

# MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

Bishnu Bhandari

## Background

The wise use of natural resources is a key factor in attaining sustainability. The term sustainable development can be interchanged with eco-development. The principle underlying sustainable development is the sustainable use of natural resources, preserving biological diversity and maintaining essential the ecological or life support system through the equitable use of resources. This word has been extensively used in developmental parlance.

“Conservation,” according to the World Conservation Strategy (1980:4), is defined as “the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefits to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. Thus conservation is positive embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilization, restoration, and enhancement of the natural environment.”

A myriad of ways and means have been in practice for ages in our society to maintain the sustainability of our scarce resources. The most important one among them is the management of cultural and natural resources in a sustainable way.

The primary objective of this paper is to introduce the concept of heritage as both a tool and a process to effectively manage our natural and cultural heritage in a wise and sustainable way. The first section talks about the meaning and significance of heritage with some practical examples and its benefits to the society. The second section describes the National Heritage Conservation Programme, its philosophical elements, and an explanation of its innovative approach. The third section deals with function of the NHC Register and seventeen cultural and natural heritage sites of national significance. Criteria of assessment are also presented in this section. The fourth section describes a twelve-step process of national heritage conservation. The fifth chapter deals with national heritage significance of the Panauti Area.

### Meaning of Heritage

The World Heritage means many different things to different people: a piece of item such as, a knife, an object, a building, endangered and threatened species of animals or their habitat, an ecosystem, a natural site, cultural expression, or social passions. It is called *sampada* in Nepali.

The popular adage "one man's meat is another man's poison" can be applied in the case of heritage. This is especially true in an ethnically heterogeneous society like Nepal's. For instance, *Pung* has great cultural value in the Gurung community, but it has no significance in the Brahman, Kshetry, or Newar communities. What is highly valued by one community may not be valued by another. For instance, wearing a *sacred* thread is a social heritage for Brahman, Kshetry and upper class people of the Hindu Newar community but not to the people of other communities.

In general terms, heritage is viewed as an inheritance like a piece of land to which one has a right at birth, and which links us with past generations. There is an implication that, with this right, comes a responsibility to pass on that property in a good, or even improved, condition to future generations which, in turn, will also possess it as a right (Carew-Reid, 1992:41). It is always a connection between the past and the future and has a cultural implication.

Conventionally, we usually think and talk about heritage as specific items of well-recognised structure, or well-defined areas. It is this tendency to break heritage down into items and parts separate from our surroundings that has led worldwide to our failure to adequately conserve it. What remains often becomes so isolated and separate from life as to diminish its traditional heritage values.

What we are discovering is that the things viewed as heritage are woven within systems, which, as a whole, are always much greater in importance than their constituent parts. This means that unless we recognise and understand all parts of the system and their relationships, with each other we cannot expect to manage and conserve those heritage items which are of specific immediate significance.

Explaining the meaning of heritage in his address at the Workshop on National Heritage Conservation in 1991, Carew-Reid (192:41) states:

The heritage concept is like an iceberg. What we see, and what is of immediate importance to us, is one of the surfaces. But if we concentrate our management effort in trying to conserve just the part that is visible, we will unavoidably fail. It will continue to diminish before our eyes. The reason, of course, is that much the same way as only 10 percent of the iceberg is visible on the surface, an item of obvious heritage significance

only reflects a mere fraction of the legacy it represents. The greater ice mass below the surface, supporting the icepeak, melts at a faster rate because of increasing water temperature; in the same way specific heritage items are supported by a foundation of natural and social resource which, if it erodes, will result in collapse and loss of the heritage.

### *UNESCO and World Heritage Sites*

Article I of the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO (1971) defines "cultural heritage" as monuments, groups of buildings and sites. A cultural monument must, for example, be authentic and have exerted a great architectural influence or bear a unique witness, or be associated with ideas or beliefs of universal significance, or it may be an outstanding example of a traditional way of life that represents a certain culture. The World Heritage Committee used two criteria with several sub-criteria for including cultural properties in the World Heritage List.<sup>1</sup>

A natural heritage property will be considered to be of an outstanding universal value if it meets one or more criteria and fulfills the conditions of integrity.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the convention is to promote cooperation among all nations and peoples in order to contribute effectively to this protection, because these properties belong to all mankind. The convention is thus original in its conception. It embodies some important new ideas linking together the conservation of nature and of culture which until recently had rarely been seen in conjunction with each other. For a long time, nature and culture were perceived as opposing elements in that man was supposed to conquer a hostile nature, while culture symbolized spiritual values. However, nature and culture are complementary: the cultural identity of different people has been forged in the environment in which they live. Frequently, the most beautiful man-made works owe part of their beauty to their natural surroundings. Some of the most spectacular natural sites bear the imprint of centuries of human activity. Sadly, in our modern world, cultural monuments and natural sites appear to be equally threatened by degradation.

The properties listed from Nepal in the World Heritage list are Sagarmatha National Park, Kathmandu Valley (Pashupati, Boudha, Changu Narayan, Swayambhu, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, and Bhaktapur Durbar Square) and Royal Chitwan National Park.

The Convention describes these treasures as properties of an outstanding universal value from the point of view of art, or history, science or natural beauty.

According to the definition of IUCN, Nepal:

Those places, national heritage has been defined objects, and activities that are components of the natural or cultural environment of Nepal and have aesthetic, historic, scientific, religious, spiritual, social, or communal significance; or any other special value for future as well as present generations (NPC/IUCN, 1992).

### *Importance of Heritage in Society*

Heritage properties or items are of great significance. They always help introduce the community with outside the world. Through heritage people of different ethnic groups live in harmony. They instill in people a sense of togetherness and solidarity. It is heritage that makes a community unique and attractive to tourists and visitors. Some of important benefits of heritage are given below:

1. *Civic pride*: helps recognize and appreciate a community's historic fabric and history.
2. *Business opportunities*: provide business opportunities such as in the restoration industry, tourism business, provision of local goods and services, basic needs service, employment, etc.
3. *Quality of life*: more than modern materials, goods and conveniences, it includes values of the area.
4. *Conservation Awareness*: Heritage is good for business. Community resources are revitalized.
5. *Tourism*: Heritage and well-maintained heritage can provide an attraction to the visitors and tourists. Tourism is all about the cultural and natural heritage. This is what people come to see. If heritage is not conserved, tourists will not come. It demands a considerable dependence on tourism.
6. *Enjoyment*: provides enjoyment and appreciation of the area.
7. *Multiple benefits*: The management of heritage provides multiple benefits to the community.

### **The Conservation of National Heritage**

In order to promote the conservation of cultural and natural heritage of national significance in Nepal, the National Conservation Strategy Implementation Project, coordinated by the National Planning Commission, has introduced a programme called the National Heritage Conservation Programme with technical assistance from IUCN-The World Conservation Union. The programme was started in 1990. Its main aim was to prepare a comprehensive register of natural and cultural heritage areas of national importance and develop approaches to managing these properties based on

community involvement and intersectoral cooperation. This programme has been run in collaboration with the Nepal Heritage Society, national non-governmental organization established to advance the cause of conserving cultural and natural heritage areas of the country. It is based on three principles.

*Cultural Continuum.* Heritage is an expression of culture that may be found within both nature and the things created by men. It is a continuum of cultural expression that extends from the most primitive natural places to the most densely populated urban conditions. Within the continuum, heritage is found in a myriad of ways that reflect the web of beliefs, patterns of behaviour, concepts of significance, and the physical creation of the people of Nepal over the millennia. It is neither purely natural nor purely human centered. The cultural expression emerges out of the landscape in terms of thoughts, beliefs, and the built environment. Heritage can be described as a "cultural phenomena," too.

*Living Process.* Heritage should be seen as a living process that grows and changes with time and must be folded into life in order to survive. It is living and is not a museum of protected things but parts of people's lives. Heritage is most relevant if it is seen as part of the daily life of ordinary people. It is then seen to have social religious, political, economic and historic significance and will be conserved as a living process as part of day-to-day life. Where the links between heritage and the communities have been broken or have never existed, the nature of the conservation process dies.

*System.* Heritage Conservation involves a wide range of interlinked elements, players and forces (Government, NGOs, donors, etc.) which must be recognized and integrated for successful conservation. All these forces must be joined by realistic management approaches which will vary from place to place depending on what is being conserved and why it is thought to be important.

### **An Innovative School of Thought**

The heritage properties are our common property and can be conserved only through our common responsibility. This is not to say that every man's responsibility is no man's responsibility. The programme represents both an alternative philosophy and a new practice of heritage conservation in implementing the National Conservation Strategy for Nepal. It is an innovative approach for the following reasons.

1. It is based on a pluralist or intersectoral approach in which the responsibility of conserving these areas is in the hands of not one but many authorities. It ranges from individual to community, from quasi-government to government, from Non-governmental Organization (NGO)

to International Non-governmental Organization (INGO), and so forth. It integrates all activities of life. It is recognised that conservation management needs to be explored from all aspects, and the interests of the government and the people need to be identified and integrated for a successful conservation activity.

2. The approach adopted in the programme is based upon a holistic view of heritage. The Conservation of National Heritage in Nepal (1992:1) states that heritage is seen as an interconnected living system of both natural and human-centered elements and regards the full range of Nepalese culture as worthy of protection. People's daily and social, economic, cultural and political life must develop to support the conservation of important place of heritage significance. People cannot protect one thing and ignore the rest. Heritage should be seen as a whole system.
3. Heritage conservation cannot be imposed on people, particularly if they cannot afford it. Nor can it be worked out in isolation. It needs active community involvement, but it cannot be mobilized unless we provide benefits and incentives to participants. It must come from within, from a strong wish and need to keep things of the past alive and useful and in a good condition. Some things can be conserved by people taking responsibility themselves, usually small things which are central to their lives. But the big things need a larger commitment so that many people can act together. Community involvement from the very beginning is the key to heritage conservation. If the community does not participate in maintenance; in daily use; in practicing the songs, the dances, the festivals and the religious life, in caring for forests and lands; and in protecting wildlife, then these things disappear. Not only is the participatory planning process essential, but that participatory management of heritage is also required.
4. A fresh approach recognizes that the role played by heritage in socioeconomic development is vital. Heritage conservation can induce local development and may even lead to an improved quality of life. Heritage management can stimulate income generating activities in the community.
5. *Prakriti* and *purush* are the two sides of the life support system or the universe. According to the Hindu spiritual philosophy, *prakriti* (material cause of the universe) and *purush* (human being) are created by God for sustenance. They are inseparable from each other. The existence of one is impossible without that of the other. They are unconditionally accepted as in their harmonious relationship. So in this programme, cultural and natural heritage are viewed and blended together. They are never in conflict with each other, rather, they fall into the continuum of cultural expansion

from primitive natural places to urban areas. They complement each other. One cannot be conserved without the other.

### Proposed National Heritage Conservation Register

A review of the literature on heritage conservation and discussions with key conservation experts indicate that much of Nepal's rich natural and cultural heritage is declining. If prompt action is not taken, the remainder of our heritage will disappear. It is thus essential to identify such types of heritage property or items and include them in the register. The main aim of the register is to:

1. identify heritage areas or items of national significance;
2. describe why they are important;
3. promote practical conservation and management activities; and
4. provide due legal protection to the sites.

The heritage register may be called an inventory or list, but here we have chosen to call it a National Heritage Conservation (NHC) Register. It is scientific as well as protective in nature. Its purpose is to ensue or assist in the conservation of heritage. A "protective inventory" was prepared by HMG/UNESCO (1975), but it lacks comprehensive information. The National Heritage Conservation Register proposed here would use the forces of community development, intersectoral cooperation, and economic development. The National Heritage Conservation Programme Coordinating Committee (PCC) has already established a draft NHC Register which includes seventeen cultural and natural heritage areas of national significance (Table 1). These areas have either met one or more of the criteria of national significance mentioned above, some of which have been listed on the World Heritage List.

**Table 1**

<b>Cultural Areas</b>	<b>Natural Areas</b>
Bhaktapur Durbar Square*	Khaptad National Park
Boudh Nath*	Langtang National Park
Changu Narayan*	Makalu-Barun National Park and Conservation Area
Kathmandu Durbar Square*	Rara National Park
Lumbini Area	Royal Bardia National Park
Pashupati Area*	Royal Chitwan National Park*
Patan Durbar Square*	Sagarmatha National Park*
Panauti Area	Shey-Phoksundo National Park
Swayambhu Area*	

*\*Included in the World Heritage List.*

Any cultural and natural heritage area or item should meet one or more of the criteria concerning both the nature of significance and the degree of significance, to be considered of national significance (Table 2).

**Table 2**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>Nature of Significance</b>	
1. Historic	Significant in the cultural or natural history of Nepal or concerned with a range of context associations.
2. Aesthetic	Having aesthetic characteristics highly valued by the community or exhibiting creative or technical development.
3. Social/Religious	Significant to a community in Nepal for social, cultural, religious, or spiritual reasons or esteem.
4. Scientific	Having research potential to contribute to an understanding of the natural and cultural history of Nepal to yield more information.
5. Other Values	Significant for some other value to past, present or future generations in Nepal, usually in addition to one or more of the above criteria.
<b>Degree of Significance</b>	
6. Rare	Being rare, endangered, or uncommon or having exceptional characteristics.
7. Representative	Significant in demonstrating the typical or principal characteristics of a class of items, places, or environments in Nepal.
8. Associative	Linked with the people, life, work activities, phases, or events in Nepal.

### **The Process of National Heritage Conservation**

A list alone will not fulfill our objectives. We must develop a process which our society can afford. This requires a comprehensive management programme in which a concerted community action can be mobilized through cooperation and coordination from all levels.

National conservation should be continuous process, otherwise heritage areas can be neither protected nor conserved. A temple once renovate cannot remain intact forever nor can a protected natural area remain protected for good without regular maintenance and repair work. They need constant monitoring and surveillance. Thus, the heritage conservation process consists of twelve



steps with two main components (Table 3). The first section is concerned with the process of registration heritage areas described above. The second section deals with the participatory management of heritage that places emphasis on practical action concerning conservation practices, active involvement of local community through out the programme and its overall development.

**Table 3: The steps of heritage**

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**I. Registration**

1. Considering the existing Heritage of Nepal
2. Nominating Heritage of National Significance
3. Assessing Heritage Significance
4. Considering Nominations and Making Entries on the National Heritage Register

**II. Participatory Management of Heritage**

5. Setting Priorities for Heritage Management Activities
  6. Conducting Participatory Heritage Appraisal
  7. Preparing a Heritage Systems Profile
  8. Identifying Management Options
  9. Preparation of Heritage Management Plans
  10. Implementing Participatory Heritage Management
  11. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Heritage Conservation Process
  12. Revising Heritage Conservation Plans
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**Heritage Significance of Panauti Area: A Case Study**

Attempts have been made to present how necessary information was collected on Panauti so as to nominate it as a heritage area of national significance. As far as the heritage conservation process is concerned, only steps one through eight were completed.

The information presented here is based on Participatory Heritage Appraisal (PHA) conducted by the Environment Core Group of the NCS Implementation Project. The Group, consisting of 28 members, stayed in the field for three days. They extensively practiced PHA techniques such as reconnaissance visit, briefing, with knowledgeable people, direct observation, secondary information, informal survey, mini-survey, focus group discussion, community discussion, planning clinic and so forth.

On the basis of this field exercise, the map of the Panauti Area was prepared with active assistance of local people and necessary information was collected. Then this information was reviewed against criteria of significance

presented elsewhere. Since Panauti area met several criteria of significance, the area was suggested for inclusion in the draft National Heritage conservation Register. Some of the significant characteristics and environmental problems prevalent in Panauti Area are presented below.

The VDC of Panauti is located in Kavre District of the Central Development Region. It is 32 km from the city of Kathmandu and is accessible by an all-weather metalled road. The settlement area is built up with densely compacted houses between rivers. The adjoining landscape is irrigated farmland surrounded by deforested hill.

The Participatory Heritage Appraisal was used as tool for collecting data and information that include key-information interview, direct observation, mini-survey, secondary information and so forth.

**Significance:**

- History of Panauti begins with the Neolithic period
- Includes sculpture from the ancient Narayan Cult of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.
- Situated at the confluence of two rivers: the Roshi and Punyamti and the third mythical river, the Nilawati
- Temples of Brahmayani with sculpture dating back to the 7th and 8th cultures A.D.
- Sacred and religiously significant Tribeni Ghat and a multi-stoned temple of Indreshore Mahadev
- Ruins of the Gorakhanath temple at the hill top
- Many archaeological ruins in Taleju Bhawani Mandir.
- Buddhist stupas and monuments
- Makar Mela held every 12 years
- Many examples of social heritage
- Degraded forests, lack of drinking water (Sati Ban, Indreshore forest and Gorakhanath forest)
- Problems of sewerage and drainage
- Braking and collection of stones from the Roshi Khola
- Panauti Hydel Project
- Commercial mulberry farms
- Namo Buddha at distance of 6.7 km.

The problems related to pollution and sanitation mainly originate from Tannery Processing Center, sewerage from the town of Banepa and from Panauti itself. The forests have been depleted with a need to reforest and protect them. The temples are in ruins and some of the historical buildings only have remains.

## Conclusion

Nepal's heritage is rich, diversified and complex. It is also a living entity. Because of these, our conservation activities need to be equally varied. Importantly, the problem of such complex phenomena cannot be solved by the government alone, no matter how much money is pumped into a project. We cannot think of doing conservation work without people and community involvement. Its successful conservation needs to be part of the whole development process, rather than a single event. Any item of national heritage should be seen as part of a social, political and economic system.

The concept envisioned here is in its initial stage and needs to be tried out in different types of heritage properties. Only then can they be recommended for its wide application.

## Notes

Paper presented at the *International Conference on the Anthropology of Nepal: People Problems, and Processes* organized by the department of Anthropology, the University of Sydney, and Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), T.U. in Kathmandu, Nepal, 7-14 September, 1992. The paper is heavily based on two IUCN reports: "*The Conservation of National Heritage in Nepal*" (1992) and "*Proceedings of the Workshop on the Conservation of National Heritage*" (1992).

1. The criteria of outstanding universal value are as follows:

- (a)
  - i. represent a unique artistic achievement, a masterpiece of the creative genius
  - ii. have exerted great influence, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture, monumental arts of town-planning and landscaping
  - iii. bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a civilisation which has disappeared
  - iv. be an outstanding example or a type of building or architectural ensemble which illustrates a significant state in history
  - v. be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of a culture and which has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change
  - vi. be directly or tangibly associated with events or with ideas or beliefs of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances or in conjunction with other criteria)
- (b) meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship or setting (the Committee stressed that reconstruction is only

acceptable if it is carried out on the basis of complete and detailed documentation on the original and to no extent on conjecture)

2. In accordance with Article 2 of the Convention, the following is considered as "natural heritage":
  - i. "natural features consisting of physical and biological formation or groups of such formation.
  - ii. geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants
  - iii. natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation of natural beauty."
  - iv. A natural site may exemplify a stage of the earth's evolutionary processes, or be representative of biological evolution, or contain the natural habitats of endangered animals. It may be a scene of exceptional beauty, a spectacular view or a reserve for a large number of wild animals.

The criteria of outstanding universal significance are as follows:

- i. be outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth's evolutionary history; or
- ii. be outstanding examples representing *significant on going geological processes, biological evolution and man's interaction with his natural environment* as distinct from the periods of the earth's development, this focuses upon ongoing processes in the development of communities of plants and animals, land forms and marine areas and fresh water bodies; or
- iii. Contain superlative natural phenomena formations or feature, for instance, outstanding exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements; or
- iv. Contain *the most important and significant natural habitats where threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation still survive.*

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