

Conceptualising Religious Repositories and Communities into Living Museums: Beyond Aspects and Perspectives

Abantika Parashar¹, Mrinmoy Das¹

Living Museum: An Explanation

A living museum is a new form of open-air museum envisaged, built, and managed by the authority and agency of local communities. In particular it refers to a new idea of holistically interpreting cultural heritage for a sustainable development. This idea originated in France in the 1970s. Living museums are now widely established around the world in a number of villages or in a territory of ethnic minorities or communities to help conserve culture, heritage and assist their future development.

Bordowa or Batatdrawa

Bordowa or Batatdrawa, the birth place of Shrimanta Shankardeva the founder of Vaishnavism in Assam is a shrine and a centre of Vaishnava art and culture. The Satra¹ institution is a living museum in itself with the Naamghar, the well, Shilikha (Myrobalan) tree in its natural boundaries. Also the Monikut, the auspicious Stone slab, the traditional musical instruments displayed in the Satra campus forms a definite perspective of an eco museum or a living museum with the Vaishnava community. Bordowa has been regarded as the *dwitiya vaikuntha* (second heaven).

Shankardeva established satras or monasteries all over Assam, to nurture and propagate his philosophy and practice of life. The satras have also nurtured certain art and craft traditions.

This cultural ambience is not confined to the satras alone. Every village in Assam, whether tribal or non-tribal, has assimilated these traditions in daily life.

The Community

The community we live in is often described as a knowledge society, a risk society, a globalized society, a consumer society, a post-modern society, etc. How could we combine the potential in an eco museum or a living museum with the aim of contributing to a 'good society'? We need to be in dialogue with our communities to identify what is important in their everyday life, maybe we have to start by identifying who this community consist of?

¹ National Museum Institute, New Delhi, India.