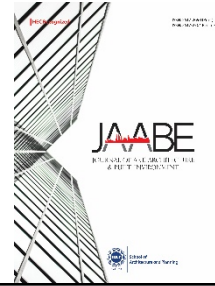




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Urban Conservation: A Transformational Vision for an Abandoned Hindu Temple in Lahore

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Abstract

Lahore is an ancient city known for its diverse culture, art, and history, which is nearly 2,000 years old. Before the partition of the subcontinent, Lahore served as a home not only to Muslims but also to Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Hindus, and other religions. There were many places of worship built for different religions at that time. After partition, the majority of the Hindus migrated to India and left behind their abandoned worship places, that is, temples. These temples were occupied by the Muslims who migrated to Lahore from India. With the passage of time, they have declined significantly and need proper measures for their preservation. These abandoned temples are one of the significant remains of Lahore's rich cultural background. Therefore, it is imperative to conserve these structures. One of the historically significant temples is the Old Basuli Hanuman temple. This study mainly focuses on the conservation of this prestigious temple, located on Aibak Road adjacent to the new Anarkali Bazar. It attempts to identify the barriers to the conservation of Hindu temples and formulates strategies that can be used for their conservation. These may include the restoration or reconstruction of the temple back to its original identity or changing it to a completely different economically and aesthetically beneficial structure. Furthermore, this study aims to pave the way for the preservation not only of the Old Basuli Hanuman temple but also of other neglected heritage sites.

Keywords: conservation planning, heritage preservation, historic preservation urban conservation, urban redevelopment

Introduction

Preserving the tangible cultural heritage is deeply rooted in the materials used and how the people care for them. Even as a better understanding is gained of the different aspects of conservation through advanced studies, the focus should remain on the physical preservation of archaeological

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artefacts and monuments, alongside the intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

According to locals, the Basuli Hanuman temple was constructed in the late 19th century, around 1880 A.D. It was one of the important Hindu temples in Old Lahore (Figure 1). However, after the partition in 1947, this temple was abandoned as most of the Hindus living in Lahore migrated to India. Later, this temple was used to provide accommodation to the migrants who reached Lahore during partition. Since then, this temple has been used for residential purposes by Muslim families. These families claim to have the ownership of the land and yet they pay the monthly rent to Auqaf (a department that generates maximum revenue from Waqf properties, contracts, rents, leases, etc.). Unfortunately, the structure was badly damaged by Muslim extremist mobs in 1992, as a reaction to the demolition of the Babri Mosque in India.

Figure 1
Basuli Hanuman Temple



Figure 2
Engraved designs damaged by Muslims



The structure and infrastructure of the temple have declined over the decades and it is losing its cultural and historic character. The temple is obscured by tall buildings and busy shops on Aibak Road. It is located on the main street of the new Anarkali Bazar, yet its entrance is not prominent as it is hidden behind the shops and stalls. Not only the infrastructure but the homogeneity in the character of the temple has been lost (Figure 2).

These problems must be taken into consideration in order to take further actions to conserve the temple building.

The conservation of an ancient structure mainly involves preserving the significance of its history, culture, and architecture for future generations. Hence, the current study aims to document the old Basuli Hanuman temple's historic importance along with the need for its conservation. This is achieved by examining the existing physical conditions of the abandoned temple, including the existing damage and structural weaknesses. Also, barriers to the preservation of such structures are identified including resistance from the community and lack of political interest. Moreover, the potential for the adaptive reuse of the temple is explored, such as converting it into a museum, library, heritage centre, or tourist point.

The temple was surveyed and in-depth interviews were conducted from the households residing there and from nearby shopkeepers. The people residing in the temple were observed to be living in poor conditions, as the overall structure, which includes the walls, roof, drainage system, and other relatable things, is damaged. The reason is that it has existed for many years without any maintenance and repair. The people living inside the temple, at the time of this study, mainly belonged to the lower middle class. While conserving the area, it should be ensured that the people living in such places are relocated and are provided with goodwill costs to help them sustain themselves socially. Moreover, the conservation strategies should be lined up with the social and ethical values of the neighboring communities to gain social acceptability.

Literature Review

Historic Conservation and Sustainability Concepts

The general definition of conservation is the careful preservation, protection, and planned management of a natural reserve to prevent its abandonment, manipulation, or demolition. Historic conservation includes outspreading ancient sites and ethics into the contemporary world.

The notion of 'sustainability' was first presented only 35 years ago. For the first time, it was mentioned in 1987 in the famous Brundtland Report (also entitled 'Our Common Future'). The report states that sustainability aims to fulfil the needs of the existing generations without compromising the needs of forthcoming generations, thus ensuring a balance between

financial growth, ecological care, and societal well-being (Elnokaly & Elseragy, 2013).

Historic conservation has since become an integral part of the sustainability agenda. Although conservation and sustainability differ in their origins, they share common grounds in cultural heritage preservation. Thus, conservation contributes to a sustainable environment. In addition to saving existing resources and the historic character, historic preservation imparts environmental, cultural, and economic benefits (Badawy & Shehata, 2018).

Historic Conservation and Environmental Sustainability

The three Rs ‘reducing-reusing-recycling’ comprise the three pillars of sustainability. Re-building and preserving ancient buildings reduces concrete and resource utilization, generates lesser waste, and requires less manpower than demolishing and constructing new structures. This complies with the notion of sustainable development as ‘the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Chohan & Ki, 2005). As the concept of sustainable development progressed, it shifted its focus more towards economic development, social development, and environmental protection for future generations (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Key Factors of Sustainable Historic Conservation. Source: Historical Conservation Projects of Saudi Arabia



Historic Conservation and Social Sustainability

Social sustainability can be defined as a life-enhancing condition within communities and also as a process within communities that results in that condition (Setha, 2003).

According to Biswas (1996), the new development surpasses the existing scenario. For a developing country, preserving the past may seem like an unfamiliar goal. Historic centres are often former colonial centres and contain many architectural and spatial reference points that are iconic to that period's dominance. However, the reorganization of the past to fit the current agendas is desired by both developing and developed countries. In Singapore, conservation is closely associated with the goal of nation-building. While, in Russia, the pace of conservation has accelerated as it is regarded as a means of eliminating previous models of urban planning (Yeoh & Huang, 1996).

The conflict of interest between maintaining the old edifice and the requirement for new development has created a dilemma (Albers, 1989). The revival of history has been accompanied by growing notions of social delicacy and ecological reflection (Böhme, 1998). As a result, conservation efforts focus primarily on preserving the physical and functional integrity of the historic urban fabric (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998; Stovel, 1998), generalization of tangible and intangible heritage, place of spirit, value-based management, and more. Several such efforts are at the centre of contemporary conservation thinking (UNESCO, 2003).

However, there are still conceptual and practical problems inherent in these concepts. For example, how to clearly represent heritage values in the current practice – using value categories such as historical, scientific, archaeological, and aesthetic significance. Emphasis on the values is determined by experts and scholars, not by the functional status of a neighbourhood in historic urban areas (Silva, 2006). As Larkham (1996) points out, effective theoretical methods to support the conservation and management of historic urban landscapes are essential. The current study aims to present a conceptual framework grounded in the concept of place visualization.

This definition of heritage conservation is compatible with the idea of tangible and intangible heritage that permeates conventional thinking about preservation. While the term tangible generally refers to building heritage, the term intangible refers to the practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills recognized by the community as part of the cultural heritage of their chemistry. It is often expressed in the form of the word of mouth, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festivals, knowledge and practices

related to the nature and the universe, traditional handicrafts, and others (UNESCO, 2003).

Any incompatibility between the image of the conserved environment and that of the professionals leads to a tense situation that can upset the best intentions of the conservation program (Silva, 2001). As argued by Strauss (1961), it is not possible to fully understand urban social behavior in cities or the processes of development and urbanization without comprehending at the same time what people think about their cities.

Another important issue related to the above is the need to address the inevitable pressures on growth, development, and modernization in historic cities (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1998). The risk aspects related to the image potential should be given full consideration, along with other typical risks considered in the management of urban cultural heritage (Stovel, 1998). In third world cities (Yeoh & Huang, 1996), during the post-war development in Southeast Asia, modernization has remained essentially synonymous with urbanization, revitalization, and redevelopment of traditional cities. Cities faced change and transformation quickly, often brought on with great effort (Biswas, 1996).

This is consistent with the assertion presented elsewhere that the conservation of urban heritage is not simply a matter of managing economic and cultural resources but is closely linked to the wider national policy framework (Yeoh & Huang, 1996). Reasonable reflections based on these divergent interests and/or thoughts must be considered in order to reach a compromise. This is politically possible thanks to the benevolence of all parties and stakeholders involved. According to Danisworo and Martokusumo (2002), though it gains advantageous public support, heritage preservation and conservation must be done through making honest, transparent, and well-oriented policy guidelines. Furthermore, it must not be experimented with and accomplished using a trial-and-error approach.

The revival of history has been accompanied by growing notions of social acuteness and ecological reflection (Böhme, 1998). Modernization through density maximization (FAR or floor area ratio) and tabula rasa redevelopment projects have always been among the strategies adopted. The values and way of life of the contemporary society are both universal and pluralistic, anarchic and innovative, individualistic and benevolent.

Methodology

Firstly, the site of the Old Basuli Hanuman temple was visited. It is located on the main street of the new Anarkali Bazar, Lahore, adjacent to the tomb of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak. During the reconnaissance survey, the site was observed thoroughly. Hence, the walls of the temple, doors, monuments, sewage condition, road conditions, and neighborhood building conditions were observed and pictures were taken. Moreover, an informal interview of people who were living inside the temple was conducted to know about their living conditions, income, density per house, and basic facilities.

Keeping in view the important findings of the reconnaissance survey, a comprehensive questionnaire was designed to collect the primary data for analysis. Then, an on-site survey was conducted to collect the responses of the occupants living inside and near the temple. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were carried out with all the households residing within the premises of the temple. Additionally, 50 in-depth interviews were voluntarily conducted with local business owners situated along the main street of the Anarkali Bazar. These businesses are located in close proximity to the Old Basuli Hanuman temple. Furthermore, secondary data was also collected from the Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department (Muslim) and the Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department (Hindu). The secondary data included detailed information about the temple and its history.

Results

Table 1 gives the major outcomes of the interviews conducted with the occupants of the individual apartments created within the temple's premises.

Table 1

Major Outcomes of the Interview with the Occupants

Questions	Responses
No. of individual apartments in the temple	12
No. of apartments occupied at the time of the survey	6
Income groups	Lower Middle Class
Claim over land ownership	Yes

Questions	Responses
Rent paid by the occupants to the Department of Auqaf Utility Services	Rs 2000/- Available in good condition
Do they want to be relocated?	Partially disagreed
Insecurities related to relocation	proximity to the job/education. no land ownership; and change of social circles
Would they consider to be relocated if they are also given land ownership?	Partially agreed
Do tourists visit this temple?	Strongly agreed
Should this temple be conserved?	Strongly agreed

Table 2 provides the major outcomes of the interviews with the locals. These include their insights about the problems faced by the surrounding areas and their opinions about the future possibilities of the temple's conservation.

Table 2
Major Outcomes of the Interviews with Locals

Questions	Responses
Major problems of the temple's surrounding	Congestions; Overhanging wires; Poor Drainage; On-street parking; and Encroachments
Should the temple be restored to its previous state (Hindu worship place)?	Strongly disagreed
Why should it not be restored?	Lack of acceptability due to religious beliefs
Should it be conserved for adaptive uses for tourist attractions?	Strongly agreed

Questions	Responses
What alternate uses can be adapted for the temple?	Heritage Site; Cultural Center; Museums; Art Galleries; and Libraries
Is it important to conserve such sites that have historical, cultural, and architectural significance?	Strongly agreed

Based on the findings, the temple has a total of twelve separate apartments, six of which are presently occupied. These apartments are primarily rented by the members of the lower middle class. In particular, the Department of Auqaf receives a monthly rent payment from the tenants and a confirmed claim to the land has been made. The utility facilities within the temple premises are in good working order. Interestingly, there was some disagreement among the tenants when asked about the possibility of moving. Concerns about the lack of land ownership, social circle shift, and accessibility to work and school were cited as reasons for the reluctance to relocate. However, as demonstrated by the respondent's partial agreement, it was found that the willingness to accept moving grew when the prospect of being granted land ownership was raised. Furthermore, the community was overwhelmingly in favor of tourists visiting the temple and agreed that the temple's grounds should be preserved.

The results revealed the analysis of the structural aspects of the temple. During site visits, it was observed that the temple has been losing its structural strength over time. The overall architectural design of the temple dated back to the 19th century. The temple was partially damaged due to the 1992 riots. The entrance gate of the temple is completely hidden behind the shops constructed in front of it which makes it difficult for the tourists to find the entrance spot. The temple's structure can be strengthened with minor structural improvements. It can be conserved as a newly built tourist spot for the people which will create new economic opportunities for the locals. This can be achieved easily with the involvement of community participation, training of local professionals, local institution-building, and public awareness campaigns. However, the process of conservation should mainly focus on the improvement of the overall poor conditions of the temple and how it should be reused to keep its identity and cultural essence alive (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Interior View of the Temple



Figure 5

Entrance of the Temple



Without a local guide, it is very difficult to reach the location of this temple as the main entrance is hidden behind the shops of the adjacent shoe market (Figure 5).

A small stairway-type entrance takes one to the edifice of a two-story high temple. The temple is in bad shape and may collapse anytime. The floor level of the temple is four to five feet above the street level. In other words, it was constructed on a high platform. On the three sides of the temple, one can still see rooms constructed with the traditional Lahori brick.

Building Components

The walls of the temple are in a very poor condition as there is no maintenance. The paint on the walls has started to tear off. Poor conditions of the wall have ruined the visual aspects of the internal structures of the temple which is now used as a residential place.

The doors and the windows have a unique architectural design. The design of the windows follows the historical trend of its era. At present, these windows and doors are used by the occupants living there as a way to communicate with the people on public streets and with the other occupants of the temple. The restoration work on temple was executed before partition (1947) is one of the reasons for their comparatively good condition than older parts (Figure 6).

Figure 6
*Traditional Style
Brickwork in the
Building*



Figure 7
*Traditional
Woodwork*



Figure 8
Staircase



Interior of the Temple

Above the stairs lies a vast courtyard leading to numerous floors used for housing families. Artificial partitions, curtains, and gates have been added by the occupants to solidify divisions among houses. The wooden balcony (Jharokha) with its fine woodwork is still in a good state. The stairs lead up to the courtyard, in the centre of which is located the fine temple with plaster mouldings (Figures 7, 8).

Residential Apartments

The complex of multiple rooms and floors currently serves as residence for multiple families. The total living space in the building is divided among 12 households. Currently, only 6 families are living there. Even the stairs are not in a good condition (Figures 8-12). The courtyard of the temple once served as the center of the structure where Hindus used to perform their religious rituals. Moreover, the tiles of the courtyard have not been altered. Structural damage can be observed in the walls. However, it remains minor as the infrastructure is still intact and resilient, which is why the building is currently being utilized by the occupants. Surprisingly, people have lived within this temple for a very long time, yet they have not altered its

structure. Rather, they just inhabit it as if it is a residential building and not a temple. It provides the evidence that the infrastructure is inevitably strong and smooth.

Figure 9

Building Infrastructure of the Temple



Figure 10

Traditional Style Doors of the Temple.



The design of the sculptures portrays the historic architecture of the time when the temple was constructed. It vividly provides the evidence of the creativity of the masons of that time and how they created such mesmerizing and stylish designs using concrete, which is not very easy to handle. It also depicts that the people of that time were keenly interested in artwork, as can be seen throughout the infrastructure of the temple. By preserving these structures, the building of the temple can be renewed as a tourist attraction spot. It is still visited by tourists on a yearly basis. However, after conservation, it can be properly utilized for tourist attraction purposes (Figure 11,12).

Figure 11

Household in the Courtyard of the Temple

**Figure 12**

Courtyard Consisting of Multiple Households.



The sanitary conditions of the overall building are extremely poor. There is no maintenance of drainage pipes due to which the area near the overflowed drainage contains algae.

The building of the temple is of historic importance and it must be maintained by the relevant authorities. The occupants claim that they received this property in return for the property they left in India during migration. Even if the property was allocated to them, the historic importance of the building must be restored, so that upcoming generations could know the original taste of the architecture of their predecessors. It is also a known fact that the occupants pay rent to the Evacuee Trust. So, if the occupants do not maintain the building, the trust must take some action in this regard to preserve the building of the temple.

Modern building techniques may serve as the basis for the regeneration and redevelopment of such buildings. These days, mix-use of buildings is preferred to minimize area coverage and optimize the land use. To conduct this type of conservation project, more research work is needed. Hence, the

current research was carried out by collecting the primary and secondary data about the project. There are up-to-date methods to do this. After data collection, analysis must be carried out.

When it comes to the conservation and preservation of historic buildings and monuments, the most important thing to be considered is the original state of that building. Unfortunately, the people residing in the temple building as well as the people visiting it as tourists or others have damaged its walls by writing worthless stuff on them. The action of the people tells a lot about the society and to what extent it is civilized.

Discussion

Restoration to the Previous Use

In this conservation strategy, the declined heritage site is rebuilt to its original state in order to be used again for the purpose it was originally intended for. However, this strategy is not suitable in case of an abandoned Hindu temple in Lahore because of the fact that there are very few no Hindus residing in Lahore. It can also adversely affect the religious sentiments of the Muslims.

Restoration to an Adaptive Use

In this conservation strategy, the declined heritage site is revitalized through minor structural changes and new uses are introduced to replace the original uses that can't be practiced anymore. Still, some space should be provided for the original uses of the building to achieve the sense of place and culture preservation. This strategy is the most suitable for the conservation of an abandoned Hindu temple in Lahore, as it would generate less resistance from the Muslim population of Lahore.

The temple has experienced a gradual decline in structural integrity over time. Notably, the entrance gate is obscured by the shops constructed in front of the temple building, posing a challenge for the tourists to locate the entrance. The temple walls exhibit severe deterioration due to a lack of maintenance. The building, repurposed for residential use by low-income households, also suffers from deplorable sanitary conditions. The neglect of drainage pipes has led to algae accumulation in the vicinity of overflowing drains. The respondents highlighted significant issues in the temple's surroundings including congestion, overhanging wires, inadequate drainage, on-street parking, and encroachments. A consensus among most

respondents underscores the urgent need for the proper conservation of the temple. There is a strong collective sentiment that the temple should be preserved meticulously, with a focus on providing improved access for tourists to enhance their visiting experience.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of the conservation of historical, cultural, and architectural sites, especially those sites which cannot be restored to their previous uses, as it may not be culturally acceptable by the society. The case in example is the Old Basuli Hanuman temple. The study documented the historical background of the temple and described its declining state in detail. It also showed the incompetence of the concerned authorities. Through interviews with the locals and the occupants, the opportunities for alternative uses of the abandoned temple were identified. The study also posed the question that why the temple can't be restored to its previous use? It also explained the concerns of the occupants about their relocation and their conditions for vacating the temple.

Implications

This study emphasizes the conservation of not only the Old Basuli Hanuman temple but other abandoned heritage sites as well. Further studies on the conservation of heritage sites can provide a comprehensive base to formulate the methodologies and policies for effective cultural preservation.

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