

Historical Background of the Kathmandu World Heritage Sites with Special Reference to Patan Monument Zone

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Nepal occupies the land between Tibetan Autonomous Region of China in the north and Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Sikkim States of India in the west, south and east, covering 147,181 sq. kms. of land area with three in ecological regions from north to south Mountain, Hill and Terai. The corresponding regions in 1991 census share 7.8 percent, 45.5 percent and 46.7 percent population respectively of the country's total population of 1,84,91,097. And of the total population, the overwhelming people are the Hindus which constitutes about 86.5 percent of the total population followed by Buddhists 7.8 percent, Muslims 3.5 percent and other 2.2 percent respectively.

Administratively, the country has been divided into five development regions, fourteen Zones, 75 districts and 3995 Village Development Committees plus 36 municipalities.

Nepal is popularly known to the outside world as the home of the gods and goddesses, the birth-place of Buddha and a country of

mystery. It has an extremely rich cultural heritage. During its long and glorious history it has preserved its ancient culture. It is, moreover, a store house of ancient Hindu and Buddhist monuments.

History of Nepal begins from the birth of Gautam Buddha (623 - 543 B.C.)¹. According to the legend and custom, the Mauryan emperor Asoka visited the Kathmandy Valley and constructed the five stupas in Patan, which are still preserved and people revered them as the Asokan stupas. But, however, from the 6th century B.C. to the advent of Lichhavi King Mandev, whose dated inscription is 464 A.D. i.e. for about 1000 years, the history of Nepal remained conjectural. But the recent discovery of Jayavarman's stone sculpture with dated inscription at Maligaon (Kathmandu) further dates back the recorded history to 274 years. i.e. 190 A.D.²

The Lichhavi period (c. 300 A.D. -879 A.D.) laid the foundation of cultural social and administrative and achieved architectural development in high standard, particularly, in

Kathmandu Valley. The superb and masterpieces of stone sculptures that are available in the Kathmandu Valley belonged to that period. The famed Mangriha, Kailashkut Bhawan and Bhadradhivas Bhawan were built during that period, which are very eloquently mentioned in the Tang Chronicles of China.

The next great dynasty is the Malla dynasty. (c. 1200 A.D. - 1768 A.D.) This period had witnessed the culmination of art, architecture and culture of Kathmandu Valley. As a result, this period was considered as the golden period of Nepal. Pratap Malla of Kathmandu, Siddhi Narsimha Malla of Patan and Bhupatindra Malla of Bhaktapur were the outstanding personalities who envied each other to beautify and construct new magnificent temples in their respective kingdoms, this competitions was not only among the kings but also among craftsmen, sculptures and painters of the three cities. Most of the present extant monuments of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are their creation.

The monuments of this period have preserved a wide variety of architectural styles. Each different type of structure has its own distinctive character and utility, but is linked one another by common ties of technique and material.

The Shah period (1768 A.D. - to date) heralded the modern history of Nepal. After the unification of Nepal, Kathmandu is recognized as the capital of Nepal and choose the Hanuman Dhoka palace as the royal residence cum official building.

During the Rana's power (1847-1951 A.D.) they had encouraged the western Neo classical

architecture; almost all the existing big white stucco palaces belonged to them.

The above statement throw some light on the history, art, architecture and culture of the Kathmandu Valley as a whole.

As regards the monuments in the Kathmandu Valley an inventory report was prepared by the Department of Housing and Physical Planning in Collaboration with UNESCO experts. This report estimates that 80 percent of all the historical monuments in Nepal are to be found in the valley. The inventory has selected and identified 888 monuments and proposed 34 monument zones.⁴

The present study is focused on the World Heritage Sites of Kathmandu Valley that have been included in the World Heritage List.

The 17th. General Assembly of UNESCO, a resolution was adopted by the convention regarding the protection of cultural and natural heritage of the world. Nepal formally accepted the UNESCO's 1972 convention and became the full member of it in June 20, 1978. After one year, in October 1979, Nepal became successful in enlisting the seven major sites of the Kathmandu Valley representing the full array of historic and artistic achievements for which Kathmandu Valley is world famous. These seven sites are three old royal palaces such as Hanuman Dhoka of Kathmandu, Patan Durbar and Bhaktapur Durbar, two Buddhist big stupas (Boudhnath and Swayambhu) and two Hindu temple complexes (Pashupatinath and Changunarayan).

At the 20th. Session of UNESCO's General Conference, held in November 1978 in Paris,

Resolution 4/7, 6/8 was calling an intensification of the project and the mobilization of international funds At its opening, the then Director-General of The Department of Archaeology (DDA) made an appeal for voluntary contributions from UNESCO member states, Non-Governmental Organizations and individuals. He particularly called on support from the world's artists and suggested that contributors might like 'adapt' individual monuments and sites for conservation work.

In response to the appeal of the Director General of the DOA of Nepal, UNESCO has made time to time International Campaign for Safeguarding the monuments of The Kathmandu Valley. And Working Group has already arranged three campaign review committee meetings which were held in Kathmandu in 1989, 1991 and 1994 respectively. As a result, the friendly countries like Germany, Austria, Japan, France, Belgium, Britain, Canada, UN bodies like UNESCO, UNDP and individual institutions like IFM (SUA), CNRS (France), Nippon Institution of Technology (Japan, Sidney and Randwick Schools of TAGE (Australia) are providing technical and financial support for restoration and conservation of the monuments of the Kathmandu Valley and, hence, for this reason, the monuments are, on the whole, particularly of World Heritage Sites, improving better and better.

For the preservation and protection of these sites His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal also declared the above six monuments (except Pashupatinath, which is now under process) as the Protected Monument Zones with its demarcation of the boundaries and

published in Nepal Gazette in the following years.

Monument	Gazetted year
1. Kathmandu Durbar Square	1984 further extension in 1987
2. Patan Durbar Square	1984 further extension is underway
3. Bhaktapur Durbar Square	1984 further extension is underway
4. Swayambhu	1978 further extension in 1994
5. Pashupatinath	-Process is going on for its demarcation as Protected Monument Zone
6. Boudhnath	1984
7. Changuarayan	1984

Keeping in view of the World Heritage Sites and as per the need of time, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has recently enacted the fifth amendment of the Ancient Monument Preservation Act, 1956. The fifth amendment updates it as far as practicable, in consonance with the spirit of UNESCO standard, Venice Charter and ICOMOS Conservation norms. Similarly, to preserve the historical and architectural environment of those sites, the DOA has issued the Ancient Monument Preservation Regulation B.S. 2046 and also enacted Guidelines for any new construction and repair works in the Protected Monument Zones of the Kathmandu Valley in 1991 and amended in 1994.

For the preservation and protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites, HMG of Nepal has recently published the Nepal Environmental Policy and Action Plan.⁵

According to the new amendment, even for the demolition of historical private buildings within the Protected Monument Zone, the concerned party has to take approval from the DOA, this amendment has the provision of creating monument maintenance fund and it classified all the monuments into three categories, international, National and Local monuments.

A Brief Description of World Heritage Sites

1. Swayambhu

The Swayambhu Chaitya is standing at top of the hill about 2 kms. west of Kathmandu. Who and when it was built is still obscure. But, according to the religious and literary sources, the Swayambhu is said to have been the oldest monument of Kathmandu Valley. Its origin is related to the history of the Kathmandu Valley and according to Purana this Chaitya antecedents the Kathmandu Valley civilization.

At Swayambhu, there are several inscriptions belonging to Lichhavi, Malla and Shah periods, the oldest being the inscription of Lichhavi Kingra Deva.⁶ Some Nepalese scholars consider this undated inscription is older than Changunarayan Garuda pillar inscription dated 464 A.D.

A detail survey of this site is initiated by the DOA, so far this survey has recorded 7 important monuments, 51 sculptures and 101 chaityas.

Due to its marvelous art and peaceful and serene appearance its importance is continuing from century to century. The other historical monuments around the chaitya such as

Vayupur, Agnipur, Shantipur, Nagpur, Pratappur, Kavindrapur, Harti temple, Aganchhen, Patis and Pokharis etc. have again enhanced its importance. And also the scattered historical objects around the hill such as numerous sculptures, inscriptions, chaityas and architectural environment that have turned this hill into an open museum. For the Buddhist scholars it is considered as one of the important Mahayan Buddhist research centers in Nepal.

Like in any monument zones of Nepal, in Swayambhu also it is being threatened by encroachment with increasing population as well as building structures thereby affecting the very existence of the Swayambhu hill itself. In the late seventies south-eastern slope had experienced the landslides. With the emergency technical and financial help from the UNESCO its slope could be stabilized.

In 1989 HMG/Nepal in collaboration of GTZ of Germany has prepared a Swayambhunath Conservation Master Plan.⁷ This Master Plan envisaged "the protection of the hill as a pilgrimage site the tradition which continued over 1500 years. Further, the Master Plan provides a model to rescue the historical and natural qualities of the sites from the adverse effects of ever expanding urban growth."

In this Master Plan following major works have been proposed.

1. Maintenance and restoration of Monuments,
2. Maintenance of the front of the fifteen houses of Buddhacharya,
3. Compensation for 35 private houses and patis for its demolition,

4. Restoration of Sattals and Patis in its original design,
5. Approach road to Swayambhu and parking facilities,
6. Afforestation, and
7. Drinking water supply and sanitation.

Progress achieved so far

The maintenance and restoration of monuments are continuing with the financial and technical assistance of German Govt. emergency afforestation work is completed and drinking water supply and sanitation work will be completed in this year 2052/53.

DOA is executing annually the activities as per the Master Plan and with the financial and technical assistance of German, Government emergency afforestation, sewerage and water supply program as envisaged in the master plan are going to be completed in this F/Y.

2. Changunarayan

Changunarayan is about 15 kms. east of Kathmandu city. This temple was constructed on the hill, but due to the lack of historical evidence who and when it was constructed is not yet known. But according to the Gopal Vamsavali Hari Datta Varman in B.S. 382 i.e. 325 A.D. had established the images of four Narayan in four cardinal directions in the Kathmandu Valley. It is one of them.

Hindus worship it as Garuda Narayan and Buddhists respect it as Hari Hari Hari-Vahana-Lokeswor.

The Lichhavi inscription bearing on the Garuda pillar of Manadeva, dated 464 A.D., is the oldest available inscription of this site.

Besides the main temple, there are various other several excellent medieval stone sculptures around its premises.

On the call of UNESCO for the protection and development of Changunarayan temple in the year 1985, a team of architects and graphic designers from Sydney School of TAFE and Randweek School of TAFE from Australia have conducted architectural research and survey of this site. They have made a detailed documentation of the site with drawings, photographs and video tapes. The TAFE colleges also organized a promotional exhibition of Changunarayan at Sydney 1986.

The Government has initiated some restoration and conservation works in Changunarayan from 1987 and is preparing a Master Plan for its overall conservation and development works.

3. Boudhanath

The Boudhanath stupa lies about 5 kms. north-east of Kathmandu city, which is the largest stupa in the valley. It represents the best tradition of stupa architecture in Nepal. It is the specimen that we find the admixture of Nepalese and Tibetan architectures. This stupa is the important place of pilgrimage for Mahayana Buddhists all over the world. Several monasteries have been developed in its periphery that have enriched this complex.

According to Sylvan Levi, this stupa was built in the sixth century A.D. The main stupa stands on the two storied plinth visible from long distance. Four Dhyani Buddhas are placed in four cardinal directions. Along the circumference, prayer wheels with depiction of "Om Mane Padme Hum" are placed around the

stupa. Its feature is hemispherical dome. In the circumference of dome, Tibetan Tantric images (Yub Yum) are installed in 108 small niches. Above the dome, square hermica with a pair of eyes each in four directions as common in other stupas is installed but its Chatra Vali is square contrary to the general circular one.

As per the survey done by the DOA in 1994 it has six important religious monuments.

4. Pashupatinath

Pashupati temple lies 4.8 kms. north - east of Kathmandu. It is the Sanctum Sanctorium of the Hindus all over the world. Non-Hindus are prohibited to get inside the temple premises. It has been housing traditional art and architecture of Nepal.

Pashupati temple has its own historical and architectural significance. The Kirati sculpture which in recovered here reveals its very antiquity. From the Lichhavi to present time it has remained as the patron deity of the kings of Nepal.

The antiquity of this complex can be traced back to the 2nd century A.D. The golden temple of Pashupatinath, however, took its shape in the 17th century. The Vishnu Vikranta image with dated inscription (467 A.D.) located at Tilganga is considered, so far as, the oldest one in the Pashupatinath area. Keeping in view of the importance of Pashupati area. His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev had issued an Ordinance in February 24, 1986 for the establishment of Pashupati Area Development Trust. The Trust was established in the next month, and King himself graces its patronship and Queen is the Chairperson. Among other, the main objectives of the Trust are to provide

safeguard, maintenance and restoration works and conduct development activities in the Pashupati area.

The Pashupati Development Trust is, at present in collaboration with DOA, conducting inventory survey of monuments and restoration works of the Pashupati area. The Trust is also delineating the boundary of the Pashupati area to be declared as the Protected Monument Zone.

5. Hanumandhoka Durbar Square

Although the antiquity of Hanumandhoka Palace goes back to the Kirata and Lichhavi periods but its extant monuments don't predate Malla period. Many Malla rulers contributed to their architectural model as well as its style of their respective times. According to some scholars, Malla rulers made this palace on the foundation of its ancient structure, Mahindra Malla, Pratap Malla and Jaya Prakash Malla made new additions which we see them today. The dates of the present monuments of this complex vary from 13th - 19th century.

The Kasthamandapa, Degu Taleju, Kumari Ghar, Hanumandhoka Palace, Taleju Temple, Kavindrapur etc. are the outstanding examples of the monuments of this site.

After the unification of Nepal, the Great King Prithvi Narayan Shah initiated the buildings of four towers representing the four towns of the valley - Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur and Kirtipur. His successors had greatly modified the old residential area of the Hanumandhoka Palace, particularly the whole western wing introducing for the first time the western style architecture amidst the indigenous medieval architecture. Besides, there are some

other monuments such as Shiva Parvati and Swet Bhairav temple in Hanumandhoka.

Hanumandhoka has political as well as religious importance since the Malla period. Various fair and festivals are also observed in this place. It was also an administrative center cum residential palace up to the time of King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah.

Even well before the initiation of the Master Plan of the conservation of Cultural Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley, the restoration and conservation activities were going on in the Hanumandhoka Durbar complex. With the financial and technical support from the UNESCO Conservation works of Nasal Chowk, Lohan Chowk, Lalitpur tower, Bilas Mandir, Nine-storied-palace, Nag Pokhari with its surrounding temples, Jalasayana Narayan were completed.

At present, the palace wing from Nasal Chowk to Lohan Chowk including the nine-storied palace has been converted into museum to house the late Kings Tribhuvan and Mahendra galleries respectively and the latest addition being the gallery of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

6. Bhaktapur Durbar Square

Bhaktapur, the city of devotees, is a conch shaped city. It is the ancient town in the country. Its antiquity is supported by the presence of Shiva Simha and Amsuvarman's inscription dated 594 A.D. which is available to Gol Madhi. The historical documents suggest that in ancient time this city was called Khriping, Khopa and then Khopring in Kirat period. In the Lichhavi period it developed as Drung - a trade center. In the early Malla

period, the city became the capital of Nepal called Tripura and Bhaktapur as a whole is known as Khapadesh. Later on Patan and Kathmandu separated from Bhaktapur. During the time of Bhupatindra Malla, the development of its art and architecture flourished to its zenith.

The Bhaktapur Durbar Square is perhaps the best specimen of Malla Palaces. It represents the beauty of the Nepalese art, architecture and prosperity of Malla period. The square can be regarded as the treasure house of the Nepalese creative arts. The Golden Gate, the statue of King Bhupatindra Malla are considered as the most beautiful pieces of art not only in Nepal but also outside Nepal too. The famous 55-window palace, Nyatapola (five storied) temple, Bhairav Nath temple, Dattatriya temple, Pujari Math are the masterpieces of architecture and wood carvings. But after the unification of Prithvi Narayan Shah the importance of Bhaktapur was neglected and declined and remained a typical medieval town till recently. But, however, modernization is steadily encroaching its periphery.

During seventies and eighties the German Government helped to restore and conserve the north-eastern part of the Bhaktapur city, particularly the Dattatriya square including the Pujari Math, and also completely reconstructed the Chyansin Mandap in the Durbar Square which was completely damaged by the 1934 earthquake and also helped to restore the Krishna temple, Aisamadhu Sattal and shrines of Khauma square. Again it has committed to contribute 30 percent of the total cost of restoration work of 55-window palace of Bhaktapur inclusive of technical support.

7. The Subsequent Study Focuses on Patan Durbar Square in Detail

The Patan Durbar Square is one of the seven World Heritage Sites of the Kathmandu Valley.

The Patan city is presently called the Lalitpur Sub-Metropolis, which is one of the 36 municipalities of Nepal and in terms of population, as of 1991, the third largest city of the kingdom, with a population of 115,865 after Kathmandu and Biratnagar.

Unlike Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, it is a Buddhist town. For instance, out of 295 Bahas and Bahis of three cities more than 56 percent is in this city and this city was laid out into a circular shape symbolizing the wheel of Buddhism - Buddha's wheel of Law.

The Patan City is one of the oldest settlements of the Kathmandu Valley. It is popularly known by different names in different periods such as Lalitpur, Patan and Yelade.⁸ However, its ancient name is Yupagram. It is believed that city was built by a person called Lalit Ghanshi from the forest called Lalit. By the name of the place and creator of the town, it is called Lalitpur. Second version is that because of its very beauty and attractive architecture it is called Lalitpur (Lalit means beautiful, pur mean city). Some say that this place was a trade center in ancient time so it is called Pattana, which means a trade center. In Newari language it is known as Yela De, which means lovely town. The Tibetan name of Patan is Ye-Rana meaning eternity itself.

According to the legend and custom, as stated above, it has a long history which dates back to 250 B.C. During the visit of Mauryan

Emperor Asoka he had constructed five earthen mounds which are still existing and popularly known as Asokan Stupas. Snellgrove supports the antiquity of this city. He suggested that it may have originated well before the beginning of the Christian era as a Buddhist community and compared it with such centers as Sravasti or Vaisali - north Indian towns familiar to the wandering feet of Gautam Buddha.⁹

It is believed that the Kirati King Yalamber ruled his country from this city itself. "Patukwodon" situated at Kwalkhu Tole - very close to Patan Durbar is considered as the remnant of his place. But Mary Slusser has taken the Patukwodon as the relics of central Stupa of Asoka.¹⁰

The recorded history of Patan begins from the Lichhavi period. There are several inscriptions belonging to that period. These inscriptions mention about the settlements, royal decrees, construction of temples, chaityas, dhungedharas and its maintenance.

Except about a dozen principal Biharas of pre-Siddhi Narsingh Malla period and few others, other extant monuments like Sikhara style temple, Nepali style temples, palace complex and other monuments are of seventeenth century or later period. In other words, more than 90 percent of the existing monuments belong to the Malla period. And, as Malla rulers were Hindu, the large concentration of Hindu temples of Patan city are confined to this Patan Durbar World Heritage Site.

Of all the extant temple Char Narayan is the oldest temple built by King Purander Singh in 1566 A.D. and second oldest being the

Narsimha temple which was also built by him in 1689 A.D. But, however, the oldest monument is the Manga Hiti built by Bhairavi, grandson of Mandev, in 570 A.D.

The credit of addition, expansion and beautification of the Patan Durbar World Heritage Site goes to King Siddhi Narsingha Malla, Sir Niwas Malla and Yog Narendra Malla. Most of the extant monuments like Patan Durbar itself Krishna Mandir, Taleju temple, Degu Taleju, Sundari Chowk, Mul Chowk, Keshav Narayan Chowk were built by them. Seeing the beauty of Patan Durbar complex, Percival Landon expressed in his own words "As an ensemble the Durbar Square in Patan, probably remains as the most picturesque collection of building that has been set-up in so small a place by the piety and pride of oriental man". Pandit Kunu Sharma of 17th century compares this square with a piece of heaven.¹² Prof. Sekler, one of the outstanding experts, praises the Durbar complex as rich, beautiful and attractive as "San Marco" square of Italy.

Of the three cities of Kathmandu Valley, the Patan city reserves and maintains the pristine glory of its medieval architecture. Unlike in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur, there is no significant alteration and modification of Durbar Square complex since the 17th century.

Conclusion

The seven Monument zones listed in the World Heritage Sites are, in fact, rightly chosen. These sites expose the unique architecture of Nepal to the world. These monuments are the culmination of achievement through long and undisturbed development of art and architecture, irrespective of change in ruling

dynasty. All the rulers from Lichhavi period to the present day were/are equally keen in preserving and developing Nepalese architecture. The peculiar thing about Nepalese monuments is that the same monument is equally respected and honoured by both. Hindus and Buddhists alike. Hindus visit the Buddhist monuments, likewise, Buddhists visit the Hindu monuments. Even the King pay visit both the monuments.

The historical monuments that stand in and around the Kathmandu Valley are unique and genuine in itself, no where else we find such types of monuments outside Nepal, for example, Nepalese Style temples and stupas. These types of architecture have evolved since at least, last 1500 years. These architectures are the result of ingenuity, skill and craftsmanship of Nepalese artists. During the Malla period the development of Nepalese architecture reached its zenith. Over more than 80 percent of the extant monuments belong to this period and a large majority of them are confined to the Kathmandu Valley, particularly in the seven World Heritage Sites.

The Malla rulers were the great connoisseur of art. They had not only built the great monuments but also for its maintenance they had allocated land endowments and also issued the royal decrees, in this context. time to time for its continuity.

During the Shah period before 1950, most of the Hindu temple were intact but Buddhist monuments, particularly in Patan, were neglected and, as a result, large number of Bahas and Bahils were remained in dilapidated condition.¹³ Again, there were set backs in the

preservation and conservation of monuments in Nepal irrespective of Hindu and Buddhist monuments because of the introduction of Guthi Corporation. All the Guthi properties of the monuments are under the jurisdiction of Guthi Corporation. So far this co-operation has neither the programmes nor sufficient technical manpower. Consequently, the monuments were deprived of proper maintenance. Thus it should have short, medium and long term policies and must co-ordinate its activities with the DOA.

After 1970 with the technical and financial co-operation of friendly countries, individual institutions and UN agencies, the DOA is conducting the restoration and conservation activities on important monuments of the country. As a result, the monuments in general and the important monuments in particular are looking better. In this regard, not only the international agencies but also, besides the government effort, the local agencies, municipalities and other Non-Government Organizations are also contributing since few decades back. It has happened because people are also becoming aware of the importance of cultural heritage of the country which they have inherited from their predecessors and have realized their duty to pass it over to their future generation as intact as possible.

The Government has completed the Master Plan of Swayambhunath, which is one of the seven World Heritage Sites in Kathmandu Valley. The master plan of Changunarayan has to be made up to-date. Preparation of such master plans for other World Heritage Sites are also equally important. Similarly, the

Government is preparing master plans for other monument zones on priority basis.

The monuments, of those Heritage Sites as the most invaluable cultural properties of the nation, should have proper records of them. It has become imperative that these properties should be inventorised, photographed and documented without delay, otherwise our future generations will curse us. Hence, keeping in view of its importance, the DOA has already made a survey of monuments and planning to prepare master plan for the rest of the World Heritage Sites.

The DOA is more a technical department but its overwhelming staffs are inadequate to cope with the present demand for works and it receives less budget. Hence, the department is handicapped in both ways from the technical manpower as well as from resources. Despite having these limitations, the Department is in cooperation with other sister organizations and the agencies and certain friendly countries including INGO's, performing its duty in the field of conservation and restoration works of the monuments of the country with utmost effort.

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