Community based participatory approach in Cultural Heritage
Reconstruction: A case study of Kasthamandap

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Abstract

Kasthamandap, a centrally located monument in the old settlement of Kathmandu, is the 7th century structure, from which the name of Kathmandu valley originated. Kasthamandap was originally a public rest house and holds social, cultural and religious significance. The 25th April Gorkha earthquake completely collapsed the monument and it took a year before the government disclosed its reconstruction plan. However, the preparations were not satisfactory. The proposed plans severely contradicted with the traditional construction system. The introduction of modern materials such as steel and concrete made the aesthetic and artistic values of the monument to lose its original identity. The general public couldn’t accommodate with the idea of our national heritage being rebuilt with considerably newer materialistic ideas and a large public outcry against the proposal was seen. The necessity of reconstruction using traditional methods and materials with equal involvement of the community was realised to maintain identity, increase community belongingness and to connect new generation with the heritage. Therefore, a community initiative to rebuild Kasthamandap started with the involvement of diverse groups from the community. This paper discusses the observations, learning and achievements of community participation of the Kasthamandap rebuilding process. Further, the paper includes exploration of both tangible and intangible aspect and its benefits for overall heritage knowledge of Kathmandu valley. This paper presents an exemplary participatory heritage-making concept, which can be a learning for heritage reconstructions in future.

Key words: Cultural Heritage, Community participation, Reconstruction, Conservation

1. Introduction

Kathmandu valley is rich in cultural and natural heritage. Kathmandu valley shares seven monument zones enlisted under World Heritage Sites. Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) shares significant portion of world heritage sites like Kathmandu Durbar Square, Pashupati, Swayambhu and Bauddha. Kathmandu Durbar Square area itself has numerous temples, palaces and monuments including Kasthamandap carrying significant emotional, religious and cultural values for the people. This historic urban landscape encompasses the very essence of a traditional settlement alongside the usurping modernity.

Kasthamandap, also known as Mārusatah is centrally located in the historic urban settlement of Kathmandu. This 7th century monument, upon which the name of Kathmandu valley was derived, is an architectural marvel of timber craftsmanship in the valley. Kathmandu is derived of the word Kasthamandap, Sanskrit word “Kastha” meaning wooden and ‘mandapa’ meaning a pavilion or temple. (Rajopadhyaya, 2018) According to a mythology, it is built of a single tree named Kalpabrikshya. There is no written document as such, but the oral handover of the story has passed on from generation to generation to generation and still prevalent today. Kasthamandap was

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originally a public rest house and holds social, cultural and religious significance along others. Even after hundreds of years, the monument continues as testament of Nepal’s living heritage.

The Gorkha earthquake 2015 and its aftershocks caused enormous damages to heritage structures of immense socio-cultural and religious values (K.C, Karuppannan, & Sivam, 2019). Total 753 heritage sites were destroyed and many were damaged all over Nepal. Major monuments in seven World Heritage Monument Zones were severely damaged and many collapsed completely including Kasthamandap (UNISDR, 2015).

Despite Kasthamandap’s high heritage significance, it took a year before the government disclosed a reconstruction plan for the monument. Dharahara got immediate limelight after the earthquake. Funds were collected from public for its reconstruction, and it became the symbol of national resilience. Hence, a group of self-motivated locals launched campaigns to wake up government agencies to emphasize and prioritise on rebuilding of Kasthamandap. By April 2016, KMC had decided that Kasthamandap would be built, through the tender process as per Public Procurement Act, where construction firms placed bids and the lowest bidder is awarded a turnkey project contract. It estimated that construction would take three years and cost 192 million Nepali rupees. When Department of Archaeology (DoA) publicly displayed the proposed design in the Basantapur dabali in Kathmandu Durbar Square on March 2016, public concern raised more than ever for as modern materials, such as steel, concrete were introduced in structure, which is against the conservation guidelines of DoA itself. Rebuilding projects, including of the historic Rani Pokhari, Dus Avatar Temple and Jaisi Dega, were already halted by then, due to local opposition. Therefore, the campaigners started to provoke government for timely reconstruction of heritage, also directing their attention to the ongoing issues of malpractices in heritage rebuilding as major concern. Opinions for the necessity of reconstruction using traditional methods and materials and involvement of the community was realised to maintain identity, increase community belongingness and to connect new generation with the heritage. Furthermore, there were questions regarding transparency and ramming the projects through lowest-bidder tender system resulting to handing over reconstruction work for contractors without expertise. Therefore, a community initiative to rebuild Kasthamandap was started with the involvement of self-motivated voluntary group of diverse communities.

Nepal experiences major earthquakes every 100 years. Our ancestors had realised the possibility of damage of heritage during such disaster and had commissioned Guthis for conservation and maintenance of heritage resources along with other activities such as organising festivals, handing over artisanship, teaching traditional dances and music. The

Figure 1: Damage of Earthquake in Kasthamandap, 25 April 2015 (Photo credit: DirghaMan and GaneshMan Chitrakar Art Foundation) Source: https://rubinmuseum.org/page/then-and-now-kathmandu-durbar-square
funding for upkeep of such tradition was entirely based upon the revenues from farmlands, entrusted under the guthis. However, with the establishment of Guthi Santhan, all the land under guthis came under the authorities of the Nepalese government. This took a massive toll for the revenues generated by the guthi lands, which meant less or no money, but the responsibilities still intact to upkeep the traditions guided by the communal guthis. The new generation of the guthi members gradually lost interested at such voluntary jobs, benefitting solely the government organisations. Role of such Guthi is considerably reduced in state’s administrative structure. As a result, several monuments were left without its traditional custodians prior to the 2015 earthquake; the structures were often neglected for their periodical upkeep, which caused irreplaceable damage to those monuments during the earthquake. Therefore, available social capital and revival of traditional patterns of heritage conservation through community participation is essential in Kathmandu (Lekalis, Shakya, & Kostakis, 2018). Importance of community participation in heritage reconstruction has been highlighted in various papers and articles, (Tiwari, Community participation in heritage affairs, 2013) (GHF, 2009) (Lekalis, Shakya, & Kostakis, 2018). There has been wide coverage of issues of Kasthamandap in national media, research papers on identity and heritage (Rajopadhyaya, 2018), importance of cultural heritage in Post disaster settling (K.C, Karuppannan, & Sivam, 2019), Post Disaster Reconstruction challenges and Influencing factors (Sharma, K.C., Subedi, & Pokharel, 2018).

This paper focuses on challenges faced in heritage reconstruction with a case study of Kasthamandap. Often community participation in reconstruction work is limited to donations, voluntary labour works and participation of community in rituals and events catering to a narrow spectrum of public. The reconstruction model of Kasthamandap is unique and had to face many challenges. The paper aim to delivers this new learning and understanding of participatory heritage making. Tangible and intangible aspects of Kasthamandap, related to function of Guthis and various space used by them are mentioned in the paper as well.

2. Methodology

This paper is based on direct observations of writers during the reconstruction phase of Kasthamandap, right after the devastating earthquake. Also reviews of different studies carried out during this phase, websites, social media, news items and discussion with local community members, government representatives and other stakeholders has been incorporated in the paper. The authors have closely worked with different community groups and they are part of technical team during the reconstruction process.

Observation of festivals and traditional ceremonies, documentation of oral stories related with the monument, public lectures by heritage experts (on history, traditional architectures, and iconography), walking heritage tours, interviews with community and professional experts, research and documentation during the Campaign to rebuild Kasthamandap are major source of information gathered to prepare this paper. In addition, the hands on experience at site, close observation of the friction between the immediate community and the experts’ community for the realisation of larger community are explored.
3. Legends of Kasthamandap

Legends on Kasthamandap depicts Kalpavrikshya being caught on the day of Machchhindranath’s Jatra by a tantric or a Jyapu, and was released with a condition to supply much required wood to build a satah. Kalpavrikshya agreed and promised to stay along with the 33 koti gods until the satah was consecrated. The promised date of consecration was the day; the price of oil and salt was to be the same, which has not been equivalent till date. Hence, Kasthamandap is not consecrated yet. Members of Sa Guthi perform a ritual every year on the 1st day of Magh, hoisting a flag (Dhwayein Boyekegu) or Patah Chayaegu, a symbolic announcement necessary upkeep and maintenance of the structure, as well as the announcement of the price of salt and oil for that year. (Bajracharya G., 1976). Another legend says Kalpabrikshya comes to watch the Astamatrika dancing for the Nretasvora during Matsendranath Chariot festival. Siddha Lila Vajra spellboun Kalpabriskhya with Tantra Vidya. Asks for a tree to build temple in return. Lilabajra constructed the temple called Marusat, and from the remaining left over wood, Shilhyan Sattal was also constructed, literally meaning pavilion made from remaining woods. Kasthamandap was not installed with any image therefore also called Maru (meaning nothing). (Bajracharya Y. P., 2010)

Legend of Lopipad based from manuscript ‘Srinath Pilgrimages’ believes Lopipad was a Nath Siddha who fetched magical tree from Kailash to construct the Kasthamandap. It has been mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions (1379) the building was given to Gorakhnath Yogi. (Risal, 2016). It is observed that Lopipad/Luipa was in Kathmandu in 9th century, which is the time when new foundation was laid according to archaeological findings.

Legend of Gorakhnath and Matsendranath is also popular where Gorakhnath comes to Kathmandu as per divine promise. He binds Nagas in anger in Mirgasthali, sits over them, and meditate. This cause draught and famine for long time, as suggested remedy by Shantikar Vajracharya, Karunamaya Loknath is brought to Nepal. As he arrives to Bunga, Gorakhnath rises to greet his guru and Nagas were released, therefore rainfall occurs (Locke, 1975). Various stories and legends tie different community group with the Kasthamandap.

4. Importance of Kasthamandap

Kasthamandap is the oldest public building in Kathmandu Valley, with traditional tiered-roof style reflecting Newar Architecture of Kathmandu valley. It has served both religious and
secular functions for over a millennium. Kasthamandap is built in mandala form of a square of 12 by 12 meters, this encloses four massive brick piers at the centre of the building. (Coningham R. , et al., 2019) This excavation proved the claims by Sudarhsan Raj Tiwari in his book “The temples of the Nepal Valley” regarding nine-pit Navakunda Foundation (Tiwari, The temples of the Nepal Valley, 2009), should exist in foundation as the name Mandap suggests. Also claims from Mr. Yagyaman Pati Bajracharya in his presentation on Seminar “Kasthamandap Tyasko Nirmata and Dhacha Sahaili” held on Magh 2nd 2072, among the stakeholders, community members and experts in heritage, that establishment of Kasthamandap was earlier than 9th century has been proved by archaeological studies.

More than just a physical structure, Kasthamandap holds immense cultural and symbolic importance for Kathmandu. It lies at the crossroads of two ancient Trans Himalayan trade routes that connect China and Tibet to India. The Kasthamandap seems to be prominent due to its size, antiquity and strategic location. The large wooden pavilion was used as a rest house for traders and is located at the intersection of two ancient towns as Koligrama and Dakshina Koligrama (Yambu and Yangal) (Rajopadhyaya, 2018) . There are various inscriptions, that describe the past usage of the pavilion in different centuries and it has been able to cater to the needs of ever changing functions depending upon the user groups.

It gained religious significance after the establishment of Guru Gorakhnath Statue in 1465 AD. There were Ganesh idols representing major Ganesh of Kathmandu; Jal Binayak, Karyabinayak, Suryabinayak and Ashok Binayak. Kasthamandap may also have performed the role of a royal council hall and coronation pavilion. It has also been accounted that 45 families had occupied the building until their subdivisions and walls were removed during the 1966 renovations by Department of Archaeology. Far from representing squatters, Slusser and Vajracarya attributed their affiliation with the monument as descendants of Goraksanatha’s yogis who had been presented with the deeds to the Kasthamandap in 1379 C.E. (Coningham R. , et al., 2016).The satah also acted as a marketplace as seen in the old paintings by Rajman Singh Chitrakar and H.A Oldfiled.

Over the centuries, Kasthamandap has been used as a royal council hall, a rest house and a marketplace. However, it has been in people’s heart, mind as, one of the iconic symbol for Kathmandu (Nepal Mandal) itself, alongside being featured in various travel brochures, business logos, and entrepreneurial organisations. Therefore, Kasthamandap is connected very much to the people in one way or the other. The heritage monument is not only historical and architectural treasures; it is also major source of economic growth through domestic and international tourism. Therefore as very strong emotional attachment was present with the people regarding Kasthamandap, which can be observed in its reconstruction process.

5. Heritage and people
Cultural heritage of Kathmandu has two fundamental dimensions namely tangible and intangible heritage. UNESCO defines cultural heritage in two categories: tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Tangible cultural heritage includes movable cultural heritage like painting, sculptures, coins manuscripts; immovable cultural heritage like monuments, archaeological sites and underwater cultural heritage like shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities. The intangible cultural heritage includes oral tradition, performing arts and rituals.

The tangible and intangible heritage is mutually dependent and complementary. Heritage keep community lively and energetic. Intangible heritage such as festivals and Jatra (procession) that took place in Kathmandu after the earthquake played a significant role in helping people cope and adapt to disaster. (K.C., Karuppannan, & Sivam, 2016). Physical structures may have been destructed but the essence was not gone, devotees prayed in front of the temples even when it was not accessible due to debris, temples were destroyed but faith was intact. It was difficult for organisers to continue the festivals as major monuments for the occasion had collapsed and many old structures were still vulnerable standing in wooden support. However, people attended the festivals with great enthusiasm. People hold pride and respect towards heritage even more after the earthquake.

6. Community based participatory approach

Community is conceptualized as involving a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality (often referred to as community of place) or sharing a common heritage or set of values, for example with a common cultural identity or with political bonds (often referred to as community of interest). Participation is the act of engaging in and contributing to the activities, processes, and outcomes of a group. (Lachapelle & Austin, 2014)

The factor that brings various individuals together, the goals that turn into a mission to make an impactful combination can be called a community. When it serves it purpose, it retreats to its original state off common individuals. Hence, to address any group of individuals as a community, a goal or a common factor is required. A purpose, a skillset, a need to attach together, to reach a common goal is all about making of a community.

Different community reconstruction initiatives has been observed right after earthquake. The models for community participation in heritage restoration used in Kathmandu Valley for other monuments were observed. Community led reconstruction is conducted by formation of Users committee. First example is from Ashok chaitya in Thamel, the restoration was attempted before earthquake and was restarted after the earthquake. Since the old guthi which took care of the stupa was defunct, a new committee was formed and registered at the municipality office with some members from the old guthi involved and commenced the restoration with a permit from the municipality. It had partial funding from municipality and other donations from the committee. Some of the community led initiatives are restoration works at Boudha Stupa, Maitripur Mahavihara, Tarani devi temple and Ashok Binayak dyochhen.
6.1 Guthis of Kasthamandap.

As based upon the research methodology, various guthis directly associated with Kasthamandap were identified. There are eight different Guthis or community group in direct association with Kasthamandap, as from field observations. Among them, three major guthis of Kasthamandap requires diligent upkeep of the structure as well as the traditions. Two are currently active Ta: Chata Guthi and Sa: Guthi, and third one Manandhar Guthi is not much active. (K.C, Karuppannan, & Sivam, 2019). Interviews, workshops and interaction with community group were undertaken at different phases. After interactions and discussions in various occasions, the study team identified few other community groups who were directly or indirectly associated with Kasthamandap.

6.1.1 Ta chatan guthi

Members of Ta Chatan Guthi are Tamrakars of Piganani. They carry out a special two-days ritual of cooking sacred rice inside Kasthamandap, and store it overnight in the room in ground floor towards the North-West corner of Kasthamandap on the last week of Gunla (tenth month of Nepal Sambat Calendar). Planks of wood stored in Kabindrapur (Dhansa) is carefully assembled in front of SilyanSata to form a “Mandap”. Tamrakars believe this Mandap to be the actual Kasthamandap. Newar Buddhist community of Kathmandu celebrate Panchadaaan on this day. Bajracharyas and Shakyas from different places come and gather around the wooden mandap and wait for the blessed rice and other offerings.

6.1.2 Sa guthi

On the first day of Magh, also known as “Magha Sankranti” and “GhyaChakuSanlu”, grain feeding to cow ritual is carried out in front of Kasthamandap. One day prior, the grain to be fed is cooked and stored in Kasthamandap. On the day, an elaborated ritual takes place in Bhusata: towards East of Kasthamandap and the Guthi members climb up to the top of the Kasthamandap to hoist a flag (dhwoja) which is known as pataa cha wonegu. They also distribute/ spread food items like chatamari, yomari and lochamari towards four direction of Kasthamandap from the roof while hoisting the flag. The ritual of hoisting flag on this day is the reminder of examining whether the same condition of the price of both salt and oil is still holds true. (Mali, 2017)
6.1.3 Gorakhnath community

The followers of Gorakhnath, one of whose statue was one of the later additions in the ground floor of Kasthamandap belong to this community. There used to be a daily worship ritual (nitya puja) before the earthquake damaged Kasthamandap. Besides, the goraksha guthi also performed the annual Chakra puja in the ground floor and hosted a tirthabhajo (a feast) in the second floor of Kasthamandap.

6.1.4 Kapali guthi

Kapali guthi also carries out “Chakra” puja in front of the Gorakhnath shrine in Kasthamandap, which has been halted after the collapse of Kasthamandap, at present the ritual is done from each of the Kapali member’s home.

6.1.5 Mahabali guthi

The Bajracharyas of Shreekhanda Taramul Mahavihar, located adjacent to Kumari chhen towards Eastern side of Kasthamandap are the members of this guthi. The guthi used to perform worship ritual during the Pachali Bhairab jatra on the West of Kasthamandap. The rituals from this guthi has been halted since 1983- 85 A.D.

6.1.6 Manandhar Gutchi

The Manandhar guthi are the original members responsible for the flag hoisting ritual on Maghe Sankranti. Last time they performed the ritual in year 1962 A.D., since then the ritual is being carried on by the Sa: guthi. The guthi is also responsible for the Baumatar ritual that takes place on the first day of weeklong Yenya festival. Baumata is made as long as the plinth of Kasthamandap.

6.1.7 Maru Kasintha guthi

The members of Maru Kasintha guthi plays devotional daapha bhajan in front of Maru Ganesh temple towards the North East corner of Kasthamandap during the month of Yanla in Nepal Sambat lunar calendar.

6.1.8 Pachali Bhairab Gutchi

Exchange of Khadga between Pachali Bhairab and head of state takes place on the Bhusata located towards the East of Kasthamndap every 12 years during the Pachali Bhairab Jatra.

Besides cultural activities, Guthi members voluntarily participated in the construction work in Kasthamandap. The valuable inputs were a source of primary data and photo collections, helping with much needed details in design and construction. Example of such incidence was the details of the corner pavilion in ground floor, also the opening at the third roof tier at the North for the guthi members to access to the topmost finial part to attach the flag.

6.2 Post-earthquake Community led activities in Kasthamandap

A blood donation program was being held in Kasthamandap like any other Saturday on 25th April 2015. As the disaster struck, 10 people lost their lives under the debris of Kasthamandap. As soon as earthquake struck, people were busy with rescue and relief operations. Armies and local people rescued and cleared the rubbles from Kasthamandap. For a brief amount, some locals set up camps on the top of Kasthamandap ruins.
During the rescue and relief activities, the excavators were used at Kasthamandap to remove the debris. Local communities expressed concerns, as it would cause irreparable damage to the foundation. News was disseminated announcing the undertaking of reconstruction of Dharahara, but almost no such news of Kasthamandap was seen in Nepali media. Dharahara, as a popular landmark of the city, received due importance with commitments of reconstruction by government. (Rajopadhyaya, 2018). Even corporate sectors such as Jagadamba steels, Nepal Telecom, were interested in the reconstruction of Dharahara. However, Kasthamandap was not in priority of government and received no media attention.

Self-motivated individuals and groups launched campaigns to wake up government to drive attention towards Kasthamandap. Dipesh Rijal, Mary Slusser, Birendra Bhakta Shrestha, Yagyaman Pati Bajracharya, Save Heritage (group), Sudharshan Raj Tiwari, Kashinath Tamot were the few among the others who showed immense solidarity towards Kasthamandap’s reconstruction with full justice by recognising the vernacular techniques and construction methodology native to the Kathmandu Valley. A small-scaled model of Kasthamandap was prepared by artist Hira Ratna Brahmacharya and was handed to the KMC. Meanwhile, Ar. Wolfgang Korn also handed over his measured architectural drawings on 7 November 2015, that he used for his book (Korn, 1998) asserting its importance to the national identity. (Rajopadhyaya, 2018). In December 2015, a UNESCO funded archaeological team from Durham University excavated on Kasthamandap site.

Locals held a Satwa Puja with 185 Buddhist priests and monks on 19th December 2016, and called the community to join forces in rebuilding Kasthamandap. The momentum to rebuild Kasthamandap in public participation increased after the puja with participation of volunteers from different field including engineers and architects. Discussions with NRA and DoA made the informal group of campaign realise need of formal organisation in order to carry out the reconstruction work more efficient and transparent. Therefore, as a requirement to work with DoA, formal non-profit organisation was registered as Campaign to Rebuild Kasthamandap (CRK) for formal procedures with the government entity.
Marking two years from the day of Gorkha earthquake on Baisakh 12th, 2074 (April 25th, 2017) the campaign-conducted mega event, starting from Kumari House declaring commencement of rebuilding. Prior to the event, a series of workshop was organised to bring in volunteers from all over Nepal and the world to build a community equipped to rebuild Kasthamandap retaining its integral values. There was huge support and people pledged for community led reconstruction. After series of discussion with NRA, KMC and DoA officials a four party agreement was signed, designating Campaign to Rebuild Kasthamandap responsible for construction work, and DoA and KMC as supervisory bodies, in NRA Hall, in presence of minister, government officials and dignitaries from different fields on 12th May, 2017. The event was two days before local elections, and political dynamics changed, which later led to unpredicted disturbances in the way to rebuilding Kasthamandap.

As there was a new political dimension after the local elections of 13th May 2017, the working modality again had to be reconsidered. Series of dialogues were conducted with KMC and CRK regarding modality to rebuild Kasthamandap. There were claims from both KMC and CRK that they should get the opportunity to rebuild Kasthamandap. CRK had already proceeded with the research works had, drawings were prepared in coordination with experts and local communities. However, as KMC declared, rebuilding process should be under
KMC’s direct involvement. There were disagreements from the campaign side regarding the decision however, the assurance of rebuilding the monument with community involvement, use of traditional materials and techniques and no contract-based reconstruction (KRC, 2018) made the campaigners agree upon the decision and took upon a role of monitoring.

Therefore, the role of CRK later was limited to documentation and research on intangible heritage related to Kasthamandap and oversee the activities of new formed committee Kasthamandap Reconstruction Committee (KRC) was formed on 1st May 2018, led by Hon. Rajesh Shakya, member of the provincial parliament. A new agreement was signed by KMC and KRC on 12th June 2018 to proceed with the reconstruction work. KRC, including local community members, Guthi members and experts, continued their support towards the reconstruction procedure.

The students groups mostly from architecture schools volunteered for the measurement and inventorying of the salvaged wooden members. The army personnel from Hanuman Dhokha palace area were also present to sort and salvage the wooden members from Kasthamandap among other debris. Various social clubs, local clubs, interested individuals, organizations joined forces. Although the reconstruction modality became an issue of contention, every heritage lover wanted to see Kasthamandap being rebuilt with its original values.

Heritage and conservation experts have been involved with the CRK since its inception and continued with the KRC. Similarly, KRC continued to involve social actors from various occupations, by addressing them into various formal sub committees according to their preferences. The technical experts in the conservation field are consulted in every aspect of construction. The community participation is throughout various programs as the one happened during the hoisting of four central posts and four central beams. The humongous task of hoisting the central four pillars and beams could have been done using the modern means and technology. However, the idea was to bringing community together, asking them to join forces and carry the elements to the construction site, making them involved with the intangible traditions, with the various pujas being performed at various intervals during the construction period. These all efforts have meaningfully contributed towards the actual concept of heritage making. The KRC intends to have continued efforts as such, so that all the social actors retain their activities and connectivity with Kasthamandap.
As Kasthamandap falls under world heritage zone, not one specific community can own it, it is a world heritage citing to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). During the reconstruction process, the committee launched the work with grandeur, inviting all the stakeholders and people from various organizations, local communities too.

7. Challenges in Community led Reconstruction

Community led reconstruction will ensure community’s pride towards heritage and belongingness. The objective of the community led reconstruction is to re-establish the heritage ownership to community, to engage new generation in reconstruction work and transfer traditional knowledge, to ensure quality in heritage reconstruction against the low bidding procurement system. It should focuses on the transparency and accountability. However, various issues are faced during the community led reconstruction, which are discussed here.

7.1 Issues in heritage reconstruction

Major issues in heritage reconstruction includes conflicting roles and responsibilities, Funding, Technology and technical guidelines

a) Conflicting Roles and responsibilities

There are different agencies looking after heritage and monuments in Nepal. Observing the case of Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square, there are several government agencies within the premises. Hanuman Dhoka Conservation Project, under KMC, Department of Archaeology, Hanuman Dhoka Museum directly working under cultural and heritage preservation works. Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Department of Tourism, working in the same space.

Major discussion at initial stage of rebuilding process of Kasthamandap was under whose jurisdiction it falls. There is understanding between DoA and Hanuman Dhoka Preservation that straight path that goes from Maru to Ason divided the monuments, eastern part under DoA’s jurisdiction and western part under KMC’s jurisdiction. Therefore, Kasthamandap was in KMC’s jurisdiction. Further, there were claims from different wards regarding Kasthamandap, as it lies in the boundary to four wards 19, 20, 23 and 24, however it lies in Ward 20. Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square is also one of the seven monument zones in Kathmandu valley World Heritage sites, UNESCO is also one of the stakeholders.

Further, in Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square different donor countries and international organisations were keen in reconstruction of world heritage sites. Donor countries as USA, China, and Japan had extended grant and loan support for various monuments. KVPT and ICOMOS are nongovernmental professional organisation dedicated to conservation of architectural heritage.

b) Funding

Different donor countries and international organisations pledged for reconstruction however fund management and procedural hassles had delayed the start of the reconstruction. (Thapa N. 2018). Also, the foreign funded projects are often carried out without or very less involvement of local experts and craftsmen. There is loss of ownership and attachment when these monuments are constructed as the construction takes place in little or no communication with the community behind closed bars. Therefore, use of foreign funding had become major concern in case of rebuilding Kasthamandap. People demanded for reconstruction with own
resources and it was expected to meet the funding collection by crowd sourcing within Nepalese community from home and abroad.

c) Technology and technical guidelines

Conflicting guidelines make reconstruction a complex affair. Experts, academicians, archaeologist and bureaucrat debate on whether the damaged structures should be retrofitted or completely reconstructed. UNESCO has its own reconstruction guidelines regarding World Heritage sites. NRA’s own Guidelines have to be followed at all other sites, not to mention the Ancient Monument Act and Regulations. (Thapa N., 2018) Further proposal for use of modern material in Kasthamandap was highly debated as Kasthamandap had withstand several major earthquakes and this earthquake damage was proved to have occurred purely due to negligence in last renovation where a main wooden pillar was not connected to the foundation. Therefore, debate in Kasthamandap was for justification on the use of modern materials, details study on the cause of collapse should be carried out and new interventions are to be adopted only if the traditional methods are proved insufficient.

d) Community Participation

In traditional practice temples and shrines belong to certain local communities, they perform daily and occasional puja rituals and have different guthis to look after these temples. But the formation of Guthi Sansthan in 1991 caused many social guthis to disappear as their source of income land was under Guthi sansthan in and their function was then limited to rituals. However, after devastating earthquake, such local communities realised their right and responsibility to reconstruct it as per the traditional architectural norms. They were ready to raise funds and undertake the works themselves, but the local municipality and Department of Archaeology have reservation in transferring the responsibility to them. (Thapa N., 2018) Not all community groups are organised for such level of task and government provision on procurement does not allow such provisions.

Debate of modality to rebuild Kasthamandap came with the governance challenge. The various forms of community participation, the idea of community involvement and the very question of who is a community raised many challenges on its own. The values defined by the Nara grid (Nara Document on Authenticity, n.d.), based upon the values based upon aesthetics, spiritual, social, historic, symbolic and scientific, Kasthamandap embodies it all.

e) Supply of construction materials and involvement of traditional artisans

Supply of construction materials like seasoned timber, special bricks and stones is a major issue in heritage reconstruction projects as the available stock is not adequate. As such, materials are no longer used in construction processes; they are not available in the market. Forest act and other conservation acts of forests and protected areas does not allow, obtaining timber for construction.

Traditional artisans work individually and are not affiliated to registered company whereas for government projects only formal organisations are allowed in bidding system. Therefore, skilled artisans are never going to get chance in reconstruction process as per the existing provisions. Therefore, Aamanat system of reconstruction had been proposed forward for reconstruction of Kasthamandap.
8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Rebuilding process of Kasthamandap went through various challenges, due to conflicting roles and responsibilities, political influence and unaware community members regarding their responsibilities and importance of community participation. Creating a platform for community led reconstruction, where construction companies could only take part in government procurement process was difficult. Public participation was limited to rituals and donations; community in decision-making process was limited. The transition of rebuilding process from the community led organisation to formation of new committee for effective and larger representation of community and institutions were learning from Kasthamandap rebuilding process. Research on both tangible and intangible aspects has been prioritized along with the rebuilding process.

People from different community and background came together and participated in discussions. Initially it was thought the community led reconstruction is not possible it is sole duty of government to reconstruct heritage monuments. However, after discussions and meetings, local community became aware and enthusiast regarding the community led reconstruction process. Community engagement in heritage reconstruction brought people of all age, community, and profession together. As past knowledge has been explored and documented, it can be utilised for progress in future. There is sense of belongingness among community members, people are more attached to heritage, there is better community bonding, and it has helped in bringing collective efforts.

During the process, the local community within the monument’s vicinity were the first ones to be approached, educated with conservation facts and procedures and to raise questions to the authorities about the correct procedures for conservation. The voices raised in favour of community engagement and awareness, quality of work, transparency in the process and against unhealthy procurement act boosted the fight for change in the modality of the reconstruction process. In many cases, it is observed financial gains were the primary motivations in a construction and conservation project. The stakeholders and social actors have stepped in with firm ideas and beliefs of how a monument should be handled. Likewise, a property formulated management structure serves in a long run with both accountability and credibility.

The project of rebuilding Kasthamandap has become pioneering one. It has inspired community to lead ahead towards heritage conservation and be informed in every step of the rebuilding process. Perspective of community participation, which was limited to donations and labour contribution in most of the cases, was changed. Community became actively involved in decision-making process and it has contributed remarkably in design and construction phase. The community effort prevented lowest bidding practice in contract basis. Policy supporting such construction is required for heritage reconstruction in future. Reconstruction of cultural heritage and monuments should not made on monetary basis. Retaining values and integrity is necessary.

The handing over of Kasthamandap back to the community or future use should have a detail management plan of keeping up with the spirit of the place. The multiple values of such an urban heritage as Kasthamandap are to be explored in the upcoming years too. The coordinated government interventions, institutions and structures of authority to restore and retain the values Kasthamandap projects. Focus should be more on such projects and investments for
mobilizing a wider set of individuals and communities willing to attach themselves to the values created by the urban heritage. Kasthamandap is the perfect example of resilience of the community who stepped forward to retain the values and not serve to public amnesia and blame game towards the government institutions only.

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