

2. Rethinking temples – Agamashastra and everyday Indian experiences (19th October 2018)

Plenary session with Agamashastris (experts on Agamashastra), Sthapathis (those who build and maintain temple buildings), and pujaris/managers/caretakers of ancient temples. The aim of this session is to explore the traditional (and enduring) Indian approach to temples as living spaces and transmitters of traditions.

Today, more than any other kind of site, temples continue to be living heritage spaces across India. Given this fact, we will investigate the traditional Indian approach to living heritage sites taking temples as our focus point. This session will raise the following questions:

- Is it possible to discern a traditional Indian approach to living heritage by focusing on temples in India?
- If yes, what is this traditional approach, with reference to temples?
- Are there any differences or significant points of departure between the mainstream international, institutional approach and the traditional Indian approach?
- What can the traditional and mainstream approaches learn from each other?

This attempt to identify and reflect on a traditional Indian approach to heritage is important because, first, we need to recognize that there might be different ways of thinking about and conserving heritage - this acknowledgement only makes us richer in terms of intellectual and practical resources. Second, because it is important to ask what role, if any, a traditional approach could have played and plays in keeping our living heritage – ancient temples – *alive*. The purpose of this panel will be to bring traditional practitioners and perspectives to the discussion table, and to expose ourselves to this knowledge system.