

RESTORING FAITH AND FORM: RECONSTRUCTION OF BUNGA-DYŌ (RĀTŌ MATSYENDRANĀTHA) TEMPLE AT BUNGAMATI

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Abstract

The paper analyses the community participation in the reconstruction of the Rātō Matsyendranātha temple at Buṅgamati. It was severely damaged in the 2015 Gorkha earthquake and its reconstruction completed after ten years, with a story of resilience, faith and cultural continuity. The reconstruction process changed from contracted construction to a community-led process. This paper further intends to study the process of community building in the core belief system integrated with socio-cultural practices, the challenges of involving stakeholders, local community, national and foreign agencies, which in due course delayed the reconstruction process. The paper claims that the initially ignored local community's active participation proved vital in restoring and conserving the temple and the site, alongside keeping the faith with the temple intact. The Rātō Matsyendranātha temple reconstruction process that spanned for almost a decade largely saw local community as the primary custodians who ensured 'authentic' traditional restoration contesting with the modern-day engineering practice. This study further delves into how reconstruction process can delay due to multifarious challenges involving stakeholders along with local and trans-local agencies. Thus, focusing on the study of community building integrated with socio-cultural practices, also the role of cultural devotion that shaped the successful reconstruction in form and function, giving valuable insight into Nepal's heritage reconstruction. The paper concludes by reiterating that the restoration of heritage structures is a multiple stakeholder engagement approach where the immediate community's involvement is crucial in understanding the faith and form of the structure. Hence, it becomes essential to identify the areas of expertise where the local community can equally participate with the experts in the field to ensure the proper reconstruction process, in which the ownership and sense of belonging could be an integral part of such reconstruction process.

Keywords: Rātō Matsyendranātha, Buṅgamati, Earthquake, Community, Reconstruction

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes the reconstruction process of the Buṅga-dyō (Rātō Matsyendranātha) temple of Buṅgamati after it was completely damaged in the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, after a tumultuous ordeal spanning over a decade. Buṅga-dyō or Karunāmaya in Nepal Bhasa or Rātō Matsyendranātha in Khas Nepali is the deity who holds immense cultural and religious significance in the Kathmandu Valley. The deity is equally revered by both Hindus and Buddhists, as Rato Matsyendranātha, embodies

a profound symbolism for the followers of both faiths. The deity is worshipped as the god of rain, compassion, and protection. Buṅga-dyō is served by a unique dual-temple system, with primary summer residence in Patan and secondary winter residence in Bungamati, respectively.

The decade from 2015-2025, Nepal's reconstruction and revitalization efforts focused on both restoration of common household and cultural heritages. This endeavor was significantly supported by national and international agencies. But for the most part concerning the restoration of cultural heritages and structures international support from various countries decided to contribute both technically and financially. The donor countries particularly focused within the Kathmandu valley's UNESCO world heritage sites and other sites of prime importance. In such context the Sri

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Lankan Government through its Ministry of Buddha Sasana and Religious Affairs extended its support for two Buddhist sites, Anandakuti Mavihar in Swayambhu and Buṅga-dyō temple in Buṅgamati (Bajracharya, 2020). The Department of Archaeology (DoA) Nepal undertook the management, technical oversight and site supervision role to ensure the compliance with national regulations and conservation principles along with the Sri Lankan government for the reconstruction works.

The Buṅga-dyō (Rato Matsyendranātha) temple completely collapsed in the 2015 Gorkha earthquake and Sri Lankan government pledged the aid of Nrs. 47,445,016.29 (with VAT), later increased to Nrs. 52,185,215.44. The works for reconstruction commenced in July 2016, after the contract for construction was awarded to a joint venture of contractors under the public procurement policy of the Government of Nepal, which favors the lowest financial bidder. While the system of lowest financial bidder shows fiscal prudence, the project faced significant and prolonged obstacles in the later phases of construction bringing out major disputes in the use of traditional materials and construction techniques brought forward by the local community stakeholders (Bajracharya, 2020).

The historical evidence regarding the original construction is not ascertained, but according to Gutschow (2011), the temple once could have been a three storied with jhingati roof and had collapsed in the 1833 earthquake that hit the Kathmandu valley. He suggested that the 17th century inner sanctum and its four original doors were preserved but the outer arcade was reconstructed using new large stone pillars and a heavy timber frame, reshaping the original tired temple to a Shikhara style. According to Locke (1980), the temple suffered minor damages in the 1934 earthquake. But the major cause for the collapse in the 2015 Gorkha earthquake was the loss of structural integrity of the timber structure over the years of neglect and lack of maintenance (Michaels et al., 2025).

The ward chief of ward no 22, in which the temple of Rātō Matsyendranātha is located, Sagar Tuladhar shared, “Buṅga-dyō degah was one of the first two heritage projects that got the government’s priority of reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake. Even though the budget was secured, it was the procurement process of awarding the lowest bidder combined with lack of technical expertise and proper documentation that resulted in the poor and delayed reconstruction in the beginning” [S.Tuladhar, Personal Communication, 2025]. This led to the halt of construction works in 2018 after the local communities strongly advocated for the strict adherence to the use of historic craftsmanship and indigenous materials in contrast to the use of modern materials such as smaller mā-apah, lime mortar, steel brackets, etc being used indiscriminately

at the site. One such case Kaji Pyakurel, the former museum chief of monuments at the palace office in Patan and the then in-charge of Bungamati restoration project is quoted here, “The foundation of the main temple was made of mud mortar. After the earthquake, we dug seven feet deep and laid brick mat formation with three feet brick wall using lime mortar instead of mud mortar in the foundation to strengthen the base. Likewise, there have been changes in the foundation and the wooden columns of the main temple” (Shrestha, 2018).

The local communities believed that the modern substitutions would compromise the authenticity and value of the structure. In most of the reconstruction cases seen during and prior to the earthquake, the challenge to determine the approach of conservation and restoration seemed lacking, as the local protests kept on rising citing loss of values and discontinuity in the craftsmanship during each restoration works. The secretary of Bungamati Reconstruction and Development Council resonated with the same voice as the locals stating that, “The reconstruction of the main temple in the square is at a halt because the Department of Archaeology and the locals disagree on the construction materials. The key demand of the locals is the use of traditional materials, such as Maa Appa instead of regular bricks” (Shrestha, 2018).

The DoA under the flagship of National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) immediately began work in 2016. The local community showed disagreement with the construction materials of the foundation and had demanded the rework of the foundational works. With the lack of progress and ongoing disputes, the Sri Lankan government withdrew its support in 2019, citing delays from the contractor’s performance and bureaucratic delays from the Nepali side. In 2020, a nine-member community led Rato Machhindranath Temple Reconstruction Consumer Committee (RMTRCC) was formed and was handed over the responsibility for reconstruction by the Department of Archaeology (DoA).

The reconstruction phase immediately following a disaster, particularly concerning the culturally and religiously significant heritage structures, invariably exposes a fundamental tension. The tension is caused by the urgent need for timely completion of the project, faithfully preserving the original architecture and cultural character, always respecting the community’s role in the custodianship and management (Maharjan and Barata, 2017). This paper delves into this complex process, specifically focusing on how the restoration effort can serve as a catalyst for community building. This is achieved through the integration of socio-cultural practices—such as traditional craftsmanship, ritual observance, and participatory decision-making—directly into the reconstruction methodology. Furthermore,

the analysis will meticulously dissect the multifaceted challenges that inevitably arise from the involvement of numerous and often divergent stakeholders. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, government agencies, international donor organizations, archaeological experts, religious bodies, and, most critically, the local community itself. Understanding and mediating the conflicting interests and priorities among these groups is central to developing sustainable and culturally appropriate heritage reconstruction projects.

2. Methodology

The study undertook a qualitative approach as it focused mostly on community participation and community engagement during the reconstruction of heritage and other monumental structures. The research is intended in studying the identification and role of community with assurance of participation as a primary stakeholder and sustainable custodians for the future. The argument presented is that the heritage often authenticated and validated by the community needs local engagement and participation who have deeper understanding of traditional methods which could mediate the clash between external bureaucracy and standardized approaches without local intention. The paper tries to argue that the external, government, or contractor-led efforts in heritage reconstruction often fail to protect cultural heritage due to bureaucratic issues and a lack of respect for traditional building methods and local expertise.

The research was carried out in Bungamati, Lalitpur Metropolitan City-Ward 22, Bagmati province, one of the primary temples of Rātō Matsyendranātha. The local residents around the Macchindrabahah and Bungamati felt largely kept out of the reconstruction process and argued that the local stakeholders have deeper understanding of the structure and heritage building practices than the contract workers, which led to the community's protest time and again for poor workmanship.

For primary data collection, the respondents were from Bungamati and experts in the field. In-depth interviews were conducted with key respondents from ward no. 22 offices, the ward chair. Convenience and purposive sampling for local interviews was done with residents and elderly people who have been both tangibly and intangibly associated via communal Guthis. Secondary data was taken from the news sources and various online news portals, social media and data repository of Nepal Heritage Documentation Project (DANAM) website.

The study embarked on four research focuses. The first focus was to see the evolving concepts of community, heritage and heritage community, its presence for heritage management. This is mostly seen through social and community engagements and communal practices. The

second focus was on the resources and funds to maintain the structure and daily functioning of the heritage involved. The challenges in allocation of national and foreign aid versus mobilization of the resources at hand of the Guthi involved were studied. The third focus is the use of materials and traditional building systems validated by the community rather than the tired top-down approach from the government stakeholders and donor agencies. And the fourth focus was of local ownership and capacity building pertaining to intergenerational knowledge transfer.

The data from the interviews and from various other news sources, social media and digital platforms were thoroughly analyzed to triangulate the claims made in this paper. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were observed. Anonymity was maintained in instances where respondents requested that the names of the individuals involved not be disclosed. Verbal consent for the interviews was obtained during the recording sessions.

3. Result

The thematic framework for examining heritage reconstruction in Nepal with the case of Rātō Matsyendranātha can be expanded into social-cultural areas as seen from the site visits and interview data. Affinity and engagement towards heritage structure through communal practices comes out from everyday activities, especially the ritualistic and cultural embeddedness. The daily, annual and periodical activities are fundamental in maintaining the community's calendar, identity and worldview. One of such practices of extended community mobilization and engagement was the annual alms collection; Laki in Kathmandu and Patan or Kiga Ki in Bhaktapur. Upon interview with Ramlal Maharjan, one of the members of the Parjamo Guthi, the Laki collection had hit hard as the cities suffer from gentrification resulting in new settlers not knowing about the tradition. The tradition is extended to other older settlements around the Kathmandu valley. Maharjan shares, We have stopped going to ask for Laki as most city dwellers have either moved out or live on the higher upper floor, who are reluctant to come down to give alms. Some do tie the alms in a polyethylene bag and hurl it down. In many instances Laki is confused with Gaki (the tradition of alms giving to beggars during eclipses) and we feel humiliated because of the confusion [R. Maharjan, Personal Communication 2025].

For social cohesion, the heritage structure - here the temple of Rātō Matsyendranātha acts as focal point for social gatherings, maintenance of inter community relationships, when broken could directly impact the social fabric and collective identity of the traditional custodian communities. Another extended community engagement surfaces as a piety towards the deity. Shakya shared an

incident when as a president of the RMTRCC he refused for an in-person cash donation, the lady who came from Banepa placed Ten Thousand rupees on his table and left [A. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025]. This shows the faith that connects the deity with other places of the Kathmandu valley beyond Bungamati.

The dynamics of community and heritage can often be seen in the legacies of social life, where the cultural memory and identity actively shapes and retains it. The reconstruction of monuments is intrinsically linked with the community's social and spiritual wellbeing, brought out by the desire to reinstate the divine dwelling and re-establish the foci of shared heritage. In one of the interviews, Dharma Dutta Bajracharya, a local artisan from Bungamati, was asked, why they felt it necessary to rebuild the temple immediately rather than build their own homes first, when Bungamati was also hard hit by the earthquake losing many lives and homes, to which he replied, "our houses are personal assets which can be built in our own accordance, but the temple is social. Our religious faith drives us. Our personal things will be forgotten shortly, but the temple will remain for hundreds of years." [D. D. Bajracharya, Personal Communication, 2025]

During the rescue operations in between earthquakes and the reconstruction period, the temple saw many volunteers. The resources offered by these volunteers varied from funds, physical labor, skills, crafts, metal motifs, arts and other decorative pieces, in-kind donations and most of the time lunches for the workers. The social media often played a key role in organizing and mobilizing the volunteers, which were mostly done by other organizations to extend their solidarity towards the RMTRCC.

The data also reveals a theme of customary practices centered on land revenues that could serve to supplement internal state funding, contrasting with foreign aid for heritage reconstruction. Here in Nepal there is a prominent Guthi system, indigenous socio-religious institution with the traditional model of communal finance. Many having financial resources earned by the endowed land by wealthy patrons (Maharjan, 2020). Bajracharya questions, "we have heard that the deity Rātō Matsyendranātha has several lands endowed to his name, instead of waiting for the funding, why could we not use the fund generated by those endowed lands?" [D. D. Bajracharya, Personal Communication, 2025]. The traditionally controlled resources and mobilization stood out during most of the interviews, where the respondents remember many communal Guthi organisations in operations until a few years before the earthquake, which remain defunct till now, which have stopped operating citing fund depletion and resources crunch. The crucial debate of whether to utilize foreign aid and their implications are often reflected through conflict over management and control, citing

local presence and custodianship. Another discontinued communal practice unveiled during the interview was the Sakhwa Payegu Guthi. The four toles situated in each direction of Buṅga-dyō temple were responsible to carry out the limewashing of the temple's respective side. The toles namely: Satu Tole, Kota tole, Yarja tole and Yalgwo tole. They were responsible for building the scaffold and carrying out the lime washing process every year on the day of Chaitra Astami (following the lunar calendar). According to the respondents, this tri-yearly Guthi operated to paint the four sides of the Rātō Matsyendranātha temple with lime (Sakhwa) and has been out of practice for more than fifteen years now (H. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025). Shakya informed that the fifty five ropanies of land across the Nakhu bridge was the source of income for these Guthis. But now the land has been privatized and sold into parcels leaving the cultural customs and traditions without financial support [A. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025].

The prominence of traditionally controlled resources and their effective mobilization was a recurring theme in post-earthquake interviews. Respondents often recalled numerous communal Guthi organizations that were fully operational until or shortly before the 2015 earthquake for Buṅga-dyō (Rātō Matsyendranātha). Alarmingly, many of these organizations are now defunct, having ceased operations and citing critical fund depletion and a comprehensive resource crunch. The shift away from these local funding sources often intersects with the broader debate concerning foreign aid, particularly its implications for local management and control. Conflicts frequently arise over the custodianship of heritage, where local presence and traditional rights are asserted as a counterpoint to the conditions and management imposed by international donors.

The local craftsmanship had to take over the state endorsed standardized practice, as the local community felt that the workmanship was not at par with regular norms. Chandan Shakya, a local resident, reported that controversy regarding the workmanship flared up when the workers began to lay stones for the foundation, but the height and workmanship was off. He said, "the locals couldn't bear to see it, [...] so they laid the foundation themselves, to show them how it's done." (Brush, 2019). But in another interview, the respondent Shakya when asked if he personally did not intervene when he witnessed the construction work being shoddy, to which he replied, "Who would step up? If we go ahead they would scowl and say, what do you know? Who are you? So we did not voice our thoughts" [H. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025]. This also shows two different perspectives from the same locals who either acted to change or chose to remain silent.

The indigenous mindset is best understood as the

cumulative result of knowledge systems that have been organically built upon generations of shared experiences within a specific ecosystem and community. These complex systems extend far beyond simple observations; they weave together traditional technologies, nuanced social structures, sophisticated economic models, and comprehensive philosophical understandings (Lekakis et al., 2018). This profound body of knowledge is not disseminated through standardized, formal curricula. Instead, it is typically transmitted through deeply immersive methods such as experiential learning, where knowledge is absorbed through direct participation in life activities, robust oral traditions, the cultural repository of storytelling, and other vital forms of intangible record-keeping, including songs, dances, and ceremonies. These methods ensure the knowledge is contextually rich and intimately tied to the land and community. This approach stands in stark contrast to the dominant Western, positivistic paradigms for organizing and communicating knowledge. The Western system heavily relies on codified approaches, prioritizing empirical evidence and objective data, and is formally institutionalized through structured, academic educational practices and written documentation. The indigenous framework, by contrast, emphasizes holistic understanding, relational ontology, and intergenerational wisdom, viewing knowledge as a living, dynamic entity rather than a static collection of facts.

In another case, the local community felt largely shut out of the reconstruction process as the government official and foreign diplomats who ‘toured’ the settlement called most of the shots (Brush, 2019). The tussle between the community wanting to be involved and integrated in the reconstruction process and the top-down heritage conservation approach from the government agencies contributed widely for the project to linger over a decade, but finally after the user committee as the community undertaking RMTRCC stepped in, the reconstruction process was stabilized, easing the fear of locals to authentic restoration of the temple.

According to Shakya, the president of RTMCC, one of the main reasons for the cost escalation of the reconstruction of Rātō Matsyendranātha temple was because nobody responsible for the preparation of drawing design and estimation of materials speculated that the Shikhara temple typology would need various types of customized bricks [A. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025] [S. Tuladhar, Personal Communication, 2025]. According to Tuladhar, each layer had a different dimension. They previously had customised fifty different types of Dachhi appa for the facade, but later changed to ninety six and finally after the reconstruction the total number of variant bricks exceeded one hundred types. The terracotta windows placed in the smaller shikaras in the first floors took ninety three days to

carve, thirteen months to dry and thirty days to be burnt inside the kiln. Such intricate details were not considered while preparing the estimation, which led to a hurried tendering system, eventually won by the lowest bidder. When the tendered contractor stepped in to work at site, faced multiple setbacks by not knowing the nature of the structure. Now another debate surmounts the plain Dachhi appa facade. Shakya shares that the previous lime washed facade was in the period of Junga Bahadur Rana, during the 1900s, and is inscribed in the main Gajur of the temple. The limewash must have been used as a temporary measure to stop the rain water from seeping in after the cracks formed during the 1934 earthquake. But the elderly Hiralal Shakya is nostalgic about the previous white washed facade and remarks, “there is one Kumah (brick layer) who wants to display his brick craft, so the lime wash is prohibited for now, but eventually in the twelve year festival it will be done” [H. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025]. The bricks were part of an in-kind donation from the brick manufacturer who supplied the brick for the reconstruction of the temple.

The study also unveils the overpowering debate of the authenticity of the work done, seeking validation from the local stakeholders. The definition of what is authentic, how the community views authenticity and the need for authenticity. This theme has to be elaborately understood over the definition of authenticity ‘locally’. In an interview with Satyam Gurung, a resident of Lalitpur and a regular visitor to the temple, shares “I saw the foundation of the temple being totally removed and replaced with new bricks, lime mortar and metal structures. It was very concerning for me, modern non-indigenous materials in a heritage site were being used which was not right” [S. Gurung, Personal Communication, 2025]. Gurung’s concern sprouted as being a volunteer in Campaign to Rebuild Kasthamandap, while he was working closely with other volunteers who were actively advocating for the use of traditional materials and building techniques. During the reconstruction of Kasthamandap, similar case of public participation came into play, when the public came forward to assist with other means of volunteering such as making inventory of salvaged wood and carved elements, conduct various workshops to bring in more stakeholders, research in the traditional building techniques and document the intangible heritage associated with the structure. This put Kasthamandap reconstruction as a top priority in the national NRA listing. The Kasthamandap reconstruction project not only saw the locals and the community as a local custodians but as a primary stakeholder for participatory heritage reconstruction (Joshi et al., 2021).

Authenticity often boils down to the local custodians who necessitate the continuity of customary practices. The intangible and living heritage is often rooted in

the functional requirement designed upon the system of being ritually and culturally authentic. Upon interview with Shakya, President of Rato Machhindranath Temple Reconstruction Consumer Committee (RMTRCC) said, "I do not know the extent of damage in the foundation done during the work by the contractor, but we had to demolish fourteen feet of the newly built superstructure and re-start from the plinth level as multiple errors were found during the earlier construction, which did not comply to the earlier traditional building system." [A. Shakya, Personal Communication, 2025]

Finally, the study also saw the theme of local ownership and capacity building during heritage reconstruction. Laximan Tuladhar Maharjan, a veteran Newar wood sculptor retorts, "You have to build from the heart. [...]. You cannot make art just by talking and planning" (Brush, 2019). The heart and soul of traditional structure remains within the skilled hands that breathes life to the building. The capacity building and knowledge transfer during the heritage reconstruction can be seen as a platform for transferring traditional building skills, empowering the stakeholders with decision making autonomy in collaboration with state organisations such as the Gũhĩ Sansthan, Department of Archaeology, and other government stakeholders.

4. Discussion

From this study, we see that the community emerges as a political construct. The heritage community or community in heritage comes out as a powerful contested concept. While looking into examples from other reconstruction projects within the Kathmandu valley, the heritage reconstruction can be divided into three approaches i.e., funded by foreign donors, funded and led by either National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) or Department of Archaeology (DoA) and by local government or local community. In an online report, the local representatives view that the projects under NRA and DoA involve heightened controversies and expenses (Aryal, 2021). Drawing examples from the Bhaktapur municipality which was equally ravaged by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, it managed to complete several reconstruction projects through local funds and community mobilization encouraging public labor, in turn saving millions of rupees. Sunil Prajapati, mayor of Bhaktapur Municipality opines that the user committee model minimizes the cost, maintains the quality and upholds the faith of the locals (Aryal, 2021). Whereas in the case of Kathmandu, the reconstruction works which were led by the user committees did not encourage public labor contribution.

While engaging the youth is the biggest challenge and of concern, Bajracharya shares, "Lack of youth interested and

engaged in taking up the traditional profession in regards of traditional construction techniques and skills" [D. D. Bajracharya, Personal Communication 2025], the recent surge in social media contents emphasizing traditional crafts have lit hope for the upcoming generations.

Community participation and heritage engagement from the locals are often deeply interwoven within rights, recognition, representation and political discourse. As the heritage related works, be it tangible or intangible, require skilled manpower and abundant funds, the central tension lies between institutionally driven (top-down) and community-led (bottom-up) approaches. It is crucial to understand the levels of participation, power dynamics and funding mechanisms while designing with the community. The effective implementation of such heritage driven projects with the community often determines its legitimacy, impact and sustainability of the project. , which later could act as a community archive. But there are still challenges ahead, Tuladhar shares, "Even though a lesson was learnt regarding the drawbacks of lowest bidding contractors and the need of user committee process for restoration of heritage structures, the national law of Nepal Government mandates to implement any kind of project over the budget of 1 crore through the same public procurement process." [S. Tuladhar, Personal Communication, 2025]

The key challenges for community led participatory approaches are navigating the motivations of the stakeholders, overcoming the resource and expertise gaps, legal mandates, management plan or putting a custodial plan after the handover of the project. These challenges can be overcome by supporting community leadership, advocacy, increasing public engagement, institutional collaboration, institutional and bureaucratic management, addressing social inequality, encouraging documentation and intergenerational knowledge transfers via training and creative social communication.

Consequently, developing robust and effective heritage strategies requires a significant paradigm shift away from simple adaptation or imposition of external models, particularly those originating from Western preservation traditions. While these models offer valuable methodologies, they must be customized and deeply rooted in the local cultural and political landscape. This demands a commitment to pluralistic participation, involving not just governmental bodies and technical experts, but also local community groups, indigenous populations, private stakeholders, and civil society organizations. This multi-vocal and inclusive process is essential to ensure that heritage management is not narrowly driven by isolated national policy objectives, specific governmental agendas, or the commercial interests of a few individuals, but instead serves the collective, long-term interests of the heritage and

its diverse communities.

5. Conclusion

The effective management of heritage is a complex and resource-intensive endeavor, one that national authorities alone are increasingly incapable of overseeing effectively. This constraint stems fundamentally from two interwoven factors: the inherent limitations of central administrative competencies and the very nature and character of heritage itself. Centralized national bodies often face severe limitations in both human and financial resources, making it impractical to adequately monitor, maintain, and valorize the vast and geographically dispersed array of heritage sites and traditions across a country. Furthermore, administrative structures, by their design, tend toward uniformity and standardization, which often clashes with the dynamic, localized, and context-specific needs of diverse heritage forms. Crucially, heritage is not a static object but a living, evolving reflection of the diverse and often competing values, memories, and aspirations of its constituent communities. It is deeply embedded in local social, economic, and spiritual practices. For management to be truly effective and sustainable, it must acknowledge and incorporate this plurality. This necessitates the development of self-governing institutional structures and decision-making processes that operate genuinely from the bottom up. Such a decentralized approach ensures that management decisions are responsive to local needs, garner community buy-in, and reflect a broader consensus on the heritage's significance.

The research saw that the reconstruction process over the decade with multiple stakeholders further pushed the reconstruction works towards limbo without a clear objective of what, when and how the reconstruction process was to be handled and who were actually needed for the successful completion of the project. But after the formation of the user's committee, the project saw direction and validation that earlier construction engagements could not provide. The restoration of the Buṅga-dyō (Rātō Matsyendranātha) temple conjoins both the restoration of faith and form through the practices to retain the custodianship among the community. In conclusion the study finds that the heritage reconstruction should be seen as a multi-faceted approach which should ensure community as a primary stakeholder in tandem with the implementing bodies be it local, national or international.

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