

# Heritage Management as a Tool for Educating Tribal Communities of India to Realize Their Identity

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## Introduction

The term '*asmita*' is derived from the Sanskrit word '*asmi*' ('I am'). It means a sense of the self as identity – how one views oneself. This sense of '*asmita*' can be linked to the tribal community of India to understand their heritage as their identity today is closely and inextricably linked to our past, our history. Heritage in this sense is about identity and identity is about heritage, especially a heritage we want to own up to and are proud of. In this connection heritage management can act as a tool for the tribal communities of India to find out their '*asmita*' or identity and the entire approach of our heritage management in this regard is totally based on generating community dialogue through educating them about their rich heritage. Heritage management is about creating an awareness which involves the management concepts of marketing, communication, and preserving the heritage in a sustainable manner.

As we know the tribal peoples of India constitute an important segment of the Indian population but they are not empowered enough to understand their own identity in terms of their rich heritage. Thus the heritage management can empower a tribal community in an active and multidimensional process, which will enable them to realize their identity and power in all aspects of life. In order to achieve this the government functionaries, academics, experts in heritage conservation and preservation, policy makers, students and professionals involved in the management of heritage can generate and interact and can build a knowledge base and a repository of best practices, using heritage as a learning resource to help initiate a heritage movement for the tribal communities which in turn will help to realize their '*asmita*'.

## What is Heritage Management?

"Heritage is about our inheritance; and the word heritage is indeed, derived from the word inheritance. Very few of us think about inheritance in the context of what has been handed down to us from generation to generation across centuries. Community involvement is in this context understood as a constituent component of heritage. Heritage is not just about preserving architecture and archaeological sites but also our culture, our tradition, our literature, our languages, and everything we can think of. We haven't actually been brought up that way in our country and most of us do not even think about heritage the way we need to. Heritage is about recognising it, preserving it, promoting it; and it is about creating ownership of this heritage so that we can instil in all of us a great deal of pride about where we come from, who we are, and what we have to provide to the entire world." Heritage plays an important role in community development, and here it is understood as a cultural construct, which if it is to be used to create identity needs to be more than simply conserved. Its relevance needs

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