Importance of tangible and intangible heritage of the core area of Chowk, Lucknow

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Abstract. The tangible and intangible heritage of a country in a mélange of epitome created during various phases of history. The heritage core city areas of many South Asian countries are losing their original identity because of the rampant globalization and modern development. The conservation and preservation policies of such heritage core city areas need attention towards its holistic integration with urban development practices which can bridge a gap between the old and the new developments of the cities. Almost all the heritage core city areas have historical, religious, social, cultural, spiritual, and scientific or aesthetic significance. There is multiple layer of historical importance which give unique identification of heritage built up areas. The built-up heritage of the core areas is based on the typology of buildings, historical importance, architectural character in terms of plan and ornamentation, the socio-cultural lifestyle of people, economy, geographical location, governance, etc. This paper is an abstract from the research work of the author, where there is an attempt to discuss the way in which conservation is integrated with the urban development and in turn its possible contribution to the urban development of core city area of Chowk, Lucknow. The paper concluded with establishing a relationship between the tangible and intangible assets of the heritage of the core area of Chowk, Lucknow. It proposes a methodology towards conserving the cultural heritage of Chowk in today’s context.

Keywords: Built Heritage, Conservation, Tangible heritage, Urban development

1. Introduction

I.1. The Culture and Sustainability Paradigm
Brundtland Report in 1987 suggested that sustainable development is the model of development that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Governments around the world are adopting and using this model to plan the future of our societies. The UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm (1972), the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future (1987), or the Agenda 21 approved in the Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro (1992), define sustainability with their focus on physical ecology. Apart from the concerns on the environment, emphasis is also being given to the interconnections between the physical ecology and the social and economic dimensions of development. The concern on the role of culture in sustainability or sustainable development has emerged as a multifaceted topic of interest, with parallel attention paid in many policy and urban planning contexts and the rise of a ‘four-pillar’ model of sustainability in a number of countries.

We argue that the ‘traditional paradigm’, with three pillars of sustainable development (environmental balance, economic growth, and social inclusion) is in crisis today because it is incomplete and fails to
integrate a key component: the cultural aspects of society. This traditional paradigm ignores culture, or, in the best of cases, it underestimates its intrinsic importance and instrumentalizes culture for other purposes. Today, people across the world are acknowledging that culture is a key factor to elaborate and implement local or national development strategies. The traditional example also does not identify that cultural values finally shape what we mean by development and determine how people see the world. In contrast, a cultural diversity approach to development paradigms brings thoughtfulness and openness, and contributes to a world with complementary, pluralized visions of development.

It is because of the neglect; the traditional sustainability model does not take into account the cultural system— the overall cultural life of a nation or city— as a key societal actor. However, the cultural system must continually find solid arguments to be given an opportunity to participate in debates on the future of our society. It is accepted that the culture and sustainable development paradigm, despite the existence of both conceptual and operational challenges, contributes to a renewed platform for future discussions about sustainability. Furthermore, it is believed that these discussions are an opportunity to bring together the cultural policies and cultural politics that ‘are deployed by distinct communities of analytical practice’, including cultural policy consultants, academic researchers, and the broader cultural community itself [1].

Thus, there is a need to understand the values of the rich cultural heritage of each of our cities. It becomes more pertinent in case of old cities of South east Asian countries because of its old and rich cultural history. Taking example of the old cities of India, most of these cities have an intrinsic value because of its rich cultural heritage, which includes not just the built heritage but also includes the intangible assets of heritage which define the lifestyle of the residents of the city.

The globalization happening in the world is affecting the cultural attributes of such cities. On one hand globalization is helping in the development of the newer areas. On the other hand, it is also the main reason for the neglect and ongoing decay of the cultural heritage values of such cities.

There is a need to bridge the gap between what is old and what is new to find a sustainable solution. A solution that is acceptable for the new generation of the people of the city, who are the main stakeholders and who are willing to be part of finding a solution.

2. Methods
The paper aims to establish the role of tangible and intangible heritage in the core city area of Chowk, Lucknow. The research started with conditional survey of the primary heritage buildings of Chowk, Lucknow. Detailed drawings were made to access the extent of damage. This was complemented with the primary survey of the stake holders through survey of the residential areas and the commercial street. The aim was to understand the extent of transformation and to study the key issues of the core area. The findings from the survey were analysed to propose specific guidelines for the revitalization of the Chowk area.

3. Discussion
3.1. History and development of Lucknow:
Lucknow is one of the largest cities in the northern part of India with the present population of nearly 3.3 million people. It is the capital of the country’s most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, which still retains the blend of tradition and heritage. The city is situated on the banks of river Gomti, a tributary of the River Ganga.
3.1.1. The intangible cultural heritage of Chowk, Lucknow:

Lucknow has always been known for etiquette (principles of social behaviour). Furthermore, it has been known to be a centre of culture and good manners in the whole country. The interest of almost all the people of Lucknow in language, poetry and music could be seen in the etiquettes among them.

During the Nawabi era, development happened in almost all the fields. Urdu language, the elite language of the army officers and the nobles is supposed to have originated from Delhi and its poetry in the Deccan. However, it was in Lucknow that the Urdu poetry was developed. The language and the poetry developed over a long span of time showing nearly seven phases of development. This is an indication of a strong tradition of linguistic eloquence that is often known as the ganga-jamuni tahzeeb. This rich tradition is even today seen in the language of the common man who has been poetically inspired and uses thoughts, similes and metaphors from Urdu poetry in his conversation.

Dastan Goi, the art of story-telling gathered much attention, had its roots from Arabia, where story telling was quite prevalent in assemblies and gatherings before coming down to the Mughal courts of Delhi. However, it soon shifted to Lucknow because of Nawabi patronage. Dastan Goi has had a great effect on the language of the general public of the city.

Lucknow has been known for the development in the Unani medicine system. Although the Muslim medicine method is quite old, but it is said that this could survive in the history, it was because of India. During the Nawabi era, nearly all the good physicians chose to come to Lucknow from Delhi because they were often rewarded extra apart from the regular emoluments.

The art of calligraphy and penmanship are both related with learning and creativity. It was during the time of Nawab Asaf ud Daula, when this art got famous in Lucknow.

It is said that when the men of Lucknow gave up the territorial conquests and did not have the courage to face the negative aspects of war, their warlike instincts led them towards animal fighting. This had developed as a full-fledged sport where the courtesans could witness intrepidity and bloodshed. The kind of animal combat which happened in Lucknow was probably never seen in any part of India. This combat was not just limited to animals but was spread in various ways: animal combat, cock fighting, kabutar bazi and patang bazi.

Lucknow has been known for the Lucknow gharana in North Indian music and kathak dance form. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was a big patron during whose era there was a lot of development in the two art forms. The Royal court of Awadh has always been a welcome destination for all the musicians and dancers.

Lucknow has been famous for the male theatrical skill called bhands. Here the young male members dress up in female attire and take part in theatrical performances. Even the bhands from Delhi got a royal encouragement in the courts of Lucknow during the Nawabi era. Soon the male performers were replaced by domnis (the female entertainers). They evolved further into mirasans (female singers) and jagnis (troupe of female singers who sang throughout the night to keep the female members of the family awake throughout the night) in the weddings as singers.

Lucknow has always been known for its cuisine. The Royal court not only gave patronage to performing arts, but also to the development of the art of gastronomy. It became a trend in Lucknow that the food should look very light but should be heavy to digest. The cuisine of Lucknow shows this quality. Experimentation and innovation in the food have been a trend in Awadhi cuisine since the Nawabi era. Nawabs gave lot of importance to the etiquettes of consumption of food as well.
Awadhi fashion is incomplete without *chikankari* and Zardozi embroidery. Both these art forms flourished under the patronage of the Nawabs of Lucknow. Lucknow became one of the biggest centres for Zardozi embroidery in India during the Mughal rule.

The *hukkahs*, the *pan daan*, the *lota* and the *peek daan* (the spittoons) have been integral parts of the society of the city for a long time. Lucknow has seen lot of refinement in the pan making, the *hukkah* and *pan daan* design.

### 3.2. Description of Chowk, the core area of Lucknow:

Chowk is the oldest part of Lucknow, the pre-Nawabi, medieval city, developed at right angle to the river and guarded by the Macchi Bhawan fort on the Southern bank. This was the road for the travellers coming in from Kanpur, and the south. The main spine of the Chowk has two gates at its both ends namely Gol Darwaza and Akbari Darwaza.

This street was built in the time of Asaf-ud-daula; but it is, probably, of an earlier date, because the southern gate, Akbari Darwaza, was built in the reign of Akbar.

It was a place which housed the courtesans, aristocrats, nobles, nawabs, *jagirdars*, *taluqadars*, *wasiqadars*, *mahajans* (money lenders), numerous highly placed officers of the Nawabi administration, and supposedly connoisseurs of arts and crafts. The courtesans were accomplished in dance and music. The Chowk became known to the British as red-light area. They were packed away in the early ‘50s under Government orders.

#### 3.2.1. Location of Chowk:

Lucknow is divided into two sectors western and eastern sector. Chowk lies in the old city part in the western sector, south of River Gomti. The major roads that define the extent of the area are Victoria Street, Kamla Nehru Marg and NH-25. The major commercial spine is the street that originates from Gol Darwaza at Chowk Chauraha and terminates at Akbari Darwaza.

#### 3.2.2. Cultural significance:

Chowk has played a vital role in the development of the culture of Lucknow. It has one of the oldest markets in Lucknow with narrow streets which signify the historical and cultural heritage of the city. The market spine is a hub of many of the intangible handicrafts. The market had jewellery shops, the pan and hukkah shops, perfumeries, dealers of precious stones and engravers, ivory craftsmen, merchants dealing with *chikan*, *zardozi* and *zari* works. There are shops of traditional footwears, flower shops, etc. which add to the conviviality of the place. Chowk is a place where we find a mix of people of different communities living together through decades. It is a place which full of activities on every festival, be it of any community and a place where everybody equally celebrates all the festivals.

#### 3.2.3. Major important buildings in Chowk area:

The major heritage complexes identified on the basis of their historical and social importance as per the secondary sources are:

- a) Gol-Darwaza – Khun Khun ji Kothi
- b) Police Station 1905 (Kothi Nawab Aali Qadar)
- c) Machhali wali Baradari (Bhola Nath Darmshala)
- d) Sri Kalli Ji's Ram Mandir
- e) King's Unani Hospital-1834
- f) Kaptan Ka Kuwan (Fateh Ali Khan)

1. (Archaeological Survey of India, Lucknow Circle, 2015)
2. (Archaeological Survey of India, Lucknow Circle, 2015)
3.2.4. The tangible heritage of Chowk, Lucknow (architecture)

Chowk is also a stage for many heritage buildings which tell the stories of the bygone era [3]. There are several religious buildings in Chowk like Kalli Ramji Mandir, the Bisati Masjid, Saudagar Imambara, Sambhavnath Temple, Tehsin ki Masjid, Mohammadia Masjid are situated together with number of institutions like Madarsas and the spacious Darul-Shafa (the old King’s Unani Hospital).

These vintage edifices represent our history and glorify our past. Known and celebrated for its magnificent palace complexes, gateways, and Imambadas the capital of the kingdom of Awadh is home to a unique style of architecture; marvellous and outstanding in its own way. Grand palaces, mosques, and mausoleums were erected during the Nawabi era, which in turn paved the way for the aesthetic and stylistic identity of the kingdom of Awadh inspired by the architectural marvels of the great Mughals with a European flavour.

Even today, Chowk retains some of its old Nawabi glamour and harmony blended with modern type of business and culture (see Figure 1).

The architecture of the Nawabs commands international importance in the world of heritage and this was verily brought out during the crumbling down of the mighty Mughal Empire [4]. As the Mughal Empire weakened the Nawabs of Murshidabad, Awadh and Hyderabad began to establish their own independent states. The architecture sponsored by the rulers and inhabitants of these new domains was heavily dependent and therefore inspired by the Mughal style established during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, yet in each case, new formal interpretations and meanings gave way to older forms. The results were often highly creative expressions, reflecting the religious attachment and
expressions of these new kingdoms. Architecture under the Nawabs of Awadh was quite a perceivable mission, with the new stately union endeavouring to make a mark striving to come out from the shadow of the Mughal empire.

Most of the great heritage structures and monuments of India are made of stone and some of them have an iron frame within. But in Awadhi architecture, brick and mortar have been shaped into impressive structures contributing to the development of a unique style and form [3].

3.3. Present situation of Chowk

The present situation in the core city areas of almost all the Indian cities is the tale of constant transformation. It has been established that revitalization is required to save the cultural heritage of such core areas. There are many stakeholders and the concerned authorities are divided in their approach towards the conservation of core areas.

No efforts have been made towards conserving the heritage of Chowk. Apart from the few notified buildings in the core areas, the rest of the heritage buildings, which are not notified, are the most neglected. Due to the lack of proper coordination with the authorities and absence of byelaws in the core areas, there is a constant market pressure to change the building function and type. The research identifies the heritage sites where coordination between various agencies is required to carry out the conservation process.

The findings from the survey have elucidated the reasons for the present situation in the core area of Chowk. They are:

1. Disintegration of the properties: The findings from the survey clearly indicate that majority of the properties have disintegrated or are in the process of gradual disintegration. This may have been due to many reasons like family dispute, families selling the properties, division of property among the grown family members, etc. The households are mostly inherited from the forefathers and the value of the property is a shared financial asset of the owners. Thus, we find multiple owners of old property.

2. Tenancy system in the core area of Chowk: The survey indicated that many of the rented properties were under the purview of the Rent Control Act, 1972. The rent being paid by the tenant has not changed since a long time. Numerous legal cases are pending in the courts and they end up paying a small amount as rent. Thus, the owners are not interested in improving the conditions of the building. On the similar lines, many of the shops have been rented since decades on the prevalent pagri system. The pagri system is a kind of the renting system where the tenant becomes a part owner of the property (not the land) and has got the rights to sell the same. However, in this system the tenant must pay a large sum of money in the beginning which takes care of the escalation in the property prices. In this system, the tenant must pay one-third of the pagri taken from the new tenant when the old tenant transfers the property to the new tenant.

3. The fragmented properties and the Rent Control Act have resulted in rental properties which are cheap alternatives for the migrating population who have come to the city for better job prospects. This is resulting in new people coming to the core city area of Chowk which is negatively impacting the cultural heritage of the place.

4. Multiplicity of public agencies in the core areas to take care of the infrastructure and development results in a lack of coordination between the agencies. The agencies involved are Municipal Corporation, Lucknow Development Authority, Town and Country Planning Organization, Jal Nigam, and UP Electricity Board. The lack of vision and coordination among the various agencies has resulted deterioration of the core.

5. Lack of connectivity from the rest of the city is a major aspect of the research on Chowk. This is affecting the lifestyle of its original inhabitants. The extreme disparity between the core
areas and the new developed areas of the city is a reason for the young generation to migrate to the new developed areas.

6. Lack of awareness among the residents of the Chowk regarding the heritage value of the place is one of the reasons for their ignorance. There is a need for organized tourism-related activities that will contribute in the sustainable development of the cultural heritage of the core area of Chowk while respecting its socio-cultural values and traditions.

The present conservation policy focuses on buildings only and has no coordination with the local development or the municipal authorities. The research helps in recommendations for the conservation guidelines in a more holistic way. The literature review of urban revitalization studies across the world, expert reviews, case studies of urban heritage cores in India, the findings of the survey done in Chowk, Lucknow shows that conservation of Chowk’s tangible and intangible heritage is essential.

3.4. Recommendations for Chowk Revitalization process:

The study of the problems of Chowk area, the surveys done to understand the transformation happening in the core area, the interaction with the stakeholders and the analysis of the onsite surveys result in five recommendations for the Chowk area, Lucknow:

3.4.1. Conservation plan

The main objective of the conservation plan is to protect the original urban fabric of the core area as much as possible by preserving the built structures and their architectural character, and open spaces in the core areas. A detailed listing of heritage buildings, both notified and unnotified should be done and they should be incorporated in the masterplan of the city. The buildings listed can be categorized as structures which require minor changes without affecting the appearance of the structure. Specific design controls can be imposed to maintain the overall character of the area. The objective of the approach should be to preserve the urban character of the core. This will also help in creation of new jobs in conservation and tourism in the area.

Before any conservation process is initiated, certain issues need to be addressed such as:

1. Regulation of property costs so that gentrification or displacement of poorer communities is avoided. This approach will not be popular as the wealthy living in the core areas always enjoy benefits from the price appreciation and gentrification of the area.
2. Strong design regulations laid down in the conservation policy often are expensive and would also face resistance from the inhabitants of the core area unless there are incentives such as loans to repair and restore facades.
3. Conservation of such areas primarily preserves the heritage elements of the city as a value for the next generation. There are economic benefits from tourism as well.
4. It has been seen that often the conservation groups which include historians, archaeologists, sociologists, architects and planners are heavily funded by some agency. This process is not a direct revenue generator. Thus, an alternative arrangement needs to be instituted, which may be a revenue generator for such conservation works. This approach will, thus, also get active participation of the inhabitants of the core areas.

3.4.2. Residents Community plan

This approach is based on inclusive planning by the people and for the people. The focus should be on the overall improvement of the living standards of the people living in the housing clusters. The approach includes facilitation of community interaction by various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Funding can be obtained partially from the main residents and partially from the indirect stakeholders. The problems in this approach include the high cost of educating the direct stakeholders and the time required to do such a work. A lot of time has to be spent to come to a consensus and solicit the community members’ approval and their participation. This is accelerated when there is a strong political will. This approach includes the approval of all sectors of the residential clusters/communities and, thus, is a more sustainable approach based on community
support. It should be carried out in a phased manner where the first phase is sensitizing the direct stakeholders and spreading awareness among the inhabitants of the core area towards the cultural heritage. This would involve holding community meetings to come to a common consensus. The second phase would include inviting both the direct stakeholders for the conservation proposals. The third phase would be to encourage tourism as a means to improve the economy of the area.

3.4.3. Merchants Community plan
This approach is aimed to improve the economic status of the core areas. The approach uses the economic potential of the local business and uses it to develop it further for better economic development. This means capitalizing on skills and cultural traditions to promote and develop business. This approach is quite similar to the residents’ community plan where a cooperation of trade members is formed for the upgradation and uplift of the trade. The cooperative uses technology for upliftment of the business and reach the prospective buyers. It provides funding for the upkeep of the place, maintenance of the parks and open spaces and improvement of the area, improving public hygiene, ensuring security, maintaining streets and open spaces and also creating business strategies for the overall development of the merchants of Chowk street.

This approach has immense potential in case of Chowk street since the residents have control over their surroundings. Funding by the local traders would minimize the need for any external funding and this would result in a sustainable system for conserving the cultural heritage of the place. However, design controls and traffic management need to be done by the city administration and planning agencies.

3.4.4. Tourism development plan
Tourism development in conserving the core areas is used in almost all the similar heritage cities which have good tourism potential. This would include upgradation of important heritage buildings and provision of tourist facilities in the core area. The residents of the core area could run facilities, such as tourist hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and public conveniences. This would also provide economic resources for the whole conservation process. This could be developed as a process where the people living in the core area are involved in the initial revitalization process and the direct benefits from the tourism and the upgradation process of the area are received by the residents. However, this should be done in a regulated manner as the tourism pressures affect the original character of the place and the community benefits are less as compared with benefits to other stakeholders.

A walk in the streets of Chowk is an interesting experience during all seasons and during the festivals. The hustle and bustle on the streets, the enchanting aroma of mouth-watering delicacies, and fragrant perfumes and flowers create a mystic experience for the visitors. The beautiful remnants of the intricate motifs on the walls of the buildings and the interesting built forms add richness to the visual quality of the streetscape. The whole experience of the built environment and the activities in the Chowk street have always been an integral part of the identity of the place.

The plan also focuses to showcase the traditional art forms of Chowk including the performing art forms. Open places identified in the physical survey can be used to conduct various performances during various festive occasions. This will help to boost the traditional art forms of Lucknow.

The plan proposes heritage walks based on heritage attributes, cuisine, various handicrafts, and the performing art forms and the built heritage of Chowk.

Signages are often a problem for the tourists who come to Lucknow. There is a need for proper signages, including direction and information signages. These signages will not only help to give direction to the tourists but will also cover public conveniences, water facilities, information centres,
eateries, caution about no smoking zones, trash bins etc. This will help to highlight various places in the core of Chowk and improve the legibility of the place to the tourists.

The visual character of the street is rich with a variety of architectural forms and iconography. Colour, textures, roofing, fenestration, steps, platforms, balconies, chabutras among other elements, are repeated at irregular intervals in different typologies of buildings and form the harmonious character in a very complex visual experience. The street is punctuated by high plinth and open spaces in front of religious buildings which have been threatened with visual clutter from encroachments and billboards resulting in loss of aesthetic value, most evident at Hiran Park. The newly added buildings visually inharmonious with historic structures cause visual conflict as seen in the main shopping street.

The historic fabric of Chowk is deteriorating and endangered as evident in the main Chowk street. The historic buildings are in varying degrees of disorder and losing their heritage value. Making legible the past has the effect of enriching the visitor experience. This is an important rationale for preservation. Chowk street needs a comprehensive set of design guidelines for visual management. Historic buildings must be preserved in accordance with the historic design palette of the chabutras, arches, arched doorways, windows, balconies, domes and stucco work on the walls. The height of new buildings must not exceed that of the tallest building, Tehsin ki Masjid or Nawab Qadr Ali Kothi. Rich stucco work on the walls of almost all the old structures are part of street identity. However, the new materials and finishes on the buildings adds to the visual clutter. A colour palette in harmony with the prevailing colours and the iconography in terms of the rich traditional stucco works on the walls should be prescribed for the buildings in Chowk.

During the experience of Chowk on foot, the proximate senses are fully engaged but the interpretation of visual elements is hindered due to encroachments all over the street. The rich heritage-built forms in Chowk holds significant architectural value with its interesting play of levels, treatment of religious buildings, intricate balconies, chabutras, and the rich stucco work. To identify the architectural elements, about fourteen historical built forms were studied. Although the elements are not similar in most buildings, they are different for different typologies of buildings, which collectively create an interesting overall architectural experience for the visitors.

The historic buildings have different design typologies and uses ranging from religious, residential, to institutional. The buildings covered by the heritage walk of UP tourism have been known for their typical character. The architectural character identified in the study should be used to create a template to establish architectural controls over all for the new buildings in the core area of Chowk. The template should consist of chabutras, doors, windows, window grills, parapets, columns, arches, domes, brackets, stucco work motifs, roofing systems, ornamentation etc. The template of the architectural elements would help to retain the overall character of the core area of Chowk.

3.4.5. Transit oriented development

The survey done in Chowk suggests lack of proper linkages with the newly developed parts of the city. This approach to revitalization of historic cores connects the core areas with the new developments of the city. Cities like Lucknow are now in dire need of a mass rapid transit system to connect the inner cores of the city with the new developed city centres. Such an approach helps in decongesting the city traffic and improving connectivity. It helps to generate more jobs, makes commuting cheaper, and promotes business in the old city cores. The case study of Delhi shows the benefit of a developed transit system which has connected the old city centres with the new ones. This is a long-term plan and funding for such solutions can be done only in phased manner by the approval of the local governments. Due to public benefits, the Government also provides long term subsidies to the private players to make it a profitable business.

There is a need of a conservation plan which combines the strengths of each of these above recommendations with phasing for implementation. Political will and a coordinated effort of the
administration and the direct stakeholders is required to make the process more sustainable. The plan needs to be integrated with the Ministry of Tourism, local administration, Ministry of Urban Transportation which involves the residents and merchants of the Chowk in the planning and execution of the conservation plan.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Proposal for conservation guidelines for the Chowk area, Lucknow

The research highlights the importance of the built environment and its relationship with the cultural heritage. Thus, the proposal is based on the interests of local residents and stakeholders in the core areas. The study emphasizes:

1. Proper policy for conserving the core areas
2. Legal framework for conservation of the core areas
3. Development of appreciation among the people towards heritage properties
4. Management of resources for the conservation process
5. Improvement of the economic situation in the core areas.
6. Promotion of tourism in the core areas.

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