



Indian Heritage Mission | **Manifesto**

APPEAL

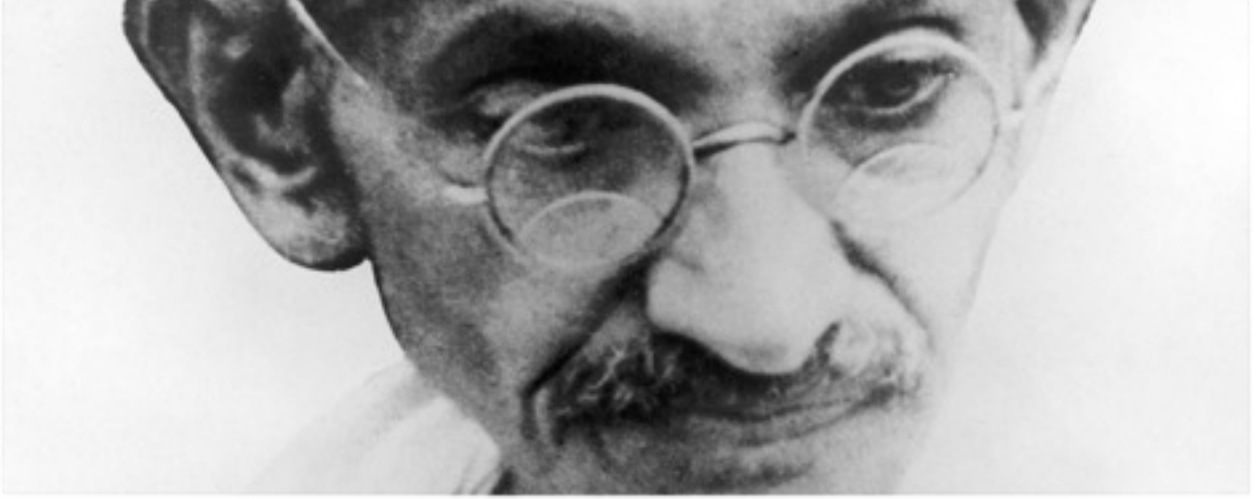
This document is not a treatise, dictum, or a doctrine; and it is bereft of pontificality in its utterance. It is a public appeal to attend to pressing needs of reviving; and, or reconstructing a National Indian Identity that reflects our philosophy, history, heritage, lifestyle, and culture – in a manner that is more appropriate than one that may be derived from loose representations in popular culture and, or the media.

Preface

This document is a 'call to conscience' addressed directly to its readers, urging them to comprehend, understand, and appreciate the true potential of our heritage as a driver of economic and infrastructural growth.

This document is primarily written to inspire philosophical thought:

- It places emphasis on questions about the scope for Heritage conservation in India; rather than on answers.
- It offers contextual and discursive grounds for philosophical inquiries on the need for Heritage conservation.
- It offers itself as a manifesto for community based actions, and draws inspiration from the concept of *APARIGRAHA (अपरिग्रह)*, the spirit of voluntarism, and that of communal effort.
- It anticipates, that community run efforts are a path forward for Heritage conservation, given that deserving efforts are first made to nurture a national discourse.
- It precedes an anticipated 'call to action' for heritage lovers to combine their efforts towards the urgent need for the standardisation of Heritage conservation in India.



अपरिग्रह

(Non-possession)

'When you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you. Everything. If the food is necessary, food will come to you.'

— M. K. Gandhi, *My Philosophy of Life*.

Independence

Prior to 1947, we struggled to liberate ourselves from foreign power. Decades later, it so seems, that we need to liberate ourselves from ourselves. In rebuilding our nation after independence, and in appropriating the remnants of the British Raj, we may have unknowingly created invisible augmentations to our national identity, that were perhaps more coloured by the pressing circumstances of the time; rather than a recalling of our roots.

By 1947, the many casualties of colonial rule, e.g. the famine of 1943; the nationwide public unrests in the run up to independence; the bloody aftermath of the partition of India; and what have you – had left us as a nation in severe ill health – economically, politically, culturally, and socially.

It is easy to draw an analogy between early independent India; and an infant born into a harsh circumstantial and existential reality. The baby-steps of an independent India are analogous to those of a severely wounded child. We could possibly not be bothered with the past because the grim present was simply too obvious in 1947. The infant *Independent India* was someone who was straight away made to play the role of a problem solver, at the very moment of its birth. Needless to say, the nation was born into an unflinching focus on mitigating what we can arguably call a Colonial Holocaust. What dream could a child of the holocaust possibly carry in its heart? It would not be an entirely unreasonable proposition — that the early decades of Independent India were justifiably spent in forgetting the horrific past, rather than remembering it in its truest sense. The fact that India is historically a vast, diverse, and richly endowed land with a timeless heritage, philosophy, and culture — needed time to be driven home.

Has that time come now?



‘The first duty of government is to see that people have food, fuel, and clothes. The second, that they have means of moral and intellectual education.’

— *John Ruskin*

Markers of Development

Since independence from British rule, we have invested most of our resources into addressing the pressing concerns of poverty and hunger; and in order to mitigate these, we focussed on industrial and infrastructural growth with a vengeance. Decades later, we have triumphantly made an emphatic mark on the global economy. However, for some uncanny reasons, we are still unsure of what a cohesive Indian identity means globally.

The fact that we have forged immense economic and industrial power with an unflinching focus on modernisation and technological advancement, has by itself, left little scope for investing time and resources into the need for the preservation of our own rich history. Although we are an independent democracy today, it appears that we may have failed to maintain a centralised focus on the upkeep of our culture, history, heritage and philosophies - which may have in turn, caused an unnecessary detriment to Indian identity globally.

No nation in the world can be considered a developed society on the basis of industrial, and economic development alone. Heritage, history, and philosophy are equally the true markers of development. Our history and culture can no longer be left bereft of a national mandate for preservation. It is our belief that enough has not been done to uphold Indian identity in its true light.

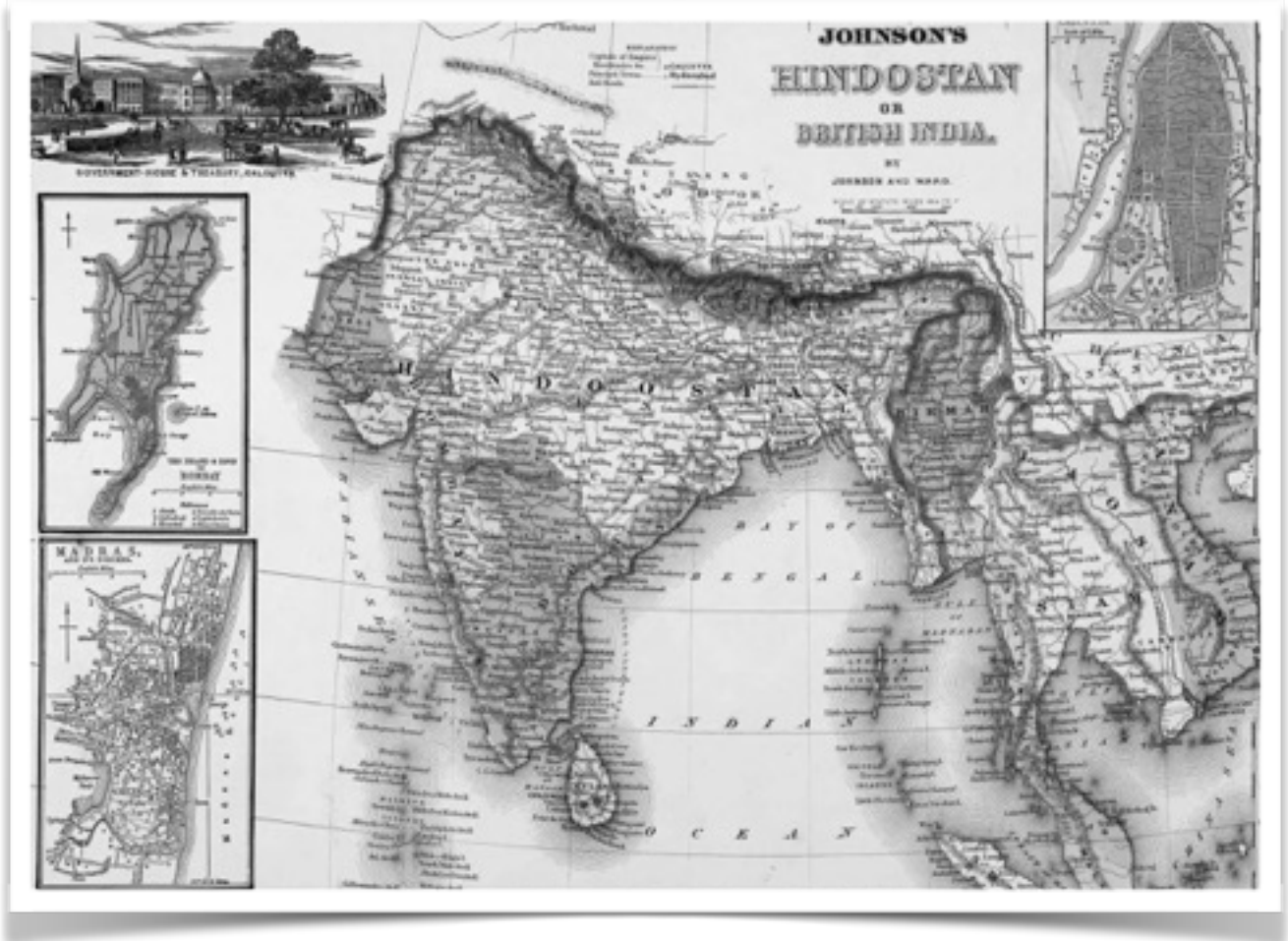
The Indian Heritage Mission is in its entirety, devoted to finding and enabling ways to preserve Indian Heritage.



“The contentment of innumerable people can be destroyed in a generation by the withering touch of our civilisation; the local market is flooded by a production in quantity with which the responsible maker of art cannot compete; the vocational structure of society, with all its guild organisation and standards of workmanship, is undermined; the artist is robbed of his art and forced to find himself a "job"; until finally the ancient society is industrialised and reduced to the level of such societies as ours in which business takes precedence of life. Can one wonder that Western nations are feared and hated by other people, not alone for obvious political or economic reasons, but even more profoundly and instinctively for spiritual reasons?”

— *Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art - Why Exhibit Works of Art?*

सोने की चिड़िया*



Should we be asking — if the सोने की चिड़िया* flew away on its own?

or — Was it slain by foreign rulers?

or — Did we kill it knowingly, or unknowingly?

or — Is it a Phoenix that will reinvigorate?

* in ancient times, सोने की चिड़िया (*Golden Bird*) was believed to be a popular nickname for India, and implied a land with an abundance of mineral resources, and agricultural fertility. In the 17th century gold coins & bars were often considered the standard currency.

Intangible Heritage | Cultural & Living Heritage

While tangible artefacts such as historic buildings, archeological sites, conserved arts, and antique artefacts etc. – inform us of history, and formulate the grounds for our inherent characteristics that have come to us via precedents; intangible (cultural, or living) heritage on the other hand; is the channel through which, our identity is carried forward to future generations.

What we do in our day to day lives - our lifestyles, attitudes, rituals, social interactions; our contemporary arts and culture, are indeed the rudiments of our Intangible Heritage, that perhaps deserve more emphasis than the evidences of our history.

What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?

According to the UNESCO website Intangible Heritage is defined under the section entitled “What is intangible cultural heritage? (Infokit 2011 - © UNESCO)”.

Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalisation. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

Intangible cultural heritage is:

Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part.

Inclusive: we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practised by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large.

Representative: intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities.

Community-based: intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.

The Indian Identity

Where is India? Who is an Indian? A farmer? A brown person? A Bollywood star, or fan? A wayward punter? A street romeo? An IT professional? A doctor or engineer? A call-centre employee? An honest worker? A traditionalist? An orthodox person? A progressive or regressive thinker? A religious, or scientific person? Or a religious scientist? ...Etc.

Perhaps none of these stereotypes hold much water anymore. In this modern globalised world, India is no longer a geographic confinement within the extents of जम्बुद्वीप*. It extends to all corners of the globe, Indians are everywhere — and perhaps vice versa, that the globe is within India as well. It is perhaps futile to envision the Indian ethos as a singularity of sorts.

It is our cultural and linguistic plurality perhaps, that is instead, unique and greater than any other country - lest we forget, that geographically, The Indian Peninsula is the last stronghold of polytheistic culture anywhere in the world. What is a polytheistic society good for, if not its plurality? Polytheism aside, we are also poly-linguistic, poly-cultural, ploy-racial, poly-genetic; and what have you? Our unique pluralism itself is saliently Indian.

India is perhaps the world's largest ecosystem that functions on the sheer power of tolerance. The demographic scale and the density of our population, literally enforce a sense of tolerance in us. This must be a strength! Pluralism demands tolerance as a vital driver of peaceful coexistence. India is a plurality. India is perhaps a unique way of life that enables tolerance and peaceful coexistence. If our plurality isn't enough evidence of the richness of our historic identity, or the immense diversity of our vast heritage, then what is?

*Jambudvipa (Sanskrit) - believed to be the *Puranic* name of the Indian Peninsula.

The Gift of Tolerance

In actual fact, India is the fountainhead of tolerance in this world - *The Indian Independence Struggle* was the first and the largest struggle of its kind, that actively and effectively used humane tolerance (and the spirit of nonviolent protest) as a weapon against injustice. The Independence struggle demonstrated in its very practice, the power of tolerance to a world steeped in empiricism. It is no surprise that nonviolent human rights struggles around the world, have benefited from this precedence.

The very definition of humanity today contains this vital strain — that we call ‘tolerance’. It is a strain that is no less than a weapon of mass peace, compassion, and love — that the Buddha too, pointed us towards.

It could well be, that our tolerance itself, was that mesmerising glow of the सोने की चिड़िया (*The Golden Bird*) that we now, seem to have abandoned, for reasons that we don't really understand ourselves.

A re-reading of our history will only unveil a primal truth — that more than anything else, to be an Indian person — is to be a tolerant, truthful, modest; and yet, a resilient person.

The long lineage of the conquerors and rulers of the Indian Peninsula, have all benefited from this gift of tolerance and plurality, and many like the great Mughal kings — Akbar and Jehangir, and later the British; have built upon this strength.

Across the world, every other person we meet even today, regardless of race, religion, or nationality, benefits from our tolerant and resilient outlooks towards even the adversities and injustices of the severest kind - simply, because of the omnipresence of a reliable Indian working class that works globally, not only in India.

The western world may have indeed confused our tolerance with our spirituality. One can argue that it is not only our spiritual beliefs, but indeed our spirit of coexistence that draws the world to us continually and perennially.

Needless to say this great gift of tolerance, is also what Mahatma Gandhi envisioned as the vital fuel for nonviolent and truthful resistance against injustice.

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

— Mahatma Gandhi



"I do not come to convert you to a new belief. I want you to keep your own belief; I want to make the Methodist a better Methodist; the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian; the Unitarian a better Unitarian. I want to teach you to live the truth, to reveal the light within your own soul.'

— **Swami Vivekananda**, on a visit to the United States of America, from *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda: Vol. 4*, Advaita Ashrama, 1985.

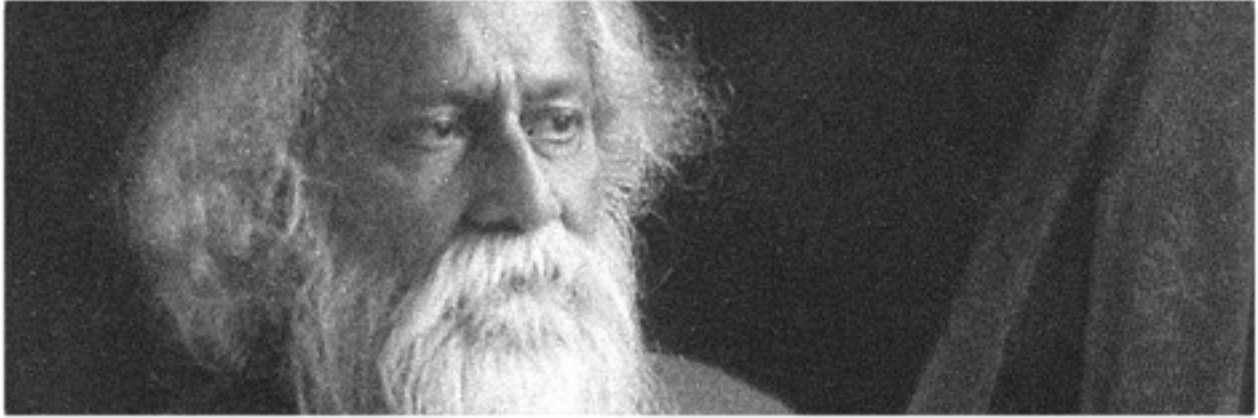
Plurality

If we truly wish to rediscover and reinvigorate the *phoenix* of the सोने की चिड़िया - (*The Golden Bird*), perhaps we can start by preserving our very own unique and salient culture of plurality.

It is the mission's belief that the demographic, geographic, cultural vastness and diversity, that is perhaps matched by no other country globally — must as matter of urgency, be comprehended as a driver for future economic growth — one that is perhaps much greater in potency than merely manufacturing and, or service industries.

The preservation of our heritage, both tangibly and intangibly, indeed has vast potential for not only discursive, philosophical, and intellectual growth — but is indeed, of great significance to further industrial and infrastructural development as well; as many other nations have proved in the recent times. It is therefore high time, that we stop ignoring the potential of our own heritage — that will perhaps benefit not only India; but potentially also many of our international friends worldwide.

The mission assumes the role of a re-enabler of a truly tolerant philosophical mindset - that in the bigger schema of humanity must aim to benefit the whole world.



‘Once again I draw your attention to the difficulties India has had to encounter and her struggle to overcome them. Her problem was the problem of the world in miniature. India is too vast in its area and too diverse in its races. It is many countries packed in one geographical receptacle. It is just the opposite of what Europe truly is, namely, one country made into many. Thus Europe in its culture and growth has had the advantage of the strength of the many as well as the strength of the one. India, on the contrary, being naturally many, yet adventitiously one, has all along suffered from the looseness of its diversity and the feebleness of its unity. A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on, carrying its burden easily; but diversity is a many-cornered thing which has to be dragged and pushed with all force. Be it said to the credit of India that this diversity was not her own creation; she has had to accept it as a fact from the beginning of her history. In America and Australia, Europe has simplified her problem by almost exterminating the original population. Even in the present age this spirit of extermination is making itself manifest, in the inhospitable shutting out of aliens, by those who themselves were aliens in the lands they now occupy. But India tolerated difference of races from the first, and that spirit of toleration has acted all through her history. Her caste system is the outcome of this spirit of toleration. For India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as the circumstances permitted. This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is... India.’

– *Rabindranath Tagore, Nationalism*

Communities as Heritage Ambassadors

India nearly defines what it truly means to say 'people power'. Serving a population as large and dense as ours is truly beyond the reach and ability of any man-made power structure – such as a government administration.

Perhaps this is evidence that in India, truly sustainable power lies within the community, and not merely in authority:

- The Indian Public, is therefore the primary stakeholder of The Indian Heritage Mission; and community engagement – its primary modus operandi.
- The mission aims to finally and fully demystify the faulty notion that preservation of history is merely a government expense, or a national liability — and it aims to uncover the potential of heritage conservation as an economic driver that enables entrepreneurship and employment opportunities nationwide.
- The mission warns us against unconscientious exploitation of natural, and human resources; and informs us of the advantage of our cultural richness as the path forward to forge an unprecedented Indian presence globally.
- The mission notes that factors such as — heartless industrial development, duplication, corruption, mass production, and foreign models of consumerism that have come into play since the opening of markets in the 1990's, have inadvertently posed a rather worrying detriment to the national consciousness of Indians.
- As a matter of urgency, it appears that the current climate is deprived of philosophical thought, cultural consciousness, and the innately humanistic beliefs that Indians were once hailed for. This is undoubtedly an impact of unregulated industrial and trade practices.
- The mission assumes the role of an advocate that will work tirelessly towards raising the national consciousness on all matters related to heritage.

Indian Heritage Mission's Principle Areas of Work

- The mission will endeavour to offer counselling, knowhow, and expertise to businesses, tradesmen, and industrial communities.
- It will encourage entrepreneurship, and innovation — in order to utilise heritage assets as catalysts of yet untapped opportunities, that invite conscientious approaches to business, trade, infrastructure, and industrial development.
- It aims to establish best practices; advocate the use of standard operating procedures; and host a forum of experts, enthusiasts, and academia in the fields of work related to heritage.
- The mission will act as a sounding board for entrepreneurs who wish to tap into these assets, and will lay bare its potential to generate employment, and business opportunities nationally.

Mission's Mandates

The Indian Heritage Mission draws inspiration and precedence from Rabindranath Tagore's Vision of Visva-Bharati, The Ramakrishna Mission, and from UNESCO. It hails in its precedents — intentions that are humanistic, progressive, and constructive; and the values that enable community led initiatives. Rabindranath Tagore's vision of The Visva-Bharati University – was itself evidence of a quintessential Indian notion of globalisation that manifest in a poets mind, nearly a century ago. The India Heritage Mission values, and aims to re-invigorate Tagore's vision of a global abode of learning — as a template for its own vision.



Visva-Bharati represents India where she has her wealth of mind which is for all. Visva-Bharati acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others the hospitality of her best culture and India's right to accept from others their best.'

— Rabindranath Tagore

In keeping with the vision of shared world heritage, the mission refuses allegiances to any particular national, or regional political agendas, or religious beliefs. It upholds an unflinching conviction that the very plurality and global spread of Indian culture and society is our innate strength; and that these characteristics define us succinctly as Indians; and that they override all other socio-political notions, or forms of allegiances.

The mission upholds five principle mandates:

1. Advocacy of the need for heritage conservation
2. Non-intrusive and constructive activism for spread of awareness of heritage as an economic enabler
3. Enabling of heritage projects and encouraging new entrepreneurial and innovative ideation
4. Establishing best practices for restoration of tangibles
5. Harnessing the power of intangibles



‘I am indeed struck by the similarity of the constitution of the Ramakrishna Mission which Vivekananda established as early as 1897 with that of UNESCO drawn up in 1945. Both place the human being at the center of their efforts aimed at development. Both place tolerance at the top of the agenda for building peace and democracy. Both recognize the variety of human cultures and societies as an essential aspect of the common heritage.’ — **Federico Mayor**, Director-General of UNESCO, 1993.

Index of Philosophical Concepts

This section offers information that is of relevance to thinking about the conservation of heritage. Today, India is not confined within its boundaries — it cannot be seen as an entirely separate entity from the rest of humanity.

Indians who live beyond our geographical borders – carry in their hearts and minds, our thinking, philosophy, and our way of life. They are a channel for us to share our wisdom for the benefit of the entire humanity. Conversely, they bring back global wisdom for us to cherish and benefit from.

We need to preserve our heritage not just for ourselves but for the benefit of the entire world. We need to create the conditions that will allow the world to see, comprehend, and understand what we have to offer to the world, and vice versa – what the world offers us.

India does not belong to us alone, but to the entire humanity.

The global spread of our wisdoms, our ways of thinking, and our philosophies – makes our heritage a shared artefact with the whole world.

In fact, most heritages around the world are shared heritages, because of the sheer fact that — whether it is the developed or the developing world; our struggles, strifes, predicaments, and urgencies are always nearly the same – all too human!

Preservation of our heritage is — preservation of world heritage.

Indian Heritage belongs to the world, just as world heritage belongs to us. In this modern globalised world, we simply cannot afford a hermetic adherence to notions of revivalism, nationalism, and separatism — if we need our scope to remain wide and free of dogma, and if we want to maintain our international spread of friendships across the globe.

The following section focusses on philosophical concepts from around the world that are pertinent to the preservation, conservation and upkeep of heritage globally.

Plato

Greek Philosopher (428-7 to 348-7 B.C.E. approx)



Ευδαιμονία (EUDAIMONIA = FULFILMENT)

HAPPINESS | LOVE | PARTNERSHIP | BELONGING | FAMILY | PEACE | COEXISTENCE | TOLERANCE | SUFFICIENCY

Plato wanted to help people achieve a perfect state of **EUDAIMONIA** (or fulfilment) – and not merely be victims of **DOXA** (or popular opinion/ taste).

How is his utopian vision of Eudaimonia relevant today? In contemporary society we constantly indulge in doxa or popular entertainment to fulfil our need to feel happy. Plato rather vehemently argues that true fulfilment is only possible with enrichment of one's self:

Think More — think for yourself, don't let popular opinion sway you.

Let your lover* change you — don't impose yourself on any other, allow yourself to experience change (*Lover need not be human in this case, it can also be taken as a metaphor of your personal sources of joy – e.g. passions, hobbies, pastimes, games, sports, leisure, music, theatre, literature, arts etc.).

Decode the message of beauty — beautiful things whisper subliminal truths.

Reform Society — always think how you can help in improving the lives of others.

Immanuel Kant

German Philosopher (22 April 1724 – 12 February 1804)



Categorical Imperative

— act only by that maxim that which you would believe has the potential to become a universal law.

It is a reinstatement in critical terms, of an idea that exists in most religions and moralities — do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This also lends itself to the Marxist notion of the greater good (or common good). In the world of community led/ public facing initiatives the categorical imperative is often established as the starting point for any project manager/ curator/ program director or exhibition designer. Since most arts & heritages rely either on public funding or governmental patronage, accountability is the most important principle to follow in order to ensure that there is no misuse of funds; and that public interest is at all times the primary concern of the managers. Since the a vast number of heritages are intangible assets of society, its benefit to the public is therefore considered as the intangible return on investment (one that is far greater than any monetary value or market driven interest rate). In public facing projects the fulfilment of the categorical imperative is considered the primary marker of its success (not monetary returns, and neither popularity nor critical appreciations/reviews).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

German Philosopher (August 27, 1770 – November 14, 1831)



Phenomenology of the Spirit

- Important parts of us can be found in history. History is not primitive.
- Eras are repositories of particular kinds of wisdom.
- We need to go back in time to find what is missing today.

Hegel is rather important to the field of heritage today. He defines the role of a historian as someone who rescues from the forgotten past — the knowledge that is missing in today's modern society. He insists that it is imperative to learn from the ideas that we dislike, e.g. we all know the dangers of nationalism, but by the very knowing of the dangers, we can filter out its advantages. He explains that progress is never smooth and therefore is often invested heavily in the realms of trial and error. In terms of heritage conservation, this is vital — as fundraising is considered the main deliverable and enabler of programs — and therefore sustained trial and error is necessary for acquiring patronage, with the view, that only through such means the categorical imperative may also be achieved, and upheld.

The Dialectic

Also known as the dialectical method, is a discourse between two or more people holding different or contrasting points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments. Dialectic is synonymous with debate, but it differs in one vital way: while in a debate, the debater may use emotional content and, or rhetoric, in dialectics there is no space for emotional investment, and a resolution can only be found through rational thought i.e. reasoning, analyses and logic.

Theodore Adorno

German Philosopher & Sociologist (September 11, 1903 – August 6, 1969)



The Culture Industry

He studied how the working classes of developed nations think and feel — and concluded that the culture industry is in fact a deeply malevolent entertainment machine that leads to a kind of mass hypnosis (doxa), and is largely responsible for the de-sensitisation, and disenchantment of thousands. He even accused Walt Disney of being the most dangerous man in the world.

Adorno pointed out some essential facts about modern society :

- Doxa eventually always becomes toxic, and takes you away from the very things that you were looking for through it.
- Capitalists doesn't sell what we need, but what in their view, we ought to need, it imposes fantastical needs upon us and thereby enslaves us to manufactured convention.
- There are proto-fascists all around, who play out the hypnosis of doxa in real life, and exercise a disguised fascism on others via manipulation of belief structures – *e.g.*: 'you have a cheap car because you are not half as good as your brother who has a rolls royce'.

He recognised that the primary obstacles to progress are psychological and not just political or economic:

- Racism, homophobia, apathy, greed, excesses etc. stem from immaturities, and so it is the task of modern society to identify them, and to help in clearing out immaturities – and to thereby enable true progress.

Edward Said

Palestinian-American Writer & Cultural Critic (1 November 1935 – 25 September 2003)



Orientalism

‘I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India, or Egypt, in the later nineteenth century, took an interest in those countries, which was never far from their status, in his mind, as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact — and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism.’

— Edward Said, *Introduction to Orientalism*

Eurocentrism

In his book *Orientalism* (1978) Said unleashes a scathing attack on Eurocentrism as the source of the false cultural representations – with which the Western world perceives *The East*; through the lens of the European cannon.

He proposes the existence of a ‘subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Eastern peoples and their culture’. This, he argues, stems from the West’s long tradition of false, romanticisation of Asia, in general, and the Middle East, in particular. He points out that representations have served, and continue to serve, as implicit justifications for the colonial and imperial ambitions of the European powers, and of the U.S.

Kintsugi

金継ぎ

The art of golden joinery

KIN = gold

TSUGI = joining



Kintsugi is the art of repairing a broken object with gold - with the view, that the flaws themselves are a mark of eternal beauty, and that, repairing it is an act of reconciliation with the ravages of time.

In Japanese philosophy, this concept is especially operational under the *Zen ideal of Wabi Sabi*; wherein more appreciation is often deserved by old, broken, rustic, modest, imperfect or frugal artefacts; than by new and polished objects.

It is believed that once something suffers damage only then it is of elemental and eternal value.

Today, Kintsugi is considered a fundamental philosophical construct that lends its relevance to the fields of heritage preservation, conservation, archeology, museology, archiving, and history — as it induces in us a vital sensitivity that is essential to harbour in ourselves, in order for us to value old, ancient, historic; and, or damaged artefacts.

Author's Note

This document is a result of the numerous conversations, discussions, contemplations, insights, and deliberations that I have had with Mr. Debashish Nayak, since late 2015.

It would not be inapt to add that the envisioned *Indian Heritage Mission* is a direct result of the life's work of Mr. Nayak, who is an architect with more than two decades of experience in managing urban conservation issues of historic cities in India and abroad. Mr. Nayak's most recent accomplishment was as the founder and director of the Centre for Heritage Management of Ahmedabad University, Gujarat, from which he retired in April 2018 - only to scale up the scope for Indian heritage conservation by now working towards founding the Indian Heritage Mission, as an act of transferring his life's work to the enterprising youth of this country.

Since 1996 Mr. Nayak has been working as advisor to the Heritage Programme of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for the revitalisation of the 'Historic Walled City'. He is also advisor to other City Municipalities such as Jaipur, Amritsar, Old Delhi, Lucknow, Pondicherry etc. He has been appointed as Advisor to the Indian Heritage Cities Network launched by UNESCO, India and as Gujarat State Project Co-ordinator for National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities, and member of the National Committee on Conservation Policy, Archaeological Survey of India. Among the many awards and accolades he has received are the Ashoka Fellowship (1990 - 1993), Salzburg Fellow (1990), Ten Outstanding Young Indian Award (1994) and in 1995, Friends of the United Nations Citizen's Award at New York. In 2006, AMA (Ahmedabad Management Association) awarded him with Anubhai Chimanlal-AMA Nagrikta Puraskar - citizenship award for his contribution in Ahmedabad. In 2015, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Governor of West Bengal. He has been recently awarded 'The Spirit of Ahmedabad' award by Chief Minister of Gujarat for his contribution in protection of city's heritage.

An unmistakably significant evidence of Mr. Nayak's success in motivating communities, and advocating Heritage consciousness, is given by the fact that — Ahmedabad is now listed as a World Heritage City by UNESCO, primarily because of his untiring efforts and dedication. Prior to meeting Mr. Nayak in 2015, I had been away from India for over a decade, and upon my return, although I appreciated the vast and widespread economic and infrastructural development that India had undergone in the period of my absence, I couldn't help but feel a certain void of a cultural, philosophical, and discursive nature — in the general atmosphere. I was at once, left thinking that all our industrial prowess must be a double edged sword that we are only beginning to feel the brunt of, as we entrench ourselves deeper into an imported consumerist lifestyle. Despite all the development and the economic prowess that the country now boasts, on its streets a certain philosophical and discursive void was blatantly evident.

Materialist ends seemed to have taken precedence over humanistic ones.

I was initially left feeling that our so called Indian way of life had transmuted into a collective race for material and power like never before. Philosophical thought, and adherence to one's roots, seemed to have diminished, if not entirely wiped away by swathes of modernisation and technological advancement. My romantic notion of a quintessential *Indianness*, was proving to be a total failure. Something in me deeply suffered, as I came across more and more common folk who had generically adapted to an exceedingly consumeristic way of life. One, that is perhaps further away from our heritage, than it perhaps was prior to the opening of markets in the 1990s. Also worrying was the fact that the scale of patronage for the arts, culture, and heritage was barely visible in the public discourse.

In 2015, when I perchance met Mr. Nayak, I was at once led to think that unbeknownst to Mr. Nayak himself, his many efforts perhaps surmount to a parallel, or underground Heritage movement. At once, I felt that this is something I could volunteer for, as an enthusiast of history and culture myself. One meeting with Mr. Nayak was enough to inspire in me a program of study on the matters of Heritage. Hence, my camaraderie with Mr. Nayak took hold.

Now, I submit myself as a volunteer in servitude of this mission.

This is for me the perfect chance to tick off from my bucket list the urge to serve my country to whatever frugal effect that I can afford — the writing of this document is my tuppence. It is a servitude that has revived in me an erstwhile fascination for our history; and I hope I am able to urge others too.

– Himanshu Desai, Ahmedabad, India, 2018

