

## Material Authenticity in Tradition of Conservation in Nepal

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### Introduction:

In discussing **history**, **change** and **continuity** of culture, particularly of the **built heritage**, as well as the formulation of conservation action, the case of Nepali tiered temples can be educating for two reasons; firstly, because it has passed through many cycles of loss and recovery as a result of (a) it being constructed and styled out of semi-perishable materials such as wood and brick and exposed to a harsh monsoon environment as if designed to inflict maximum deterioration, (2) the siting of the Kathmandu Valley in one of the most active faults, thereby being subject to large earthquakes periodically and (3) occasional fire happening out of ritual offer of lights during worship and secondly, because the practice and tradition of conservation as particular mix of preservation, restoration and reconstruction seems to have begun along with the construction of Nepal's earliest images and buildings housing them and developed and continued over centuries right down to present times. These cycles of **recovery**, **restoration**, and **reconstruction** have not only led to overlapping of many layers of history, meaning and materials in the heritage but also established its own standards of understanding, knowing and safeguarding it for presentation, preservation and enhancement, thereby informing us how the following societies have taken action to conserve the heritage passed on by the preceding ones in history. While these deteriorating and endangering conditions have influenced the approaches and methods of conservation and the evolution of the architectural heritage itself, the conservation approach and its demands have also extensively acted on the historical development of the heritage itself. The practice of regular conservation and the culture of reconstruction through **replacement of deteriorated components** followed over such long period and regularly has also meant that very few or none of the architectural heritage that we have are 'original', as a whole or even as part, if we restrict definition of **material authenticity** to its initial construction. It becomes clear from some inscriptional sources that Nepali tradition of conservation itself has built on some sense of authenticity through design and construction skill practiced as family trade and the experience passed on from the older generation to the new at each stage of generation.

Thus, even as practice of replacing old with a new (for example, the weathered windows with new freshly carved ones) may appear to go against the current conservation principle, which largely based on the romantic historicism and scientific dating of **historical time** and which emphasize **datedness of material** as the key criteria of authenticity, the practice being a defining character of Nepali building construction tradition should not be discarded and dismissed. Other ways of representing time or fixing datedness may also need to be formulated; design and style as a basis of dating could well convey historicity as well in cultures with very long period of development. Architectural traditions and characters deriving out of use of perishable materials and that respect their **perishability** (natural disposal) should be judged differently from

traditions using seeking **permanency** (those on the path of stones to concrete to reinforced concrete and plastics?) and their material authenticity needs to be defined in some other ways. In these days of climate change, we much recognize the ecological sense of cultures that have respectfully developed recognizing and accepting the perishability of all things material and establish compatible principles and practice of preservation of materials in conservation.

Therefore, as assuring authenticity is possibly the most important requirement of any conservation action, it becomes necessary for us to understand how authenticity and conservation standards may have to be redefined based on conservation as practiced by our ancestors. Such new norms should be of use for practice of conservation in Nepal and in all cultures based on perishable materials.

### **Materials in Nepali Architecture:**

It is most likely that use of stone in buildings started in the Kathmandu valley with the coming of the Lichchhavi in the first century CE. Prior to that the Kirat buildings were constructed in brick (and possibly wood) – the Kirat use of stone being limited to some images of worship carved out of soft stones (sand stone of the so-called *Sankhu* variety) towards the end of their rule. That not just the materials but also the form of Kirat temple was much different from that of the Lichchhavi can be inferred from the inscriptions of the latter, which names them as *devakula* as distinct from the Lichchhavi's *bhavana*, *prasada*, etc. That the brick and wood architecture had reached a well developed stage in the Kirat period and was certainly flourishing in the Lichchhavi period can be understood from the archeological finds as well as description of the Chinese diplomats. The Lichchhavi period saw experimentations in building stone temples, possibly starting with the Avarana type of small temples. With the Lichchhavi had also came the script, inscriptions, Sanskrit language and the society informed by the classical Hindu/Buddhist sciences in oral traditions (*srutishastra*).

By fifth century, they developed the technology of stone burnishing and polishing (*tam ralep*) and applied it to the hard stone (granite of so-called *Kodkhu* variety) images, *linga*, *chaitya* and carved architectural elements like columns to give it a characteristic sheen and protection from weathering. Although the ritual bathing, cleansing and worship of *linga* and *chaitya* using different auspicious liquids, and use of vermilion and other colored powders and their corrosive property and the deterioration these caused on the unpolished and soft stone, may have inspired them to use *tam ralep* on stone, this set them firmly on the path of conservation of both the ritual object and associated rituals. The applied technology saved the edifice, the stone stele on which the inscriptions were written and consequently the edict itself to tell the story of the edifice too. Without the *tam ralep*, the reading of Lichchhavi history would indeed have been arduous.

Lichchhavi architectural developments show that their experiment with architecture of stone did not go much beyond the miniature Chaitya and the small Avarana temples; any tall and larger temple structure possibly quickly lost to earthquake and not

reerected. It should be for such happenings in history that we find fallen architraves and carved stones not easily salvaged for use in other constructions, strewn around known Lichchhavi sites. So we see *amalaka* and other intricately carved large stone pieces looking like those belonging to *Nagara temples* traditions around Changu, Sankhu, Pashupatinath, etc. In this manner, it appears that the architecture based on wood and brick that developed over the Kirat tradition became the major architectural style of the later Lichchhavi as well as the Malla period. Wood, brick and mud had again come to be the key materials for construction and definition of most Nepali architecture and town. Single or multiple roofs with deep overhangs crowned the brick and wood body to make the Nepali style and came to be called *Varata* (which refers to its Kirat base) or *Besara* (literally meaning mixed and possibly hinting at the assimilation of the Kirat and the Lichchhavi) in classical texts.

**Craftsmen, Skills, *jaat* and the *guthi*:**

The Kirat society was apparently divided into *astadashaprakritin* or, the eighteen crafts, as one Lichchhavi inscription puts it. This is very similar to the Sakya society in the period of the birth of Buddha and suggests that the building crafts were quite well developed. It has been inferred from literary sources that of the eighteen crafts, only one, the potter, did not cut (but molded) the material; all other crafts cut the material as they worked on them. In this social set up, a differently divided and stratified society of the four castes (*varna*) came with the Lichchhavi and a mixed society of four castes and eighteen *jaat* was formed.

The craft skills were transferred to future generations as a family tradition; from father to son through apprenticeship practiced as daily working life. The initial craft based division of society of the Kirat was further consolidated in the Malla period by King Jayasthitimalla (1380-1396); many more specializations were institutionalized as family trades as the Newar society was reformed into sixty four *jaat*<sup>1</sup>. Quite a few of the *jaat* supported the growing specialization in building crafts.

Over the centuries, Nepali society appears to have developed standard methods and norms for construction as well as conservation that were implemented through the family tradition (*jaat*) of construction professionals. The general management and financing of it was kept outside of the caste or *jaat* defined professional responsibility through the setting up of the institution of the *Guthi*, a trust funded through land grants run by a wider representative management committee. The primary objective of the *Guthi* was to ensure continuity of cultural/social practice and of urban public facility buildings (such as temples, monasteries, *sattal*, *chapa*, *pati*, etc.) and services (such as streets, street-side drinking fountains, wells, water conduits, ponds, street lighting, etc.) through a seasonally programmed activities and initiatives of maintenance, restoration, operation). In respect of assuring continuity of socio-cultural as well as economic traditions transmitted through the mediation of the urban buildings and supporting

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<sup>1</sup> Some documents suggest that the reorganization had 80 *jaat*.

infra-structures, the conservation of buildings and other physical infrastructures themselves formed a key activity.

Inscriptions from as early as fifth century CE tell of conservation of images, monuments and urban utilities and setting up of institutions with endowments for restoration of object and continuity of social, religious and economic practice. The Nepali cultural journey of the discovery of conservation, its objectives, principles, and standards and institutionalization of the process along with funding seems to have begun simply with pious objective of assuring continuous ritual worship of images set up by individuals. First, we find Jayalambha donating land in perpetuity (*dattam akshyayaniyam bhumi*) for ritual worship of Jayasvora *linga* in an inscription dated 491 CE. Shortly thereafter, in another inscription dated 513 CE, we find King Basantadev granting use of state tax at local level for repair of a water conduit set up by his sister Jayasundari to enhance merit of their father through her pious act. In an inscription dated 533 CE, we find Dhruvasangha donating land and its proceeds for ritual worship and occasional repair of several *linga* set up by himself and placing the grant in care of *Svajana Gosthi* (a charity board composed of own relations/members of own community). The objectives in maintenance, care and conservation of public utilities, images and monuments that had started basically with the urge to take one's acts of piety into future had been developed and elaborated into care for one's roots from the past, place, people and practice and to carry those into the future as the history progressed. The practice had expanded greatly over the Lichchhavi period itself and the Malla period saw its widespread application at national, town and neighborhood levels. The tradition of civic participation funded through agricultural land resources continued with excellent results and full force until the unmanaged urbanization of agricultural land, new land reforms management and shift of urban services as public administration responsibility of municipalities followed in modern Nepal drove the Guthi arrangements defunct.

#### **Conservation from *Pratisam skar* to *Jirnodhar* :**

The Lichchhavi inscriptions distinguish new construction (*sthapana, sam sthapana*) from restitution or repair with specific terminologies. The key term used to describe 'conservation' by the early Lichchhavi in those pioneering days and throughout that period is *pratisam skara*, a Sanskrit compound word, formed with prefix '*prati*' (meaning 'near to' or making it close to) on root word '*sam skara*' (meaning what has been 'handed down from respected tradition' or 'put together, refined or made perfect or as per sacred precept'), which would mean (*keeping*) *near to (perfect) as created, i.e. like the original* in the context. This compares well with modern day understanding of conservation action as a '*truth-enforcement*' operation, 'truth' denoting the 'original condition' (Salvador Muñoz Viñas in Contemporary Theory of Conservation). However, use of term *pratisam skara* seems to be authorizing/accepting additions and embellishments as integral to conservation of buildings also. Additionally, other inscriptions detail the term; (a) *khandafutta pratisam skara* or repair of partial deterioration or chipping of stone and loss of polish back to original (b) *pratisam skara* of *kalakram ena vishirna, bhagna* or restoration of natural wear and damage through passage of time and (c)

*pratisam skarascha kalanatikram enaiva karya* or restoration of works deteriorated by aggressive action of time – explaining the varying grades of deterioration and commensurate conservation action.

Two inscriptions of Amshuverma are instructive on authenticity and other objective principles followed by the Lichchhavi in conservation works. In his inscription dated 607 CE, Amshuverma records that 'having observed that the coat of arms was worn out from the top (to bottom) by time, he restored it taking cue from the outline then existing' (*haim am ... kavacham ... kalenasirnam abalokya... tasm annidarshanam vapyā ... kritavan ... puna*). This clarifies that restoration work is, in principle, guided by the original; the remaining faint outline of this heavily deteriorated golden coat of arms has been cited here as the reference for making a new one. Clearly, this was not patching up worn sections and did not involve salvage; only the original design was followed and done using the same material, gold. The tradition of continuing design, style and material as per the original in any reconstruction action appears to have been set in place. In another inscription recording the restoration of a brick and wood *devakula* temple in the year 610 CE, Amshuverma inscribes 'having repaired carefully so as to keep it in good condition for longer into future' (*yatnata pratisam skarya... dirghatara paschatkala sausthitya nimittam*) and thus states the long term objective outcome of conservation action. The aim of conservation appears to have been two fold: assuring continuity of cultural activity and longevity of the artifacts or edifices used in the activity.

Different terminologies for conservation, seen in Malla inscription, indicate a changed situation or approach. A 1359 CE inscription, which records the reconstruction of Pimbahal following the destruction of all the towns of Nepal by the king of Yaban Sultan Samasuddin<sup>2</sup> states that the dilapidated chaitya fallen at that time<sup>3</sup> was given a new cover (*'karoti navakam varayahah*) or its renovation completed (*jirnoddhara pratipaditam*). In an inscription recording conservation of Jayabagesori water conduit done by Jayasthitimalla (dated 1388 CE) to augment religious merit of his late queen Rajalladevi, the existing situation is described as '*jirnam bhagnam divam svarnashodhita purbajairayam*' (worn out, dilapidated and fallen albeit with the conduit shining with the golden plate cover put by the ancestors) and his own action is characterized as '*punah sam sthapyā vidhivata*' (reconstructed according to ordained rules). The term leaves little doubt that what he did amounted to *sam sthapana* (new construction) of the structure and the pit possibly retaining the golden spout from the earlier restorations as the original component. In an inscription recording a major restoration action undertaken by Jagatpalvarma in 1414 CE on Baghbhairav temple of Kirtipur, we find the description of existing condition as '*bhagnavesm ashirah su*' (dilapidated and fallen temple including its top roof) and the work '*jirnoddar*' completed with the instruction of three specialists e.g. '*jirnoddaravidhanesmim*' (expert in the rules of renovation), '*daivagnya*' (astrologer priest) and '*jajam ana*' (family priest).

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<sup>2</sup> The wordings are '*srutansamsadino yabanadhirajah nepalsarbbā nagaram bhasmikaro*'

<sup>3</sup> The wordings are '*tasmin chhyane patita chaityamidam dristwa jirnam*'. Sultan Samsuddin of West Bengal had caused large destruction in Kathmandu Valley in the year 1326 CE.

The three examples are drawn to represent the three major building type of the Malla period and using different building materials and technology e.g. Chaitya (solid brick in mud mortar and plaster), Water Conduit Pit (brick) and Tiered Temple (brick and wood). Comparatively, the Lichchhavi inscriptions selected in this article were referring to stone *linga*, golden coat of arms and a wood and brick temple. All the examples except the Pimbahal Chaitya, which was damaged by vandalism in a war action, are of buildings deteriorated by the wear and tear of normal exigencies of nature and man.

From these three selected inscriptions of the Malla period we find discontinuation of the term *pratisam skar*, used by the Lichchhavi, in favor of *jirnoddhar* (in Sanskrit and *lhongn* in Newar), *navakam vara* (new cover), *punah sam sthapanā* (reconstruction), and other phrases with similar meaning. One of the key reason for the shift from *pratisam skar* to *jirnoddhar* may be the fact that the later conservation involved less of repair and reconsecration of images and more of restoration, repair and reconstruction of buildings and building parts. This also substantiates that the material nature of the ensemble of architecture had changed with development of comparatively tall temples in brick and wood and construction and reconstruction methods informed with a greater empirical understanding of the action of deteriorating agents of climate, earthquake and fire.

#### **Monsoon, Earthquake and Fire:**

Nepali architectural stylistic as well as construction tradition is based on and derives out of use of very weather sensitive materials such as wood, brick and mud. The intense and speedy deteriorating actions set in these materials by the summer monsoon, its element of pouring rain, wetness, humidity and heat and efforts to deal with and retard the consequences of these, appear to have greatly influenced the technique and technicalities of construction, development of materials and conservation practice itself. Although all cultures and their artifacts are subject to the 'continuous and ineluctible attrition' (James Marston Fitch) of the environment and their physical integrity affected, particularly in extreme situations (strong agent – weak material) the development of the artifact itself reads like a record of technical efforts made by the culture to deal with it.

The large overhanging roofs with characteristic slope of the Nepali temple can be attributed as a response to the pouring monsoons and the need to protect the brick walls with carved woodwork of windows and doors on the wall surface. The struts that support the large overhangs, its structural function cloaked in by the elaborate carvings, act in visual unison with the roofs and walls to further define the Nepali architectural style. The characteristic red sheen of the brick is itself a result of the glazing material and technology developed to protect brick and brick-wall from the ingress of moisture. The development of the brick itself records several steps taken to protect it from moisture and its action; first development input seems to have been made in the traditional brick making process when the ruffian brick faces are tamped and beaten and solidified and compressed using mallets so that the porosity of the brick and thereby, its absorptivity,

itself was greatly reduced. The glazing material itself is prepared by growing and maturing moss formed on vegetable matter through the action of monsoon rain itself! But as the brick-wall itself was constructed in mud mortar and the action of rain and moisture on the mortar was as critical, wedge-sectioned bricks were developed. The application of such wedged and glazed (*dachi-appa*) bricks stopped the ingress of moisture by simply hiding it from exposure to the outside. This three pronged response of brick and brick wall to moisture complimented the protection designed in the roof overhang.

The linkage of detailed architectural design and climate is well told by the carved window; these faced such threat from rain grazing on the wall surface that the window lintel had to be lined with *mikhafushi* eye-brow-bricks designed to maximize dripping. As such design and detailing of the wall could only reduce but not stop the loss of the fine carvings, the Nepali architect detailed the window with double frames so that the outer decorative window could be replaced without opening the brick wall (which lasted much longer with its *dachiappa* bricks). The inner frame which was encased in brick and remained dry, lasted as long as or even longer than the brick wall. It was ironical that aesthetic definition that the carved wooden elements gave to Nepali architecture also brought effects of exposure, 'loss of cohesive and adhesive strength, and embrittlement' to consequent disintegration and loss. The finer the carving the deeper and more extensive would be the weathering through sequences of wettings and dryings, moisture and sun and a demand of a quicker replacement.

Since material conservation is primarily "physical intervention in the fabric of the building to ensure its continued integrity", Nepali building culture appears well oriented to conservation from very early history as it sought to minimize the consequences of the weathering action of nature. It should be clear from the example of the carved window that replacement of a part that has outlived its natural life is a natural conservation response.

Although the action of nature in weathering of both wood and brick was quite severe, it was still not as radically destructive as the earthquake or fire. And a greater scope for bettering performance against weathering than against earthquake could be concluded. It is in this context that we find the use of the phrase '*dirghatara paschatkala*' (longer into future) by Amshuverma in his inscription recording repair of Matin *devakula* assuming significance. The Lichchhavi had already noticed how limited was the life span of wood and brick architecture when compared to that of stone subject to the wear and tear leased by weathering agents. Despite of this, it must have been the frequent earthquakes and their failure to make the stone temple stand up to shake of the bigger quakes that made the Malla builders go more with wood and brick than stone for tall temples.

Although inscripational records of reconstruction after the action of earthquakes directly referring to it as the agent of destruction are rare (and this may have been a blackout inspired by religious beliefs), there would have to have been many reconstructions

following huge earthquakes. Kathmandu valley is an earthquake field that is massively shaken and most tall buildings leveled at least every hundred years; and 'reconstructing foundation up' has been the only option for conservation after every great earthquake, such as those of 1255, ...1833, 1934. The post-1934 restoration of 55 Windowed Palace illustrates how conservation norms come to be socially and technically set in post-earthquake real time.

The action of 1934 earthquake on the 55 Windowed Palace of Bhaktapur brought its second storey, a virtual timber frame with its 55 bayed projected window to collapse but left the bottom two floors with heavy brick wall standing saving its famous murals. The restoration of the palace was done salvaging as much wood and window works as possible, maybe primarily due to lack of supplies and funds for new woodworks and not so much with the aim to retain as much of the original as possible. But apparently with quite a few of the window lattices as well as strut and rafter timber broken from the fall, they were trimmed for reuse consequently the reconstruction had the window projection itself reduced by a third. We also find that although the ground floor does not appear affected by earthquake, the double columns in the *dalan* towards the courtyard were replaced with single columns and with lesser number of open bays too. For some reason, all the *tham* were also newly carved with simpler design<sup>4</sup>. Such actions show that the traditional conservation practice went for replacement of structural elements too when required. Some design changes also appear to have been made in the location of doors and windows on the outside as well as inside of the east wing.

Nepali history is also witness to the fact its religious built heritage has literally risen out of the ashes several times after radical destruction by fire ignited by wick light offered in worship. How did our ancestors reconstruct their heritage in the absence of photographic and artistic records and the physical evidence of a heap of charcoal? The experience of 'restoring' the gutted temple of Pratappur after the fire of August 2003, particularly establishing some semblance of truth in the 'replacement' of the totally charred internal partitions for which no 'visual or descriptive' records were available was a contemporary reality-check on us, the professionals<sup>5</sup>. Although there are very few direct inscriptional record of fire and reconstructions, there have been several reconstructions after fire. All inscriptions of such works use terms for new construction to describe the reconstruction<sup>6</sup>. The need to wholly replace the building following destruction by a huge earthquake or fire is reflected in the use of most of such terms as *punah sam sthapanā*.

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<sup>4</sup> Written records of the works were not kept but the earlier posts had somehow remained stored for more than a century and we found several of them during the 2003 conservation. Some of the older thams, possibly the originals from 18<sup>th</sup> century, are now put back as double columns.

<sup>5</sup> The replacement for the carved window used in the sanctum to screen off sacred secret images from view was best 'authenticated' through use of the knowledge and experience of traditional wood worker.

<sup>6</sup> One such inscription, dated 1708, issued by Bhuvanlaxmi and King Bhupalendramalla is at Changu and records reconstruction after the fire of 1702.



### **Beginnings of Modern Conservation in Nepal:**

Ancient Monuments Act of Nepal promulgated in 1955 was largely aimed at protection and moves to conserve built heritage (in the traditional core of the towns of Kathmandu valley) began with the setting up of its Planning Office with United Nations assistance in 1962. One of its first recommendations was to impose a 'building code' for its 'monument zones' to direct its 'development as well as heritage preservation' but it went unimplemented. In 1974 in the town of Bhaktapur, a German government supported 'Bhaktapur Development Project' was instituted with a clear emphasis on the restoration of historical buildings and temples. By 1978, it had added a new focus of infrastructure conservation, rehabilitation and development and thus had gained a turn into spatial conservation. But it still did not follow the building codes approach and instead went for direct conservation action through use of public funds in private buildings also. Only a few years before, an UNESCO sponsored conservation project had been proposed and undertaken at the Hanumandhoka Durbar, the key monument of the Durbar square at the heart of the traditional monumental core of Kathmandu town. The project developed and followed its own approaches to monument conservation. It also took some very heavy handed approach to building strengthening such as introducing concealed concrete ring beams into the medieval structure. Both the projects defined conservation in their own ways as UNESCO and its technical expert groups had not as yet come up with standard norms and approaches for conservation or for interventions with conservation objectives<sup>7</sup>. Both the project learnt a lot from the traditional crafts and craftsmen and it was from such learnings that the 'experts' themselves developed their expertise, particularly in the techniques of restoration and reconstruction. Such experience also informed the professional engineers, architects and archeologists as well as the government Department of Archeology which had the legal responsibility for the heritage conservation under the Ancient Monuments Act. Up till then, the Department of Archeology was largely following a reconstruction mode in its restoration projects of temples and other public heritage buildings. When seven monument zones of Kathmandu valley's built heritage was listed as Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site in 1979, it included the three Durbar squares, the central palace and monuments zone of the towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. It is notable that the Building Code approach was chosen by the Department of Archeology to affect conservation at the territorial and private building level, while it continued the reconstruction mode with the conservation of public monuments in Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site. UNESCO and its missions appear to have styled as arbiters in conservation after the inscription of KV in WHS list in 1979. An under-funded and under-staffed Department of Archeology reeled as KV was put on the list of WHS in Danger. The restoration of Keshavnarayan Chowk of Patan Durbar MZ, the first 'conservation' project undertaken after KVVHWS's inscription, did not take much note of UNESCO guidelines. The failure to affect conservation of the historic fabric in the monument zones and uncontrolled urbanization led UNESCO to list Kathmandu Valley as World Heritage Site in danger in 2003!

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<sup>7</sup> The first set of guidelines was only issued by UNESCO in 1977.

### **Conservation and Authenticity:**

In modern times, broad globally generalized basis of conservation has evolved out of the 1972 UNESCO Convention Covering the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Sites. The first stage conclusion of ensuing debates on conservation and authenticity were made by the 1994 Nara Convention. Nara Document on Authenticity defines conservation quite widely as “all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement.” The doctrinal position on conservation has thus been largely developed on these three defining criteria of *understanding, knowing and safeguarding* of heritage in the three aspects, *history, meaning and material* and the three objective stances of presentation, restoration and enhancement. The triple tripartite discrete points of consideration in conservation design shows how complex conservation practice has become to professionals at present.

However, Authenticity is spelled in detail considering history and material and applied for purpose of restoration only. In practice, the application of material authenticity is often limited to its initial construction, the first phase of the historical time line of the resource. The manner of breaking down history of a heritage resource into three phases, the one at the creation of the object, the past and the perceptual present<sup>8</sup> condenses the long past period and its many points of recreation/reconstruction or renovation of the object into one hazy aggregate reducing the detailed sequential imprint of history into something of a challenge to authenticity. If ‘a heritage that is substantially reconstructed today would become a product of the present’ and would loose its significance/value as heritage, then the several substantial reconstructions in the past would also appear as amounting to progressive loss of authenticity rather than its enrichment, which is what our ancestors were aiming at when the interventions were made at many points of time in the past. As assuring authenticity is possibly the most important requirement of any conservation action, it becomes necessary for us to understand how authenticity may be redefined based on conservation as practiced by our ancestors. Should we need to make so much of the fixed spot in a linear reconing of time in defining historicity of heritage and its authenticity with respect to time? For cultures with a long conservation tradition like Nepali architecture, authenticity defined with value only for original integrity cannot be just – it has to put as much value to the authenticity of evolutionary integrity (particularly in design and workmanship) or traces and layers of past conservation as points of (re-)creation. It should be patently wrong if Nepali conservation practice at present sees the actions of Amshuverma (as described in the inscription quoted above on the renovation of the coat of arms of Changunarayan) of ‘reproducing based on original outline’ as a loss of material authenticity at that time itself!

For cultures, whose historical development is predominantly steered by religions that had and have a cyclical and seasonal notion of time, history becomes diachronic and the layers seasonal. When such accumulated seasonal layers span centuries of active socio-

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<sup>8</sup> Feilden, Bernard M. and Jokilehto, J, Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Site, 1993 ICCROM; p 16

cultural and material action, conservation becomes a practitioner's nightmare particularly if we take the definition of authenticity at layers of the seasonally renewed originals. Similar complexities will surface in the area of material, as acts of 'conservation' of the past society gets piled up. Similar multiple diachronic layering of meaning is also a factor to reckon with as the religious practice itself has undergone layered changes over the past and several sites may have reflections of the changing Hindu (Vaisnav-Saiva-Shakta-tantrik-etc) or Buddhist (Hinayana-Mantrayana-Bajrayana-etc) cult(?) associations. Also, the valley heritage's pluralism (resulting out of the social mix of the Kirat, Hindu and Buddhist in living neighborhoods) makes for many 'meanings' at the 'community' levels. Kathmandu valley.

The need to understand cultural heritage from the perspective of the living primary inheritor community, to look at the layers of history and meaning from the eyes of that community and to base activities designed for material safeguard on their practices of presentation, restoration and enhancement become paramount while defining authenticity and discussing the norms and standards for architectural conservation particularly for WHS inscribed on the criteria of living heritage such as KVVHS.

Some of these considerations of meaning and values from the perspective of the living community can be interpreted within the reformulations of Authenticity as made in 2005. These reformulations extend the definition of authenticity from the material aspects like form and design, materials and substance, location and setting, to more intangible aspects, such as use, traditions, techniques and management systems, etc. This will not only usher in new tests of authenticity beyond the physical fabric to associative values but also lend priority to history, meaning and material to those accrued after the initial creation. Such an approach will be of particular importance to the conservation of heritage that has a very long history of development. The importance of any heritage could not be based just on its ancientness, not also on the width of history it is able to tell. We can learn from Lichchhavi inscriptions that assuring aesthetic and material integrity is as noble a requirement of conservation as maintaining historical integrity of the original.

As Nepal is a signatory to these conventions and as the high peaks of built heritage have been largely included in the seven monument zones inscribed by UNESCO as Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site, current conservation practice and the Nepali professionals are subject to global conventions and experts, whereas the foremen and skilled workers and craftsmen are instructed by the practice coming down as a family tradition. Experience and assessment of actual conservation works done in Nepal shows that the traditional knowledge and practice triumphs at the detailing and execution of conservation action on built heritage, whereas the global knowledge of experts and conventions has been of greater consequence in planning and addressing issues broadly. However, there has been little assimilation of the global into the local and the global theory tends to remain aloof of the practice.