mubarakpur comprises of approximately 40,000 weavers who work under various middlemen.

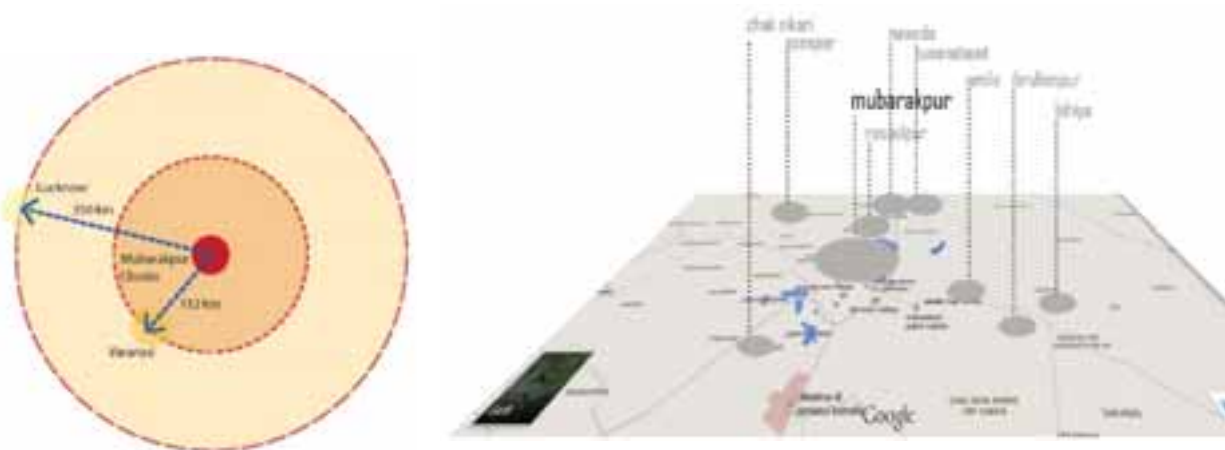


Fig 3: Left- Location of Varanasi from Mubarakpur as Mandi and Lucknow as secondary market. Right - The clusters of smaller village making the integrated weaving cluster of Mubarakpur



Fig 4: The Management cycle of the weavers of Mubarakpur, placing the master weaver in the centre of economic chain to improve the workability

a. The Management Hierarchy of Mubarakpur

For a systematic understanding of the management hierarchy in Mubarakpur, one needs to segregate the hierarchy into different categories based on the stake, ownership and function of the stakeholders. The four major categories are middlemen with independent group of weavers (Category A), middlemen with weaver working in *karkhanas* (Category B), self-help groups or cooperatives (Category C) and independent weavers (Category D). Each system comprises its own set of weavers. Majority of weavers in Mubarakpur come under the category A and is the oldest, where they are paid daily wages ranging from Rs 150 to Rs 500 per day depending on the intricacy of the weaves required and simultaneously the time taken to complete the saree. In this category the raw material with design and colour scheme is provided by the middlemen and each weaver

weaves as per the desires and requirements of the middlemen, on the handlooms set at the weavers residence. This category dominates the hierarchy system because almost all the weavers have no capital investment for the raw material required, and sometimes even the handloom has to be set up by the middlemen. Category B is a slightly new system for the weavers of Mubarakpur, while this has been a common trend in the weaving sector of Varanasi. In this category the middlemen establishes a small *karkhana* with 10 to 15 looms and weavers are paid to work on these set up. All the pre loom and post loom activities are completed in the *karkhana* itself, and it becomes a monthly job system for the weavers. Category A and B are not very much different in terms of finances for the weavers but a very significant concern lies in their working style, which forms the backbone of this weaving culture.

Category A: Middlemen with independent group of weavers
 Category B: Middlemen with weaver working in karkhanas (handloom workshops)
 Category C: Self Help Groups and Cooperatives
 Category D: Independent Weavers



Fig 5: The management hierarchy- yellow represents the number of traditional weavers involved in weaving in different categories while grey is the corresponding profit made by the traditional weavers



Fig 6: Traditional handloom weaver in a local karkhana, Mubarakpur



A silk saree with contemporary motifs and designs

Category C has proven to be a creative uplift for the weaver's community of Mubarakpur, where many weaving families have formed self-help groups and act as body to produce and sell their products in the markets, the profit is shared by each investor. This category comprises weavers, their families and relatives, who are financially independent and support each other as a single body. Independent weavers who come under Category D, procure raw materials on their own, bleach the silk threads, develop a design, dye the threads, wrap the warp and weft and weave the finished saree, then it is independently sold into the markets. There are very few independent weavers in Mubarakpur, reason being not many weavers could afford the finances of buying the raw materials and developing the design scheme on their own. Category A and B are mostly dependent on the wholesale market but Category C and D makes most of its profits from annual fairs, melas and exhibition held annually in different parts of the country. It is very interesting to note that the proportion of weavers

involved in different categories to the proportion of profits made by the weavers is inversely related (fig 5). The more independent the weaver is, the more profit it makes, and the more it develops economically and socially. This statement should not be taken in isolation, it is a collective process. It is not that the weavers should all be made independent to make them financially viable in the present scenario. There lies an intricate web of traditional management system which tries to fit in the contemporary scenario of fewer demands and lesser profits for the traditional weavers of Mubarakpur.

b. The Intangibles of Management Hierarchies

In the case of Mubarakpur all these categories are knitted together, they have different implications to the weaving craft. The hired weavers who are supplied with raw materials and design, work at home with their family members. The entire family is involved in various pre loom and post loom activities such as tying of warp and waft, filling of bobbins, sitting on a loom to weave the

patterns etc. Post loom activities include trimming of extra threads, finishing works etc. While all this process happens at home involving kids and other members of the family, it is very likely that they develop the understanding of the crafts at a very early age. This not only ensures the transfer of knowledge system for the future generation but also ensures that the family works together and their lifestyles are governed by the weaving processes.

On the other hand, once a weaver moves to a *karkhana* for work, he breaks this connectivity and an unseen loss sweeps within the traditional weaving management system. In both the cases there is one benefit that a weaver receives if he is working in a *karkhana*, if any damage regarding the quality and design occurs, the loss is incurred by the middleman who is the owner of the *karkhana*. While if the same problem occurs at a weaver's home, the damaged product is returned to the weaver and the loss is to be paid from his side. This may seem to be a small issue but its implications are huge when a weaver only earns Rs 150 as a daily wage and takes 15 days to complete a saree which somehow has defects due to some unavoidable reasons. A weaver of such wage would be working for another 15 days without a pay or would be in debt under a middleman. This leads to various other social issues in the community - from a child to be born, his daily need, education and marriage. Each important stage in a weaver's life is managed by taking loans from middlemen to be paid by weaving for him for the rest of life. This vicious cycle keeps on continuing till the weaver is compelled to work for the same middleman for his whole life without making profits and growing financially or socially.

Breaking this vicious cycle, many have turned into self-help groups and cooperatives, and this has benefited many among the community. This forms an interesting composition of members coming together as equal investors, they may belong to same clan for example the *bohris*, the *shias*, the *barellwi* or simply friends to form their own self-help group. Among themselves is a new salesman, designer, dyer, weaver, who earlier were all weavers. This pattern has encouraged young members of the family to take interest in the business and preserve their tradition. This has also reduced the number of unemployment among the youngsters, and improving their situation physically and emotionally. As mentioned earlier, the profit goes to each investor and has drastically changed the economical situation of many weavers. They have found special places in exhibitions, melas and collaborations with designers such as Raw Mango, Manish Malhotra and others in cities, increasing a demand among the elite society members. The Sant Kabir Award, Shilp Guru Award and National Award given by the Indian government has encouraged these weavers to regain an identity of their own. Among the

major exhibitions happening are the Trade Fair, Dilli Hart, Azamgarh Festival by IRTHD, etc. This year another exhibition was held in the newly constructed community bazaar of Mubarakpur for three days, huge response was received from the locals. The services provided by the collective effort of government, NGO and individual clients have given opportunity to traditional weavers to rise on its own and generate a capital to buy raw materials and produce finished products on their own.



Fig 7: Infrastructural status of a weaver's handloom, weaving a traditional silk bridal saree

Post Lockdown Scenario

Despite many efforts, most of the weaving sector is still owned by the middlemen, the weavers have little or no right over the economic chain. The investments and profits are entirely under the control of the middlemen, and the weavers are exploited based on the low wages and time dependency of the product produced. In return no assurance is provided to the weavers and the fine woven work are sold in markets at high prices, where the weavers pay is only about a tenth of the selling price of the woven product. In the past years there has been a huge demand for the handloom silk *sarees* and *dupattas* and Mubarakpuri work has been labelled as a high-end product. On one hand the market has expanded and the profits have escalated, on the other hand the situation of handloom weavers have drastically depleted. The gap between the profits made by the middlemen and income received by the weavers has widened making the

situation worse. The handloom sector apart from economic crisis is facing yet another intervention of power looms. Varanasi being the centre of such products have reduced the intake of pure handloom work and is providing the retail market with fake nylon power loom products which the common public is unable to identify. Facing such a situation the handloom sector pre



Fig 8: Abandoned handloom in a *Karkhana*, Mubarakpur taken in 2016

lockdown was not in a very good state. Fig : Abandoned handloom in a *Karkhana*, Mubarakpur taken in 2016 Amid the lockdown the situations have changed, the existing fighting economy of the handloom sector has felt its biggest loss. While the weavers were still fighting the war between middlemen, poor infrastructure, low wages, and huge seasonal losses, they were not prepared to stand against a health and economic crisis of this pandemic.

As the lockdown continues there is no demand left in the market and investors have lost many clients both domestic and international. New businesses which were beginning to bloom have been crushed, with little or no stock of raw materials. With the first weeks of lockdown in mid March, middlemen still had stocks and asked the weavers to continue their work. As per a middleman in Mubarakpur who owned a *karkhana* of 14 looms, describes that now only 2 of his looms are working. Another middleman in his conversation states that almost 70% of the weavers have lost their jobs. Not having stake and investment the hired weavers are forced to take up other jobs within the community on lower or no wages.

Advantage being, almost all weavers as per their traditional system were already working from home and were saved from the infection, but they could not save themselves from the loss of job and the foreseen crisis. Weaving could no longer be taken forward for the lack of supplies of raw material which were precured from the larger markets of Surat, Ahmedabad and other cities. With this it became difficult for the middlemen to

provide daily pay to the weavers. With little support from the community itself many could sustain with food and essential items. Those working in *karkhanas* were asked to stop coming and self-help groups have sustained among themselves.

Luckily till now there were no major outbreaks of corona cases in the cluster, weavers have fought the health crisis and failed to cope up with their economic crisis. Chanderi another weaving cluster in M.P faces the same situation of no corona patient but almost 2000 weavers lost their source of income as per Kalle Bhai, a social worker and weaver himself.



Fig 9: Lifestyle of a traditional weaver before the lockdown

Breaking the Norms

There have been many initiatives by government and various NGOs to provide essential needs to the crafts community of India, and same has been done in Mubarakpur. While the community survived from whatever it received during the process, this initiative cannot be carried for a long time. The concern is not to provide them financial assistance or essential needs on a daily or monthly basis but to provide them with continuous work. Coping from demonetisation and GST reforms, the handloom sector which was still fighting the war between power loom and imported products has again fallen with the shocks of this lockdown. As per a recent article in Hindustan times which stated "With around 80 per cent of the garment industry mostly micro, small and medium enterprises, Clothing Manufacturers Association of India, which has around 3,700 members employing over 7 lakh people, said most of its members do not have the kind of reserves to see them through 3-6 months of this magnitude". If the above statement for the commercially produced textiles is compared to the handloom textiles the loss would be double assuming the past trends in the handloom sector. K. Radharaman is a textile designer, fashion retail business owner, and founder of The House of Angadi in an article to 'The Wire' has suggested various initiatives to be taken by the government in terms of wage support, incentives and reduced GST. What is more intrinsic that the weavers to be involved in continuous job. The handloom sector can produce linens and other textiles needed for household, hospitals, offices and other work places, which has been a model of Khadi India for long. The same model can be implemented in villages such as Mubarakpur and Chanderi where products are manufactured for the consumers of India. This would ensure continuous demand and also generate funds for the community without putting pressures on the government. It would be a shift from traditional silk weaving but would keep the weavers engaged and employed for a long time. Encouraging handlooms is an insurance of producing local handmade products from natural materials such as cotton and silk, and there could be no debate over the health and environment benefits of these products during this pandemic.

In this lockdown due to corona crisis when everyone is working from home, weavers housing unit works acts as a small cottage industry within itself. The architecture incorporates the handloom and its entire setup, which results in integrated work spaces. Weaving acting as the way of life, the houses acting both as workplace and residence in the same unit. The immediate streets and maidan (ground) for stretching the warp and courtyard for rolling the weft. The key lies in the way of life led by the weavers and self-sustainment of their settlement. The major problem lies to procure the raw materials

which cannot be not produced in Mubarakpur itself and for this the weaver's community entirely depends on the external sources. This need of weavers is highly dependent on connectivity reforms and also caters to the transfer of finished products to their markets. This shift needs to take place at the policy level where the transports forms the spine and re-joins the transport and economic chain.

The policies which already exist need to be appropriately implemented and executed. At the same time is very important to educate the weavers of these reforms, their rights and laws concerning their social, physical and economic growth which the community is going to face after this lockdown. This approach has to be a bottom up approach where each stakeholder manages its demands and shortcomings. It is vital to understand that the middleman in this process is not to be considered a degenerator, in fact their strength of marketing skills and management of resources is to be utilized fully. The community has to come together to establish a system where the financial crisis could be controlled within their management process and no external body is needed in a time of crisis as this making it a self-sustaining system.

The imperatives of protecting and safeguarding the weavers of Mubarakpur and Mubarakpuri *sarees* can be many but the main aim lies in the upliftment of the community through socio-economic upgradation and help the weavers getting the respect and the wages they deserve. Three months into the lockdown, the community has fallen and can only stand with support from us.

This article is a result of rigorous interaction with the weavers of Mubarakpur since 2014 as a part of the architectural thesis, and documentation work for the dossier of Iconic Weaver Clusters of India inscribed in the Tentative List of UNESCO Nominations.



Rural Tourism in India: Potential Waiting to be Explored

Rakesh Mathur

Before we go into the nuances of the concept of rural tourism, the big question is - why rural tourism? Traditionally, tourism is meant to promote historical and commercial cities and destinations, built heritage and sites, natural wonders, adventure activities, shopping, entertainment etc. Why draw people to visit villages and the countryside? What do you showcase that tourists can see, appreciate and enjoy and go back satisfied?

The one simple answer to all these questions is: the experience. This transcends the realm of material and physical pleasures and provides emotional and mental enrichment and satisfaction. There is no substitute for that 'feeling' of being connected to your roots, the lifestyle of your forefathers, the leisurely pace of daily

existence, the bonding of families with clearly defined roles for each member, the uniqueness of village sports and physical exercise, the simplicity of village entertainment, bathing in the open with fresh cool water from the well and the simple classroom under the pipul tree.

Our contemporary urban dwellers have missed out on all this. City children have no idea how apples, bananas, potatoes, cabbage and beans grow, where they come from, and the effort that goes into planting and harvesting. How our milk and ghee are collected and processed, how cattle are reared, how food is cooked if there is no gas, and how bullock carts are a way to travel. The dependency on air conditioners and refrigerators is a

fact of life not only for our urban children but even for their parents. There no awareness of the traditional simple and unique water, room cooling, and storage systems, nor of the use of clay matki and mud angethi.

Our rural areas offer myriad – and to city-bred visitors fascinating – experiences such as the simplicity of highly competitive games like kabaddi, marbles, stapoo and lattoo, timeless old tales, folklore, music from the iktara, (one string instrument), local song and dance performed around the simmering angethi, and the elders sharing a hooka till it is time to hit the bed on the charpai made of jute fibre. It can be an eye-opener to those from hectic urban lives that this way of life can be simple, creative, and satisfying. Rural tourism is the way in which these experiences and these values can be showcased, promoted and shared, amongst our own people as well as visitors from afar.

Though things have been rapidly changing, with commercialisation in the farming sector and strides in industrialisation, more than 70 percent of India's population still resides in rural areas. Developmental activity, such as provision of roads and electrification has of course caused some change, but much of the basic lifestyle is the same. And the expansion of this infrastructure is what actually makes rural tourism feasible.

Villages are the well-springs and the repositories of India's art, craft, culture, values, religious practices, festivals, folk dance and music, and of course, traditional cuisine. It is true that in India cuisine taste, flavour, and condiments change every 200 kilometres, depending on local environment and crops, and it is this variety that offers unique dining experiences. Many traditions and practices are still maintained in our villages. Ayurvedic herbal medicine, the knowledge and practice of yoga, traditional local massages with herbal oils are all integrated with daily living. Ladies knit and teach their children crochet, embroidery, and other textile arts, men integrate deeply rooted wisdom into modern agricultural practices, and all participate in festivals and rituals.

In addition, there is a significant amount of built heritage in our rural areas. Some were once key trading centres and local rulers resided there, in palatial homes. The rulers and wealthy residents were often also patrons of local art, craft and culture, sponsoring the construction of religious structures and elaborate wells and other facilities. The restoration and adaptive re-use of these historic structures can provide a valuable asset for tourism.





It is clear that there is great unexplored potential, but there are also several possible pitfalls that need to be addressed. One danger is the incursion of “five-star” culture, through construction of high-end hotel properties. Some rural areas already have heritage hotels, but these are part of the local legacy. Apart from restoring and adapting traditional properties, construction of new luxury amenities should not be encouraged. This will destroy the very purpose and ethos of rural tourism, which is to provide an authentic and enriching experience. On the other hand, local villagers should be selected, empowered, trained and encouraged to provide neat, clean and hygienic accommodation and facilities within their environment, and become local guides to the guests.

Another serious threat is the damage that can be caused to the local environment by the irresponsible traveller. Apart from the environment, damage can also be caused to local culture and lifestyles. This involves sensitising

and educating the local population against negative practices by irresponsible tourists, and for setting up and enforcing through village elders, a strict code of conduct. Local families need to be trained in the basic importance of good hygiene, sanitation, garbage segregation and disposal practices, while for visitors an introduction to local culture and sensitivities might be provided at the time of booking.

Finally, a serious challenge is infrastructure. Covered drainage, adequate electricity, connectivity, and good sanitation facilities are as essential as is marketing.



With the growth in domestic tourism, rural tourism can also slowly grow. The benefits to our rural residents can be immense, and can include stemming the tide of migration to cities, providing new employment opportunities, and enhancing pride in the local culture, as well as bringing new economic prosperity. But as with all tourism, if handled with sensitivity, it can also play a substantial role in bringing people together, and helping them to understand and appreciate each other's role, culture, and traditions. Truly a win-win situation.





Traditional huts in rural Konso village are the main draw for visitors

Rural Tourism

An Engine for Development

Dr. Harsh Varma

Tourism, when properly planned and managed, can be an important driver for socio-economic growth for rural areas, creating ample job and income opportunities, especially for women and young people. This article describes the relation between rural tourism and local economic development, explains the need for proper planning and stakeholders' engagement, discusses the role of small and medium enterprises, the importance of gender equality, and provides practical examples from the work carried out by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the specialized agency of the United Nations for tourism, on rural development through sustainable tourism.¹

¹ For the purpose of this article, the terms "rural tourism" and "tourism in rural areas" are used as synonyms, always taking into account that they include the active involvement of the rural populations in the planning,

Tourism Trends

With over one billion international tourists travelling the world in 2013 and an estimated five to six billion travelling within their national borders each year, tourism has become a key sector in economies worldwide, both in advanced ones and in emerging and developing countries. Tourism is estimated to account for 9% of the world's GDP, generate one in every 11 jobs globally and represent 6% of worldwide exports. Over the past decades, along with its immense expansion, tourism has also witnessed a substantial diversification of destinations, with many emerging economies and developing countries seeing their tourism sector grow significantly. International tourist arrivals in the emerging markets and developing countries increased from 83 million in 1980 to 507 million in 2013. To give

perspective, the growth rate of international tourist arrivals in emerging markets and developing countries has been substantially higher than that of the advanced economies. While in advanced economies international tourist arrivals grew by 3.3% a year on average between 1980 and 2012, the growth of arrivals in the emerging economies and developing countries during that same period reached 5.7% a year.

Rural Tourism and Local Development

In many emerging economies and developing countries, tourism has become a primary source of foreign exchange earnings. Often, important tourist attractions such as national parks and protected areas, fine landscapes and tropical beaches, are located in rural areas, which may not have many other economic development options. Tourism is, in fact, often better placed than many other sectors to contribute to local economic development in rural areas, as it is consumed at the point of intervention, it is a diverse and labour intensive sector providing a wide range of job and empowerment opportunities as it employs more women and young people than most other sectors and creates opportunities for many small entrepreneurs. Further, taxes and levies from tourism can be used by governments for development purposes, and the infrastructure investment required by tourism can also be beneficial to rural communities. However, poor segments of the population in rural areas do not always fully benefit from the economic impacts of tourism; mainly because of a high level of leakages in the tourism sector. Interventions to enhance the local economic impact from tourism should focus on building capacities among poor communities, in particular youth and women to, obtain employment in tourism companies, supply goods and services to tourists and tourism enterprises and establish small and medium-sized tourism enterprises. Close collaboration between governments, the private sector and the civil society is of utmost importance to make the tourism sector contribute to local economic development in rural areas.

Planning for Rural Tourism Development

When referring to rural tourism and regional development, two critical factors must be considered. First, when new regions are opened up for tourism, they offer a new and different opportunity to travellers – both domestic and international – to gain varieties of experiences, which results in increased foreign exchange earnings and other financial rewards for the destination. Second, when tourism is introduced into rural areas, it fosters regional development in all dimensions: creation of jobs and income for the local people, in particular youth and women, consumption of local products by the tourism sector, support to the local handicrafts and other economic activities and, improved infrastructure and facilities. Thus, it is clear that rural tourism can play an

important role in regional development.

With a clear strategy and regulatory framework for tourism development in rural areas, and the promotion of destinations among potential investors, new investment can be attracted to help develop the sector and create much needed employment and income opportunities. By providing capacity building to local people while promoting investment incentives and legislation that promotes local jobs and the links to other local productive activities, a high share of local employment can be achieved in tourism enterprises. As tourism offers a relatively high percentage of job opportunities to youth and women, these often disadvantaged groups have in the sector, an opportunity to enter the job market and make a professional career.

CASE STUDY

CAMBODIA – MEKONG DISCOVERY TRAIL PROJECT

The Mekong, one of the world's greatest river systems, runs a 190km course through Stung Treng and Kratie provinces in north eastern Cambodia. The Mekong River and the Cambodia's north-east area have been identified by the Government in its National Tourism Development Policy as one of the priority areas to develop in order to expand Cambodia's international image beyond the Angkor Wat and to distribute the economic benefits of tourism more equally throughout the country.

To strengthen the efforts of the Government of Cambodia and as part of its Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) initiative, UNWTO formulated the “Mekong Discovery Trail” project. The project aimed to develop sustainable forms of tourism along the Mekong River in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces and thus enhance local economic impact and benefits to the communities. The project envisaged for the “Mekong Discovery Trail” to be recognized as a brand and tourism destination for rural and ecotourism, where the local community is engaged in providing a wide range of services and experiences to visitors.

The project was implemented in four phases between 2007 and 2012 and achieved the following results: tourists can now enjoy a variety of itineraries for small and thematic biking trails along the 190km long stretch of the Mekong River in Stung Treng and Kratie Provinces. A visitor's guide book, a tourist map and a website with detailed information on the Mekong Discovery Trail is available and fully operational, and so are several tourism products such as horse cart rides, bike and kayak rental for greater visitor satisfaction. Sign posts, information boards, toilets and rest shelters constructed at key areas along the trail provide further comfort to the tourists.

Based on numerous field observations and feedback from the local hotels and guesthouses, the guidebook on the Mekong Discovery Trail has already facilitated a lot

of visits to the communities and extra overnight stays in the provincial capitals. The Mekong Discovery Trail website has seen an increase in visits by more than 50% from 2009 to 2011. More specifically, in 2010 the website received 4783 visits while in 2011 the number of visits has increased to 7455.

Participation and feedback from stakeholders and the private sector helped in the process of designing and promoting the tourism products, the different trail itineraries and business concepts that appealed to the target market, while at the same time yielded the much needed benefits to the local communities. For example, through the website, the guidebook and the media spots, the project promoted a culinary product called “Kralan” (sticky rice in bamboo sticks) as an attraction along one of the biking routes of the Mekong Discovery Trail which helped increase income earning opportunities for the “Kralan” producing families.

By actively informing and involving tour operators, their interest and willingness to purchase goods and services provided by local people has significantly increased. More than 30 new tour operators were promoting the Trail in 2011 and have included places of interest along the Trail as part of their published itineraries.

Thanks to the series of skills training, capacity building and mentoring programs conducted by the project, more than 500 members from the target communities and representatives from tourism business have gained skills and knowledge in sustainable tourism, English, non-verbal communication, hospitality, tourism business and services, and waste management. The most important target communities have now English speakers in tourism services. Six homestays and eleven food and beverage establishments in target communities, and five accommodation providers and eleven food and beverage establishments in Kratie Town have improved their operation. In addition, raising awareness on sustainable tourism development among communities and enabling them to sell goods and services to tourists has helped improve the interaction between tourists and host communities.

The UNWTO ST-EP Initiative

The potential for tourism to play a significant role in rural development is increasingly recognized by the international community and by national governments. In 1999, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development urged governments and development organisations to maximize the potential of the tourism sector for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, including indigenous and local communities. Convinced about the potential of the tourism sector to contribute to poverty reduction, in particular in rural areas in developing countries, the UNWTO launched the Sustainable Tourism for the Elimination of Poverty (STEP) Initiative at the World Summit for Sustainable

Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The ST-EP Initiative aims at reducing poverty levels through developing and promoting sustainable forms of tourism.

Within the ST-EP Initiative, UNWTO has developed several activities in all the regions of the world. It has organized, so far, over 25 regional and national training seminars on tourism and poverty reduction to build capacities among public officials, NGOs, the private sector and communities in developing countries, with the participation of more than 2,000 officials. Continuous research by the UNWTO has led to the publication of five reports on the impact of tourism in reducing poverty levels, including recommendations on how to maximize these impacts.

In 2004, the Government of the Republic of Korea became a pioneer partner of the ST-EP Initiative by hosting the UNWTO ST-EP Foundation and providing funds for project implementation. Subsequently, UNWTO received support for the ST-EP Initiative from the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), the Italian Government, the Spanish Development Agency (AECID), the Flemish Government, the Government of Macao S.A.R. and a wide range of other development agencies and private sector organizations. Thanks to this important support, over 100 ST-EP projects are already under implementation, benefiting more than 35 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The ST-EP projects focus on a wide range of activities, such as training of local guides and hotel employees, facilitating the involvement of local people in tourism development around natural and cultural heritage sites, establishing business linkages between poor producers and tourism enterprises, providing business and financial services to small, medium and community based tourism enterprises, and multistakeholder collaboration to increase the local economic impact from tourism in a destination. The vast majority of the ST-EP projects is implemented in rural areas, with often relatively high poverty levels, providing ample opportunities for disadvantaged people to build up sustainable livelihoods through their involvement in the tourism sector. An example of a ST-EP project focusing on rural tourism development in the South of Ethiopia is provided in the box below.

CASE STUDY

ETHIOPIA – KONSO COMMUNITY TOURISM PROJECT

Konso is the name of a scenically attractive rural district and an ethnic group located in the South of Ethiopia, with a population of 228,000. It is administered by the Konso Special Woreda (KSW), which is a District Council with a considerable degree of autonomous authority. The farmed highland landscape provides part of the visitor appeal but the main draw is the physical

structure of the Konso rural villages, which are densely settled, behind a complex of massive stone walls.

Up to 2006, the local economic impact from tourism in Konso had remained limited, and the interaction between tourists and local people was far from optimal. Most of the tour groups visiting southern Ethiopia passed through Konso and some, but by no means all, stopped there to look at the villages. However, the community was seeing little benefit from the visits and the proportion of visitor income retained locally was low. There was a considerable amount of hassling of visitors, especially by children seeking money and other items, and this had put some operators off from stopping in Konso.

With a contribution from the STEP Foundation, UNWTO launched the ST-EP project titled “Konso Community Tourism Project” in mid-2007. The project was implemented by KSW with the technical support from SNV Ethiopia for a duration of three years. The project aimed to enhance the local economic impact, and in particular the community benefit, from sustainable tourism in Konso.

At the outset, a survey among tour operators and tourists visiting Konso was carried out, that revealed that only one-third of the visitors reserved time to visit one or more of the attractions in Konso, whereas the remaining two-third only had time to make a short stop over (approximately 2-3 hours) in the district capital Karat, before heading further south. Tour operators described the limited availability and low quality of tourist accommodation as the main bottleneck to spend more time in Konso, and also expressed concerns about the hassling of visitors.

To improve the quality of the accommodation in Konso, a two days basic training on customer care and business (hotel) management was provided to 26 owners and managers of hotels, pensions, and restaurants in the area as well as another six days training on service provision for 27 employees. The trainings especially helped to bring about improvements on food preparation, sanitation and hygiene. Convinced of the potential of the area, a large Ethiopian tour operator started constructing a 50 bedroom lodge in Konso, which further helped solve the accommodation problem in the district.

To improve the interaction between tourists and host communities, tourism awareness raising meetings were conducted in Konso villages with a total participation of around 20,000 community members and information on the project was disseminated via the local radio. The awareness raising meetings focussed on those villages most frequently visited by tourists, and discussed how to host tourists in a friendlier manner and gain some income from the tourist visits to the villages. Following these meetings some villages started offering overnight stays to the tourists in their community centres and

serving local food and drinks. In consultation with the regional government, a district fee for tourists visiting Konso had been introduced, and the project made arrangements that 70% of the fees collected would be redistributed to the communities for small scale development projects, such as improvements of schools and construction of toilets and water wells.

The project trained thirteen local guides, who information centre, in the style of a traditional Konso house, was built in the centre of town and operates as an orientation and admission point for all groups and individuals coming to Konso. The centre also contains a sales outlet with local handicrafts. To promote the area among tour operators and tourists, a website (www.konsotourism.gov.et) and marketing materials were developed and distributed among tour operators and other tourism stakeholders.

The results of the project gradually became visible over time. Tour operators and the local government reported that tourist hassling was significantly reduced and that the interaction between tourists and host communities had increasingly transformed based on mutual understanding. Some first improvements were made to the quality and availability of tourist accommodations, and tour operators showed an increasing interest to visit Konso and stay overnight. In four years' time, the number of international tourist arrivals in Konso almost quadrupled (from 1833 in 2006 to 8293 in 2010). The income generated for community development projects via the district fee grew rapidly from US\$ 7,000 in 2007 to US\$ 26,500 in 2009. The thirteen local guides that received training were all regularly taking tourists around in the district. As a group, they earned some US\$ 2,000 per quarter, excluding the tips given by tourists. Detailed figures about the income generated by villagers through selling meals, drinks and handicrafts or the provision of homestays could not be collected, but indications clearly showed that this source of income was also growing.

In merely three years' time, Konso entered the right direction to become recognized as a major location for culture-based and rural tourism in Ethiopia, where the local community is engaged in providing a wide range of goods and services to tourists. Visitor figures and tourism income rapidly grew and development partners showed an increasing interest to support tourism development in the district. The ST-EP project laid a sound basis to develop tourism in Konso in a sustainable manner, and with the further support of development partners and local stakeholders, the tourism sector in the district could make a significant contribution to local economic development.

Tourism SMEs Development in Rural Areas

A factor which deserves particular attention is that the tourism sector offers good opportunities for local people in rural areas to establish small and medium enterprises



The Mekong Discovery Trail offers a variety of rural tourism products

(SMEs) to take part in the tourism value chain. The products and services offered by these enterprises may include: accommodation, catering, handicraft production and retail centers, excursions, and the provision of various recreation activities. Support to engaging poorer groups of the society in the process of establishing and managing tourism SMEs is often a very efficient way to help enhance the local economic impact from tourism. Based on a tourism value chain analysis in the destination, local government authorities and development agencies can provide assistance to local people to identify opportunities for establishing new tourism enterprises or to expand existing tourism businesses, particularly in ways that would help generate more local employment.

There are a number of common challenges faced by local people in rural areas in setting up and managing a tourism enterprise. The main ones are related to limited access to finance, lack of market knowledge and business skills, poor infrastructure, language and communication issues, lack of trained staff and limited experience of handling visitors. The challenges can best be addressed in an integrated manner by supporting SMEs to get access to financial services and business development services, and to provide vocational training to new and existing staff. Financial services to tourism SMEs are provided in various forms and through various institutions, e.g. matching grants issued by a local tourism authority, a revolving fund managed by a local NGO, or soft

loans and small credits provided by micro finance institutes. Business development services are generally delivered by local business service providers, who are well aware of the needs of the sector and the specific characteristics of the destination. The services may focus on topics such as business planning, financial planning, product development, marketing, and establishing business linkages with larger enterprises.

Financial services and business development services are often provided hand in hand; this is to ensure that entrepreneurs do have the knowledge and skills required to achieve a positive return on investment when micro finance is made available. Often entrepreneurs are supported to prepare sound business plans, addressing marketing and financial management aspects, which is generally a pre-condition to obtain financial services.

The formation of associations of rural tourism SMEs is a useful tool to help overcome problems related to their small size and fragmentation. Networks can be established between SMEs of the same type (travel agent, accommodation, etc.), or SMEs based in the same destination. Networks of SMEs can play a key role in organizing capacity building, making arrangements with micro-finance institutes for the provision of financial services, encouraging mutual learning and exchange of experiences, and developing joint marketing activities. A good example of joint marketing undertaken by a network of rural SMEs is the recent website (www.turismoruralcentroamerica.com/en) and mobile application for the promotion of rural tourism



accommodation in Central America, developed by the Network of Rural Tourism Accommodation in Central America with the support of UNWTO and the ST-EP Foundation.

In many rural destinations, there is a considerable scope and need for capacity building for the new and existing staff in tourism SMEs, e.g. on topics as housekeeping, front desk services, tour guiding, and food & beverages. Vocational education is often used as a way to prepare (new) staff for their jobs in tourism SMEs. It is important to develop tailor-made vocational training modules that exactly meet the training needs of the tourism SME staff, and to ensure that training is delivered by local experts who are well aware of the requirements in the sector and the destination.

CASE STUDY

COSTA RICA- E-MARKETINGFOR RURAL TOURISM

In 2013 and 2014, UNWTO supported ACTUAR, the Costa Rican Association of Rural Community Tourism, to implement a rural tourism e-marketing project. The project focused on introducing new e-technology and e-marketing tools to the ACTUAR members, 33 rural tourism enterprises in Costa Rica, in order to improve their connectivity and marketing activities.

Thanks to the project, thirteen rural community based tourism enterprises managed to get connected to the internet and started using e-marketing tools. Thirty representatives from different rural tourism enterprises received training on the new communication technologies, which helped them to develop websites for their enterprises. New e-marketing activities specifically focused on receiving more direct bookings from clients, and on establishing business linkages with European tour operators specialized in eco-tourism and rural tourism. In addition, a familiarization tour to the rural tourism enterprises was organized with the participation of 24 tour operators from Costa Rica.

The new marketing activities helped generate a substantial increase in visitors, i.e. an average increase of 65% over the two years project period, and a related

improvement in level of income and quality of life of the local families involved in the rural tourism projects.

Gender Empowerment through Rural Tourism

When planning and developing tourism in rural areas, it is important to pay particular attention to gender aspects of tourism, especially the issues of women's employment in the sector and women's local participation in tourism planning and management. Rural tourism provides various entry points for women's employment in hotels, restaurants and other tourism enterprises as well as opportunities for creating self-employment through small and medium sized income generating activities, thus creating paths towards improving the socioeconomic situation of women and local communities. However, there are a number of conditions under which this potential can be used more effectively, such as providing training to women to enable them to develop a career in the sector or providing business and financial services to women who want to develop or expand rural tourism enterprises. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that the careers in the tourism sector are not hindered by existing domestic and caregiving responsibilities, and that cultural perceptions towards women's roles are challenged in order to make the socio-economic benefits more sustainable.

In general, women already make up a significant part of the work force in the tourism sector, yet often they mainly occupy lower level jobs and consequently the average income generated by women in the sector is relatively low. To ensure that women can optimally benefit from tourism development in rural areas and that their rights are protected, the managers in the public and private sector need to be made aware of their responsibilities and the opportunities to improve women's participation in the tourism sector. Some of the ST-EP projects implemented by UNWTO have a clear gender focus, and aim to promote gender equality and empower women in selected tourism destinations in rural areas. Lessons learned from the projects show that in order to enhance women's opportunities for participation in rural tourism, collaborative efforts are required between the national and local authorities, the civil society and the private sector, and women should be involved in all stages of planning and development of rural tourism.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Rural Tourism Development

Having established how rural tourism can contribute towards local economic development, some closing remarks can be made on how to achieve a high degree of sustainability when planning and developing tourism in rural areas. There are several factors, which must be kept in mind before actual development can take place. An essential step in this regard is to hold detailed

consultations with all stakeholders on the shape and structure of the development, including central government, regional government, local authorities, local communities, civil society and the private sector, giving all of them a chance to contribute their views to this consultative process. This should be followed by an objective and realistic assessment of the potential of the tourism resources, cultural, natural, and man-made, as well as the available services and facilities. It is only after these exercises are completed that a process of integrated planning and development can be undertaken, which must revolve around the basic principles of sustainability. The planning process should take into account all the factors which are necessary for the longterm growth and development of rural tourism in the region, in particular the required human resources and infrastructure improvements.

Capacity building activities may be required to enhance the knowledge and skills of members of the rural population to make a career in the tourism sector. The planning and delivery of capacity building activities

should take place in close consultation with the private sector and may require a detailed training needs analysis. Investments in infrastructure need to be properly planned to help unlock the tourism potential and facilitate communication and travel to and within rural destinations. Investments in infrastructure stimulated by tourism can include investment in roads, water supply, energy supply, sanitation and communications and provide considerable benefits to the local people and offer new socio-economic opportunities.

In addition to capacity building and infrastructure, the planning process should also involve formulation of plans for the development of tourist services and facilities, tourist information and, marketing and promotion.

Finally, it is pertinent to re-emphasize that active multi-stakeholder collaboration between all stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society is essential to manage the development of rural tourism in a sustainable way, and to promote the tourism potential of rural destinations in an efficient and effective manner.

About the Authors

Giles Tillotson is the Author of numerous books on architecture, history and landscape. His writing for general audiences includes his 'Golden Triangle' trilogy: *Delhi Darshan*; *Taj Mahal*; and *Jaipur Nama*. He has also written guides for the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, including *Nagaur: A Garden Palace in Rajasthan*.

Prof. A. G. Krishna Menon is a renowned Architect, Urban Planner and a Conservation Consultant. He is the founder member of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and Former Convenor, Delhi Chapter.

Karni Singh Jasol is Director of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur and was the Project Advisor and Organizing Curator of the exhibition '*Peacock in the Desert - The Royal Arts of Jodhpur*'. He also Co-Curated the critically acclaimed exhibition '*Garden and Cosmos: The Royal Paintings of Jodhpur*', for which he received the prestigious Alfred Barr Award of the College Arts Association. With a Master's Degree in Museum Management and Indian History, Culture, and Ethnoarchaeology from the Maharaja Sayaji Rao University in Vadodara, he is a Fulbright and Charles Wallace Fellow.

Dennis Rodwell is an Independent Researcher and Consultant Architect-Planner. He works internationally in the field of cultural heritage and sustainable urban development. He has also served in local government posts as architect, conservation officer, urban designer, principal planner and project manager. He writes and publishes widely on the theme of conservation and sustainability in historic cities.

Yashaswini Chandra has a PhD in History of Art from SOAS University of London, where she was also a teaching fellow. She has been guest/visiting faculty at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Ashoka University. She worked for Sahapedia, for many years, managing the multi-volume documentation of the Rashtrapati Bhavan and an institutional collaboration with Rupayan Sansthan, Jodhpur. *The Tale of the Horse* is her first book as a solo author. She previously co-edited *Right of the Line: The President's Bodyguard*. She is an avid horsewoman and her debut book draws on that interest.

Geert Robberechts graduated in Art History (Musicology) at KU Leuven, Belgium. In 2003, he founded the Belgian Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). The main project has been the Royal Gardens of Rajnagar. Since 2020, this project has been adopted by ITRHD.

He has been connected with many heritage projects in Belgium and India, and is also the Director of the India House Leuven.

Nishant Upadhyay is a Conservation Architect trained at KU Leuven, Belgium, as a recipient of the Erasmus Mundus Expert scholarship where he is also a doctoral researcher. He is a TEDx Speaker and presently an International Heritage Expert to the UNESCO Dhaka office. He is the Founder Architect of Dharatal, a Lucknow based design atelier with focus on local communities, their heritage and cultural landscapes.

Katyayani Agarwal is an Art Historian and an Independent Curator, Advisor and Consultant for museums and cultural spaces. She is working towards restoring and conserving built heritage particularly in Rajasthan and is the Curator for two upcoming museums in Rajasthan and Mumbai. She is a Consultant and Advisor to several institutions, an Advisor on the HCCD Advisory Committee of INTACH.

David Brown is the Chief Preservation Officer, National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States.

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Yuri Mazurov is a Professor at the Moscow State Lomonosov University in Russia, who introduced heritage studies in Russian Universities. He is an expert in environmental economics and management, sustainable development, ecological and cultural policy and geography of natural and cultural heritage.

Anika Molesworth is the 2015 Australian Young Farmer of the Year and helps manage her family's sheep station near Broken Hill, in western New South Wales. She manages the International National Trust Organisation (INTO) Sustainable Farms project. In 2014 she founded Climate Wise Agriculture to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. She has worked in Laos with farmers researching climate change resilience by reducing production risk.

Shaista Perveen is a Conservation Architect and teaches at School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi and Jamia Millia Islamia focusing on architectural heritage. She has undertaken listings of cultural resources of towns and settlements, such as Diu, Azamgarh and Khajuraho. Her expertise lies in research and documentation leading to Project Proposals and Conservation Plans.

Rakesh Mathur is a Hospitality Industry Professional with decades of experience in Indian and global hotel groups. He is currently the Director & Principal Advisor of Lords Hotels & Resorts. He Co-founded the 'Responsible Tourism Society of India', and also the Code of Conduct for Safe & Honourable Tourism, officially endorsed by UNODC and adopted by the Ministry of Tourism. He is a recipient of several awards, and Board Member of IHHA, INTACH Tourism Committee, Auro University and Chairman HI-AIM.

Dr. Harsh Varma has decades of professional experience of working in the tourism sector. He has headed the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Programme for Technical Cooperation for eleven years, he was also the Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific for several years. Holding professional degrees in tourism from the UK and Austria, he has implemented tourism programmes and projects in more than 140 countries in the world.



Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development

About 70 per cent of India's population still lives in rural and tribal communities. Sadly, poverty remains a chronic condition for almost 30 per cent of this population. Yet even the most poverty-stricken areas, lacking access to basic facilities, often hold wealth accumulated over centuries. These are their heritage assets, not just historic sites and structures, but also a vast array of traditional skills. Conserving and nurturing rural heritage can be a powerful tool for sustainable economic growth in India's villages, ensuring livelihood to rural residents in their traditional homelands, enhancing the pride and self-confidence of the entire community.

Recognizing this, a number of professionals and specialists in relevant fields came together to establish and manage the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD), a registered body. The Trust's two-fold aim is very specific: firstly, the preservation of our vast rural heritage – some of it fast disappearing – for its intrinsic meaning and value; secondly, linking this preservation with improvement in the quality of rural life in areas such as income generation, education and literacy; health and hygiene; waste and water management and issues of women and the girl child.

ITRHD is actively involved in projects relating to conservation of rural heritage and rural developmental programmes in eight states viz. Uttarakhand, U.P, Haryana, Rajasthan, Nagaland, Telangana, Jharkhand and Kerala. The Primary School in Hariharpur in Azamgarh District in U.P. is supported by a number of friends and members who have agreed to contribute at least Rs. 3000/- each every year for the education of one child. We appeal to all our Members, to come forward for a good cause. The potters and weavers of Nizamabad and Mubarkpur villages in Azamgarh District have also received our attention. We have helped them in opening up new markets for their products. In each of the projects undertaken by ITRHD local bodies are fully involved in planning and implementation processes; the Trust's frontline workers, the Heritage Ambassadors for Rural Traditions or HARTS, serve as local project coordinators and resource persons, working in development areas to benefit their respective locations and communities.

JOIN HANDS WITH US : There are many rural areas in our country that await your support and action. That is why we invite you to join hands with us by becoming a member of the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development.

There are compelling reasons for becoming a member. The long-term future of our country lies in the revitalization and appropriate utilization of assets inherited by our rural and tribal populations. The benefits are many, not just economic development and poverty alleviation. Equally, they are markers of identity, reinforcing a sense of ownership amongst communities, encouraging grass-roots leadership and innovation, and instilling dignity and pride. An improved quality of life is an incentive for rural populations to remain in their own surroundings rather than migrate to the misery of choked urban conglomerates.

In this sense, your membership is actually an investment in the future. Certainly no investment can be as fulfilling as that which restores and nourishes the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people and highlights their assets as national treasures. That is why we invite you to join us in this endeavour to recognize and respect our rural and tribal heritage in a manner that will keep it alive for the benefit of all.

MEMBERSHIP FEE

VOTING MEMBERS, one-time payment

INDIAN

Life Member (Individual): Rs 5000

Institutional Member: Rs. 25,000

Corporate Member: Rs. 10,00,000

FOREIGN

Life Member (Individual): US\$ 500/ UK£ 300

Institutional Member: US\$ 1250/ UK£ 800

Corporate Member: US\$ 25,000/ UK£ 16,000

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

INDIAN

Associate Member Rs 2000 (renewable after 5 years)

Rural Member: Rs 100 (one-time token fee for rural residents)

Associate Member Corporate: Rs. 1,00,000

FOREIGN: one-time payment

Associate Member Corporate: US\$ 5,000 / UK £ 3,000

Donor Member: Donors paying over Rs.1,00,000 will be offered complimentary Associate/Full Membership

Please note:

*Membership fees in other currencies will be equivalent to the amounts given in US\$.

*Donations to ITRHD are eligible for deduction u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

*Cheques should be made in favour of

Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development,

and sent to the Registered Office at

C-56, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi - 110013.

*Membership fee can also be remitted to

Bank Account no. 31738466610,

State Bank of India, Nizamuddin West, New Delhi 110013.

*Foreign parties may remit the membership fees to:

FCRA a/c no. 31987199987 in State Bank of India, Nizamuddin West, New Delhi- 110013.

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For more information, write to us at mail.itrhd@gmail.com.



Indian Trust for Rural Heritage
and Development

Photograph

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBER (VOTING CATEGORY)

INDIAN TRUST FOR RURAL HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT (ITRHD)

“Just as the universe is contained in the self, so is India contained in the villages.” Mahatma Gandhi

1. Name of the Applicant
2. Address of the Applicant
.....
.....
3. Educational Qualifications
.....
4. Profession/Present Employment
.....
.....
5. Date of Birth
6. E-mail
7. Mobile No.
8. Landline No.
9. Experience with Rural
Heritage/Development
Or
Area of Specialisation

Turn Overleaf

Registered Office : C-56, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi - 110013, India Tel. : (91-11) 42631755, 24370219, 24370220
Registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, Regn. No S/534/Distt.South/2011

Category of Membership	Membership Fee	
	Indian Resident (Indian Rupees)	Others (US Dollars)
Life Member Individual	5,000	500
Life Member Corporate	10,00,000	25,000
Life Member Institutional	25,000	1,250
Associate Member, Individual (5-year term, renewable after 5 years at same fee)	2,000	
Associate Member, Corporate	1,00,000	
Associate Member, Rural	100	

Note:

1. Unless otherwise specified all fees are one-time payment only.
2. Any academic or cultural body, including a University, Department or Registered Society engaged in cultural, academic or social work is eligible to apply for Life Member Institutional.
3. Associate Members will not have any voting rights.
4. Any person residing in a rural area, who is interested in rural heritage and development, can become a member on paying a token fee of Rs. 100 only.
5. The Membership Fee once paid, is Non-Refundable.
6. The Fee shall form part of the Corpus of the Society.

I am enclosing cash / cheque / demand draft for Rs. / USD as
admission fee for (category of membership)
and I agree to donate the fee to Corpus Fund.

Signature of the Applicant

I recommend the application of for membership.

Signature of Trustee / Life Member

Name of Trustee/Life Member

(The Membership Committee appointed by the Trustees reserves the right to reject any application for membership of the Trust).

Please note: A cheque / demand draft is to be made in the name of the **Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development** payable at Delhi.



Indian Trust for Rural Heritage
and Development

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