ABSTRACT

Community Empowerment through Intangible Heritage for Sustainable Development and examining its impact on Built Heritage - Mathura & the Braj region of India.

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All over the world empowering the community is the buzz word. It's the new way forward being propagated by most agencies world over. This paper would like to address the role of community and intangible heritage vis-a-vis the built heritage. It would also like to emphasize the role that Living Cultural Heritage plays within urban development.

This paper explores the vast intangible resource present in the city of Mathura and the larger region of Braj. It also presents the approach applied towards its Living Heritage under the Govt. of India scheme - HRIDAY. This paper also attempts to explore a comparative narrative for the intangible heritage of the 12 HRIDAY cities sought under the Govt. of India scheme.

Braj is the land of krishna and is known world over today due to its associations with krishna lilas (religious annecdotes). It is an extremely vibrant region with immense historical, religious, social and cultural significance. This land of krishna consists of thousands of historic water bodies (kunds), forests and grooves (van/ upvan), hills and hillocks, temples and other built structures, all related to various aspects of krishna. All these natural and built heritage (tangible & intangible) treasure has been undergoing assault in the hands of over enthusiastic communities at places and in other places being falling apart due to apathy and neglect of the community.

Based on the experience of Braj studies, this paper wants to explore the interrelationship between the community and its intangible heritage and its impact on the Built environment. It wants to put forth through the case study of Braj the pros and cons of various approaches. It wants to emphasise that various stakeholders, local authorities, experts, local citizens have to participate, communicate and then reach a consensus on their heritage. Only then does heritage become inseparable from its people. The question to be debated is " what is good for heritage and what is good for the community ?".