Banaras, the Cultural Capital of India: Visioning Cultural Heritage and Planning

Prof. Rana P.B. Singh
Professor of Cultural Geography & Heritage Studies, & Head, Dept. of Geography,
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, UP 221005, India. Email: ranapbs@gmail.com

Abstract. From India 32 properties are enlisted in WH List (till February 2015), however ‘The Riverfront Ghats of Varanasi’ has not yet been proposed for inclusion, mostly due to political complexity and lack of strong movement from the stakeholders. Framing tourism and cultural development in holistic frame for national and international resource within the purview of the ancient roots of heritage properties and traditions of spirituality, sacrality and pilgrimages that have a long tradition and continuity in India, Ministry Tourism and Culture, and Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, have recently conceptualised two innovative and appropriate national programmes of interfacing and counter-depending missions of (i) Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), and (ii) Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD). In both of these programmes the ministries of Culture and Tourism and Urban Development will collaborate to strengthen and promote the heritage sites and centres of pilgrimage-tourism in making the environment green and sustainable while befitting into the roots of culture, traditions and society and also image of the site. This essay attempts to critically examine the rationales for proposing Varanasi as a heritage city in the WH List and the problems faced in this process since last fourteen years. In this context the status of Varanasi on the scale of UNESCO-WH List, the implications of the past and on-going Master Plans and City Development Plan (JNNURM), governance strategies and issues of public awareness are critically examined, and further visions of recent programmes of HRIDAY and PRASAD are appraised in the purview of Varanasi.

Keywords: heritagescapes, heritage planning, HRIDAY, contestation, Master Plan, PRASAD, public participation, stakeholders.

1. The Master Plan and Heritage Zones

People say, “By seeing Banaras, one can see as much of life as the whole India can show”. In fact, Banaras is an archetype of all India, but it is full of complexity and contrasts resulting too difficult in comprehension for those who stand outside the Indian tradition. Vārānasi, popularly called Kaśi or Bānāras (wrongly spelt as Benares in anglicised way), known as the Cultural Capital, Heritage city of India and one of the oldest living cities of the world, records a continuous settlement history since ca. 1000 BCE. However, the present city has grown mostly during the early 18th century. Varanasi acquired status of a ‘million+ city’ (as Urban Agglomeration, VUA) in 1991 and recorded a population of 1,435,113 people in 2011. Administratively, the VUA (82º 56'E – 83º 03'E and 25º 14'N – 25º 23.5'N) consists of a Municipal Corporation (MC), an Out Growth (OG), four Contiguous Towns (CT), two Notified Areas (NA), one Municipal Board (MB), and one Cantonment Board (CB) [cf. Singh 2015a]. The city’s population consists of predominantly of Hindus (63 per cent), substantial Muslims (32 per cent) and other religious groups. There are ca. 3,300 Hindu sanctuaries, and 1,388 Muslim shrines and mosques (more than in any city in the world). Existence of 4 universities and 3 deemed universities, 150 Muslim schools, ca. 100 Sanskrit pathashalas (traditional schools), and 50 Inter and Degree colleges make the place a ‘City of Culture and Learning’. The vividness and multiplicity, and the diversity and unity are easily envisioned in its practising religions, performing cultures, functioning society and regulating economy – altogether making a cultural mosaic or universe of ‘heritagescapes’, in which age-old festivities and performances play a major role (cf. Singh 2009c, pp. 17-18). In the Master Plan 2011, around 0.95% (i.e. 82.50ha) area out of 8,645 ha was allocated under historical, heritage and archaeological uses, which in Master Plan 2031 has been reduced in ratio to reach only 0.38% (i.e. 92.40ha) out of the proposed total covering area of 24,646 ha.
As the city has grown in area, population, business and administrative functions, its influence extends beyond the municipal limits. From a city with a single core (CBD, i.e. Chauk), it has now acquired the character of an Urban Agglomeration (UA) that spread over an area of 119.52 sq. km. And then there is a much larger area called Varanasi Development Region (477.34 sq. km) over which it has no formal control but to which it sends its products and from which it draws its food and other requirements. What happens in the region has implications for the city and its people and vice versa. With further improvement of the GT road (National Highway 2) into a super highway, the future expansion of the city will continue to be on all sides surrounding the city.

![Varanasi Development Region as in Master Plan 2011](image)

In 1982 the Varanasi Development Authority (VDA, formed in 1974) made an assessment of the earlier plans of the city. And, under its direction, the Town & County Planning Organisation (TCPO) prepared a comprehensive Master Plan of Varanasi 1991-2011, during which time the population of Varanasi Agglomeration is expected to double (cf. Singh 2009c, p. 327). The five-tier areal units are defined on the basis of administration and planning strategy, taking Varanasi Development Region, VDR (as in Master Plan 2011, and further apprehended in 2031) as the outer limit. From lower to higher hierarchy they are: Varanasi City Municipal Corporation 86.45 sq. km, Varanasi Urban Agglomeration, VUA 119.52 sq km, Varanasi Master Plan - Operative Area 144.94 sq. km, Varanasi Master Plan - Projected Area 179.27 sq. km, and the outer most Varanasi Development Region, VDR 477.34 sq. km (Fig. 1).

Under the ‘Master Plan 2011’ the expanded area proposed for Greater Varanasi is 179.27 km², however the land use categories planned do not fit the standard norms of ecological balance in the minimum threshold. The most noticeable change during the 1991-2011 Plan is the expansion of the area of the city (+112%). The major changes since 1991 as introduced after 1988, indicate a catastrophic increase of land under government and semi-government uses (+390.50 per cent), and public and community facilities (+190.63 per cent). The increasing pace of population results to
increase area under residential uses up to 253.63 per cent over 1988 (cf. Singh 2009c: 327). This catastrophic change spoils the ecological system of land use; the most crucial group is parks and open ground that records a decrease of over 60 per cent in comparison to 1999. Similarly a great loss of agriculture and open land within the master plan area, at a rate of above 40 per cent, is again a great warning. In addition to the city’s population, everyday about 45,000 commuters visit the city; this numbers increases to 65,000 during festive season.

Fig. 2. Varanasi, Development Plan 2011.

For the first time in the history of Master Plans for Varanasi, some strategies of urban heritage and heritage zoning were proposed in the recent Master Plan (1991-2011; Singh 2009c, p. 327, cf. Fig. 2) to maintain and preserve the ancient glory of Varanasi, and to identify necessary facilities and infrastructure and various heritage complexes (cf. Rana and Singh 2000: 150-154). A little over 2% of the total area is proposed under tourism and heritage zone. More emphasis has been laid on the government and semi-government uses.

According to the zoning plan, five heritage zones can be identified in Varanasi (Fig. 2):

1.1. Riverfront Ghats (stairways to the riverbank)

The riverfront heritage covers the portion of the city stretching within 200 m from the river bank. Eighty-four riverfront ghats cover a length of 6.8 km along the crescent-shaped bank of the River Ganga, Ganga-ji (Ganges in anglicised way, devotionally called Ganga-Ji), from the confluence of Asi drain in the south to the confluence of the Varana river in the north (Fig. 3). Here the riverfront is overlooked by lofty palatial buildings built mostly by kings and lords from different parts of India between 18th and 20th centuries, and the area along the ghats is dominated by various shrines and temples. One of the most impressive buildings is the Darbhanga Palace, presently called ‘Brij Rama Palace’ (now owned by the Clarks’ Hotel Group), which is presently in the process of conversion into a heritage hotel that will consequently result into loss of heritage and promotion of environmental pollution. The ghats of Varanasi (cf. Fig. 4) represent one of the finest ensembles of monumental architecture linked with the everyday activities of the devout people, thus symbolising the heritage tradition of India.

Almost all visitors (tourists and pilgrims) take part in the on-site package scenic tour programmes (whether at a luxury or a basic level), of which the Ganga ghats are the most popular. The ghats are the nexus of the major rituals and festivals (‘the intangible cultural heritage resources’) in the
holy city, from where all rituals start by taking a sacred bath and get concluded by giving a donation to the riverfront priests, like thanksgiving.

Fig. 3. Riverfront Varanasi, World Heritage Site.
In order to absorb the population growth in the old city centre, new buildings are being constructed either by demolishing old structures or by building on them. Since most of the heritage sites are in these densely inhabited narrow lane areas, two UP State Government orders (no. 320/9-A-32000-127, of 5 February 2000, and 840/9-A-3-2001, of 11 April 2001) state that, “in all the towns situated along the Ganga river, no development activities can take place 200 metres from the riverbank”. It specifically prohibits new construction on the riverfront ghats unless these buildings are temples, maths and ashrams (monasteries) and only if these have approved construction plans or are only being renovated. The order goes on to say that all other old buildings that are within 200 metres from the ghats can only be renovated. Overall these orders aim to protect the integrity, sacredness and the ancient glory of cities along the Ganga. The crescent-moon shaped riverbank is a landscape temple in the form of an amphitheatre, where the ghats form the platforms, the water the altar and the sun is God.

1.2. Durgakund-Sankatmochan Area
This area contains about twenty temples and shrines and the water pools of Durgakund and Kurukshtera kundas, which are two historic sacred tanks dating from the late 18th century (Singh 1994). Every Tuesday, and more frequently in the month of Shravana (July-August) and Ashvina (September-October), especially the nine nights (Navaratri) in the light fortnight, worshippers perform rituals in the Durga temple. This was built on the orthodox model of Hindu temples, but without an excessive display of minute carvings and sculptures. Towards the east near the Ganga river is the oldest sacred pond in Varanasi, viz. Lolarka Kund, which was referred to in the Mahabharata (2nd century BCE) and which still attracts a large mass of pilgrims, especially on its annual day of celebration falling on the Bhadrapada (August-September) 6th of the light fortnight. In this area also stand the temples of Tulasi Manas Mandir and Sankatmochan Hanuman Mandir.

1.3. Kamachcha-Bhelupura Area
This area records some of the old monasteries, ancient shrines and an ancient heritage site associated with the Jain Tirthankara Parshvanath, together with many monuments and buildings of the British period (18th-19th centuries). The historically notable temples and shrines in this zone are: Kamachha Devi, Krodhhan Bhairava, Angareshi Chandi, Vatuka Bhairava and Vaidyanath Shiva. The Dvarakadhisha (Krishna) temple and sacred pool of Shankhudhara are other heritage sites.

1.4. Kabir Math (Lahartara) Area
This site was the birthplace of Kabir, a great saint-poet and social reformer of the 16th century. There are several monasteries in this area related to the life of Kabir. The Kabir Temple Complex is coming up as a great modern heritage and centre of solace and learning; of course it is turning to be a ‘White Elephant’ less associated to the local society and culture. Under the heritage complex
development programme by the UP Government, a development plan has been prepared and some works have already been going on.

1.5. Sarnath

This archaeological heritage site was famous for its sanctity, beauty and natural scenery (Fig. 5), qualities that attracted the Buddha to give his first sermon here in 528 BCE. Following Muslim invasions and the downfall of the Gahadavalas Kings, the site was left in ruins and only came to light in CE 1793.

![Fig. 5. Sarnath: Places of attraction.](image)

The principal site in Sarnath includes a well-preserved commemorative stupa (a decorated masonry tumulus) which dominates the site, the foundations of a reliquary stupa, the ruins of the temple complex and ancient monasteries, and a myriad of small votive stupas. The stupa and its surroundings are already proposed in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1998. The on-going development plan is in accord with heritage conservation, environmental sensibility, public involvement and user feelings, as befitting a most important centre of heritage tourism. It is sad to record that there is lack of co-ordination between Japanese donors and the Indian institutions involved in planning (see Singh and Rana 2002/2006).

1.6. Other Heritagescapes

There are many other sites, areas and monuments in Varanasi which urgently require restoration and preservation and inclusion in the sustainable heritage tourism programmes. These include the Hindu Observatory at Man Mandir Ghat, the Amethy temple at Manikarnika Ghat, the Sumer Devi temple at Ramanagar and adjoining tank, and many others. Varanasi is famous for its series and layers of sacred circuits, among which the Panchakroshi is the most popular. This pilgrimage circuit representing the cosmo-spatial mandalic territory (kshetra) of Kashi is a unique attribute of Varanasi. The total route covers 88.5km (25 krosha, i.e. 5 krosha x 5 parts) and is divided...
into five parts marked by overnight stops. At these five spots there are 44 dharmashalas (rest houses) for pilgrims. In every intercalary month, malamasa (e.g. the last were from a period of 17 May to 15 June 2007, and 15 April to 14 May 2010, and the recent one from 18 August to 16 September 2014; falling every 3rd year), over 50,000 devotees perform this pilgrimage (cf. Singh, Rana 2002). Under the recently initiated heritage development project, a part of the Master Plan, partial works like improvement of roads, cleaning of the water pools and repairing of some of the roads are being completed. On the ground of pilgrimage-tourism this cosmic circuit should be given special emphasis, so also promote sustainable heritage tourism.

Among the above five sections, the Riverfront City is being in the process of getting enlisted in the UNESCO Heritage List ‘mixed cultural landscape’ since 2001; however, due to the lack of the public awareness and active participation, the complex web of bureaucracy, rising corruptions, and the rise of both individualism and consumerism, there seems to be little hope for the proper implementation of the plans and maintenance of heritage properties in their original forms. Moreover, its nomination process has been marred with conflicts between Hindu and Muslim factions (Singh 2011b, p. 295). Ultimately there is an urgent need to re-vitalise the city with re-establishing the ecological order by promoting civic sense and active public awakening and participation (Singh 2011c, p. 351). The Ganga river is so polluted now that only the most faithful would venture to take bath in it. The Ganga River as an environmental milieu is not simply a water stream that flows across the land; this is what the Hindu culture knows to be true — and knows this in a certain way. It is not simply a question of how the river matters to society at present (in a strict sense), it is more important to see the meanings and cultural values which have been sustained for centuries. It is our moral obligation to revere this deeper attitude and maintain it in the context of the present needs, searching for a balanced relationship between man and nature within the microcosm of the Ganga river. This ideal brings together both Hindu culture and the vision of a sustainable society. The Ganga is declared as a ‘National River’ by the union government of India on 4 November 2008, as the first step for environmental and heritage preservation; however, even after passing more than two years rarely any recordable transformation made!

Having a prime objective to help replace the current piecemeal efforts to clean up the Ganga with an integrated approach that sees the river as an ecological entity and to address the problems and strategies for environmental cleanliness the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) was founded on 20 February 2009 and opened by the prime minister of India. Let us hope that the vision and reflections of heritage (tangible and intangible) associated with the Ganga river and continued since the ancient past would also be considered in such programmes.

The impact of urban sprawl and neighbouring effect is constantly marked by the expansion and growth of two towns across the Ganga river, i.e. Ramanagar and Mughalsarai UA, lying only at 5 km and 18 km east of the main city, and recording population of 48,378 and 154,692 in 2011, respectively (cf. Singh 2009c, p. 335). During 1991-2001 they recorded a growth of 35% and 27%, which reached to 19% and 33% in 2001-11, respectively, mostly due to varying degrees and complexities of urban sprawl. It is further estimated that both towns will be directly linked as a continuous urban space by 2031. This tendency will further intensify the demographic and economic pressure on the city of Varanasi.

Unfortunately the Master Plan 2001-11 as prepared by the VDA and passed by the UP Legislative Assembly has failed to implement most of the priority projects enlisted. Realising this now ‘private investors’ are encouraged to come forward and take care of the follow up in-process Master Plan 2011-31 under the purview of withdrawal or non-implementation of the earlier strategies and projects. In the Master Plan 2001-11, a long list of roads was prepared to ensure its widening but the condition of roads could not improve despite the fact the traffic load continued to increase. The VDA could also failed its drive against high number of illegal constructions, misuse of basements sanctioned with parking provisions and developers of illegal residential colonies on the outskirts, and illegal destruction and encroachments of heritage properties. Projects like Kamdhenu Nagar were put on the backburner while the fate of Transport Nagar hung in balance due to delay in completion of the process of land acquisition. A few years back, the VDA had adopted strict attitude against the law breakers and violators of building laws, but its drives could also not continue for long — resulting back into the earlier condition. However, despite its failures in the past, the VDA now appears ‘serious’ for ensuring a planned development in future as would be proposed in the in-process Master Plan 2011-31.

It seems that some ready-made plans on the line of other similar cities would be superimposed; like in the past, and again rarely people’s participation being given its rational place? Will the VDA put these plans in public domain and call for opinion of the civil society who is passionate about their
heritage and contributing their bit towards its maintenance and preservation? Or will it want the people living in this sacred city to be as disconnected as they are today with their heritage and traditions, which are mostly used as resource for (outsider) tourists? Do we want citizens to continue to be disconnected from the campaign and continue to flush and forget its rich traditions? There is a need to involve the communities and reconnect them to the heritage and traditions in making in-process Master Plan 2011-31 more sustainable and heritage-oriented. Let’s not undermine the fact that success of the programme to bring the city’s culture to better life will rest with the involvement of communities’ right from planning to monitoring (cf. case of the Ganga river, Babu 2009).

2. Inscribing the Riverfront Ghats in UNESCO WHL: Story of fight and failure

The story of realising issue of inscribing the Riverfront Ghats in Unesco WHL goes back to 1989, when under the direction of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan (President, National Academy of Sciences, NAS; b. 7 Aug. 1925—), a Project Design Workshop on “Natural and Cultural Sites along the Ganga for inscription in the World Heritage List” was organised during 7-8 April 1989 under the auspices of the NAS with the collaboration of several departments of the Government of India like Planning Commission, Department of Arts, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Prime Minister’s Committee on Heritage and Cultural Resources, and also INTACH and the Ganga Project Directorate. This was undertaken as a part of Nehru Centenary Celebrations. This Workshop had turned to be only an academic exercise and bureaucratic propaganda, and rarely any comprehensive report came into black-and-white, even after passing three years! Surprisingly the case of Riverfront Varanasi was no way discussed at all.

Encouraged and inspired by the above initiative, the present author had contacted Hélène Legendre-De Koninck, a Canadian heritage expert and writer, through a letter dated 6 April 1992, to know about the criteria and procedures of inscription in the WHL. Her reply and advice (30 April 1992) helped to get in contact with ICOMOS, UNESCO World Heritage Committee, and concerned ministry of the Government of India. On these lines on 16 May 1992 a letter was sent to the President of ICOMOS by Singh, attaching the details, potential grounds and strong conditions fulfilled by the “Riverfront Ghats and the Old City Heritage of Varanasi” for getting inscribed in the WHL. Also a follow up letter (18 May 1992, ref. NGJI/VSF/206) was sent to the Indian National Commission for cooperation with UNESCO (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India). The ICOMOS has considered the request sympathetically and through the head of communication IUCN (The World Conservation Union) sent the letter and documents to Sectional Officer, Department of Culture (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India); the office took note for appropriate action (ref. No. F.17-19/ 92-UU, dated 1 June 1992), and sent copy to Singh. As a follow up Singh had further contacted the Secretariat of the IUCN, who forwarded his letter and all documents to several persons concerned with the issue (cf. Singh, Binay 2012). Time passed and things went in their own way, but nothing in support of the proposal resulted (cf. Singh, Binay 2013).

The above story has encouraged publication of a paper taking into consideration all the criteria and characteristics that rationally and most viably justified nomination of “The Riverfront and Old City Heritage Zone of Varanasi” for getting inscribed in the UNESCO WHL; the resultant essay was first of such reports (Singh 1993). Again the author had tried to disseminate this noble idea by sending his essay to several persons and institutions, including INTACH New Delhi and local Varanasi Chapter, but sorry to say that no positive result had been noticed except a few other publications of papers on the line of the same/similar idea repeatedly (Singh, Dar and Rana 2001; Michell and Singh 2005; Singh 2004, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). Those involved in heritage conservation movements have felt humiliated and disappointed from all sorts of potential steps for public awakening, shareholders’ active participation, non-cooperation from the intellectuals and INTACH Varanasi Chapter, non-seriousness from bureaucrats and administrators, and their consequential situations and rarely now these issues are discussed.

With the initiative of Mr Jagmohan [Malhotra], then Govt. of India’s Central Minister of Urban Development, and later of Tourism and Culture (2001-04), ca. four-month exercise of preparing ‘Integrated and Integral Cultural Development Plan of Varanasi’ was performed intensively, resulting into two-days National Seminar, organised by the U.P. State Department of Tourism: 11-12 August 2000, and thus recommendatory plans for preservation and development of cultural and monumental heritage and also intangible heritage (fairs, festivals, celebrations, folk culture, etc.) were proposed. This comprehensive project also included issues of development related to tourism, cleaning and repairing of the riverfront ghats and the ancient and heritage lanes, maintenance and repairing of roads
and interlinking paths, plan for developing Panchakroshi pilgrimage circuit, environmental cleanliness and pollution control, and energy conservation, etc. Soon the ministry had changed, resulting into change of priority and interest. In this project as usual INTACH Varanasi had no way involved itself for any sort of support.

After a gap of about seven years the Kautilya Society, an NGO working for cultural preservation, under the supervision of the present author held a meeting on 4th of February 2001 and chalked out some plans for heritage documentation, preservation and conservation, while collaborating with Society of Heritage Planning and Environmental Health, SHPEH, a local NGO; this resulted like a strong mass movement and activities that promoted the cause of heritage awakening and preservation, at least during last ten-years.

As a follow up programme the Kautilya Society contacted the VDA (Varanasi Development Authority) and its senior authorities, including the then Commissioner and Chairman VDA) and the Vice-Chairman, who shown keen interest and under their patronage the project for “Nomination Proposal for Incription in the UNESCO World Heritage List” had started its procedural preparation in November 2001. With common consensus a Working Group for Drafting UNESCO Proposal was formed consisting of thirteen representative members from administration, bureaucrats, Varanasi Development Authority, intellectuals and activists, department of tourism, department of culture, faculty members teaching heritage tourism (e.g. from Banaras Hindu University), museums (e.g. Bharat Kala Bhavan), legal experts, eminent citizens, SHPEH, and Kautilya Society; this WG worked under the guidance of three unanimously nominated persons as honorary officials. As in the past, the INTACH Varanasi Chapter was completely silent and in spite of several times calls and requests none of the associates attended any meeting and took part in any of the heritage programmes. Finally an agreement between VDA and Kautilya Society was made on 15 March 2002 for overlooking all the preparatory activities and final draft proposal (cf. Singh, Binay 2012, and 2013).

On the above line of agreement the Kautilya Society has prepared three reports (March/April 2002) under “Nomination Proposal for Incription in the UNESCO World Heritage List”, where all the listed properties are described under historical importance, aesthetics, locational characterises, present state of condition and religious importance, also illustrated with GPS values, line drawings, cross-sections, site plans and photographs (cf. Singh 2009b, p. 363) within an year that deal with: (a) Varanasi: Heritage Zones and Sites (details of 53 sites and properties, covering the riverfront ghats, core heritage area surrounding Vishvanath temple, Sarnath, notable properties in the city, and Panchakroshi route), (b) Varanasi: Heritage Zones and Sites (details of 40 sites and properties, covering the same areas like first report ‘a’ with additional illustrations and drawings), and the final (c) The Riverfront and Old City Heritage Zone of Varanasi (details of 73 sites and properties, covering the riverfront ghats and old heritage zone area, and also other side of the river Ganga, i.e. Ramanagar fort and Ramalila space and affiliated built-up structure, also consisting of select bibliography, historical accounts, tourists statistics, critique and resume of other Chapters’ heritage activities, history of heritage laws and Indian context, suggested amendment on Urban and Town & Country Planning Acts, and finally detailed schedule of Plan of action 2002-2011). The final report (op. cit., c) was on the line of the Master Plan of Varanasi 2011, which was approved and passed by the UP Government Assembly on 10th July 2001 (ref. 2915/9-Aa-3-2001-10Maha/99); in this Plan five Cultural Heritage Zones were identified and in the purview of tourism development strategies were proposed (see Fig. 2).

After passage of time by changing the government at state and ministerial changes into the central government, the local officials transferred to other places, the degree of peoples’ involvement and interest, the whole intense exercise for inscribing the ‘Riverfront and Old City Heritage Zone of Varanasi’ gone into vein. However, with the initiation from the UNESCO Delhi branch and pressure of the Central government, again some attempts had been made on these lines, which started in March 2003. In continuation, to discuss the 3rd Report VDA had called official meeting on 15 October 2003 and asked for revision and modification of the Proposal, which Kautilya Society had complied and submitted on 21 October 2003 taking in view the recommendations made by ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) in its letter dated 28 July 2003, addressed to the Commissioner, Varanasi Division and suggestions made by the VDA. Some bureaucractic formalities and forwarding transmission were performed, but nothing consequential came out; and the officers get transferred from Varanasi that resulted to put whole exercise into waste bins as usual in such a system.

The latest initiative under JNNURM of a similar proposal of HDP (Heritage Development Plan) was started on 1 January 2009 under the auspices of INTACH New Delhi that without any direct collaboration from its local Chapter or and local organisation has already prepared several plans and pilot-projects. Ultimately, no (detailed) document on the line of UNESCO’s Guidelines to prepare
proposal for inclusion (dossier) in the WHL has been made. Moreover due to time lag, there is a little chance for such proposal and its acceptance even in the Tentative List, because already 22 such properties are enlisted in the Tentative List in 2014, thus the List now records 46 such properties from India. Also to be noted that already by February 2015 in total 32 properties are enlisted in the WHL, including the latest one the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (2014) under Natural World Heritage. Considering these happenings, at the earliest the Riverfront and Old City Heritage of Varanasi may probably be put on the tentative list in 2016 (?) provided the project proposal is prepared strictly in accordance with the UNESCO WHC Guidelines, and to be reviewed, verified and submitted as soon as possible.

Thanks to the recent vision and guidelines of the hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also an elected member from Varanasi city parliamentary constituency, that under the purview of Smart City development strategy through the process of lifonology, the interfacing programmes of HRIDAY and PRASAD seek to promote an integrated, inclusive and sustainable development of heritage sites (cities), focusing not just on maintenance of monuments but on advancement of the entire ecosystem including its citizens, tourists and local businesses. The scheme covers 12 heritage cities including Varanasi, Amritsar, Ajmer, Mathura, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Vellankanni, Puri, Dwarka, Badami, Warangal, and Amravati. At the first phase already Rs 5,000 million has been allocated for the HRIDAY programme on 21 January 2015 by the Urban Development Ministry (cf. Singh, Binay 2015a). Of the twelve cities, Varanasi received major share, accounting to Rs 893.1 millions, which consists of implementation of project (800), information, education and awakening programmes (30), preparation of DPR (30), and skill development (20), infrastructure of the city (10.5), and administrative works and its functioning (2.7). On 26 November 2014, the UNESCO by an agreement with Ministry of Urban Development, GOI, has agreed in revitalising and conserving the rich cultural heritage of these cities, while taking care of the increasing pace of urbanisation. In this programme priority be given to conserve and preserve the heritages (natural, cultural: tangible and intangible), which may attract more tourists and pilgrims, and to improve civic amenities for betterment of life and landscapes. Under the purview of HRIDAY and PRASAD the plan to get included ‘The Riverfront and Old City Heritage Zone of Varanasi’ has recently been further discussed (December 2014), and preparation started to prepare dossier for its inscription the UNESCO WHL. This is also to be kept in mind that the sacred spaces vis-à-vis public spaces are in way will serve as peace plaza and places of spiritual awakening having “the potential for healing communal strife and reviving urban art, (cultural and) folk practices. Heritage conservation can thus become an empowering tool for local communities and for the visitor an opportunity for spiritual growth” (Sinha 2014, p. 60), which is ultimately aim of the urban areas.

3. Varanasi on the criteria of UNESCO-WHC

i. Representing a masterpiece of human creative genius

There are several examples of architectural master pieces of attached with inherent meanings, archetypal representations and continuity of performances and rituals. The microcosmic temple of Panchakroshi that places 273 deities in three-dimensionality as replica of the originally existing images and shrines along the five sacred routes in the city is a unique example (Gutschow 2005, also Singh 2002). Built in 1936 Bharat Mata (‘mother India’) temple, of which the interior is dominated by a remarkable 90-square-metre map of India carved in a relief out of marble blocks set into the floor, is an example of perceiving the nation as a goddess, as eulogised in the ancient mythologies. Other distinct and unparallel examples include the temples of Guru dham, Kardameshvara, Vrisabhadhvajeshvara, Amethy, Mahamaya, Lolarka water pool, and some others too (cf. Michell and Singh 2005). One of India’s earliest, most picturesque and one of the finest Gothic Revival structures in Perpendicular style, the building of Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi, dates from 1848-52. Of course the Sanskrit University (earlier college) was founded in 1795, but later it shifted to the present building. This is the only institution in the whole world that is based on Sanskrit language and ancient Indian tradition. It has also the richest collection of ancient manuscripts, kept in the Sarasvati Vidya Library. Presently the building and the collections in the library are both facing the problem of destruction and loss.

ii. Exhibiting interchange of human values in architecture and monuments

Varanasi is the only city in India where textually described cosmogonic frame and geomantic outlines are existent in their full form and totality, thus the city becomes universally significant even
today. The city is a mosaic of the various religious groups and their traditions. In the city alone, there are over 3300 Hindu shrines and temples, about 1388 Muslim shrines and mosques, 12 churches, 3 Jain temples, 9 Buddhist temples, 32 Sikh temples (gurudwaras) and several other sacred sites and places. Here Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and even Islam have their distinct traditions, and on the other end they together conform the harmonious life and culture of the city called ‘Banarasian’. The life style of Banaras is unique in nature, and is referred to as Banaraspitan. It is an art of living, both passionate and carefree, what the Banaras dwellers call masti (‘joie de vivre’), mauj (‘delight, festivity’) and phakarpan (‘carefreeness’). Teaching and training of Sanskrit and Ayurveda (the traditional system of Indian Medicine) has been present here since at least the 5th century BCE, and is still in practice prominently.

iii. Testimony to cultural tradition in history

The city has two remnants of a holy past: the first one being Sarnath where Buddha gave his first sermon, ‘Turning the wheel of law’ in ca. 528 BCE. Later during the 3rd century BCE king Ashoka built a monastery township there which continued its existence till the 12th century CE and was later destroyed. The second one is the Rajghat Plateau, where the archaeological findings and the C$^{14}$ dating of some of the wares excavated from the earliest level (upper part of IA layer, sample No. TF-293) refer the existence of urban settlements in the period during 1000-500 BCE. The archaeological investigation is further supported by Robert Eidt (1977) on the basis of scientific analysis of chronosequence of non-occluded/occluded phosphate ratios. This site has been the original centre of one of the oldest continuously occupied modern cities in the world. The site evidences indicate small farming and domestication of animals, a sign of pastoral economy. This is only the far past. After this, the whole history of Banaras is a ‘testimony to cultural tradition in history’, as it was one of the main centres of Hindu culture and civilisation.

iv. Outstanding example of architectural ensemble and landscape

The unique crescent-shaped arc of the Ganga river has attracted people from various parts of India to come, settled and make their own distinct imprint along the 7 km bank of the river as clearly visualised in the architectural grandeur and the cultural landscapes. The existence of 84 ghats along the Ganga river to archetypal connotations, e.g. 12 division of time x 7 chakra (sheaths), or layers in the atmosphere; likewise the number 84 refers to the 84 lacs (hundred thousands) of organic species as described in Hindu mythologies. This development records a sequential growth during the last two thousand years. Since sunrise to sunset, the cultural landscape along the Ganga river is dominated by ritual scenes and religious activities, a supportive system for other profane functions that are dependent on this. The view of the riverfront from the river is clearly an outstanding example of architectural ensemble and landscape scenario.

v. Example of a traditional habitat, culture and interaction

Since the past people from different cultures, religions and territories came and settled here while maintaining their own distinct traditions in their own community, and also developed a harmoniously integrated culture of traditions lost elsewhere, which is still visible on different festive occasions. Of course, occasionally there also happen religions conflicts, tensions and contestations (cf. Singh, 1997); however, during natural calamities like flood, water logging, heavy rains, or human induced occurrences like bomb blasts and riots, people from such diverse ideologies, like Hindus and Muslims, work together to save the city and thus prove that this is a city of humanity and universality. There are fourteen tombs of Muslim Sufi saints which are regularly visited by Hindus and Muslim, who perform their own rituals side-by-side.

vi. Example of the continuity of living traditions of life (intangible)

Since ancient times the natural and cultural landscapes of the city, closely associated with the traditional way of life, have retained an active social role in contemporary society. The city is a place of pilgrimage and a holy site for sacred baths in the Ganga River, for having a good death, and getting relief from transmigration for learning and receiving spiritual merit, etc. In spite of several downfalls and upheavals, traditions are fully alive even today. The presence of ‘dying homes’, charitable homes and pilgrims’ rest houses are some of the city’s unique characteristics. Additionally, silk weaving and sari making, metal, wood and terracotta handicrafts, toy making, particular painting forms, etc., bear witness to the continuity of historico-cultural tradition. Banaras is considered to be a veritable jungle of fairs and festivals with respect to variety, distinction, time, sacred sites, performers, overseers and side-
shows. “Every day is a great festival in Banaras” – so says the tradition. Recently some of the old festivals have been revived in its original style, despite some modern touches. This lifestyle has also manifested itself in a musical tradition known as the Banaras Gharana (style). Many great musicians and performing artists have been born here and still regularly return to visit and to perform their art for the public as tribute to the spirit of the soil. The names of Ravi Shankar, (late) Bismillah Khan, (late) Kishan Maharaj and many others make obvious the richness of the Banaras musical culture.

vii. Beauty of natural phenomena & aesthetic importance

The city represents a unique natural shape along the Ganga river which forms a crescent shape, flowing from south to north for about 7 km; the city has grown on the left bank in semi-circular form around it. The area along the right side is a flood plain, preserving the natural ecosystem. Thus, together the two sides represent the cultural and natural beauty where meet the human construct of architectural grandeur in the form of series of traditional buildings and other side perennial flow of the Ganga from south to north, which is unique in the whole course of the Ganga valley. This is described in ancient mythology and religious literature, which became part of the religious and ritual activities that are still the prominent scenes. The eastern edge of the city faces the rising sun, which makes the ghats of Banaras sacred and unique for all Hindu rituals. This aesthetic harmony between the river and the city is unique in its presentation.

viii. Unique traditional performance: example of environmental theatre

Of course originally proclaimed in 2005 by the government of India, UNESCO has incorporated the ‘Rāmalilā — traditional performance of the Rāmāyana’ in its representative list of 90 declared on 4 November 2008. This list also includes two more intangible heritages, i.e. ‘Kutiyattam, Sanskrit Theatre’, and the ‘ Tradition of Vedic Chanting’. The Rāmalilā is a dramatisation of the epic journey of Rāma, the 7th incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. The Rāmalilā, a theatrical form of story of the Rāmacharitamānas (old Rāmāyana), is performed in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. It is performed across northern India during the festival of Dashahra, held each year according to the ritual calendar in autumn (September-October, Hindu month of Ashvina). Of course the most representative Rāmalilās are those of Ayodhya, Ramnagar and Banaras, Vrindavan, Almora, and Madhubani, the Rāmalilā of Ramanagar is unique in the whole world. In the city of Banaras Rāmalilā holds for different periods at different sites according to their tradition and historicity, ranging from the period of ten days to 31 days (cf. for details see Sax 1990/1993).

4. Old City Heritage and Riverfront Cultural Landscape

All the criteria, according to Article 2 of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 2003 and 2005, which relate in the domain of intangible cultural heritage, are already part of age-long traditions in Varanasi. This includes oral traditions of ritual performances, folk music and songs; performance arts like traditional dance, music and theatrical performances on special festive occasions throughout the year; social practices in celebrating festivals and events; knowledge and practices concerning nature (like naturopathy, alternative medicine, yoga) and the universe (classical astronomy and astrology); and traditional craftsmanship like toy and pot making, silk embroidery, etc. Moreover, other characteristics as defined in the above Article also are a part of life in Varanasi, continued and maintained since the past, being transmitted from generation to generation; being constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history; providing communities and groups with a sense of identity and continuity; promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity; being compatible with international human rights instruments; and complying with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, and of sustainable development.

Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention of 2003 clarifies its purpose for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage by ensuring respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned, raising awareness at the local, national and international levels about the importance of intangible cultural heritage, and securing mutual appreciation thereof, and ultimately providing international cooperation and assistance. Nevertheless it is to be noted that all these plans have to pass through governmental and bureaucratic procedures. Thus many times they suffered delays, obstacles, as well as lack of priority — given to other choices for political or personal motives — in spite of the urgency of the matter and its universal importance.
The Ganga riverfront with its ghats fully fulfil the criteria of Cultural Landscapes as designated in Article I of the Convention, and specifically that of cultural landscape “that retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress”, and associative cultural landscape “by virtue of powerful religious, artistic, cultural associations of the natural element”. It is noted that ‘the shift of the Ganga river and silting of banks has impacted the riverfront landscape causing alarm among conservationists who have been pressing since 2001 to have the riverfront and the old city nominated in the UNESCO World Heritage List (cf. Singh 2009a, pp. 139-142). Varanasi ghats fit the categories of ‘an organically evolved landscape’ as well as ‘an associative cultural landscape’ in the cultural landscape criteria. The ghats on the Ganga have evolved over centuries into the spiritual centre of Hinduism’ (cf. Sinha 2014, p. 3).

The conservation of most heritage properties faces intense pressure. Even if these properties are presently in the same physical condition as in the last couple of decades and their architectural characteristics are being maintained without many legal and administrative measures, their architectural integrity is now being threatened. In the name of development, old structures are modified or demolished, even where these structures are made of stone and are not weak. The ownership is often collective or remote (like maths, ashrams, havelis, palaces, etc.), and renovation work is expensive. Unless stringent measures are taken for protection, there is a high probability that new structures, using new building materials, will increasingly replace old architectural shapes and material. Recent construction work and events in the old city demonstrate that even when ownership is in a single proprietor’s hands, he usually prefers rebuilding rather than renovating. Besides these risks, the buffer zones and the skyline of the old city, whose status quo is preserved at this moment, are also being threatened by encroachments and the rising heights of buildings.

Fig. 6. Manikarnika Ghat, Varanasi, the Heritage Planning sites.

According to the Master Plan (1991-2011), under the Clause 2.9.2 Use Zone S-2 (Core Area/Heritage Zone), all the heritage monuments will be protected by the laws and construction
permits be issued as per the norm of ‘the distance-regulation’. This plan is the first of its kind to be officially approved by the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh (ref. No. 2915/9-A-3-2001-10Maha/99, dated 10 July 2001). For the first time, heritage protection issues have been discussed in this Plan and heritage zones and sites have been identified. In the follow up Master Plan (2011-2031), the earlier Plan has been revised in order to implement the policy of preservation of heritage sites and to channelize the development of the city.

In order to absorb population growth in the old city centre, new buildings are being constructed either by demolishing old structures or by building on them. Since most of the heritage sites are in these densely inhabited narrow lane areas, two state government orders (order number 320/9-A-3-2000-127, dated 5 February 2000, and order number 840/9-A-3-2001, dated 11 April 2001) state that, in all the towns situated along the Ganga river, no development activities can take place 200 metres from the riverbank. It specifically prohibits new construction on the riverfront ghats unless these buildings are temples, maths and ashramas (monasteries) and only if these have approved construction plans or are solely being renovated. The order goes on to say that all other old buildings, that are within 200 metres from the ghats, can only be renovated. A recent example of renovation and conservation of the Manikarnika Ghat with the support of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) is an example of work that was completed in 2006 (cf. Fig. 6); however in lack of continuity of maintenance and carelessness the scenario is again return back to its old phase in ugly way.

The increasing impact of pollution and the decreasing volume of water in the Ganga together have a multiplying effect in Varanasi. The appearance of huge sand islands from the end of April and the increasing lower water level of the Ganga are proving a big threat to the very existence of the ghats and their purpose. About three decades ago the width of the river had been 225-250m, however it has recently reached to around 60-70 m. The main stream has lost the previous high speed of its current due to less volume and pressure of water, resulting in an increased pollution level. Close to the Asi Ghat, the first one, the river has already left the bank about 7-8m. The existence of ghats in Varanasi is in danger because the existence of the Ganga is in danger! This trend is constantly increasing, and already some ghats at the down stream are now facing the problem of sinking and fracturing.

5. Public Awakening (chetna march): Raising the Voice

As a public awakening march, an open dialogue and press conference was called upon on 10 August 2009 evening at Asi Ghat, attended by around hundred persons raising a public voice to “Save the Heritage city of Varanasi” taking in view of the discrepancies and major drawbacks of the City Development Plan, CDP (esp. transportation and morphology) prepared in hustle by Feedback Turnkey Engineers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, FV, which was highlighted in a newspaper (cf. Dikshit, 28 July 2009, TOI). No where the DPRs (Detailed Project Reports) prepared by INTACH Delhi and submitted to VDA on 16 July 2009, are taken into consideration or even any sort of coordination maintained between these two plans (cf. Singh, Binay 2009, TOI). The Convener of the INTACH Varanasi has already sent (29 July 2009) an appeal to Hon’ble Prime Minister of India and other concerned authorities of the Govt. of India to see the issue and intervene in such superimposed plans (prepared by outside agency) that never fit to the spirit and culture and not viable; obviously they will turn to serious threat to the holy and cultural city of Varanasi.

The budget of CDP is planned to Rs 46,806.5 millions (equals to US$ 965 mill) and should be completed by the year 2030. In this plan the following six threatening issues are realised and petitions are moved by the public to media and government personnel, of course with a little success:

1. Construction of Permanent Jetties along the ghats for the boats will destroy the very purpose of the riverfront historical and cultural sceneries serving as the most attractive landscape.

2. Construction sites of the five Flyovers in the main heritage zones would destroy the functional character and heritage monuments.

3. Construction of the Ring Road outside the city territory without considering the sacred territorial pilgrimage path of “Panchakroshi” that developed in medieval period and still so frequently used by pilgrims, will destroy the archetypal and cosmic symbolism of the city.

4. The construction of a new area for Dyeing and Polishing of fabrics outside the city will serve as ‘outside’ pressure that will loss the traditional craftsmanship of the city.

5. Introducing Mass Public transport system in the main city will create a chaos and disaster to the heritagescapes; let the traditional system may be improved in renovated way.
6. **The Lighting of the heritage sites** will promote stress on the heritage component and further deteriorate the heritage environment. Modernity should be avoided if heritage is in danger.

In continuing of several such marches, on 9 February 2009, with the initiatives of INTACH (Delhi) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MFAC) of Spain a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to conserve, protect and preserve the heritage monuments and promote cultural heritage in the temple city of Varanasi and develop world-class infrastructure in the area, which will pave the path in inscribing Varanasi as ‘World Heritage City’. According to this MoU experts from Spain will intensively work in Varanasi for documentation, inventory and status reporting of the heritage properties and heritagescapes; but no progress is made yet, and also the role of local chapter of INTACH has been negligible in coordination, mostly due to lack of vision, insights and plans that undemocratically handled for the personal interest. Such programmes are mostly based on outsiders’ creation — that are superimposed here, keeping away the assessment of local requirement, understanding and without hearing the local voices, however through media they propagate the rationality and suitability of the plans and designs they have crafted out!

During 2010-2012 with technical support and cooperation of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), CEPT (Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmadabad), and Advisory Services in Environmental Management (ASEM), a venture of the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Municipal Corporation of Varanasi had worked out for the sanitation plan enhancing environmental cleanliness and hygienic urban habitat that will result to conserve, preserve and maintain the aesthetic values of heritage. Of course, the action through functioning “City Task Force” had started, however at some stage it was stopped.

In spite of all such tragic situations, people are still hopeful for some good changes that would be befitting in maintaining the glorious culture and heritage of this heritage city. Let us hope for new light that may help to keep, continue and envision its image as “the City of Light” through the vision and plans under HRIDAY and PRASAD, recently dreamed and structured by the Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is the Member of Parliament from the city itself.

6. Framing HRIDAY and PRASAD

Framing tourism and cultural development in holistic frame for national and international resource within the purview of the ancient roots of heritage properties and traditions of spirituality, sacrality and pilgrimages that have a long tradition and continuity in India, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, have recently conceptualised two innovative and appropriate national programmes of interfacing and counter-depending missions of (i) **Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY)**, and (ii) **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD)**. In both of these programmes the ministries of Culture and Tourism and Urban Development will collaborate to strengthen and promote the heritage sites and centres of pilgrimage-tourism in making the environment green and sustainable while befitting into the roots of culture, traditions and society and also image of the site. The three major sites selected at priority level, include Varanasi, Mathura, and Ajmer.

(i) **National mission of HRIDAY**

The National mission on the “Heritage city Development and Augmentation Yojana” (HRIDAY), aims conserving and preserving the distinct and unique characters of the heritage cities, those maintained the continuity of their traditions of heritage (tangible, intangible, and cultural landscapes, including written, oral, and performed ones), and they would be used as a resource for sustainable development and ecological restoration. That is how, heritage development means not only the beautification of the city and conservation of the heritage site but also the preservation and sustainable development of the entire city with respect to its cleanliness, planning, livelihood of the local people and economy.

In Indian tradition, heritage is called ‘dharohara’, which is a combination of two words, i.e. dharā- (‘the mother earth/ Lord Vishnu who holds’), and -ihara (‘endeavour of identity through time’). The word also carries the meaning of ‘bearing’ and ‘preserving’ the surface of the earth. That is how it should be explained in terms of the ‘root’ (‘shrotā’) and ‘identity’ (‘asmitā’) — a framework of continuity of interconnectedness and a personality of culture, thus in terms of space it combines the microspace, site (sthān), the extended space, habitat (parivāsa) and the regional projection, territory (parikshetra), and ultimately linking to terrestrial, cosmos (brahmānta). Additionally, it also connotes the tangible, intangible and visual attributes. Altogether the Indian word ‘dharohara’ should be better
translated as 'heritagescapes' and to be explained in the purview of 'heritage ecology' in corroboration with 'deep geography'. It possesses the spirit of spirituality and interconnectedness that have roots in the past, existence in present and vision in future ('sanātana'), and altogether this works in unified totality for psychological well-being or soul healing.

Cultural heritage sites are the true representative of the divine order and human’s deep faith involvement, that is how it may be accepted as religious ‘resource’, but it has scientific, recreational, aesthetic, economic and sacramental values too. Thus the metaphorical meaning of “HRIDAY” (literally ‘heart’) is the core concern for the ‘inclusive-sustainable development of heritage-and-pilgrimage cities’ in India. This frame would be taken as core concern under the HRIDAY Programme.

The protection, augmentation, management, authenticity and integrity of properties (both tangible and intangible) are also important considerations, together with the above specific characteristics. In the above context three basic meanings, in historical context, to the understanding of heritage sites are:

- a political meaning – to assure responsibility for the decisions;
- a cultural meaning – to save culture rootedness and sense of continuity; and
- a didactic meaning – to promote citizen’s participation.

These meanings are associated with deconstructing the value of cultural heritage into its component parts identifying the following six value elements:

- aesthetic value: the visual beauty of the building, site, and so on;
- spiritual value: the significance of the asset in providing understanding or enlightenment or in representing a particular religion or religious tradition;
- social value: the role of the site in forming cultural identity or a sense of connection with others;
- historical value: connections with the past;
- symbolic value: objects or sites as repositories or conveyors of meaning, and
- authenticity value: the uniqueness of visiting ‘the real thing’.

(ii) National mission of PRASAD

With a view to beautify and improve the amenities and infrastructure at pilgrimage centres of all faiths, a National mission on ‘Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive’ (PRASAD) has been announced in the Union Budget 2014-2015 and an amount of Rs. 1000 million has been proposed for this initiative. Under PRASAD the old historical-cultural pilgrimage routes and associated sites would also be developed.

The interconnectivity and reciprocity between pilgrimage and tourism are integral part of human travel. That is how ‘pilgrimage-tourism’ is conceived as an alternative for the solution; of course this is more inclined to metaphysical issue and life philosophy: meeting sacred-and-profane. Pilgrimage-tourism is considered now as strategy for heritage awakening, deeper experiences and transferring the religiosity into global humanism and spirituality. The sustainable frame of pilgrimage-tourism and heritage should be promoted in three ways: philosophical, organisational, and managerial. The eco-healing approach to pilgrimage-tourism is considered as a post-modernist way to consider pilgrimage as a bridge between recreation and spirituality; this way pilgrimage-tourism will provide a rational alternative for cultural consciousness and strategy for poverty alleviation.

The deeper sense of attachment is pre-requisite for awakening (of awareness). Once one can develop deep feeling (of love) to a place that would help caring for it — a path that helps one to have realization leading to revelation. As the ‘caring for the place (the Earth)’ is inherent in the pilgrimage-tourism, it provides opportunity to intimately sense and deep feelings for the place and the people — their behaviour, their heritage, and the present in which they live, act, and keep the glorious tradition alive.

The approach to study tourism so far has been the study of economic activity almost always. It limits the scope and answer to many questions posed as consequence. On the line of ‘commodification approach’ proposed by Ashworth (1991, p. 111), the ‘eco-healing package’ (cf. Fig. 7) may be explained here which extends the horizon of potential resources in pilgrimage-tourism as an alternative tourism, expected that it will fulfil the objectives of PRASAD.

The purpose, of developing ‘eco-healing approach’ within the frame of PRASAD, evidently is to highlight the strong rationality of developing pilgrimage-tourism on the pathways of ecofriendly and ecospirtual ways. The components of this package may be briefly explained as the following:

(a) The Resource(s)

This package identifies cultural and spiritual heritage as resources. In one hand, the goddess shrines and associated territories form the cultural heritage resources; and, the rituals, awe, deep feelings and faith, belief, and the system of vratas and fasting, etc. together make the spiritual resources on the
other hand. The live traditions of continuing maintenance of these resources reflect their inner strength. Their qualitative and quantitative richness may be taken as the indicator of their potentialities for serving as the basis of an alternative tourism. Additionally, the involvement of spiritual resources will effectively check the consumer (tourists) behaviour and thus ensure healing of the mother earth.

Fig. 7. Components of Pilgrimage-Tourism (cf. Singh, Pratibha 2004, p. 213).

(b) The Assemblage

The process of assembly begins with selection of the way. Apart from it, this process also involves interpretation. With reference to goddesses, the assemblage of archetypal symbolism represented by the goddess’s form and geographical setting, the *spiritualscape*, and the cultural context make the spirit of place meaningful and confirm its potentiality for pilgrimage based tourism. While interpreting, the importance of deep feelings and intimate sensing to be projected in clear and simple terms. Making simultaneous reference to enshrouding value system is also equally significant.

(c) The Operational Aspect

Experience(s) and the capacity to experience are two most vital issues at the interface between the product and consumer, i.e. spirit of place and (pilgrim) tourist. Here, the greater emphasis is on the (pilgrim) tourist who has to undergo the process of experiencing, which depends upon certain pre-requisites, e.g. reverence and respect, belief and faith, and more importantly deep insight to understand the revelation and a developed sensitiveness to feel the spiritual bliss.

For the successful operation of this kind of alternative tourism, it needs to be well organized. This stage involves many supporting agencies to provide infrastructural facilities. Ashworth (1991, pp. 118-119) talks of certain ‘necessary preconditions’, like organizational integration, motivational integration, financial integration, functional integration, and spatial integration — for the efficient functioning of his model. All of these seem to be equally essential in the case of pilgrimage based alternative tourism that remains oriented more towards the health of heritage (and mother Earth) than commercial profits (for appraisal in India see, Neuß 2012).

7. Indo-Suitogaku vis-à-vis Kashi-Kyoto Interface: framing the Water-front Cities

I saw the light along the riverfront Ganga; I suddenly realized that was my home, where the earth spirit meets the divine – the revelation of life. Alas! Now the feeling of attachment is superseded by consumerism together with individualism and materialism. Attachment to a place is a prerequisite for developing a sense of the spirit of place, and would also be an inherent force behind framing HRIDAY and PRASAD. This sense of attachment provides emotional and spiritual sustainability to both individuals and the community, and ultimately the landscapes. Attachment is an existential and phenomenological experience, as illustrated in Kyoto. The key to the future is in the commitment of human inhabitants living there who maintain this sense of attachment and perform their activities in a quest of awakening (*svachetana*). Within the broad vision of eco-spirituality preserving the spirit of sustainability keeping the spirit of place at its nexus is generally taken as the main philosophy behind “Suitogaku”: towards framing the Water-front Cities, as proposed and elaborated by Japanese landscape architect Hidenobu Jinnai (2013). The ethics of “sustainable development,” to which almost
everyone subscribes today, requires this generation to use the world’s environmental resources in ways that do not jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To be successful, this principle requires another dimension — reverence and revelation (ecospirituality) [cf. Fig. 8]. Development should preserve, not destroy, those assets of the natural and spiritual power of our own cultural heritage, which future generations would also wish to enjoy and cherish.

Fig. 8. Main constituent values of Suitogaku
(in the frame of Sacred Natural Sites, after Verschuuren 2007, p. 308).

Reverence — the deeper vision of the sanctity of life; responsibility — the connecting link between ethics and rationality; frugality — grace without waste; and ecojustice — all form the minimal core of intrinsic values for right conservation and preservation of the spirit of sustainability (Skolimowski 1990, pp. 100-102). In fact, in corroboration with reverential development Suitogaku should be conceived as an unitary in the broadest and deepest sense, which combine reverence and sanctity of life with contemporary economic, social, moral, cultural, and traditional premises to bring peace and harmony with nature (cf. Skolimowski 1990, p. 103), i.e. a rational integration and righteous counter-balance between dharma (moral code of conduct) and karma (right action). The expansion and rejuvenation of the Japanese idea of Suitogaku may also have its Indian form, let me call it Indo-Suitogaku that may take consideration of the five gross-elements (mahabhutas) of nature.

The Mahabharata (12.198.14–19) states that the Supreme God created primordial man, who first made sky; from sky, water was made and from sea of water, fire and air — these latter two together made the earth; these together are called as mahabhutas. Hence, in a metaphysical sense, these elements are not separated from earth other. These elements are related to one another by means of their intrinsic nature leading to a bond among creatures (cf. Singh, Rana 2009c, p. 131). In the Puranic theory of creation, the Svayambhu God Brahmana (self-born creator), being desirous of progeny, created water first. The Bhagavata Purana (1.3.2–5) says that primordial man was lying down in the waters of the universe, therefore in any habitat planning and preservation water to be given prime importance. At riverfront Banaras the traditional and salvation activities are performed along the bank, ranging from initiation and birth rituals to death and post-deal rituals and in between several others which include even amusement (e.g. tourism, entertainment and various plays) and awes too (e.g. mystical and unique varieties of rituals, which one can easily visualise while passing on the boat or having walk along the riverfront ghats.

Considering the above perspective, the Indo-Suitogaku should to be studied and projected in the frames of interdisciplinarity and unitary links among various subjects. The Indo-Suitogaku should I hope avoid to ‘think of space as “something” to be perceived, but it should be visualised, experienced and revealed as an “in born organising principle” of mind that used to construct the perception of the world from the data received through the senses’ (Deveroux 1996, p. 175). Waterfront to be developed as repository of contact-point among water, land and human habitat “where the symbols of the past stand in contact with lively present” (Lynch in Banerjee and Southworth 1991, p. 670). The fact that they may be difficult to implement in practice, in no way negates their importance and desirability (for a comprehensive illustration see Jinnai 2013). It may further be used as healing channel between human mind and the divine nature (cf. Deveroux 1996, pp. 136-137), of course it is a challenge in case
of Banaras where the age-old traditional holiness has constantly been resisting modern and planned developments.

As a followed up programme after hon'ble PM Narendra Modi’s visit to Kyoto and sign of an agreement on 31 August 2014 between Varanasi and Kyoto, the Kashi-Kyoto MoU and pact between India and Japan has been finalised in a Steering Committee meeting on 13 January 2015 at New Delhi, taking into consideration the similarities between Kyoto and Varanasi and the possibilities of sharing the experiences of Kyoto’s emergence as the top ranked city in the world in the domain of cultural tourism with inclusive-heritage development strategies centred around conserving its rich culture heritage. The three concerned areas highlighted in respect of Kyoto’s initiatives were: conservation of cultural heritages (tangible and intangible), radical changes and modernisation in town planning is a sustainable way, drastic reduction in garbage generation and enhancing the appeal of city’s cultural visibility in the purview of public awakening through measures like banning outdoor advertisements, riverfront encroachment and unauthorised development, etc. (cf. Singh, Binay 2015b).

8. Envisioning Future & Liveable City

There is no perfect optimal plan for making city complete and ecologically liveable. Although modern design, technology and resource transformation are important ingredients, cities will flourish by creating opportunity through their own narratives while working with their history, tradition, cultures, resources, location and population potentials to improve liveability (cf. Stanley 2010). Liveable city is a concept on the minds of urban planners, developers green builders and stakeholders concerned for good and happy places around the world. Liveable cities enhance the lives and well-being of its citizens, encouraging community and public participation through designing urban infrastructure that brings people together (cf. Murry 2011). Additionally, liveable cities embody sustainability — ecologically, economically, culturally, socially and humanistically (cf. Pal 2015, p. 278).

The following five general principles should guide the development of Liveable City on the line of ecological sustainability; these should be given more care in the Varanasi Master Plan 2031:

- Be better places to live, for everyone;
- Underpin growth and jobs;
- Leave a sound legacy for future generations;
- Offer better linkages to regions and other major cities;
- Integrate within and between transport and land use, urban form and new technologies.

The following principles that are more specific should guide mobility within accessible city:

1. Take a ‘systems’ approach to the whole network.
2. Limit the need for travel and, if this is not possible, limit the distance to be travelled. For example, by providing work opportunities close to home and making teleconferencing and augmented reality facilities available within local precincts.
3. Relieve people of the need to ‘drive’ vehicles, thus freeing their travel time for more personal or productive tasks; for example, using non-crowded ‘public’ transport and intelligent transport systems to permit automatic operation of road vehicles.
4. Separate major flows of freight and passengers via separate networks.

While many city governments face unprecedented challenges, a number of steps can make cities more liveable and protect the environment. These include better urban planning, more public transportation, better sanitation and rational water use policies, energy conservation, urban farming, and waste recycling. In addition, slower population growth would ease pressures on cities and buy time to find solutions. Of course, sustainable urban development is a recent, yet controversial concept. Wheeler, in his 1998 article, defines sustainable urban development as “development that improves the long-term social and ecological health of cities and towns.” He sketches a ‘sustainable’ city’s features: compact, efficient land use; less automobile use, yet better access; efficient resource use; less pollution and waste; the restoration of natural systems; good housing and living environments; a healthy social ecology; a sustainable economy; community participation and involvement; and preservation of local culture and wisdom.
After passing twelve years now the concept of sustainable urban development and liveable city planning are popularly conceived as philosophical vision for city planning, especially for old cities; as also this would be befitting to Varanasi. Because of political and governance structures in most jurisdictions, sustainable planning measures must be widely supported before they can affect institutions and regions. Actual implementation is often a complex compromise among several stakeholders and policy makers, and in bridging machineries, which in our cases quite complex and corrupt. Nevertheless, sustainability requires governments to stay engaged, public-private partnership to be appropriately designed and regulated to benefit the community (Yuen and Ooi 2010, p. 8); it may be difficult, but not impossible. A conflict between the preservation of the character of existing historic towns and “change” has formed the central argument for conservation and sustainable planning. Presently, heritage has superseded conservation, where marketing of heritage as a product according to the demands of the consumer, mainly tourists, has resulted in the commercialisation of heritage over conservation values that also turn into contestation. Today, the symbiosis of both tourism and heritage places has become a major objective in the management and planning of historic cities like Varanasi (cf. Nasser 2003).

As regional capital the City is serving as nexus for the economic development and its transactions, and also trying to maintain its status as popular place of pilgrimage and tourism. But think of the period after two decades when population will be double, the requirements will be different and intense, the transportation would require complex network, maintenance of city’s role as bridge between rural and urban culture, and also coping with India’s urban share that would be half by 2031, how the city will take lead in these situations and transformations! Presently the City is unprepared and ill-equipped to tackle the challenges it faces to create new and better landscape and life (cf. Singh, Rana 2015b).

Land acquisition is one of the biggest, most politically fraught obstacles to industrial growth and expansion of the City. Farmers have fought bitter battles against their land being taken for urban expansion, development of residential colonies, and stalling some projects for years. There is lack of coordination among the three development institutions responsible for making plan and implementing them, viz. Varanasi Development Authority, Varanasi Municipal Corporation, District Urban Development Authority, and their affiliates.

The way Master plan 2031 manages its urban transformation will determine the course of its development and economic ascent. Unfortunately, rarely public participation is taken care for making this Master Plan, which is mostly conceived as an extension of the old one and additionally chalked out as manifestation of earlier model plans those have no way concerned with the similar situation. There is another big gap between ‘inside’ (residents) and ‘outside’ (administration) approaches. Theoretically tourism and heritage are also given consideration in preparing development plan, but no way rationales, threshold and land use plans based on ‘pilot projects’ and case studies are yet prepared. The INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage), New Delhi, has been entrusted to work on the issues of heritage development plans, which completely avoided to take any sort of collaboration with the local expert and resources. The situation is turning as unwillingly the residents have to accept all such plans conceived by outsiders and theoreticians those no way have experience or deeper interaction with the local society and culture. Let the authorities realise these and such studies to be taken for making planning strategies (cf. Pal 2015, p. 281).

9. Concluding Remarks

Heritage is the mirror of mankind’s growth, progress and prospects; it is very important that it should be preserved. One has to remember that modern way of life and science, and ancient wisdom and its messages can work together to help in searching a harmonious and peaceful path of mankind’s integration with nature. In order that this heritage become a resource for development, it needs to be first documented, then protected, maintained and finally utilized according to specific heritage guidelines and legislations. Only then, combined with an increased citizens’ awareness and participation, will policy efforts and interventions become sustainable – environmentally, socially and culturally (cf. Singh 2011a, p. 251).

It is notable that the initiative made by local NGOs, experts and eminent citizens of the city, to propose the nomination of the old city centre of Varanasi for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List has activated the sensitive and positive response in the city administration to think of preservation of cultural heritage. A mass movement of awakening (chetna march) is required for reverential
development. But it should not turn into fundamentalism, nor should it cause any damage to secular life.

In order that heritage becomes a sustainable resource for development, it is essential that: (i) Heritage be protected and maintained; (ii) Heritage protection be continuously monitored, assessed and strategies be changed fitting according to appropriateness, priority and in need of the time; (iii) Impact of heritage protection should be constantly evaluated and improved upon; (iv) Heritage protection activities should be supported by the residents and stakeholders; (v) City development plans follow specific heritage guidelines support system and the by-laws; (vi) Heritage to be promoted so as to bring sustainable economic benefits to the local population; and (vii) Information and cultural programmes on heritage issues to be disseminated for awareness building among citizens.

In our temporal frame we have to give respect to the past, search solutions in the present, and make directions for the future. This should apply to the issue of urban sprawl beyond the corporation boundary and interlinks with the surrounding areas (peri-urban), which were not considered in preparing the CDP or DPR. Remember, a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the site as a living organism. In order that this heritage becomes a resource for development, it needs to be first documented, then protected, maintained and finally utilised according to specific heritage guidelines and legislations. Only then, combined with an increased stakeholder awareness and participation, will policy efforts and interventions become sustainable – environmentally, socially and culturally. We may separate ourselves from the web of our heritage in the pursuit of modernity and secularism, but it would always be at the cost of our hearts and souls.

10. References


Additional latest Newspapers articles related to the issues raised (6 March 2015 —→):


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Singh, Rana P.B. (chairman and editor) and Dar, Vrinda (associate & co-editor) 2002a (March 20). Varanasi: Heritage Zones and Sites. [Details of 53 sites and properties]. Varanasi Development
Authority, Varanasi (India). 110pp + 18pp appendices + 70 figures/ maps (locational, site plans, cross sections), 45 plates of photographs, including historical outline and Selected Bibliography. 1st Report. Fully copyrighted © Rana P.B. Singh.


The Author

Contact & Corresponding Address:
Prof. Dr. RANA P. B. SINGH
Vice-President: ACLA, Asian Cultural Landscape Association
Professor of Cultural Geography & Heritage Studies,
Head, Dept. of Geography, Banaras Hindu University
# New F - 7, Jodhpur Colony; B.H.U.,
Varanasi, UP 221005. INDIA.
Tel: (+091)-542-2575-843. Cell: (+91-0)- 9838 119474.
Email: ranapbs@gmail.com

§ Rana P.B. Singh [born: 15 Dec. 1950], M.A. 1971, Ph.D. 1974, F.J.F. (Japan) 1980, F.I.F.S. (Japan) 2004, F.A.A.I. (Italy) 2010, F.A.C.L.A. (Korea) 2013, ‘Ganga-Ratna’ (GMS India) 2014, Professor of Cultural Geography & Heritage Studies, and Head, Department of Geography at Banaras Hindu University, has been involved in studying, performing and promoting the heritage planning, sacred geography & cultural astronomy, pilgrimage studies in the Varanasi region for the last four decades, as consultant, project director, collaborator and organiser. He has also studied heritagescapes of Japan, Korea and Sweden. He is also the Member, UNESCO Network of Indian Cities of Living Heritage (- representing Varanasi), and was a South Asian representative to the IGU initiative on ‘Culture and Civilisation to Human Development’ (CCHD), 2005-08. He is also the Member of the two Steering Committees of the International Geographical Union’s Commissions, 2012-2016: (i) Cultural Approach in Geography (C12.07), and Landscape Analysis and Landscape Planning (C12.25). In recognition of his works, he has been honoured as being Fellow of the Academia Ambrosiana, Italy, F.A.A.I. in 2009, and serving as member of its International Board of the Scientific Committee, 2010-15. As visiting scholar he has given lectures and seminars on these topics at various centres in Australia, Austria, Belgium, China PR, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, USA (& Hawaii), and USSR.

### Hindu Festivals with Titahi & Roman Dates, CE 2015-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Hindu Date/ Titahi</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Makara Samkranti</td>
<td>Pausha, L-15, F</td>
<td>5 Jan</td>
<td>24 Jan</td>
<td>12 Jan</td>
<td>2 Jan</td>
<td>21 Jan</td>
<td>10 Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pausha Purnima</td>
<td>Pausha, L-15, N</td>
<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>8 Feb</td>
<td>27 Jan</td>
<td>17 Jan</td>
<td>4 Feb</td>
<td>24 Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Magha Amavasya</td>
<td>Magha, L-5</td>
<td>24 Jan</td>
<td>13 Feb</td>
<td>1 Feb</td>
<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>10 Feb</td>
<td>30 Jan</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Maha Shivaratri</td>
<td>Phalguna, D-14</td>
<td>17 Feb</td>
<td>8 Mar</td>
<td>25 Feb</td>
<td>14 Feb</td>
<td>4 Mar</td>
<td>22 Feb</td>
</tr>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>New Samvata starts, Vasant Navaratri-1</td>
<td>Chaitra, L-1</td>
<td>21 Mar</td>
<td>2072</td>
<td>8 Apr</td>
<td>2073</td>
<td>18 Mar</td>
<td>2074</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Rama Naumi</td>
<td>Chaitra, L-9</td>
<td>28 Mar</td>
<td>15 Apr</td>
<td>5 Apr</td>
<td>25 Mar</td>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>2 Apr</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Mahavira Jayanti</td>
<td>Chaitra, L-15, F</td>
<td>4 Apr</td>
<td>22 Apr</td>
<td>11 Apr</td>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>19 Apr</td>
<td>8 Apr</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Akshaya Tritiya</td>
<td>Vaishakhha, L-3</td>
<td>21 Apr</td>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>29 Apr</td>
<td>18 Apr</td>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>26 Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Buddha Purnima</td>
<td>Vaishakhha, L-15, F</td>
<td>5 May</td>
<td>21 May</td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>29 Apr</td>
<td>18 May</td>
<td>7 May</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Haritalika/Tija</td>
<td>Bhadrapada, L-3</td>
<td>16 Sep</td>
<td>4 Sep</td>
<td>24 Aug</td>
<td>12 Sep</td>
<td>1 Sep</td>
<td>21 Aug</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Lolarika Shashthi</td>
<td>Bhadrapada, L-6</td>
<td>19 Sep</td>
<td>7 Sep</td>
<td>27 Aug</td>
<td>15 Sep</td>
<td>4 Sep</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Ananta Chaturdashi</td>
<td>Bhadrapada, L-14</td>
<td>27 Sep</td>
<td>15 Sep</td>
<td>5 Sep</td>
<td>23 Sep</td>
<td>13 Sep</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Pitri Visarjana-14</td>
<td>Ashvina, D-14</td>
<td>11 Oct</td>
<td>30 Sep</td>
<td>19 Sep</td>
<td>8 Oct</td>
<td>28 Sep</td>
<td>17 Sep</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Surya Shashhti</td>
<td>Karttika, L-6</td>
<td>17 Nov</td>
<td>6 Nov</td>
<td>26 Oct</td>
<td>3 Nov</td>
<td>2 Nov</td>
<td>20 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Margasirsha Purnima</td>
<td>Margshirsha, L-15, F</td>
<td>25 Dec</td>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>3 Dec</td>
<td>22 Dec</td>
<td>12 Dec</td>
<td>30 Dec</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Lunar Eclipse</td>
<td>Full Moon (F)</td>
<td>4 Apr</td>
<td>10 Feb</td>
<td>9 Jul</td>
<td>31 Jan</td>
<td>27 Jul</td>
<td>16 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Solar Eclipse</td>
<td>New Moon (N)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Lunar month:** D, Dark Fortnight (waning, krishna), L, Light Fortnight (waxing, shukla); F, Full Moon; N, New Moon.

By & © Rana P. B. Singh; New F - 7, Jodhpur Colony, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 221005, India. Tel. (+091)-542-2575 843. Mobile: (+091)-0-9838 119474. Email: ranapbs@gmail.com  ;

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2. The ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) – A Perspective for Banaras

According to UNESCO [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/newdelhi/areas-of-action/culture/intangible-cultural-heritage/; retrieved on 15 December 2014], the following conceptual frame of Intangible Cultural Heritage, ICH, refers to:

“Intangible Cultural Heritage is a broader term which no longer depicts only the monuments and collection of objects of cultural importance. In the age of fast-growing globalization, Intangible Cultural Heritage plays an important role in maintaining cultural diversity. Proper understanding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage pertaining to different communities helps in ensuring intercultural dialogue.”

“The concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage extends over a wide field, particularly the oral traditions, languages, the process of creation of skills and know-how, performing arts, festive events, rites and social practices, cosmologies, learning systems, and beliefs and practices related to nature. Intangible Cultural Heritage is important not only for the manifestation of culture, but also in the transmission of the wealth of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next.”

“UNESCO New Delhi supports the effort of local communities and groups to identify, enact, recreate and transmit the intangible or living heritage, and to found their culminating point in the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.”

According to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – or living heritage – is the mainspring of humanity's cultural diversity and its maintenance a guarantee for continuing creativity. It is defined as follows:

“Intangible Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.”


“The term ‘Cultural Heritage’ has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

“What is intangible cultural heritage?” Intangible Cultural Heritage, ICH is:

# Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part;


# Inclusive: we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practised by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large;

# Representative: intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities;

# Community-based: intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.

The UNESCO (ref.: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00052; retrieved on 15 December 2014) has further incorporated the concept of ICH:

“Instances of intangible cultural heritage are not limited to a single manifestation and many include elements from multiple domains. Take, for example, a shamanistic rite. This might involve traditional music and dance, prayers and songs, clothing and sacred items as well as ritual and ceremonial practices and an acute awareness and knowledge of the natural world. Similarly, festivals are complex expressions of intangible cultural heritage that include singing, dancing, theatre, feasting, oral tradition and storytelling, displays of craftsmanship, sports and other entertainments. The boundaries between domains are extremely fluid and often vary from community to community. It is difficult, if not impossible, to impose rigid categories externally. While one community might view their chanted verse as a form of ritual, another would interpret it as song. Similarly, what one community defines as ‘theatre’ might be interpreted as ‘dance’ in a different cultural context. There are also differences in scale and scope: one community might make minute distinctions between variations of expression while another group considers them all diverse parts of a single form.

While the Convention sets out a framework for identifying forms of intangible cultural heritage, the list of domains it provides is intended to be inclusive rather than exclusive; it is not necessarily meant to be ‘complete’. States may use a different system of domains. There is already a wide degree of variation, with some countries dividing up the manifestations of intangible cultural heritage differently, while others use broadly similar domains to those of the Convention with alternative names. They may add further domains or new sub-categories to existing domains. This may involve incorporating ‘sub-domains’ already in use in countries where intangible cultural heritage is recognized, including ‘traditional play and games’, ‘culinary traditions’, ‘animal husbandry’, ‘pilgrimage’ or ‘places of memory’.”

The UNESCO has broadly classified ICH into five categories: (1) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (2) Performing arts; (3) Social practices, rituals and festive events; (4) Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) Traditional craftsmanship.

While giving due consideration to the UNESCO Scale of ICH, in the Indian perspective of the ICH, specially referring Varanasi/Banaras/Kashi, various attributes of the ICH can be classified into TEN broad categories, viz. (1) Oral Traditions, (2) Performance Arts, (3) Ramalila and other Lilas (variety and distinctive; historical), (4) Parikrama/ Yatras, Pilgrimages, (5) Rituals and Festivals (selective), (6) Traditional Art & Craftsmanship, (7) Scholastic Traditions, (8) Indigenous Knowledge & Healing Tradition, (9) Memorials, icons and Saints’ associated sites and performances, and (10) Birth places and memorials of Freedom Fighters and Literates (see Table 2.1).


Table 2.1. Attributes of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Varanasi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Se</th>
<th>Cultural Heritage attributes (selective)</th>
<th>Varanasi/Banaras/ Kashi (major ones referred)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oral Traditions</td>
<td>Katha (religious story telling), Birha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Performance Arts</td>
<td>Dhrupad, Sanskrit Theatre, Bhajan, Nautanki/ Kauwali Bharat Milap, Lok Nritiya (folk dances), Kathak Gharana, Tabla Gharana (e.g. Kishan Maharaj), Thumari Purvi (Poorvaiya) singing, Birha, Vedic chanting, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ramaila and other Lilas (variety and distinctive; historical)</td>
<td>Ramnagar Ramaila, Chitrakut Ramaila, Assi Ghat Ramaila, Nati Emili Ramaila, Chetganj Ramaila, Khojwa Ramaila, Shivpur Ramaila, Krishnaila (Assi Ghat, temples), Nrismhashaila, Dashavaterralaila (Prahalad Ghat), Vamanaila (Trilochan Ghat), etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parikrama/ Yatras, Pilgrimages</td>
<td>Chaurashikroshi Yatra, 96 sites; Panchakroshi, 108 sites, Yatra; Avimukta Yata, 72 sites; Nagar Pradakshina, 72 sites; Vishveshvara Antargriha, 72 sites; Omkareshvara Antargriha, 72 sites; Kedareshvara Antargriha, 108 sites; Aditya (Sun), 14, Yatra; Vinayaka, 56, Yatra; Devi, 96 sites, Yatras: e.g. Kali, Gauri, Lakshmi, Mahavidyas, Matrikas, Chandis; Ekadash Rudra Yatra, 11 sites; Rishi, 7, Yatras; Vamana Yatra, 42 sites; Vishnu Yatra, 42 sites, Char Dham Yatra, 4 sites; Uttaradik Yatra, 126 sites; Dakshinadik Yatra, 108 sites; Masika Yatra, 12 sites; Ritu (season’s) Yatra, 6 sites, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Traditional Art &amp; Craftsmanship</td>
<td>Murti casting (sculpturing), Shringar (icon decorative art), Saridozi etc., Silver work, Poshak, Kanthimala, Purda, Chitrakala, Khilauna (wooden toy making), Silk weaving (Banarasi Sari), Tabla and Sarangi making, Pan, Special sweets (e.g. Mallaiyo), special breakfasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Scholastic Traditions and schooling and discourses system</td>
<td>Banaras Hindu University, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidhyapith, Sampurnannad Sanskrit University, Central University for Tibetan Studies, Parshvanath Jain Institute, Institute of Handloom Weaving Sangveda Vidyalaya, Darul Salfia Islamia University, Udai Pratap Autonomous PG College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Indigenous Knowledge &amp; Healing Tradition</td>
<td>Nature therapy, Yoga centres and tradition, Ayurvedic medicine and centres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix: 3.

**Area (Heritage) Walks (already ongoing and proposed)**
[for details, see: Singh and Rana 2002/2006]

# 1. The Asi Ghat–Sankatmochan

# 2. Sonarpura – Kedara Ghat
Lambodara Vinayaka, Nilakantheshvara, Jyestha Vin., Mahalakshmi, Gauri Kunda, Tarakeshvara, Kedara temple.

# 3. Manikarnika Ghat –Vishvanatha (Golden) temple

# 4. Siddhesvari Area

# 5. The Raj Ghat
Lal Khan ka Roja, Gandhian Institute of Studies, Krishnamurti Foundation, Adi Keshav T, Sangameshvara Temple, Java Vinayaka, Chandan Shahid.

# 6. The Banaras Hindu University & Environs
The B.H.U. Campus, New Vishvanath T, Bharat Kala Bhavan (Museum); Jnana Pravaha, the Centre for Cultural Studies; The Osho Dhyanmandakin, centre of meditation therapy; Raidas/ Ravidas Temple.

# 7. The Old City and the Special Places
Jangambari Math, Panchakroshi T, Gopala Mandir, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, Nagiri Pracharini Sabha, Kala Bhairava T, Svami Narayana Temple. # Seeing the City, the Places of attraction: Kamaksha Devi, Tilabhandeshvara T, Temples in the Lakshmikund Area, Hindu Observatory, Bharat Mata T, Vishalakshi Temple, Kashi Vidyapith, Lat Bhairava, Jalarama temple; Diesel Locomotive Works.

# 8. The Panchakroshi, Pilgrimage
The Five Night halts and the temple clusters, Pilgrims’ rest houses: Kardameshvara, Bhimachandi, Dehli Vinayaka, Rameshvara, Shivapur, Kapiladhara.

# 9. The Ramnagar, across the Ganga
The Fort, Royal Museum, Walk in the Fort, Purana Institute, Vyasheshvara, Sumer Devi T, Rama Lila.

# 10. Saints of Medieval period
(A) Kabir: message, birthplace, and seat of discourses; (B) Raidas: message, birthplace, and shrines; (C) Tulasi: life, places associated in Banaras, Hanuman temples, Vindu Madhava temple.

# 11. Sarnath, Where the Buddha Preached

# 12. The Jains and their holy places, and their festivities
The birthplaces of Tirthankaras – 23rd Parshvanatha, 7th Suparshvanatha, 11th Shreyamsanatha, and 8th Chandraprabha, – their shrines and associated festivities.

# 13. The Muslim Sacredscapes and related festivities
History and culture, Schools, Tazias; Sacredscapes/ mosques – Fatman, Shah Tayyab, Chandan Shahid, Bahadur Sharif, Dhai Nim Kangooore mosque, Alamgiri mosque, Jnanavapi mosque, Aurangzeb mosque.