

PRESERVING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	6
LIST OF TABLES .....	7
ABSTRACT .....	8
I. INTRODUCTION .....	9
Origins and development of the concept of landscape .....	12
Carl Sauer and his approach to ‘morphology’ of cultural landscapes .....	14
Cultural landscapes as a ‘way of seeing’ .....	16
Cultural landscapes and inclusion of social and political dimensions .....	17
Application of Cultural Landscape theories to the cause of Preservation .....	19
II. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE .....	21
Origins and methodology .....	21
Popular critique of the NPS approach to cultural landscapes .....	26
National Heritage Areas NPS .....	28
III. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION BY UNESCO .....	31
Origins and methodology .....	31
Popular critique of the UNESCO approach to cultural landscapes .....	34
IV. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION IN INDIA .....	37
Notions of Time .....	37
Notions of Space .....	40
Notions of Nature .....	41
Notions of Culture (Man-made entities) .....	42

V.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION IN INDIA.....	44
	Recommendations for the future of Cultural Landscape Preservation in India .....	44
	Discussion of relevant site-specific examples .....	46
	Proposed Methodology: .....	52
	REFERENCES .....	57
	APPENDIX I .....	63

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. A statue of Nataraja. Photo reprinted from Pandya, Y. (2005) Concepts of space in traditional Indian Architecture..... 39
- Figure 2. Gaya-Uruvela Pillar. Photo reprinted from Dehejia V. (1998) 'India's Visual Narratives', in Paradigms of Indian Architecture. .... 39
- Figures 3 and 4. A tree-trunk and rock surface respectively used for religious symbols. Photo reprinted from Sinha (2006) Landscapes in India: Forms and Meanings. .... 42

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 Categories of NPS Cultural Landscapes .....	23
TABLE 2 Criteria for determining significance of cultural landscapes .....	24
TABLE 3 Seven Aspects of Historic Integrity .....	25
TABLE 4 Definition and Categories of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes .....	33

## ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, a variety of policy frameworks have been designed worldwide for the protection and stewardship of cultural landscapes. While the National Park Service (NPS) in United States has developed a system of preparing Cultural Landscape Inventories and Reports (CLI & CLR) to address sites under their administration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has its own criteria for designating cultural landscapes within an international forum. This document attempts to outline and critically analyze these two approaches with the aim of exploring their applicability to the Indian milieu.

The ultimate aim of the research is to attempt the formulation of a methodological framework for the implementation of cultural landscape preservation in India. This is achieved by first exploring endemic Indian notions about *time, space, nature* and *culture*, followed by the proposal of a few key concepts or broad recommendations that should, in my opinion, guide any cultural landscape preservation efforts in the Indian context. This is supported by a discussion of a few best practices at sites both in India and worldwide where appropriate solutions were sought. Lessons from these as well as the analysis of the NPS and UNESCO models together give rise to a methodological framework for initiating cultural landscape preservation in India.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Conscious and unconscious preservation of heritage throughout the world in almost all cultures is a process that has been in place since time immemorial. More recently however, this process has taken the form of an organized movement of heritage conservation in most parts. An understanding of what the field entails, what constitutes heritage and how does one go about conserving it, are issues that have thankfully undergone constant reinterpretation since the field was born. This has ensured that the field perpetually tries to expand its scope in a manner that increases its relevance and impact. The formulation and development of the concept of cultural landscapes is one such aspect that reflects an increasing formal awareness in our minds of what constitutes our cultural and natural heritage.

Cultural landscapes are understood as the combined works of nature and man that are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. Their conservation necessitates that heritage be conceptualized not just as cultural objects (man-made buildings, etc.) and natural features but also social and economic processes and practices that define the way we interact with our environment. Cultural landscapes implore us to look at environments as the outcome of the interplay between nature and man.

In the past two decades, cultural landscapes have come to be recognized worldwide as a distinct resource type within preservation philosophy and practice. As a result, a variety of policy frameworks have been designed and put into practice for their effective protection and stewardship. Within the US, the National Park Service (NPS) is one of the most significant bodies involved in such preservation, and they have developed a system of preparing Cultural Landscape Inventories and Reports (CLI & CLR) to address sites under their administration. My research engages in placing the NPS approach within a world-view of similar (yet varied) concepts, particularly the interpretation of cultural landscapes by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Being one of the oldest living civilizations in the world, it is needless to say that there are a number of sites that qualify as cultural landscapes in India; yet presently there is no system to protect and manage them

While it is well understood that endemic conditions would necessitate a culture-specific approach and caution has to be exercised in adapting ‘Western’ models literally, I strongly believe that the true value of cross-cultural studies lies in learning across cultures. Therefore, it is proposed that the CLR framework developed elsewhere in the world can provide a good starting point for initiating preservation of cultural landscapes in India. Simultaneously it is also anticipated that issues that are specific to the Indian context hold potential for making the prevalent approach to CLR’s more inclusive, and thereby address some of its popular critique.

*Research Goal*

To put forth a set of recommendations and propose a brief generic guide that can contribute in directing the future of cultural landscape preservation in the Indian context.

*Research Objectives*

- To understand the theoretical concept of ‘cultural landscape’ and map its translation into a practical preservation ‘tool’.
- To critically analyze the designing of this tool by NPS and UNESCO.
- To now treat both the NPS & UNESCO models as manifestations of external methodologies & to explore their applicability to the case of cultural landscape preservation in India.
- To analyze those conceptual notions in India (such as time, space, nature and culture) that have the potential of possibly affecting cultural landscape preservation.
- To accommodate the conceptual differences thus recognized by translating into appropriate policy and methodology recommendations.
- Finally to arrive at a generic model that can act as a framework for undertaking cultural landscape preservation for specific sites in the Indian context.

## II. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE THEORY AND ACADEMIC APPROACHES

The term ‘cultural landscape’ in the contemporary scenario brings up a plethora of meanings, notions and understandings - from having been liberally used by writers and journalists to describe the social ‘scene’ at large, to expert professional organizations using it to imply a specific resource type, there indeed exists a rather wide interpretation of the term and concept. As eminent geographer Paul Groth, has aptly termed it, “the polyphony of cultural landscape study” in present times is indicative not only of the complexity of the concept, but also of its origins and transformations over past decades (Groth and Wilson, 2003, 21). In the present chapter I will engage in a discussion of the broad patterns that have governed the evolution and development of the concept of “cultural landscapes” in the past century or so, and conclude with a dialogue on the application of this concept to the cause of historic preservation.

### *Origins and development of the concept of landscape*

The word *landscape* in English and its equivalents in most other languages have undergone varied transformations in the last few centuries. Various scholars in the past have studied its two components – *land* and *scape* to understand how the word came to exist and be used<sup>1</sup>. In the Middle Ages, *land* implied any well-defined tract of the earth with definable boundaries. The origins of the word *scape* on the other hand, have been traced to meaning a composition of similar objects. This can be seen more clearly in old

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<sup>1</sup> For reference see Jackson 1986, and Groth 2003.

English precursors to landscape – *landscaef* and *landskipe*, both of which contain the roots – ‘sheaf’ and ‘ship’ that imply a collection of similar things. At the same time, the word *scape* has also been linked to ‘shape’ and ‘scrape’, meaning to create or cut. The most popular application of the word landscape during the Middle Ages to cultivated and agricultural tracts of land, can thus be seen as an evidence of both these above stated interpretations – ‘landscape’ essentially implied a collection of well-defined tracts of the earth that have been shaped or altered (by human presence). Therefore it can be said that the earliest meanings of the word had both spatial and social connotations (Groth 2003). However, it appears that the word faded into disuse and was reintroduced back into English in the 1600’s from the Dutch word *landschap*. This time though, the word had acquired an artistic sense and was used to denote a picture depicting scenery on land. Subsequent influence by the Picturesque and Romantic movements was instrumental in underscoring that ‘landscape’ largely referred to framed panoramic views of wild nature. This cultural tradition of “seeing nature with the painter’s eye” determined attitudes towards the appreciation and preservation of natural beauty and continued well into the nineteenth century. Once tourists had learned to “connect scenery and painting in their minds, the picturesque became [their] mode of vision” (Carr 1998, 12). This understanding also made its way across the Atlantic and can be witnessed in the way early American painters and writers envisioned native landscapes through the distancing lens of pictorial composition. (Carr 1998). Thus, from possessing both spatial and social connotations, *landscape* came to assume an exclusively aesthetic dimension- something

that was set to change with the advent of cultural landscape studies in the twentieth century.

*Carl Sauer and his approach to 'morphology' of cultural landscapes*

Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889-1975) was the chair of the geography department at the University of California, Berkeley, and in his role as an eminent academician, he strongly influenced evolving ideas in the field of cultural geography. In his groundbreaking 1925 essay "The Morphology of Landscape", Sauer proposed the following, now widely accepted, definition of cultural landscapes:

*"The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result."*

Thus, landscape, as he understood it, was not a composed *image* or concept, but rather a definable area that had been shaped by a cultural group operating on it. His ideas during the early part of the twentieth century were a reflection of similar evolving concepts worldwide in the field of geography<sup>2</sup>, that were attempting to emphasize the cultural aspect in studies of nature and geography. Sauer's work can also be seen as a strongly critical reaction to the prevailing theory of environmental determinism at that time, which espoused the view that the physical environment, rather than social conditions, determines culture. The fundamental argument of the environmental determinists was that aspects of physical geography, particularly that of climate, influenced the psychological mind-set of individuals, which in turn defined the behavior

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<sup>2</sup> See Groth 2003 for advances in cultural geography in Germany, France and England.

and culture of the society that those individuals formed. Conversely, Sauer proposed that 'culture' was the evolutionary force behind the imprints that people left on the earth. This approach involved the inductive gathering of facts about the human impact on the landscape over time.

However, as we look back in retrospect, the most significant impact of Sauer's work lied in shifting the sense of 'landscape' back from a composed image to the place itself (Groth 2003). Over the years though, the biggest criticism of his morphological approach has been that it assumed that everything we encounter in this world already belongs to 'nature' or to 'culture', a division that was then entrenched in the very fabric of the discipline (Whatmore 2003). Also his interpretation of cultural landscapes being formed out of natural landscapes through the agency of an overarching culture, has been viewed as overemphasizing the physical shaping of the earth, and underemphasizing the role of mind and vision in reading and interpreting landscapes. Moreover, the concept that landscapes are none other than "the material expression of a seemingly unified group of people who lived in that region" has been seen as a rather limited view of culture, forcing it to align itself within certain uniform rules and expectations. Contemporaneous to Sauer's approach was a much more loosely formulated one by J.B. Jackson, yet one that had a significant impact on academic thought regarding cultural landscapes in the twentieth century.

*Cultural landscapes as a 'way of seeing'*

J.B. Jackson (1909-1996) was a prolific writer, editor and landscape philosopher who played an influential role in the maturation of cultural landscape studies, particularly in the United States. Although he followed Sauer's line of thought in his interest in cultural landscapes, he constantly strived to explore the 'symbolic' aspects of landscape. In essence, he was making the effort to move beyond the 'morphology' of landscape and towards the 'experience' of landscape. Jackson continually encouraged his students and readers to realize the importance of "art and emotion" in 'reading' the landscape as a "kind of text full of symbolic clues to the meaning that lies behind the bare morphology" (Cresswell 2003). His work therefore had a great impact on humanistic geographers at that time, who were interested in seeking conceptual frameworks to study people and their activities in spatial contexts. Other important geographers who headed this shift towards 'reading' landscapes, were D.W. Meinig and Yi-Fu Tuan to name a few. In his 1979 popular essay 'The Beholding Eye', Meinig puts forth the idea that although the morphological features in a landscape, in terms of roads, houses, trees etc. remain the same, a plethora of different meanings can be derived depending upon the way in which individuals with different interests interpret the same physical features. This line of thought underscored the concept of landscape as a 'way of seeing'. Yi-Fu Tuan also mirrored similar ideas in his essay 'Thought and Landscape'. "Landscape", he argued, "is not to be defined by itemizing its parts. The parts are subsidiary clues to an integrated image. Landscape is such an image, a construct of the mind and of feeling" (1979, 89).

Therefore, as the field of cultural landscape theory evolved the focus shifted from the form of the material landscape and towards the way we see the landscape.

*Cultural landscapes and inclusion of social and political dimensions*

The understanding of cultural landscapes was and continues to be further defined and redefined. While landscapes as a ‘way of seeing’ was an approach that gained a lot of ground in academic circles, theorists and philosophers soon started insisting on the relationship between that way of seeing and the social and political conditions which overdetermine it. Cosgrove in his groundbreaking work *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984), sought to place the way of seeing landscapes in a historical and social context. The ‘gaze’ which had assumed overdue importance in interpretation of cultural landscapes, was now being critiqued for being highly susceptible to individual bias and representing a myopic point of view—usually that of the trained professional who treated the cultural landscape as an ‘object’ of study. Another effect of this way of seeing was that it removed the active subject (whether people in the world or the onlooker) from the world (Cresswell 2003). A telling ancient Indian tale, recounted by Anthony King in his essay ‘The Politics of Vision’ (1997, 134), addresses similar issues:

*A man, seeking enlightenment, asked his guru for advice. The man suggested, “I shall go to the highest mountain and there I shall open wide my eyes and look around.” And the guru replied, “This will be your first mistake.”*

This brief story prompts a number of questions central to “the relation of vision to belief, of belief to knowledge, and of knowledge to authority”, while at the same time highlighting the cultural specificity in which seeing and believing take place (King 1997).

Contemporary cultural landscape theorists have therefore endeavored to convey fully the political and social dimensions of place. Therefore, while early studies focused on rural settings, now even urban areas, parking lots, factories and slums are actively covered under the gamut of cultural landscapes. It is widely understood that landscape meanings can be interpreted as “noble, nostalgic or uplifting expressions of choice and group life, and they can also be seen as those of economic exploitation, racism, capitalist accumulation, and a lack of choice” (Groth 1997). This shift has further implied that the field of cultural landscape studies is now scattered in half a dozen disciplines (history, geography, architecture, urban planning, art history, sociology and folklore, among them). It has also implied that we need to stop seeking single, unified meanings in landscapes, but see them as “multiple, coexisting texts or competing fragmentary expressions” (Groth 1997). To demonstrate such issues, Dolores Hayden, in her pathbreaking work, *Power of Place*, has fought for the idea that the form of a Los Angeles bungalow, firehouse, or street corner may be much less important than its use, occupancy and way in which the surviving form can help present day observers mark minority life. Cresswell in his essay ‘Landscape and the Obliteration of Practice’ voices similar emotions when he proposes ‘landscapes of practice’ - which essentially means that cultural landscapes be looked at as practiced environments, an inherently lived phenomena as opposed to representation or ideology (2003). The overall impact of these concerns is a call for increased participation by human inhabitants and user groups in the management of cultural landscapes.

*Application of Cultural Landscape theories to the cause of Preservation*

It was not until the 1970's and early 1980's, that preservationists began to address issues associated with the broader landscape. Until that time, historic preservation had largely occupied itself with singular historic buildings. Leadership in this broadening of scope was provided by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), which formed a historic preservation committee during the early 1970's. It was however, the National Park Service (NPS) "more than any other American organization or agency, that provided the most significant direction to the nascent cultural landscape preservation movement" in the United States (Alanen and Melnick 2000, 7). Their overriding focus until now had been the preservation of spectacular natural beauty in the form of national parks and monuments. Cultural landscape studies provided them with a coherent framework to combine cultural resources with natural ones. The NPS approach to cultural landscapes, however, will be addressed in greater detail in the next chapter. Here, I will now address the conceptual and practical issues that arise when preservation gets combined with cultural landscapes. Preserved landscapes are "a bit of an oxymoron" (Watts 2001, 14). This statement sums up the most popular concern that has been raised to the adoption of cultural landscape studies by champions of historic preservation. Problems seem to arise from the fact that acts of preservation tend to protect a landscape from transforming through time which runs entirely counter to the inherent dynamic nature of landscapes. Why and how cultural landscape theory was adopted to policy frameworks in preservation practice is an intriguing question. Jackson, despite being one of the strongest proponents of cultural landscape studies was known to be skeptical about

their applicability to preservation. He conceded that the ‘beauty’ of an ancient environment “comes from its having been part of the world, not from having been isolated or protected, but from having known various fortunes” (1997). Lynch voiced similar notions when he emphasized the import of ‘layering’-- the visible accumulation of overlapping traces from successive periods, each trace modifying and being modified by the new additions, to produce something like a ‘collage of time’ (1972,170). Yet if we look back, it can be seen that cultural landscape studies were rather instrumental in helping preservation broaden its focus from singular buildings to entire districts and rural landscapes – thus enabling a redefinition of some of the prevailing and rather ‘rigid’ philosophies of preservation. This process, however, is far from complete and as parallel advances in the theoretical understanding of cultural landscapes continue, it implores the field of preservation to keep up and refine existing policies. The following sections provide a brief overview of some of these existing cultural landscape preservation methodologies by two major agencies – the National Park Service (NPS) and UNESCO.

### III. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The NPS has been and still remains a major player in the practice of landscape preservation, and more recently cultural landscape preservation in the United States. Managing expansive holdings of land owned by the federal government, the NPS probably presents the largest organized system of preserving identified cultural landscapes worldwide. How this system was developed, and currently operates will be briefly discussed in the following sections, followed by a discussion of its most popular critiques.

#### *Origins and methodology*

It was not until the 1980's that cultural landscape preservation began to gain popularity and emphasis. In 1981, the NPS released the first edition of their directive titled *Cultural Resources Management Guideline* (NPS Directive 28), officially recognizing cultural landscapes as a separate resource type. Robert Melnick helped to define the methods of the new approach with his 1984 study (Melnick 1984). In 1989, the NPS published a National Register Bulletin (with Melnick again as an author) titled *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Districts* that discusses the characteristics of rural historic landscapes and suggests methods of survey and research. Following a number of other relevant publications, guidelines and policies, NPS began the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) initiative in 1992. The CLI was envisioned as a systematic inventory or database inventory of cultural landscapes in the NPS that would

assist land managers in "planning, programming, and recording treatment and management decisions" (Page 2001). By 1997, CLI's had been implemented throughout NPS and in 1998, NPS published the *Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports (CLR): Contents, Process and Techniques*, providing procedural and practical information related to preparing a CLR. The CLR built upon the CLI to provide not just a documentation of cultural landscapes but also specific treatments and recommendations for the same.

The standard definition of a cultural landscape, accepted by NPS is as follows:

*A Cultural Landscape is defined as a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or that exhibit other cultural or aesthetic values.*<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of management, they chose to categorize cultural landscapes into four distinct but non-mutually exclusive categories, listed in Table 1.

In terms of methodology, the standard procedure of preparing a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) for a site, usually involves the following parts:

- Part 1: Site History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis & Evaluation.
- Part 2: Treatment
- Part 3: Record of Treatment

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpted from (Page, Gilbert and Dolan 1998)

TABLE 1 Categories of NPS Cultural Landscapes

Definition and Categories of NPS Cultural Landscapes	
A Cultural Landscape is defined as a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or that exhibit other cultural or aesthetic values.	
(i)	Historic sites: a landscape significant for its association with a historic event activity, or person.
(ii)	Historic designed landscapes: a landscape significant as a design or work of art; was consciously designed and laid out either by a master gardener, landscape architect, or horticulturist to a design principle, or by an owner or other amateur according to a recognized style or tradition; has a historical association with a significant person, trend, or movement in landscape gardening or architecture, or a significant relationship to the theory or practice of landscape architecture.
(iii)	Historic vernacular landscapes: a landscape whose use, construction, or physical layout reflects endemic traditions, customs, beliefs, or values; expresses cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions over time; is manifested in physical features and materials and their interrelationships, including patterns of spatial organization, land use, circulation, vegetation, structures, and objects. It is a landscape whose physical, biological, and cultural features reflect the customs and everyday lives of people.
(iv)	Ethnographic landscapes: a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources. Examples are contemporary settlements, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site; New Orleans neighborhoods; the Timbisha Shoshone community at Death Valley; and massive geological formations, such as Devil's Tower. Small plant communities, animals, subsistence grounds, and ceremonial grounds are included.

Source: 'A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process and Techniques' (1998)

Part 1 includes historical description (via archival research, oral histories etc) of the landscape through every historic period upto the present and a documentation of the existing conditions. It is suggested that both these forms of documentation: historical and existing, may be done with identification of individual landscape characteristics such as circulation features, vegetation, topography, buildings etc. that individually and collectively make up the landscape. The analysis and evaluation step in the process then

states a period or periods of significance that represents a time frame during which the cultural landscape assumed its ‘significance’. For defining ‘significance’ the process harks back to the National Register Criteria (Table 2).

TABLE 2 Criteria for determining significance of cultural landscapes

As defined by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the National Register criteria, to be eligible for the National Register a cultural landscape must possess the quality of significance in American history, architecture (interpreted in the broadest sense to include landscape architecture and planning), archeology, engineering and culture. To be eligible, a cultural landscape must be shown to be significant for one or more of the following Criteria for Evaluation:	
A.	Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, or
B.	Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or
C.	Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
D.	Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Source: National Register Bulletin 15: How to apply the National register Criteria for evaluation

After the establishment of a period(s) of significance the process now compares findings from the site history and existing conditions to identify which landscape features contribute to this significance and moreover which of them have the ‘integrity’ to be able to do so. Historic integrity determines if the landscape characteristics that shaped the landscape during the historic period are present in much the same way as they were historically. While the process does acknowledge that depending on type of significance, presence of some characteristics may be more critical to integrity than others, it does

expect that the most ‘significant’ landscape characteristics retain integrity (Refer to Table 3 for aspects of historic integrity).

TABLE 3 Seven Aspects of Historic Integrity

<b>Location:</b> the place where the cultural landscape was constructed or the landscape where the historic event occurred
<b>Design:</b> the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a cultural landscape.
<b>Setting:</b> the physical environment if the cultural landscape
<b>Materials:</b> the physical elements that were combined or deposited during the particular period(s) of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form the cultural landscape.
<b>Workmanship:</b> the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
<b>Feeling:</b> a cultural landscape’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
<b>Association:</b> the direct link between the important historic event or person and a cultural landscape.

Source: Excerpted in ‘A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process and Techniques’ (1998) from the National Register Bulletin 15: How to apply the National register Criteria for evaluation

Based on the findings, Part 2 of the CLR then focuses on articulating appropriate preservation strategies for long-term management, while Part 3 acts a retrospective technical record of all the treatment work. It is necessary to state that this process acts a *guide* for cultural landscape preservation in the Park Service and is not intended to be a rigid doctrine. Yet it is expected that the basic tenets of conducting historical research, documenting existing conditions, defining period(s) of significance and then assessing the integrity of landscape characteristics, do form the conceptual backbone of the process.

*Popular critique of the NPS approach to cultural landscapes*

While the above mentioned process has enabled the much-needed initiation of cultural landscape preservation in a number of Park sites, it has also been subjected to some criticism, which can be briefly summed up as follows:

- Firstly, excessive reliance on ‘codification’ has the potential to ‘negate the very idiosyncratic landscape qualities that set one place apart from another’ (Alanen and Melnick 2000, 17). While it is true that in order to implement any policy, some level of generalization is required, care should continuously be exercised to encourage innovative approaches that can arise from the distinct nature of sites. It has also been pointed out in the past that management of cultural landscapes itself, by the Park Service, reshapes the landscape into a standardized “National Park-scape” (Watts 2001,55) with visitor centers, picnic tables, interpretive displays, and so on, all of which comply with national standards and expectations. Cultural landscape studies in such a scenario can be used as an opportunity to recognize and most importantly halt this process to maintain inherent uniqueness.
- Much of the detail of the CLR, including such things as terminology and criteria for significance and integrity, borrows directly from the National Register which is primarily geared towards individual buildings or historic districts. Even cultural landscapes, in order to be nominated to the National Register, must be nominated as one of the five National Register property types (buildings, districts, sites, structures or objects), or as multiple properties, since there is no separate category for cultural landscapes.

- Secondly, the conceptual basis of Park-initiated cultural landscape studies, attempts to tie ‘significance’ and ‘integrity’ to a specific historic period. Underlying this approach is a crucial assumption that there exists a period or periods sometime in the past when a kind of ‘golden age’ prevailed. The problem with this retrospective approach is that it suggests “a line, a date, divides the present from the past and that from our vantage point within the present it is possible to describe the past accurately, analyze it objectively, and interpret it with fidelity to some absolute standard of truth or reality” (Howett 2000, 199). An undesirable result of this approach can be a severing of our ties with the more immediate past that is considered insignificant in relation to the more remote ‘period of significance’. Moreover, the process does not allow for changes in the meaning of “the past” with passing time.
- Thirdly, the concept of ‘integrity’ defined as the ability of a resource to convey its significance through intactness of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, places immense importance on an extant and physical record of the past. Besides over reliance on ‘surviving’ material evidence, the applicability of this approach in acknowledging non-material or intangible manifestations of the past is also very limited.
- Finally, the exclusion of existing user groups from the cultural landscape documentation and management process raises concerns that it reflects the isolated view of a section of trained experts, rather than the views of the very people whose relationship to the land is being analyzed in the first place. In Parks

that have existing human settlements, policies tend to discourage, if not completely remove, residents, while encouraging Park visitors on the other hand, thus represents a very ironical attitude towards human presence (Watts 2001, 82). Moreover, even visitors as a dominant user group are rarely, if ever, made an active participant in the documentation and management of the Park cultural landscape.

### *National Heritage Areas NPS*

Concurrent to the Cultural Landscapes Program described above, there are a few other programs and preservation approaches by NPS that involve and deal with cultural landscapes and are thus relevant to our present study. I will now briefly describe one such program in detail – namely, the National Heritage Area(NHA) program operated by the NPS since 1984. A ‘National Heritage Area’ is a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. This definition resembles very closely to our understanding of cultural landscapes as discussed in the previous sections. However, the NPS approach towards them differs greatly from those national parks and monuments that are actually owned by NPS. A National Heritage Area is not a unit of the NPS, nor is any land owned or managed by the NPS. Instead, a National Heritage Area is a locally-managed designation that focuses heritage-centered interpretation, conservation and development projects over a complex matrix of public and private land. National Heritage Area initiatives are

coordinated by a local entity in partnership with varied stakeholders that work collaboratively on projects that meet the area's stated management plan goals. In addition, while a National Heritage Area designation is permanent, the NPS relationship with and commitments to a NHA vary over time.<sup>4</sup>

The NHA program is essentially a grassroots endeavor. Working in partnership, the residents of a particular area group together and identify the intrinsic and distinct qualities that integrate the region and make it special. The work may also extend across jurisdictional and demographic boundaries by identifying multiple cultural landscapes that are linked thematically, historically, or geographically. The next step in the process is designation by the Congress which is contingent upon the development of a heritage management plan. The NPS supports National Heritage Areas with funding, training, technical assistance, and recognition for community efforts (Hart 2000).

In the opinion of the NPS there are four critical steps that need to be taken and documented prior to the Congress designating a heritage area. These stages are:

- public involvement in the suitability/feasibility study;
- completion of a suitability/feasibility study;
- demonstration of widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed designation;
- commitment to the proposal from the appropriate players which may include governments, industry, and private, non-profit organizations, in addition to the local citizenry.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information see NHA website at <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/FAQ/INDEX.HTM>

Experience has also shown how important it is to complete the suitability and feasibility study before a heritage area is designated. Once a heritage area is designated, a management entity (outlined in the designation) take on the task of developing a heritage management plan for how they will achieve the tasks set out in the feasibility study, which includes identification of important resources and themes that represent the community's heritage. The management entity may be a State or local agency, a Federal commission, or a private nonprofit corporation and is authorized to receive Federal funds on the area's behalf. The management entity and its partners have three years following designation during which to develop a plan and receive approval by the Secretary of the Interior.

The heritage area concept offers an innovative method for citizens, in partnership with local, state, and Federal government, and nonprofit and private sector interests, to shape the long-term future of their cultural landscapes. The partnership approach creates the opportunity for a diverse range of constituents to come together to voice the range of visions and perspectives that exist in any community that has strong connections and interests in the place in which it lives and works. Most importantly, this approach reflects a radical shift in preservation philosophy to consider peopled landscapes as protected areas.

#### IV. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION BY UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an international consortium of approximately 200 countries, maintains a World Heritage List to which countries that are signatories to the ‘Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’ (1972) can nominate cultural landscape sites with ‘outstanding universal value’ in a global context. The UNESCO World Heritage List aims to catalogue and designate eligible sites through a strict nomination process thus paving the way for their conservation that is then managed by the country in which the site is located. Under certain conditions, listed sites can also obtain funds from the World Heritage Fund for their management. I will now briefly describe the ‘cultural landscape’ category within the UNESCO designation process and follow with a critical discussion in this regard.

##### *Origins and methodology*

As mentioned above, UNESCO is an international consortium of countries and operates on the principle of ‘world heritage’ understood as cultural and natural heritage around the world that is considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the ‘Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. The purpose of the *Convention* is to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage of ‘outstanding

universal value'. Reflecting the prevalent thinking during the 1960's & 70's, the Convention divided potential World Heritage sites into two sorts: natural and cultural. In the 1980s, however, as inscription of World Heritage sites continued but found the process as originally defined unable to cope with large areas of both natural and cultural value, the category of site called 'cultural landscape' was created very consciously by the World Heritage Committee to enable nomination of sites that previously could not be handled by existing criteria. Consequently, in 1992 the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes. The Committee at its 16th session adopted guidelines concerning their inclusion in the World Heritage List. Three main categories of cultural landscapes are defined by UNESCO, as described in Table 4. The three categories of cultural landscape have so far stood up well. There has been no great demand to change them, nor any apparent need. Almost certainly this is because they are conceptual rather than functional categories, dealing with the nature of landscapes rather than the uses which made them what they are (Fowler 2003). Yet, over the years it was felt that there were certain shortcomings in both the understanding and the designation of cultural landscapes around the world, reflected in a regional and thematic imbalance in the resultant list. This will be discussed in greater detail in the critical discussion that follows a summary of the methodological process adopted by UNESCO in managing cultural landscapes.

Only countries that have signed the World Heritage Convention, pledging to protect their natural and cultural heritage, can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory to be considered for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List. The

TABLE 4 Definition and Categories of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes

<b>Definition and Categories of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes</b>	
Cultural landscapes represent the ‘combined works of nature and man’ designated in Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention. They are ‘illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.	
(i)	A <b>clearly defined landscape</b> is one designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes characteristically constructed for aesthetic, social and recreational reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles
(ii)	An <b>organically evolved landscape</b> results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features. They fall into two sub-categories:  (a) A <b>relict (or fossil) landscape</b> is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form.  (b) A <b>continuing landscape</b> is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with a traditional way of life. It is continuing to evolve while, at the same time, it exhibits significant material evidence of its historic evolution
(iii)	An <b>associative cultural landscape</b> is a landscape with definable powerful, religious, artistic or cultural associations with the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

first step a country must take is to make an ‘inventory’ , known as the Tentative List, of its important natural and cultural heritage sites located within its boundaries. By preparing a Tentative List and selecting sites from it, a State Party can plan when to

present a nomination file. A nominated property is independently evaluated by two Advisory Bodies mandated by the World Heritage Convention: the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), which respectively provide the World Heritage Committee with their evaluations. Once a site has been nominated and evaluated, it is up to the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee to make the final decision on its inscription. Once a year, the Committee meets to decide which sites will be inscribed on the World Heritage List. To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Refer to Appendix I). Once nominated, UNESCO works in partnership with the country where the cultural landscape is located to manage change by encouraging the preparation of a heritage management plan, providing technical and financial assistance. The management of the cultural landscape however, is the responsibility of the country where it is located, failing which the site may be delisted from the World Heritage List.

#### *Popular critique of the UNESCO approach to cultural landscapes*

A few problems that have been identified in the past 15 years of ‘cultural landscapes’ having been a part of UNESCO designation process can be summed up as follows:

- The biggest criticism of the UNESCO approach deals with the prerequisite of ‘outstanding universal value’ for inclusion on the list. This terminology substantially overlooks the presence and indeed significance of a multiplicity of

perceptions and instead tends to assume a uniformitarian view of man and culture (Khanna 2004). Possessing a quality of universality and at the same time being representative of the distinctive cultural traits of a geographical region is a tall order, begging the sub-question of how well the cultural landscapes chosen so far have lived up to those criteria (Fowler 2003).

- The second major criticism is based on the lop-sided geographical distribution of cultural landscape sites on the World Heritage List and this is often seen as representative of the Euro-centric predisposition towards tangible, material heritage that is incongruous with the intangible dimension of most cultural landscapes in the East.<sup>5</sup>
- Also, in terms of thematic content, there is an imbalance in the World heritage sites. Almost all sites represent a harmonious relationship between nature and humanity, although it is a known fact that this relationship can be far from that. Therefore a few disaster landscapes, for instance, are required to illustrate not only the effects of natural calamities, but more importantly in terms of cultural landscapes, the human reaction to it (Fowler 2003).
- Finally, the surge of tourism activity that is an inevitable outcome of designation has posed serious concerns in the past over the dramatic (and at times undesirable) alterations that it can cause both in the existing character of the landscape and its relationship to its inhabitants. Most sites, especially in

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see the Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List (1994) available online at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/globalstrategy/>

developing countries have been found to be seriously ill equipped in reconciling their newfound status of a 'tourist-destination' with their traditional way of life.<sup>6</sup>

The reason why I engaged in a critical discussion of these cultural landscape models by two major agencies- NPS and UNESCO, is because the way we design our preservation 'tools' holds the potential of strongly influencing the way we conceptualize our heritage. It is not an uncommon phenomenon to 'package' cultural landscapes according to a defined framework for purposes of nomination or management and thus the framework of the cultural landscape preservation 'tool' assumes utmost importance.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see UNESCO publication – 'Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites', (2002) ed. A. Pedersen. Available online at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/1/>

## V. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION IN INDIA

In the absence of any national policy on cultural landscapes in India, UNESCO designation is basically what potential sites can acquire in the realm of ‘organized’ preservation. Yet it would be faulty to assume that the centuries old civilization has been entirely oblivious to sustaining landscapes through their own practices, traditions and way of life. In the pre-colonial era (as indeed in rural society even today) local populations had been actively associated with their heritage, worshipping the sacred and using the secular so that all that was considered of value was well looked after. That which fell into disuse meant that it was no longer valued by society (Menon 1994, 40). An awareness of the myriad ways in which people have appreciated their heritage can allow us to reconceptualize and question prevalent approaches. Thus I will now proceed to a brief investigation of endemic notions about Time, Space, Nature and Culture in Indian society with the aim of exploring their bearing on cultural landscape preservation in India.

However, it is not intended that these ‘notions’ be deemed in any way as ‘universal’ and representing Indian culture as homogenous. With the extreme diversity of religious groups and communities in India, the views expressed herewith relate primarily to cultural groups affiliated to Hinduism, the majority religion of contemporary India.

### *Notions of Time:*

It is often said that in India we live simultaneously in three time zones – the legacies of past and aspirations for future effectively combine with the realities of

present. The Indian psyche has perceived Time as a cyclic phenomenon since ancient times (Brandon 1965). The faith in reincarnation-- cycle of birth, death and rebirth; the unending chain of construction, destruction and reconstruction, all reaffirm the belief in the recurrence of time (Pandya 2005, 12). However, although cyclic, time is not static- it is helical, evolving continuously. This cyclic view of time contrasts with the linear or historical viewpoint of time in most Western cultures, and can be traced to a closer connection with biological rhythms of climatic and natural processes in older societies. Mumford, crediting the mechanical clock to industrialized cultures, says that it 'dissociated time from human events, and helped create the belief in an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences', where every instant in time becomes unique and once past it is recognized as distinct from and irreplaceable in the present or future (1934). Conversely, the cyclic view of time places greater faith in the recurrence of events and thus is less susceptible to treating the past as singular, lasting, and immutable. The cyclic viewpoint is corroborated by traditional Indian mythology, art and sculpture, where chronological or temporal progression is often sacrificed in favor of symbolic relevance (See Figs 1 and 2). For example, in Figure 1, Nataraja, a classical form of Lord Shiva is shown immersed in a furious dance of destruction. It depicts a dynamic balance between creation, symbolized by the presence of the drum, destruction—symbolized by the ring of fire and the demon below, and reconstruction symbolized by the reassuring open blessing hand gesture.



Figure 1. A statue of Nataraja. Photo reprinted from Pandya, Y. (2005) Concepts of space in traditional Indian Architecture.

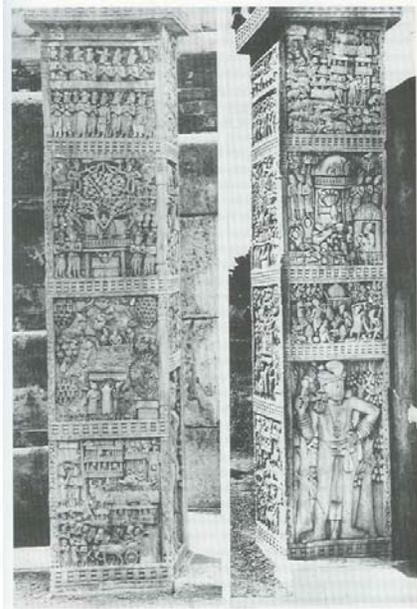


Figure 2. Gaya-Uruvela Pillar. Photo reprinted from Dehejia V. (1998) 'India's Visual Narratives', in Paradigms of Indian Architecture.

Similarly, in Figure 2, which depicts a stone pillar from an undated Buddhist era, each framed module depicts an incident from Buddha's life, yet the events are not arranged in any logical temporal sequence. Rather the viewer is required to start at the bottom, move to the top, and end at the center. Possibly, a geographical (or cosmological) logic is at work here. Based on the narrative, the artist may have felt that the heavens should be at the top of the pillar, the earth at the bottom and the descent in between.

*Notions of Space:*

Space and Time are the two basic dimensions of the phenomenal world, as it is presented to, and apprehended by the human mind. Since ancient times in India, Space has been understood not as a static entity framed by material objects, but rather as something that can be perceived only by movement through it (Pandya 2005, 20). The journey, the process of moving through space, in itself becomes the event. Corridors, thresholds and circumambulatory passages thus assume great significance in Indian space-making. This concept extends even to larger areas of land where it gets manifested in the proliferation of pilgrimage routes throughout the Indian subcontinent. These pilgrimage circuits tie places of significance together in a system of symbolic order. Divine and heroic narratives that are basic to Hindu textual and oral traditions are stamped on the landscape and can be read and encountered by the pilgrims en route on their journey. Some theorists feel that Indian society 'uses the metaphor of spatial distance to draw attention from one to the other', and to acknowledge places that are spatially distant but spiritually near (Das 1989, 53).

*Notions of Nature:*

Hindus, as most other prehistoric societies view nature as a symbol of divinity. Throughout Hinduism, we find the assumption that the natural world is pervaded by powers towards whom reverence is requisite (Kinsley 1995, 55). Accordingly, the most valued cultural landscapes derive their significance from being sacred and not exemplary examples of scenic beauty. Recent academic scholarship has proposed that the concept of archetypes can be used as a valuable tool in analyzing cultural landscapes in India (Sinha 2006). An archetype is a generic, idealized model from which similar instances are derived and patterned. How this concept translates in the shaping of cultural landscapes in India can be seen in the presence of some highly revered natural archetypes such as the River Ganga, Bodhi Tree and Mount Kailash, each of which have found their way into countless manifestations in everyday landscapes over the past centuries. They are valorized in mythology and literature and sustain themselves by allowing associations to be made to them in contemporary tradition. Thus a newly constructed, modest roadside temple with a *shikhara*<sup>7</sup> that symbolically refers to the form of Mount Kailash succeeds in making this connection owing to the iconic power popular symbols enjoy in Indian culture.

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<sup>7</sup> *Shikhara* –a Sanskrit word meaning summit or crest is used in architectural vocabulary to denote the towering superstructure above the innermost sanctum in Indian Hindu temples.

*Notions of Culture (Man-made entities):*

Cultural landscapes in India have no worth purely for their extant physical elements. It is rather the associations that the landscape has with values defined by that culture, which are perceived significant. For example, the city of Banaras in Northern India, is a cultural landscape that is significant for its deep religious and cultural associations, although its physical fabric has been ever changing during the 3000 years of its existence (Eck 1999). Intangible forms of heritage can be seen to occupy important roles in most spheres of Indian culture—from oral traditions and folklore, to indigenous building crafts and a preponderance of symbolic references. Such rituals and signs have the power to create notional realities, at times absolving and overwhelming the obligation of a physical construct or material reality. For example, because of a painted sign, a tree trunk ceases to be perceived as an ordinary object but assumes new meaning as a holy shrine owing to conjured associations.



Figures 3 and 4. A tree-trunk and rock surface respectively used for religious symbols. Photo reprinted from Sinha (2006) *Landscapes in India: Forms and Meanings*.

For example in Figures 3 and 4, religious symbols readily transform ordinary, everyday objects into those of reverence and cultural significance.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION IN INDIA

The aim of this document is to attempt the formulation of a methodological framework for the implementation of cultural landscape preservation in India. I will now try to achieve that goal by first outlining a few key concepts or broad recommendations that should, in my opinion, guide any cultural landscape preservation efforts in the Indian context. This will be followed by a discussion of a few best practices at sites both in India and worldwide where relevant problems presented themselves and appropriate solutions were sought.

### *Recommendations for the future of Cultural Landscape Preservation in India*

The following recommendations represent key concepts, which in my opinion should inform cultural landscape preservation efforts in India. They are an attempt to adapt global approaches—as exemplified by NPS and UNESCO in the earlier part of the paper to the endemic Indian concepts described later.

- Voicing the distinctive Indian attitude towards past time, Nehru said that India is ‘like some ancient palimpsest’, much like the ‘collage of time’ discussed by Lynch, on which ‘layer upon layer of thought and revery had been inscribed’, all of which presently coexist to create the complex personality of India (Nehru 1946, 47). In such a culture that believes in a cyclic view of time it seems highly impracticable to use the existing concept of a ‘period(s) of significance’ sometime in the ‘ancient past’ for purposes of preservation. Trying to articulate significance

at any given time is like taking a photograph of a horse at full gallop; it is a representation of the moment rather than of the entire process (Keith 1993, 28).

Features considered to be historically significant change over time. Not only do figures and events gain fresh stature or fall into disrepute but entire aspects of the past become newly worth saving or ripe for discarding (Lowenthal 1981, 220).

This calls for periodic reassessments of ‘periods’ and ‘statements’ of significance to be incorporated into the cultural landscape preservation process. Such steps will also ensure that the more immediate past with which we are continuously building new ties and deriving new values is not lost.

- Importance of intangible forms of heritage (customs, rituals, folklore, techniques, etc.) in India, as opposed to only tangible, material objects (buildings, landscapes, etc) necessitates abolition of universal criteria of ‘integrity’ and ‘authenticity’. As long as the associational ties between our evolving past and the present are sustained, overdue importance must not be attached to the preservation of every surviving material vestige of the past. Assistance can be drawn in this endeavor from the Nara Document on Authenticity<sup>8</sup> that suggests evaluation of authenticity within the cultural context of the heritage landscape in question.
- To ensure that both the above-mentioned goals are met, it is imperative that organized preservation shifts beyond the realm of a small elite and engenders community participation (Engelhardt 2002, 50). Only such an approach based on

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<sup>8</sup> The Nara Document on Authenticity was drafted by the 45 participants at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held at Nara, Japan, from 1-6 November 1994, at the invitation of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Government of Japan) and the Nara Prefecture. The Agency organized the Nara Conference in cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS. It is available online at [http://www.international.icomos.org/naradoc\\_eng.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/naradoc_eng.htm)

active involvement of current users, has the potential of sustaining the cultural landscape over time and preventing its transformation into a ‘lifeless’, museum-like entity.

- Finally, any attempts at cultural landscape preservation in the context of a developing country like India, have to be closely tied with overall infrastructure development -- including but limited to promoting employment, sustaining traditional crafts and alleviating poverty.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Discussion of relevant site-specific examples*

In the past decades, various strategies have surfaced as potential solutions to the effective conservation of cultural landscapes in India. These have largely been born out of a growing dissatisfaction with (and the inability of) exclusively Western models in being able to conserve and manage such sites. While few have advanced beyond recommendations by expert committees and despite their existence as isolated, site-specific solutions, they can act as critical building blocks in the definition of a holistic, generic policy and methodology framework being attempted here by my study.

I will now proceed to a brief description of relevant approaches at three specific Indian sites, followed by a two examples from around the world (also within NPS & UNESCO),

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<sup>9</sup> The importance of this aspect can be seen in the on-going conservation of Jaisalmer Fort, Rajasthan, India, where it was realized that before any steps could be taken to restore the architectural fabric and monumental buildings in the Fort, it was necessary to tie such efforts with upgrading basic infrastructure facilities. This was done in the form of the ‘Streetscape Revitalization Project’ that focused on installing drains and lavatories in all streets and houses, cleaning residential facades etc. Such efforts were instrumental in winning local community support for the overall Fort Conservation Project.

which can provide pointers for a potential over-arching approach to cultural landscape preservation in India.

- *The Group of Monuments at Hampi*: Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1987, this site comprises of over 6000 acres of a rugged, rocky setting with numerous historic structures dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Reflecting existing trends in preservation philosophy during the 1980's, the site was inscribed exclusively under the 'cultural' criteria of UNESCO. However, in recent years, the spectacular natural setting that surrounds these buildings- including hilltops, caves, ponds, irrigated fields and water channels are all being recognized as part of a 'cultural landscape'. In addition, the continued human habitation of the site and the development pressures it entails is emerging as the biggest challenge that faces heritage management at Hampi. In the absence of any national policy, the site is managed jointly by the State government, with constant monitoring by UNESCO and an expert research group that carries out archaeological investigations and specialized conservation work on site. The problem lies firstly, in too many regulating bodies in the management process, with little coordination amongst each other, and secondly, the absence of a vehicle ensuring local community participation in it. To counter this problem it has been suggested by conservation professionals on various occasions, that a 'Hampi Heritage Zone Resource Center' must be set up that would move beyond current state, national and international laws to direct the overall planning and management of the site (Thakur 2001). At the heart of this recommendation, lies a

critical need to coordinate State-sponsored development programs with heritage conservation, and to prevent their functioning as disparate entities. Conceived as a local institution, this Center will ensure participatory management of the site and a grass-roots approach as opposed to a top-down one.

- *The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka*: The Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka are in the foothills of the Vindhyan Mountains on the southern edge of the central Indian plateau. The site was inscribed under the ‘mixed’ category of UNESCO in 2003 reflecting the rising awareness of cultural landscapes as a resource type<sup>10</sup>. Within massive sandstone outcrops, above comparatively dense forest, are five clusters of natural rock shelters, displaying paintings that appear to date from the Mesolithic Period right through to the historical period. The cultural traditions of the inhabitants of the twenty-one villages adjacent to the site bear a strong resemblance to those represented in the rock paintings. Particularly noted are affinities with the tradition of wall paintings on houses that seem to demonstrate a continuity of wall painting traditions with the images in the rock shelters – the most recent of which are probably a few hundred years old. Similar decorative elements are found on pots and other handcrafted items of everyday use. These people also still use the resources of the forest at certain times of year for hunting and for gathering edible produce – as illustrated in the cave paintings. However current nomination treats the core of the area with the ‘authentic’ rock art as

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<sup>10</sup> For more information see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/925/>

distinct from the surrounding villages, proposing in one instance to fence off the nominated area to stop excessive cattle grazing. The hunting and gathering practices of the people now living in the villages is undoubtedly still there as an authentic element of their traditions, but very much under threat due to such controls. The significance of the Bhimbetka cultural landscape is about the connection between the people who created the rock art and the way they sustained a living from the surrounding countryside over many millennia. If the authentic nature of the relationship between people and the forest is to be sustained, then people must still have access to the forest. To achieve this, a fundamental strategy is needed to limit the number of people using the forest so that it can continue to be used as a sustainable resource.

- *The Mumbai Experience:* In the burgeoning metropolis of Mumbai, a number of heritage precincts are privately owned and thus unprotected by the sole central government body – the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). To ensure urban conservation of such areas, a plan was proposed by conservation enthusiasts that suggested the vesting of regulatory powers in the City’s Municipal Corporation – a local government body that is primarily responsible for providing basic infrastructure facilities to the various city zones under its jurisdiction (Guzdar 2002). By tying heritage conservation with this local administrative and development unit, Mumbai started for the first time in India, a new framework that relied not on the federal but the city government for its effective operation. A

lynch pin of the new regulatory framework was an expert body, a specialist 'Urban Heritage Conservation Committee', to be constituted in the Municipal Corporation. The only shortcoming of the process in my opinion was that districts/ buildings worthy of conservation were arrived at by a system of 'listing' done by conservation professionals rather than the local population and user groups themselves.

- *The REAP methodology of NPS: REAP (Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures)* is a research strategy employed for cultural resource management for the first time by NPS to glean ethnographic information on local populations of western Native American communities having long-standing associations with certain parklands. Since then, it has been tried out at few other park sites as a methodology for community participation. The approach fuses traditional methods of archival documentation and physical mapping of a 'cultural landscape' with those drawn from the social sciences, such as behavioral maps, transect walks, and individual and group interviews of the local community. The merits of this process in gauging people-place interaction have been exhibited at the Independence National Historic Park and Ellis Island (Low 2003). While in my opinion REAP is an excellent methodological tool for community participation, its effectiveness can be greatly enhanced if a group from the local population itself, rather than external expert professionals can be entrusted the responsibility of carrying out the surveys and data collection. This approach has

been exhibited at least on one prior occasion at the Spanish Town Historic District in Jamaica where local youth (in this case high school students) were engaged to develop, administer and analyze a survey of approximately 100 residents. This will ensure that the local community does not become an object of study, rather initiates its own conservation and development through its youth.

- *Stewardship begins with people—certification & marketing of traditional products:* A recent initiative by the NPS has been the publication of an *Atlas of Places, People and Handmade Products (2007)*. The Atlas illustrates the many different ways national parks and other protected areas in the United States are beginning to work in partnership with local communities to promote and market products that strengthen community ties to cultural landscapes. Many cultural landscapes bear the imprint of historic land use practices that have ceased to be economically viable. Consequently, the key to the successful conservation of these landscapes lies not in recreating the past at these sites, but in building on that past and crafting an economically viable future for these places. Building upon this thought, NPS has begun the certification and marketing of local and regional specialty products, such as organic produce, artifacts etc. Not only does this ensure much needed participation of the local community in conservation but also lends economic feasibility to sustaining intangible forms of heritage.

*Proposed Methodology:*

Deriving from endemic Indian notions about cultural landscapes mentioned in the earlier part of the paper and a few real-life approaches described above, that are based in part on some of those concepts, I will now proceed to conceptualizing and proposing a potential methodological framework that can guide cultural landscape conservation in India. It is organized as a 7-step Action Plan, described below. These steps are in no way designed as distinct entities, but rather as overlapping and at time concurrent activities.

- Step 1: Introduce heritage conservation as one of the obligatory duties of urban and rural Municipal Corporations.

Municipal corporations are local bodies entrusted with the responsibility of providing basic infrastructure facilities such as drinking water, roads, schools and hospitals etc. to land under their jurisdiction. This is facilitated by a subdivision of a city or village into smaller parcels of land that can be effectively managed. I propose that in the Indian context, heritage conservation should be incorporated into other basic functions of the municipal corporations. This is preferred over an independent local conservation body to ensure that development and conservation go hand in hand right from the outset; however, it is proposed that an expert group of conservation professionals should be instituted by the municipal corporation to provide technical and advisory support.

- Step 2: Engendering a Stewardship Ethic

The first task of these local municipalities must be to encourage activities, such as hands-on workshops and public charrettes that develop the technique of envisioning among communities as a means to self-identify their needs and expectations of how heritage might contribute to development. Local schools and universities should play an important role in this process and processes such as REAP can assist in the endeavors.

- Step 3: Identification of pilot projects

This is done on the basis of the needs of the local participant community. An effort should be made in this step to ensure that conservation projects are not understood in the conventional sense as restoration or rehabilitation ones alone, but rather as intangible too, such promotion of local practices (dance, oral traditions etc.)

- Step 4: Impact assessment

Both positive and negative anticipated effects of the projects should now be evaluated before commencing any work on them. This would necessitate an extremely interdisciplinary approach to ensure that the interests of any sector or community are not compromised. For example, in case of the Bhimbetka site, possible conflicts between hunting practices of the native community should be weighed against sustainability of forest resources to arrive at a solution. This step should primarily be coordinated by the expert group in consultation with the local people.

- Step 5: Research into traditional practices, techniques etc.

At this stage, research and training is directed towards those traditional practices that will be utilized in the project(s). For example, if the project involves that traditional lime mortar will be employed for restoring and building new structures in a historic stone fort, then research at this stage will need to be done into how the lime was traditionally manufactured, whether cement technology has enhanced or deteriorated the process and if the technological know-how of the technique is readily available in the form of traditional masons, builders etc. Conversely, if the project involves revival of an old dance form that forms the cultural identity of a community, research at this stage will be directed into identifying how many people still survive with the traditional knowledge and what steps are needed to reinterpret it in the present scenario.

- Step 6: Making a financial plan

This stage will translate community aspirations and research results into an economically feasible financial plan to ensure that the projects can be carried out with self-generated funds and minimum reliance on government sources. This may involve exploring the role of tourism, marketability of traditional products, etc. Such an approach is extremely important in the context of developing countries with limited financial resources. Public-private partnerships can also be explored as potential fund-raisers in this process.

- Step 7: Linking local communities or zones by higher levels of administration

In the context of India, I would propose that primary responsibility for administering cultural landscape preservation should be entrusted with local governments as opposed to

state and federal ones, whose role should be to provide an enabling administrative rather than legislative or financial framework for conservation. The reasons for this are multi-fold—firstly, keeping in mind the extreme plurality and diversity within Indian states and communities, generic laws at national level will be ineffective and financial obligation by the federal government will make it harder for local communities to compete for and achieve funding.

The methodology described above is not intended to be perceived as a rigid doctrine rather a generic and conceptual framework which can, not only accommodate individual cases, but rather be adjusted by them to better suit the peculiarities of each site. Most importantly, the conceptual basis of the approach is to make cultural landscape preservation in India a grassroots movement as opposed to one that is centrally administered and managed. The second cornerstone of the approach is an attempt to associate it with the agencies that take care of the infrastructure development needs of particular areas, in this case being the municipal corporations. This will ensure that development and heritage conservation go hand in hand right from the outset of any project, besides ensuring that conservation is able to adequately serve objectives of social and economic development and vice versa.

The idea of this research was born out of my introduction to the cultural landscape preservation movement in the US and a realization of the potential that it held for sites around the world. This led to an exploration of the UNESCO approach to cultural landscape preservation, and finally an attempt to relate these two approaches to the cause

of cultural landscape preservation in India. It was imperative to adequately situate these concepts within the cultural and natural context of India, before arriving at a set of recommendations for initiating cultural landscape preservation in India, as proposed in the concluding section above.

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## APPENDIX I

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

### Selection criteria:

- i. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- ii. to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- iii. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- iv. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- v. to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

- vi. to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.  
(The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- vii. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- viii. to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- ix. to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- x. to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.