

## Towards Understanding Heritage and Monuments

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### ABSTRACT

Heritage always plays an important role. Heritage can be simply defined as what we get from our ancestors. Heritage can be tangible and intangible. Monuments form an important part of the heritage. Monuments are an important area of study in history as well. Monuments attract a large number of people, locals, historians, artists, photographers, students and tourists. The paper attempts to discuss the important concepts of heritage and monuments.

Almost everything that we manifest in our day to day life is a part of our heritage. It may be regarded as anything that someone wishes to conserve or to collect and pass on to future generations. Heritage is taken to include everything that people want to save. It is our legacy from the past, what we live with today and what we pass on to future generations. Heritage belongs not only to people or the culture concerned, but also to mankind as a whole and it plays an important role in underpinning people's cultural identity. It is all pervasive and concerns everyone. It also reflects someone's or some group's search for identity. Heritage is for people; not just for a small minority of specialists and experts, but for everyone.<sup>1</sup>

The development and civilization processes of all societies are based on Heritage. David Throsby developed a useful indication of the scope of what is included within heritage: 'moveable artifacts, artworks and other items such as are contained in the museums and other collections and immovable heritage such as archeological sites, buildings, monuments or a group of buildings, locations, precincts etc. of historical or cultural importance.'<sup>2</sup>

Also, historic remains preserved from an earlier period are not just neutral objects but tools through which current identity, power and society are manifest. So, heritage is better understood as a process, rather than a finite set of structures. One can say, heritage is the set of values that the current generation place on the artifacts, buildings and identities associated with the past. As a construct, heritage takes its present values from the social, economic, historic and political values of today's society.<sup>3</sup>

Heritage is concerned with the view of a particular observer from the present back to the past. Heritage buildings or monuments or even heritage sites are capable of being preserved at the same time as being used to earning money to pay towards their upkeep, provide jobs and help support regional areas.<sup>4</sup>

Monuments add meaning to the present through their association with the past, thereby giving the present a past. Memory associated with them persists, evoked by their physical presence even after the passage of time. However, for memory to persist there is a need to observe, interpret and create the narrative upon the bedrock of material things.<sup>5</sup>

A monument can be defined as a tangible manifestation of gesture of preservation in the face of disintegration, diffusion and disappearance of a certain set of ideas or events.<sup>6</sup>

The eyes fall on the monument, it dwells there for a while delighted and refreshed. Monuments are linked to the past is redolent of social, intellectual, and romantic memories, to recall its adds richness and interest to the present. However giving an altogether new dimension to monument's definition, Prof G. Baldwin Brown in the Department of Fine Arts in the University of Edinburgh provided a new definition. According to him, a monument is something that gives us pause that bids us reflect and is a reminder of past or absent thing.<sup>7</sup>

John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1851-53) provides us with a nineteenth century notion of what monuments are and what they should do. Ruskin turned the entire city into a monument.

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Leask and Alan Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites*, Oxford, Elsevier, 2012, p. 32

<sup>5</sup> Mark Wigley, "The Architectural Cult of Synchronization", *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 4, Winter 1999, pp. 412-15.

<sup>6</sup> Bart Verschaffel, "The Monumental: Meaning of a form", *The Journal of Architecture*, Volume 4, Winter 1999, pp. 332-336

<sup>7</sup> Gerard Baldwin Brown, *The Care of Ancient Monuments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.20

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Howard, *Heritage: Management, Interpretation, identity*, London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003, p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Theosby, D.'s article 'Seven questions in the economies of cultural heritage' in Michael Hutter, and Ilde Rizzo edited, *Economic Perspectives on Cultural Heritage*, London, Macmillan p.30

<sup>3</sup> Tony Gilmour, *Sustaining Heritage: Give the past a future*, Sydney University Press, 2007, page 4

He provided a meaningful historical narrative from objects of built and natural landscapes in his *Lamp of memory* (1849). Alois Riegl's taxonomy of monuments, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus* gave rise to architectural interest in monuments and leading to reassessment and reevaluation of iconicity and symbolism in architectural postmodernism. This architectural postmodernism presented a view that architectural signs may refer to meanings outside architectural proper, either through visual similarity (termed as iconicity) or cultural associations (symbolism). From the first act of its creation, through its long life to the present day, an historic building has artistic and human 'messages' which will be revealed by a study of its history. A complexity of ideas and of cultures may be said to encircle monument and be reflective in it.<sup>8</sup>

Historical monuments in a silent way reflect the history and culture of the period in which they are constructed. History is the reconstruction of the past and this reconstruction becomes an interesting and scientific idea when explored through the representative monuments of any given period.

India possesses a rich and varied cultural heritage, spreading over millennia of history. The heritage includes archeological monuments, palaces and garden tombs. India is a vast country interspersed with numerous remains in the form of monuments and sites. These remains are our rich cultural heritage and of inestimable value. Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age old traditions and as concretized forms of their creative genius and skill. The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event.<sup>9</sup>

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