

ICSS/13/OP/470

Heritage site management problem in developing countries: a case study on Temple Town Bishnupur, District Bankura, west Bengal, IndiaNilanjana Das Chatterjee¹

The prerogative of cultural geography is to analyse how space, place and landscape are shaped by culture. It focuses on people's relationship to the natural world and the modification of that natural landscape into cultural landscape. Cultural landscape is tangible outcome of the complex interaction between human groups with its own practice, preferences, values, aspirations and a natural or modified environment (Knox & Manston, 1987). This interaction is time and space specific. Thus each and every place has its own cultural identity. This identity may become a resource for the further development of that place. So it happens in case of the 'temple town' Bishnupur. Geographically it is located between 22°57'15" N to 23°12'32"N latitude and 87°31'46"E to 87°24'11"E longitude. The place significance of Bishnupur is historically rooted. It was the capital of Malla dynasty. The Malla kings patronise many handloom and cottage industries including Silk, Tasar, Conch shell carvings, Bell metal, Patachitra etc. Along with this the Malla kings constructed many terracotta and brick made temples as religious symbols. Malla reign faced many ups and downs for several times. Naturally many cultural practices imprinted their material and non material culture to the indigenous Bishnupur culture. The terracotta temples witnessed as piece of evidence of that acculturation process. The temples of Bishnupur and surrounding areas were constructed in 16th or 17th century. The temple architecture of neighbouring state Orissa has a great impact on the temple of the study area. Incarnation of Mughal and South Indian style of temple can also be found (Santra, 1998). The Mughal, Parsic, Indo-Parsic, Hindu classics, Buddhist style and the mythological influences are prominent in terracotta ornamentation. Beside that the influence of Portuguese architecture is prominent (Dasgupta 1980). Thus mixture of tangible or natural resource and intangible resource in form of religious beliefs makes temples as a part of cultural environment which becomes a resource base for tourism. But it is very difficult in the developing countries to promote tourism because in most cases supply of basic needs get priority in the national planning programmes. Thus the architectural heritage sites like Bishnupur though having good tourism potentiality could not get proper priority at Local, Regional, National and International level. The present paper is trying to address such questions related to the management of heritage sites in the developing countries.

Key words: *Cultural landscape, Place specificity, Acculturation, Heritage site*