

Proceedings of the *Baithak* on 'Industrial Heritage of Railways in India'



Image Credits: Sahapedia

A documentation of the *Baithak* held on 21st February at the National Rail Museum, New Delhi as part of the India Heritage Walk Festival 2020. Report by Moulshri Joshi on behalf of Sahapedia.

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The Baithak - '**Industrial Heritage of Railways in India**' was held as a part of the India Heritage Walk Festival 2020, organised by Sahapedia and curated by Moulshri Joshi, architect and founding partner at SpaceMatters.

About Sahapedia

Sahapedia is an open online resource on the arts, cultures and histories of India (broadly, South Asia) based on both curated and crowd-sourced content. '*Saha*' (Sanskrit for 'together with'), is an invitation to explore together the richness of the Indian cultural landscape. Sahapedia appreciates that knowledge around each subject is complex and has many dimensions. Sahapedia's platform gives users many options for finding their preferred way around each subject. On the Sahapedia website people can read articles, watch videos, listen to interviews, and browse image galleries. Users can also explore historic sites and natural spaces through virtual walks, timelines and interactive maps.

About SpaceMatters

SpaceMatters is an integrated design practice founded in 2005 by architects Amritha Ballal, Moulshri Joshi and Suditya Sinha with architecture, interior, urban design and habitat research capabilities based out of New Delhi. Cultural curation especially in the field of industrial heritage is one of the six focus areas at SpaceMatters where the studio works with organizations and networks such as TICCIH, ICOMOS, ANIH to assist in the study, interpretation and preservation of historic landscapes. SpaceMatters' has been constructing an inventory of India's Industrial heritage which currently lists over 400 sites from across the country and remains a unique survey on the emerging subject. For more details, visit www.spacematters.in

About IHWF

IHWF is India's largest heritage walk festival, it spans over 65 cities and offers participants experiences from across sectors such as historical sites, culinary hideouts, nature parks, and photo-walks. Beyond walks, IHWF also organises discussions on culture and heritage called Baithaks. The festival is an award winning undertaking powered by Sahapedia.

Introduction of our Sponsors

This rendition of the festival has been possible by the generous support of sponsors - UNESCO, NMDC, Airbnb, Tata Technologies and Interglobe Foundation.

About Baithak

'Baithaks with Sahapedia' series are an informal multi-disciplinary platform that promotes discussion and dialogue to understand heritage as it is seen and experienced by individuals in varying contexts. The program features speakers to lead engagement with various facets of India's history, culture, arts and popular trends. These talks are in the mould of informal, intimate and lively discussions, resembling a traditional Baithak.

About the Baithak topic

India has the unique privilege of being home to not one but four UNESCO World Heritage Sites connected to the railways. This is an exception but what lies unacknowledged is the fact that an entire nation lies charted with railway lines and the memory of a kinetic nation produced by, for and despite the locomotive. During this Baithak, we will talk about how we can define the territory of this complex and all-encompassing heritage. We will share the experience of our speakers, the challenges of managing this heritage and in process hope to put together some good ideas on how to work across disciplines to tackle them.



Baithak on "Industrial Heritage of Railways" in India held at the National Rail Museum in New Delhi saw railway experts, enthusiasts, scholars and government officials come together to brainstorm. Image courtesy : Sahapedia

Introduction Speech: The Landscape of Railway Heritage in India

Welcome!

I, Moulshri Joshi, have the honour of curating this from Sahapedia partly because of my background in Industrial Heritage and partly for the lack of people taking up the study of Industrial Heritage in India and Asia. Some of you here have spent a lifetime working with railways and might find some consolation in the fact that as much as within Railways, disciplines such as archaeology, conservation, architecture, planning, and culture at large are only beginning to come to terms with the vast yet undeniable inventory that we have been handed down as remains of our industrial past. I use the word industrial in the broadest possible sense – heritage of how we made things, material evidence of scientific and technological value that includes manufacturing, engineering, construction, and the tangible & intangible landscapes that capture them.

My fascination started purely from an architectural sense, intrigued by the sight of old warehouses, mills, factories, mines, railway bridges – thanks to some early chance encounters. These stood out as icons of what we produced collectively and recently.

There is not a life that industrialisation did not touch. That understanding escalated quickly to the appreciation for the very messy realities these post-industrial sites left behind. Landscapes left behind by industrialisation were virtual and literal scars on our cityscapes and symbolised loss of opportunity, neglect, exploitation, pollution, litigation, abandonment and sometimes death and disease. I learnt on the job, travelling to former industries till the messiness came to be the nature of industrialisation itself – one that was built on sweat and blood, trial and error and profit and loss, mountains of waste and a long arc of history. The intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change pegs the date of the irreversible change human actions as 1750s - also the advent of industrial revolution. So can we delink heritage of industrialisation from climate change? These are complex ideas but they can be set into motion often with just one visit to an ordinary mine or factory as it did for me as a teenager visiting a bangle-making factory in Firozabad. The power in these spaces for me lies in their capacity to educate and help us make better choices for the future.

I have had the pleasure to work with various organisations in the field such as TICCIH, ICOMOS, ANIH and have recently enrolled to RES, ISRS, ACHS. The idea is to learn the different vocabulary of different groups with same goals to be able to do what I'm doing today.

Industrial Heritage – An oxymoron?

As an architect, I have often argued that ruinous, degraded physical conditions of sites of industry has kept us from embracing these landscapes as sites of heritage, culture and beauty. But this is not all. Industry by meaning is linked to innovation and newness and heritage antiquity and refinement. How then to reconcile 'industry' as 'heritage' and connect the two seemingly paradoxical concepts? Perhaps it is a self-preservation of sorts that we have denied this connection and the subject lies in the margins of heritage studies, fit only for machine buffs or the hipster equivalent of culture. If dilapidated and seemingly ordinary sites produced by people and often children and women within an exploitative ecosystem potentially trigger changed-were to be regarded as 'heritage', it would dent beyond repair and potentially bring down the tenants on which elite production of heritage rests. And in that lies the real power of the idea, it could transform heritage production as romantic indulgence of the past to becoming a problem-solver for our current crises. This would mean that we ask bigger and better questions from heritage "*thoda aur wish karo*". And that's why we are here today.

Indian Railways

In the birth of our nation, a definitive marker of the national geography was the Railways. It is difficult to imagine India as a bounded, whole national space without the landscape transversed and made visible by the railway line. The technology joined unconnected dots and people on the map and ideas moved between them, through them and on these tracks, to produce a new nation.

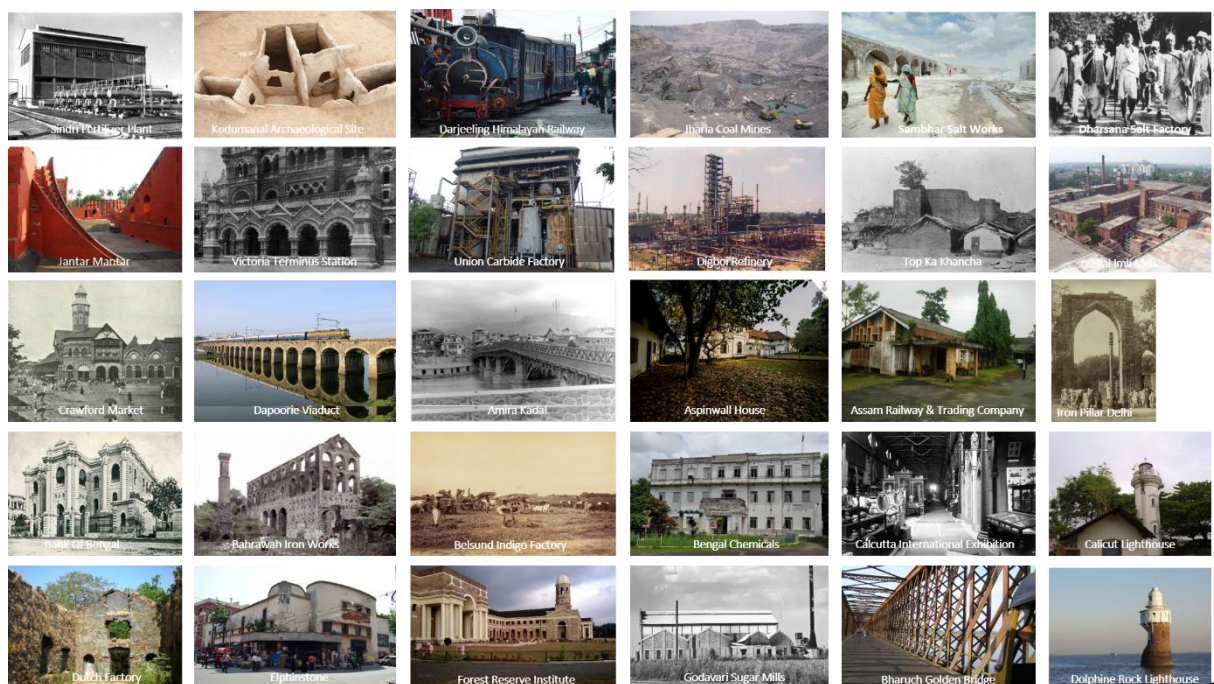
That Railways was first and foremost an industrial enterprise, a technology to extract and transport the produce that the Indian subcontinent could offer, a space to invest surplus to produce surplus and a commercial enterprise that subsidized and often

supported the wars of the Imperial Britain, is the reason to discuss its legacy in terms of Industrial Heritage. As an industry it gave jobs to a large population, skilled them and created generations of those who stood in awe of the passing train. The state project of railways, as irrigation canals, telegraph lines and highways, were instruments to consolidate colonial India -economically, politically and socially and was the engine to bolster military and industrial might. The project, favoured over all other state-works, was developed at a pace that far surpassed Britain and France during the same period.

Railway workshops in colonial India could produce well-priced locomotives as early as 1860s. Yet, local production was side-stepped in the favour of British imports. Between 1860-1940, some 22% of the total locomotives made in India were sold to colonial India. Only a fraction of the capital invested in Railways was actually spent in India. Till the turn of the century almost all equipment to skilled labour came from Britain. By 1904, some 200 million people were commuting by railroad, a mile-ratio higher than continental Europe. Until the 1870s, while railway travel in Britain was largely restricted to middle and upper class, third class passengers were occupying the passenger freight in India. By 1920, some 500 million travelled by train and railways derived the bulk of its revenue from third-class passenger, over 96% of all. By 1920, some 500 million travelled by train, far exceeding the original estimate and trumping passenger travel over cargo.

If the story of Indian Railways is how it produced a nation, it is also the story of how colonial India produced a modern, industrial Britain. If the story of Indian railways is how it bridged distances and brought communities closer, it is also the story of how it worked to sharpen difference and create new communities. If it produced a modern, trans-national or global landscape, it combined, often problematically, national and native identities and a sense of swadeshi.

What we live now is the space between these two realities and that is the story of how we repurposed the complex history we inherited to make a post-colonial, technological India. Looking back is a way to make sense of this inheritance



Starting 2014, I took up the challenge to inventorise India's industrial heritage. It hard to piece together a story, an understanding of what is industrial heritage in India? without material evidence and those had not been documented. Today the inventory in its fourth volume and records 400 sites - with textual and visual material - from across the country. These are sites of manufacturing, transit and transport, extraction, Railways, Maritime, Post & telegraph, Public works, Museums and industrial townships, labour housing, archeological sites and traditional industries, industrial disasters and documentation of industrial culture such as company art and photographic collections. Of the 400, some 70 are railways site that span scales and occur in the following categories–

1. Railway Ensemble such as the world heritage sites of Darjeeling, Nilgiris and Kalka-Simla Hill Railways
2. Railway townships, workshops (which are often little towns themselves)
3. Railway Stations
4. Railway bridges, aqueducts and other public works
5. Railway printing press, schools and other specialised buildings
6. Transport museums and heritage parks
7. Industrial railways such as colliery, forest, sugar and brickwork railways
8. Associated sites such as railway schools, clubs, hospitals etc
9. Railway Lines
10. Light railways including trams, municipal railways such as garbage trains of Bengal

This is an expansive landscape and the scale of the built heritage ranges from entire townships to lines and locomotives. How do we deal with this? How do we begin describing this heritage and attending to its preservation?

The Asian Experience

It is important to draw in at this point the Asian Experience- the experience of the 'other' people who has largely been described and documented by the West, often the colonisers themselves. It is a remarkable experience of industrialisation in shadows of colonial empires. It exists today in its multifarious avatars of ecological devastation, chronic poverty, economic subjugation and cultural apartheid which sets it apart significantly from the western experience of becoming modern and industrial. And this heritage needs to be reclaimed in the way we frame this heritage. How must we do it is a challenge? How well – in all honesty – can we tell this history is a responsibility upon us. These questions are a part of a larger expansion of the concept of 'heritage' and moving from the 19th century approach focused on memorials and monuments, lines and locomotives to images, ideas and questions.

To deal with this difficulty of expressing the magnitude of the task upon us, I have found the elephant to be an excellent metaphor ever since I chanced upon Jules Verne's hidden gem of a thriller set in post-mutiny Cawnpore or Kanpur called *Demons of Cawnpore*, a story of revenge and deceit powered by an elephant that is powered by a steam engine! Here is an excerpt:

“On the morning of the 5th may, the passengers along the high road from Calcutta to Chandanagore, whether men women or children, English or native, were completely astounded by a sight which met their eyes. And certainly the surprise they testified was extremely natural.

At sunrise, a strange and most remarkable equipment has been seen to issue from the suburbs of the Indian Capital, attended by a dense crowd of people drawn by curiosity to watch its departure.



Jules Verne's novel on a steam-powered mechanical elephant. Illustration by Léon Benett

First and apparently drawing the caravan came a gigantic elephant. The monstrous animal, twenty feet in height and thirty in length, advanced deliberately, steadily and with a certain mystery of movement which struck the gazer with a thrill of awe. His trunk, curved like a cornucopia, was uplifted high in the air. His gilded tusks, projecting from behind the massive ornamented howdah, which looked like at lower surmounted, in Indian style, by a dome shaped roof and furnished with lens-shaped glasses to serve for windows.

The elephant drew after him a train consisting if two enormous cars, or actual houses, moving bungalows in fact, each mounted on four wheels. The wheels which were prodigiously strong, were carved, or rather sculptured, in every part. Their lowest portion only could be seen, as they moved inside a sort of a case, like a paddle box, which concealed the enormous locomotive apparatus. A flexible gangway connected the two carriages. How can a single elephant, however strong, manage to drag these two enormous constructions, without any apparent effort. Yet this astonishing animal did so! His huge feet

were raised and set down with mechanical regularity and changed his pace from walk to a trot, without either the voice or the hand of the mahout being apparent.

The spectators were at first so astonished to all this, that they kept a respectful distance. When they ventured nearer their surprise gave place to admiration. If some inquisitive person had chanced to lay his hand on the animal, all would have been explained. It was but a marvellous deception, a gigantic imitation, having nearly as possible every appearance of life.

In fact, the animal was really encased in steel, and an actual steam engine was concealed within his sides. The Train or the Steam House, to give it its most suitable name, was the travelling dwelling promised by the engineer."

From Chapter 1 Section 5 "The Iron Giant" The Demon of Cawnpore, Jules Verne

It is rail fanning & fantasy at its peak. The elephant was a symbol of strength, thrilled the onlookers, was an engineering marvel for those who crafted it and a management nightmare for those who had to herd it through the Indian towns and jungles. Industrial heritage of Railways in India is very much this steam elephant. We are here not only to celebrate its beauty but also as caretakers of this metaphoric machine to build to share our experience and angst.

It only adds to our troubles as caretakers if we take the elephant at face value, a magnificent beast like a giant locomotive. Besides the largeness of the physical space it occupies, an entire ecosystem is needed to take care of it. No doubt there is much to be obsess over its unique physique but that view must be shared alongside its social, ecological and economic view – the 3 cornerstones of sustainable design – if we must survive side by side this mammoth. Many of you are elephant trainers, you are the mahout who ride it and keep it running. The elephant guides are the archivist, historians, rail fans are the make possible a more intimate experience for all others including children who watch in amazement from the streets. Some of you are in the business of training the trainers - academics, policy makers, leaders of organisations. But really we are all the blind men in the room making sense of this elephant. It's an honour that today, in one room, we have all the capabilities to befriend and work with this metaphoric elephant. Thank you for the honour.

Speaking of Railway heritage in terms of Industrial Heritage gives us a methodology, vocabulary and case studies and an organised network on multiple disciplines to work with and tackle this elephant in the room holistically. And if that means that the room needs to be redrawn, disciplinary boundaries breached then so be it.

I will invite the six speakers we have today to take up different aspects of this subject. We will also then open it to questions to all other participants. For the constraint of time, I would request that you are brief. Thank you!

Moulshri Joshi,

Founding Architect, SpaceMatters. Author of *Inventory of Industrial Heritage in India*.

Speaker 1 *What role can the Indian Railways play in the field of Railway Heritage?*

Vinita Srivastava
 Executive Director (Heritage)
 Indian Railways

Other affiliations : Member - ICOMOS India, Member - TICCIH, Member - Rail Enthusiasts' Society, Member – Indian Steam Railways Society

Welcome everyone! It is indeed a privilege to host our visitor from abroad - Dr Wu from Taiwan - stalwarts literally from the Indian railways on my side here who have steered us at work and the framing of the study of heritage; my hardworking pillar of support, the Director of Rail Museum; and on this side, everybody who sees the Railways from outside. The younger lot represents the wonderful parents, children, the younger people who make this museum really come alive.

Busloads of them come in everyday, makes me wonder if the young are excited by Railways, then there is something we can all look forward and work towards. What we hope to achieve by this hour or so of conversation, I guess, is just threads of thought that will take us forward because every museum needs a muse.



*"Museums are the crucibles in the field of heritage"
 says Vinita Srivastava. Image credits : Sahapedia*

I attended a conference where the British Rail Museum Head explained that whenever he lost a sense of meaning or purpose, he imagined a little camcorder outside the gate of the museum, recording what people say when they walk out of the museum. He wondered whether they would say, "ah, such a boring place" or would they feel "oh, this opens up a new thought" or would the parents say "oh, my children learnt something wonderful today".

I wish there was such a recorder but there isn't and neither should we record. We should be able to imagine what this place and all other rail museums are capable of. At the National Rail Museum, New Delhi we have partnered with Google Arts and Culture for the Indian Railways Project, where you have access to the story of the Indian Railways told through the journeys, the people, the heritage and the engineering.

We have also worked on digitizing the archives of the National Rail Museum. They were fairly dilapidated but with a little bit of guidance, help and support, we have digitized almost 50,00,000 pages of manuscripts, visuals and maps.

Explore the railways of India



EDITORIAL FEATURE

Experience the Indian Railways Like Never Before

From tunnels to locomotives, explore the railways in exciting new ways



EDITORIAL FEATURE

12 Picturesque Stops Along the Indian Railways

Discover the most beautiful stations and incredible views

Indian Railways partnered with Google Arts and Culture to document the 150 years old Indian Railways with its 151,000 km of laid track and an infinite source of memories. Image credits : Google

There is a part of the history of railways which is pre-Independence, from 1912 onwards, which is the colonial portion. Some of these pictures on the glass table of this conference room are Railway Logos. Those which have the Crown on top are from when the Crown took charge, the rest are the East India Company and the State ones. Through all of this we hope to have a lot more stories to tell as a result.

We have a tie-up with National Archives of India, they have agreed to share the PWD Railways, pre-Independence, the PWD Department.

I will close my speech with Tagore's poem.

" thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger."

That's what the railways did. They entered as colonial beasts, but they turned around, bringing the country together. So let's hope that our conversation and whatever little we bring to this table helps to have many more such forums, many more such minds attached to this museum, Rajesh Agrawal sir here started the 'Friends of the Museum' concept, there are people who guided it since it set up in 1987. Let's hope even our younger visitors go back with a sense of connection to this place and bring forward ways to make it ever more alive and relevant.

Thank You. Once again a very warm welcome.



Colonial-era Railway logos are printed on the glass top of the conference table in the National Rail Museum, New Delhi. Image credits : Sahapedia

Speaker 2

The Possible Revival of Steam Locomotives in India

Ranjit Singh Virdi

Former General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway
President, Indian Steam Railways Society

The History of Steam Locomotives in India

Steam locomotives came to India in 1853, and at one point of time, the India Railways had over 10,000 steam locomotives. The WP bullet-nosed locomotive was used for passenger travel. There were about 5,500 of these steam locomotives at one time. But eventually there was a purge. The purge happened in the late 90s when the locomotives were replaced with diesels and electrics and by 1994-1995 they were all scrapped, cut out and sold. The last commercial scheme service was in the year 1995 on broad gauge and in the year 2000 on meter gauge and after that it was finished. Narrow gauge rails remain.

The Revival

You may wonder how the revival of steam locomotives came about? The revival, to whatever extent it has taken place, is thanks to one gentleman known as Mr. Ashwini Lohani who was at one point of time the director of The Rail Museum, New Delhi. He took it upon himself to restore a locomotive called the *Fairy Queen*, which was then lying on a pedestal in the Rail Museum. He took that locomotive to Perambur to revive it and it came to be recognized as the oldest working steam locomotive in the world. This incident helped revive the interest in steam locomotives and got the Government of India and the Ministry of Railways to see there was an appetite for these heritage structures amongst the general public. The *Fairy Queen* was the first one and it still runs a service sometimes from Delhi to Rewari.

What is left on Indian Railways as far as steam locomotives are concerned? There are about 250 which are on pedestals and about 7 broad gauge steam locomotives, 3 WPs, EIR. The *Fairy Queen* is EIR 22, there is a Ramgotty and a Beyer Garratt in Kharagpur. On meter gauge there are 9 locomotives, and on narrow gauge, there are 14 locomotives, of which 11 are at the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, 1 in Kalka-Shimla, 1 in Jogindernagar, and 1 in Merul. So all totalled about 30 working locomotives and 3 more are under restoration.



Bringing alive the magic of steam-hauled trains, the Indian Railways put into service its renovated heritage steam loco Azad WP 7200 for hauling the iconic tourist train, the Palace on Wheels in 2018. Image courtesy: JL Singh

These figures may be slightly out of date. What's left of steam elsewhere in India? We have one 1:4 scale model which is working at Bal Bhawan, which was restored recently as a gift by Krauss Maffei from Germany. We also have a heritage steam centre in Rewari, which is about 85kms from Delhi It is worth visiting and they have a lot of artefacts over there. And we have the capacity to build and restore steam locomotives, which is still alive at Perambur in Southern Railway and at Golden Rock in Tamil Nadu. These are the two workshops which still do restoration.

The way ahead...

The Indian Railways looks at heritage as basically an obligatory expenditure. They don't look at it as something that is going to produce revenue. So, there is no scope for profitability. Indian Railways, you can't blame them, they are huge, it's an elephant as Jules Verne pointed out. But the model being followed in the United Kingdom is very interesting. There they about 100 small companies, each working independently and profitably, that together have over a thousand steam locomotives working. So there is a great revival of steam locomotives over there because they are very proud of the fact that they were the ones who invented the steam engine, a huge motivation factor. These private enterprises are running it in a period setting and people really love it. This is a profitable way forward for us in India. We need private enterprise to work on the 30-odd steam locomotives we have.



The Fairy Queen, is the oldest working Steam Locomotive in the world, built in 1855. It was completely over hauled in 1996 & resumed commercial operations in 1997 as the Fairy Queen train tour. Source: www.indianrailways.gov.in

So the first prerequisite would be to have a steam locomotive that could run at 100kmph, if you want to take a train from Delhi to Agra and run it as a commercial tourist, something to interest the people. That would be the first thing to be made a reality and after that there are these – *The Fairy Queen* and *Express*. *Express* is very popular in Southern Railways, they run it once in a month or so, on small sections near Chennai. They run it with one coach and it is fully booked.

Bottlenecks in revival of steam locomotives

The three biggest problems regarding conservation and revival of steam locomotives in India, are as follows :

Firstly, the biggest problem is loss of skills. Today we are losing people who are able to maintain and operate steam locomotives. They are getting depleted very fast so we are requesting retired people to share their knowledge with us.

Second is the lack of priority towards steam locomotives. Of course this is not a criticism of Indian Railways, I was part of that organization and I myself probably didn't give it as much focus as I should have because Darjeeling Himalayan Railways was at one point of time, under my charge. Resources are allocated by the Railways but revival of steam locomotives is still considered a peripheral activity, it is not the mainstream activity.

Third is the lack of private sector involvement. Maybe if there is private sector involved, this revival will pick up.

We owe it to our future generations to keep this marvel going. We really have to have the public interested and invested in reviving this important piece of heritage. Thankyou.

Speaker 3

Engaging Indian Youth with their Heritage

Smita Vats

Founder ITIHAAS - Indian Traditions and Heritage Society

Pride and Ownership in Heritage

Knowledge about India's heritage and culture is vast but fragmented. So much information is locked up in various institutional departments and government offices. The average person does not have access to that information. Let me just begin by saying that heritage is a lot about belonging. It is a lot about ownership - who owns heritage? Like the previous speaker Mr. Virdi explained how in UK they have a fantastic model of private companies giving a second lease of life to steam heritage locomotives since Britishers built the steam engine; so there is a lot more stake. The concept of pride and ownership is very central to the work that ITIHAAS does.



Smita Vats (right) explains ITIHAAS' work with children and the need for Heritage Studies in India as Conservation Architect and Urban Planner Aishwarya Tipnis (left) looks on. Image courtesy: Sahapedia

Heritage Studies

ITIHAAS embeds heritage as a syllabus into school curriculum, so that it is a subject any student would study; like mathematics, geography or history. Heritage studies is something which we try to make mandatory in schools. We have not succeeded in a big way because we are battling an NCERT-CBSE-ICSE curriculum but we think young people have to be brought into the sphere of heritage; they have to be brought in as stakeholders, so that they feel a sense of belonging and ownership, and thereby pride. This is a very slow process. Spaces as fantastic as the Railway Museum should not get limited to a ride or a picnic. Within schools, the operative word is *picnic*, how do we separate this tendency of schools to club students' immersion in our heritage from a picnic? How do we make students engage with this rich heritage?

Making Heritage Modern

Young people today are poised to take in a lot of information. They are not in a state where we need to mollycoddle them and restrict them to only the very basic facts. They are interested to go into the details of things and are from a very early age beginning to find careers. I think the process of simplifying heritage for the young and making it very modern – that is the oxymoron. I really believe that we don't treat a heritage space as something for the youth to engage with. We dismiss them due to their age and undermine their ability to contribute. But the moment we start treating a space for young people, it makes a big difference.

This is what we endeavour to do through ITIHAAS'. For example, visitors to the Taj Mahal aren't allowed to take paper or pencil inside the complex. How then can we engage students who visit? What ITIHAAS has done is to copy designs made on the walls of the Taj and created stamp-on tattoos. So, we just stamp tattoo the kids' arms with this design and they do a treasure hunt of finding this design on the Taj Mahal walls. This is how ITIHAAS circumvents strict rules to make a place more fun and child-centric.

We have got to bridge that oxymoron by finding a way of making what is antiquity and bringing it closer to children's day-to-day lives so that they have a stake in it. ITIHAAS does many programs and we are very happy to work at the Rail Museum if there is a chance to bring children in.



ITIHAAS tries to connect the paradigms of heritage with education. Photo courtesy: ITIHAAS

Skilling within Heritage Sector

Skilling within Heritage is a challenge because unless heritage starts to create job opportunities, people will not enter the field. Today there are many more people entering the field of heritage than there were 15 years ago. Today there are career prospects in heritage but there needs to be more profit and employability to pull more people in. Plus, we really have to think of clubbing heritage – we have no dearth of it – with education and tourism.



ITIHAAS Training Programme upskilling the guides of Neemrana Fort Palace, Jaipur. The programme was held in conjunction with National Skills Development Corporation. Photo courtesy: ITIHAAS

We are currently working with the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) and we are training 20,000 guides across the country. None of them are in Railway or Industrial Heritage but maybe at some stage one should find people and plug them in there because what we're really doing is upskilling existing guides in major cities making sure that authentic information of ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) or any other research is shared with the larger public. The best way to share is through weaving a narrative – a story.

Skilling the Next Gen

A successful programme that works towards the skilling of the next generation is our student ambassador programme. ITIHAAS works with students in the summer across ten museums in the country. At the National Museum, New Delhi, we have 90 students who actually work in the stores, learning restoration techniques like chemical coating. If young people understand the hard work that goes behind maintaining heritage they will learn its value and begin to respect it. This begins very simply – without intellectualizing the whole thing, we just allow students to get their hands dirty.

15 years ago, being a guide in a heritage site was not a coveted job, yet today many youngsters do it as a part-time job for spare cash and it is seen as a good way to merge your passion for culture and history with earnings. Thus, skilling would begin with sensitization of young people and engaging the best minds to see that they have a stake in this bountiful heritage.

Change for the better – slow but steady

Things are changing – both on the institutional level and personal level.

The War Memorial, New Delhi got in touch with ITIHAAS because they have 14,000 children coming a day. But these children charge in and then charge out. The Memorial authorities wanted to ensure a take-back for these children. And they wanted to know how do you follow up? Because regular visits to heritage sites, definitely create an alternate career option as you grow. We've had so many young people come back all getting great marks, parents pushing them towards engineering and medicine, and they shifting to anthropology, archaeology, museology. So, there is a definite shift. Now the responsibility is how do you take them towards careers. Post-sensitization, now is the next stage.

Speaker 4

Industrial Heritage, Railway Heritage and Conservation Practise in India today.

Aishwarya Tipnis

Conservation Architect and Urban Planner

Affiliations : ICOMOS India, Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres 2017

Whatever I am saying today is my personal introspection based on my experience of preparing the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan [CCMP] for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway World Heritage Site. For this project, I worked with multiple organizations – ICOMOS, UNESCO, etc – but they sit on the other side of the world. Whereas the actual management of the heritage site happens on the other side – here, in India. There is a huge gap because when you're looking at an international perspective, they don't understand your problems on the ground. And the problems on the ground cannot be sorted with the global overview because they just don't understand, the conversations don't happen – it's always one preaching to the other, and when you're preaching, its never sustainable. So, my experience is that we need to define what Industrial Heritage means for us in India.

The Gap: Global Frameworks Vs Local Contexts

ICOMOS India is a very new thing, it started in 2012, we never progressed anywhere because we've been stuck in trying to adapt ourselves to what Paris or the global world is saying, when really we should be doing the opposite. Just because the globe is saying that Industrial and Technological is the same, it doesn't necessarily mean that for us.

My experience and my research says that when you look at an Industrial Heritage site in say, the UK, it was designed with aesthetics in mind, and so the buildings are more pretty. But when you're looking at an Industrial Heritage site in India, it was built for profit and thus construction was hasty and aesthetics did not feature. So even when we're looking at the 14 stations as part of the World Heritage Site in Darjeeling, none of them are pretty buildings, maybe one or two. Barring the Headquarters Building of the Darjeeling Railways, which is well designed; everything else was raised, bent, put together, and moved into place fast. So if we try to adopt an approach that is spelt out by Paris, it fails in the Indian context. That's the gap.



The 140-year-old Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a Unesco heritage site. Image credits: DHR Online.

Plugging gaps

We don't know our own heritage and we have to find ways to deal with it in our own context, in our own understanding, which I don't think there are enough people talking about it. Every time there is a project of Industrial Heritage, we have international experts coming in to tell us what to do but they are not listening to what we are saying. The CCMPA project for was a huge learning experience for me because I was the only Indian consultant on a team which had 5 international consultants. Work on the ground was being done by me along with a group of young people, fresh graduates in architecture and engineering. So our learning is from the ground; it is from cups of tea with the Inspector-of-Works telling us what works and what doesn't; it is from the constant rotation of people. The biggest problem was how government officials would undergo training and work on site in Darjeeling for a few years before moving on to their next posting. That is how we came to the idea of creating a manual, so that even if people change, knowledge remains in one place.

But that is only one case, of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways. We have to look at an entire country and its plethora of heritage. But who is going to be responsible for it? The colleges are not talking about Industrial Heritage, they are not even talking about heritage! The tourism courses at institutes across the country preach tourism but they don't talk about heritage. Even architecture courses do not talk heritage. So all that new architects want to do is demolish old buildings and build new ones because that is what's fashionable. Nobody wants to go through the pains of doing a heritage project. So we have gaps at those levels. Now where do you start plugging it in?



On-site work for the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan [CCMPA] for the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway World Heritage Site. Image credits: Aishwarya Tipnis Architects

Heritage Courses for Railway Officers

Huge amount of money has been spent in preparing the CCMP, which will stay on as very pretty books, but the people who are going to manage the building on site, do they understand the CCMP? That's the question we should be asking. Are they capable enough of managing their own heritage? And therefore what is more important for us is to have a course on heritage that every Railway Officer goes through, not just somebody who has chosen to be in that position. Heritage should be like the five other subjects that you are teaching at Railway College because there is heritage everywhere.

Problem of Plenty

It is not only the DHR [Darjeeling Himalayan railway] that is an important site of Indian industrial heritage. Every single British-era railway station has heritage, history, artefacts. Why do we need people from outside [India] to come and tell us

what to do? When you have these experts coming in, they say this is very precious, this is the only one of its kind, but we have 50,000 of these. And so the people in charge of it every day say that we see 50,000 of these so they are not special. So there is a difference in perception in what is special, what is not special, what is heritage, what is not heritage. So unless we as experts come up with a definition with what is Industrial Heritage for us in India, this gorge is only going to widen. As ICOMOS India, it is important that we put down our definition and say what is Industrial Heritage for us here. It necessarily does not need to match what the European context is. It may be totally different.

Speaker 5

Rail Heritage : A Railway Enthusiast's View

J L Singh

Founding Member, Secretary and Magazine Editor – Rail Enthusiasts' Society



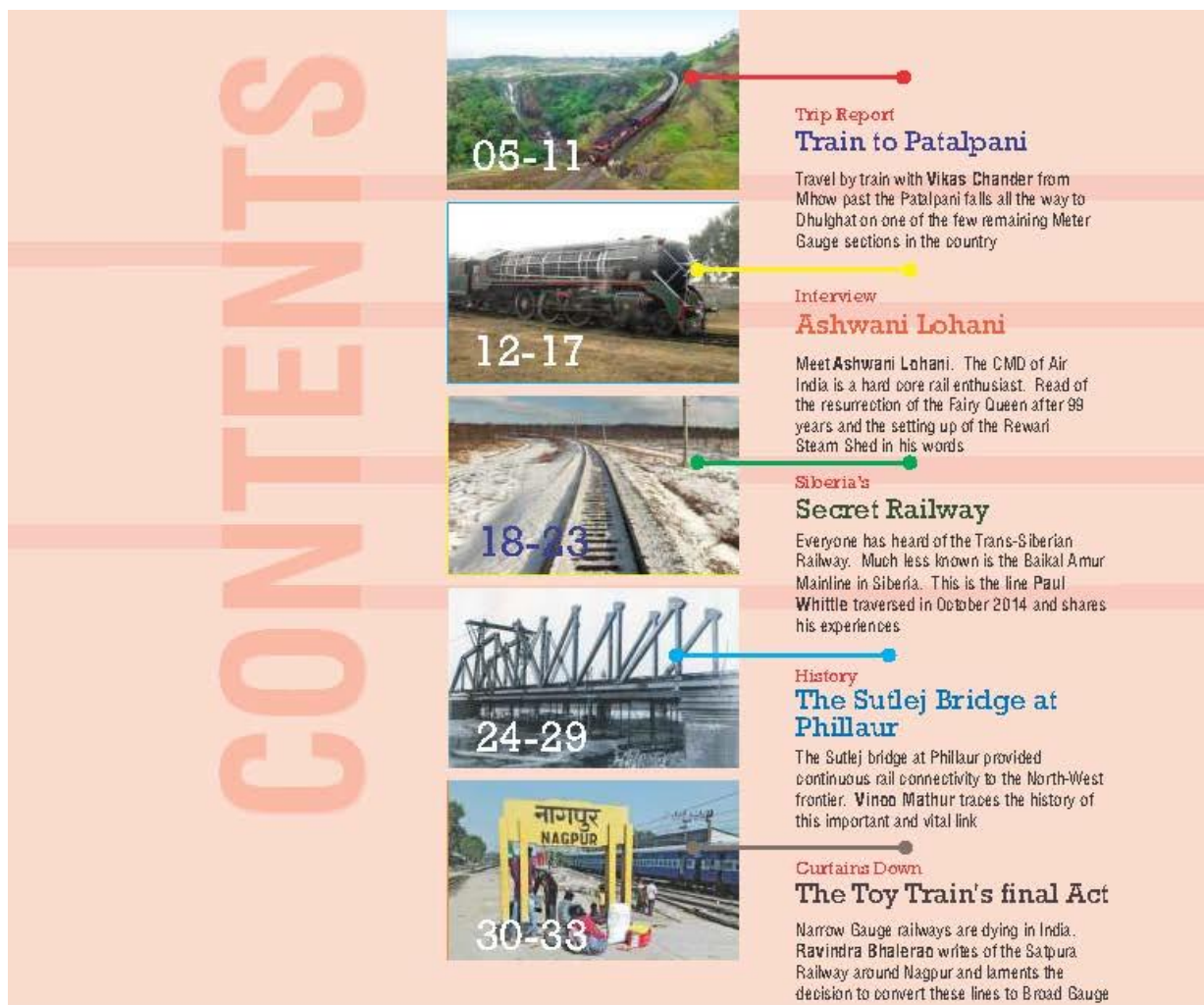
Mr. J L Singh explaining the Rail Enthusiasts' Society's contribution in disseminating India's Rail Heritage. Photo credits: Sahapedia

The 'Rail Enthusiasts' Society' (RES) is a very new society – we were registered in December 2015 with the objective of bringing together rail enthusiasts on a platform to exchange ideas. The format we thought would do justice to our goal was through a quarterly magazine. Prior to launching our magazine, India had no magazine which put together Rail Heritage. The Indian Railway Fan Club (IRFCA) is a popular e-group but it lacked a tangible or solid output, which is where we come in. While our magazine is for Rail Enthusiasts, about 50-60% of our content deals with Heritage and History.

Defining 'Rail Enthusiast'

Let me start by telling you *who* is a Rail Enthusiast. Anyone who has a passion for the Railways, which is manifest in any form or any degree of passion, dealing with any area related to the railways. Below are a number of such areas, which indicate the breadth of the field.

1. History and Heritage
2. Maintenance and Operations
3. Locomotives and Rolling Stock
4. Track, Bridges and Tunnels
5. Rail Architecture, Rail Photography, Rail Modelling
6. Anecdotes, books and films about the Railways



*A glimpse of the variety of content in the quarterly magazine published by the Rail Enthusiasts' Society.
 Image Credits : Rail Enthusiasts' Society*

This list is non-exhaustive. If you are interested in anything to do with the Railways, then you are a Rail Enthusiast. For example, one of our members is passionate about walking along railway tracks. He is based out of Pune and has walked along the railway track from Pune to Bombay, a feat he completed over several days.

While walking along railway tracks or under a railway bridge, he keeps an eye open for interesting details. He once spotted a girder stating it was a product of the Vulcan Foundry in the 1892, an interesting heritage trivia which he promptly captured on the camera he carries on him. The RES was formed to bring together such railway enthusiasts in a tangible way.

Club Activities

Among activities that we have already conducted are guided rail trips – a visit to the Rewari Steam Heritage Shed, visit to Farrukhnagar Railway station, one on the Miyagam-Dabhoi Narrow Gauge section, one to the Patalpani-Kalakund Meter Gauge section. Nine of us walked down all the way from Patalpani to Kalakund; a section of the Western Railway near Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. The Miyagam-Dabhoi Line was the last narrow gauge line in Baroda Division, which is now gone – it is already broad gauge. We have been travelling and organizing visits – one to the DMRC Maintenance Depot in Delhi and another to the Kharagpur Workshop of South Eastern Railways.

Engaging the Next Generation

We are trying to bring in children to join RES by tailoring our content and halving our subscription rates. Currently, we have 12 students who are members of our society. The Kolkata Division of RES, under the energetic supervision of Mr. Sanjoy Mookerjee, has been quite active in engaging school students. RES has conducted a debate among school children on rail heritage in Kolkata, a quiz on the railways in Kolkata, visit to the Metro tunnel under the River Hooghly in Kolkata and a guided walk of Howrah station and the Howrah Rail Museum.

Student Guides

As a rail enthusiast, I make it a point to check out the local Rail Museums wherever I go. In America I have been pleasantly surprised to see the guides in these museums during the summer months are students who are on a holiday. Once I came back to India I discussed the possibility of something similar in Indian rail museums with my wife who is a career counsellor. We came up with the idea of training students to be guides for the National Rail Museum in Delhi during the summer. My wife wrote to a number of schools asking for volunteers and we were surprised to see the volume of interest – we got 35-40 volunteers! Unfortunately, the Museum Director told me that the museum could only accommodate 10-12 student guides. On a first-come-first-serve basis we organized a training programme for the volunteers – in this very conference room – and took them around the museum and trained them to be guides. Later on – last month – when I was guiding people at the museum, I called in some of these students to observe and learn, so that they can conduct such guided walks themselves. This is a win-win situation – the students learn about rail history and heritage, we give them the know-how on how to be guides, and the museum gets trained, enthusiastic guides. Even getting 10-15 such student guides is a good outcome for all concerned.

Photography

When a Rail Enthusiast travels, they will invariably carry a camera. The amount of photographs submitted to our magazine on Railways and Rail Heritage is enormous. Half of the pages we publish in our magazine are of photographs. A year ago we published an issue on the 'Architecture of the Railways', for which members contributed photographs of some of the most interesting and beautiful railway buildings around the country. When the Railways started in India, it was the biggest industry, and manifestations of the Imperial Power were visible in the huge beautiful buildings like the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai. Here I would like to add an interesting trivia – India does not have only 4 railway sites listed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, we have four and a half! The Western Railways' Headquarters building is a part of the the Bombay Art Deco Ensemble – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. So we can count that as half of a world heritage site pertaining to the railways in India.



"A rail enthusiast who travels will always have their camera on them" says JL Singh. This image is from a series on the Shindhawane Ghat by rail enthusiast Purva Bahadur. Image courtesy : Rail Enthusiasts' Society website gallery

Enthusiastic Collectors

All rail enthusiast are collectors of some kind. Some rail enthusiasts locate artefacts, while others are passionate about philately and numismatics, some collect old time tables and cigarette cards. Documentation of our Rail Heritage is thankfully on the rise – the Bhavnagar Railway Museum publishes a booklet which lists every item in the museum. Our members have found artefacts like old bricks with dates marked on

them at railway stations and have tried to save them for posterity. In India we have 37 rail museums and galleries. As a general public, we are not aware of the fact that we can use the museum as a safe-keeper of any rail-related heritage we find or we might have something from our ancestors which might belong to the Railways. This kind of a link is not obvious to us because we are not within the documentation system. Museums can become places to deposit heritage that have come down to us from our family.

Documentation Rail Heritage

The book 'Indian Railways: More Miles, More Smiles' contains an essay penned by one of our members. As an avid stamp collector, he showed the development of steam locomotives in India through the stamps issued to commemorate them. Thus, we each chip in to document our collective heritage. Our magazine is ofcourse a lot of documentation.

RES is also involved in lobbying for the cause of Rail Heritage in India. Our Calcutta chapter lobbied with the Government of Bengal and the Railways in order to salvage girder of the Victoria bridge in North Calcutta. It is now in a museum where visitors can see its special pendulum bearing. RES has also been facilitating other organizations to spread the word about Indian Railways. We have collaborated with Google on their Google Arts and Culture project on the Indian Railways. We have also contributed to a book on Indian Railways by DK Publishers.

We want to disseminate knowledge about India's majestic Railways not only to the hard-core rail enthusiast but also to the general public.

Speaker 6

How can we put people in the heart of heritage management when we speak of railway heritage?

Rajesh Agrawal

Former Executive Director (Heritage), Ministry of Railways, India

Former Member, Railway Board

Importance of Railways in India

Railways is about people, and this is seen in how the Indian Railways links the landmass of India. The four world heritage sites of India are in four corners of the country. We have the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in the East, the Nilgiri Railway in the South, the Kalka-Simla Railway in the North and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai in the West.

We cannot imagine the Freedom Struggle without the Railways. We move 25 million passengers a day. This 25 million is more than the population of the advanced western countries of the world. More than Australia, more than Canada, more than

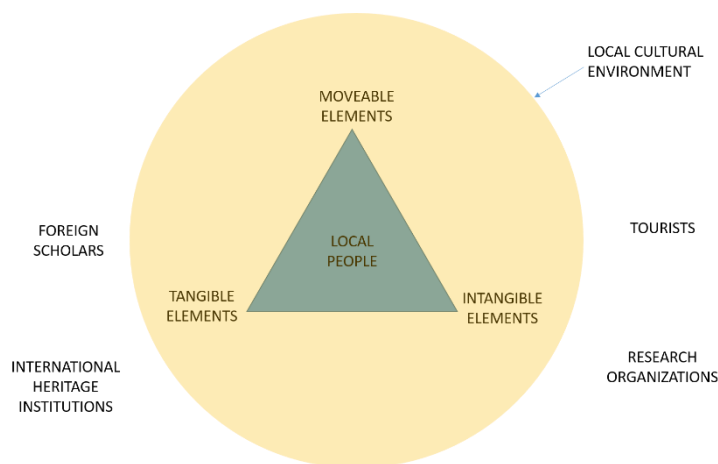
very large countries. 25 million – that is humanity being moved every day! It's a huge socio-cultural significance that we have these four world heritage sites in the country.

I agree with Aishwarya Tipnis that we Indians have a non-Western context. I have been emphasizing that for the last 20 years. Heritage is not simply the immovable elements; it is not only the monumental structure. Heritage basically encompasses the moveable and the immovable. You cannot imagine a temple without the idol. Similarly, a railway is nothing without the steam engine. So the moveable element, which is missing in the colonial world, need not be missing in our world.

Steam Locomotives are recognized officially by law as a monument in several western countries, even the moveable element. It is within a realm of natural, social, cultural and environmental heritage. And it has the tangible and intangible. Unfortunately, the Western world does not have intangible elements. Smita Vats was saying that the narrative and the stories are missing. If we start to tell the stories of how railways is linked inextricably with people's lives, we could not stop listing.

Community involvement in Railway Heritage projects

We introduced ourselves to the local communities in Darjeeling and they came over and sang Railway songs for us which we never knew. These were Railway songs that they had composed in their language for steam engines, and they've been singing it for 100 years. These intangible elements are there.



*People-centric Heritage framework by Rajesh Agarwal.
Image Source: Dhriti Nadir*

Unfortunately, we are looking at Heritage as something that is ancient, that is not so. Heritage is something which you have to save for posterity. Heritage is not something which is 100, 1000 or 10,000 years old. Academicians insist on looking only at the structure, that's not it, people are at the centre of it. What I'd like to emphasize, is that you can imagine a triangle with people in the centre and on one vertex you have the

moveable elements, on the second vertex you have the immovable elements and on the third vertex you have intangible elements. Then when you start listing, you are going to fill the triangle. And the whole thing is in a cultural and natural environment.

Locals in Darjeeling were singing and dancing on the railway tracks with us and insisting that we should not let this railway go. Whatever else may go. The local people were fully charged up in this exercise. People are in the centre and these so-called 'customers' who may be Europeans and tourists who think that they should be preaching or invading the place; these guys are on the outer periphery. They are invading the space of the community which is owning this heritage. So they have to

be treated outside of this triangle. These customers have to be part of this cultural space, they cannot invade with their own culture. Tourism has to be endogenous tourism.

SAHAYTA Programme

What I want to emphasize is that these people are ruled by the heart, not ruled by the brain. To get the interest of the community, what we did was, we involved each one of them and ran a program from the bottom to the top which we called SAHAYTA. We can expand SAHAYTA for you.



People have got to be at the centre of Railway Heritage in India. Heritage must include not just the moveable elements and the tangible, but also the intangible. Image credit : The Hindu

The first element that the locals want is to be connected to the outside world, right now they are frogs in a well, they are cocooned. You've got to give them a connectivity to the world at large.

So 'S' was for '*Sanchaar*' - access, connectivity.

What they needed next were *Anubhav* (experiences)

Hausla for human dignity; vulnerability reduction is a huge problem in society

Then they need *Avamshakti* (community empowerment)

Yantr – tools in the form of Science and Technology packages, ICT tools

Next was *Takneek* (Technique) to take them to the 21st century.

The last is that it has to translate into some source of income, what is the *Aiy or Aamdani*. It need not be cash, it can be in kind or some facilities and services.

It was a well-structured SAHAYTA program which assisted every child, every woman, every single labourer, every single politician, every single stakeholder who was local to the community. We ran 5 centers in Sukhna, Kurseong, Sonada, Ghum, Darjeeling. They were absolute instant hits. Unfortunately, they vanished after I left.

As far as the CCMP is concerned, my concern was that the CCMP was also a very Paris-driven initiative and the people who actually worked on the ground were never associated with it. Then obviously you will have a document which nobody has read. Or the people who are actually supposed to be understanding it are still not aware of what has been penned down in it. Then it doesn't get you where you ought to be getting. I'll also sum up and say that the realm of Rail Heritage is a very wide canvas. The steam locomotives which are monuments by law are very much there, the buildings, bridges, archives, artefacts are there – it is a very wide realm. We have documented and listed a lot of it. We have to take this together and take it forward. I am glad that you are all here. I would like to suggest that perhaps these world heritage sites like mountain railways are basically cultural corridors. The location where they have come in has actually shaped societies and civilizations. Along the cultural corridor, already there are heritage walks, trekking groups and cycling tours going on. They are already going on. I am sure it can be done much better.

Discussion



A lively QNA Session followed the speeches and people attacked the problem of Industrial Heritage of Indian Railways from various disciplinary angles. Image courtesy : Sahapedia

Participant 1 : It has been wonderful listening to all the speakers talk about the various facets of Industrial Heritage. Industrial Heritage is from the Industrial Revolution, and as a mechanical engineer I am curious about our ancient heritage, like the Iron Pillar. It is an engineering marvel and yet we know so little about it! Only the head of the metallurgical department in IIT Kanpur has done research on the metal. But it is an amazing thing – I cannot imagine a 6 tonne piece, supposed to have been manufactured by melting together pieces as heavy as 250kg. Can you imagine, where is that workshop? If today I have to handle that 250kg pieces, to weld together, I will use cranes. But 1500 years ago how did they lift it? They couldn't manually lift it, it is red hot. Two red hot pieces being brought together and forged. Did they use elephants, chains to lift it? Another question is where is this workshop? We know it is from the Gupta period because the inscription seems to point to Vikramaditya, the moon emperor. But we have not even tried to find out where could have been such a workshop and what are the means? I am from Jamalpur, it has been 150 years since we got a 5 tonne forging hammer, which was the biggest in Asia that time. We don't wonder how this has been done. Nobody is even asking the question that where is the workshop?

Ranjit Viridi : The same thing is being asked of the Pyramids.

Moulshri Joshi : Actually now there is a lot of work being done on the pillar, on the extraction of the iron, where is the iron coming from. I appreciate the examples which need to be documented, in order to push back against non-local ideas of framing Industrial Heritage. We have a tremendous indigenous history that is overlooked in searching for sources of such spectacular ancient inventions. Where is the community of forgers who forged the iron for this pillar? Where is the knowledge of making rust-free iron? These are the investigations we need to make through research organizations in order to document this history. Without such examples we cannot push back on the dominant idea that industrial revolution took place in Britain and that India was without industrial knowledge till it arrived at our shores. Without this kind of documentation, history does not get pushed back to a proto-industrialization period and that's why this is important.

Vinita Srivastava : I have a comment to make about how different governments can work together on preserving Railway Heritage. There's an indoor gallery panel here in the National Rail Museum, Delhi where we have celebrated the link of Mountain Railways of India with Taiwan's Alishan Railway. The Taiwanese were a Japanese time war occupied country which then went on to celebrate this railway in a very unique way. So today if you travel through Alishan, you will find not only the sacred tree station – the railway that used to cut trees is now having a sacred tree station – and a 'walk in the clouds', where the Alishan mountain top is seen. You have the railways linking to the ecology, the industrial heritage, the fact that it used to cut the entire forest and now its bringing them back again, communities around it are involved as tour guides. There is a lot to learn. Railways are already linking people.

Rajesh Agarwal : Let me tell you that it has been 20 years since we had the dedication ceremony for Darjeeling, so 2020 is the 20th anniversary of the dedication ceremony of our world heritage site. World Heritage Day is on 18th of April and that is also coinciding with the Railway week, the first train in India started on 16th of April. There are a lot of possibilities to celebrate World Heritage Day; I am sure the Swiss, Austrians, British people are interested, so maybe we can take this forward. The centre of gravity of Industrial Heritage should be in Delhi, I have already founded a society which is presently based in Asia but not out of Delhi. And of course the Taiwanese are very close to our group. I don't know whether you [Mr. Wu] have come with your group of people.

Mr. Wu : No, I am here alone, sent by the Ministry of Culture. I will be stationed here [in Delhi] for the whole year.

Rajesh Agarwal : I am happy to say that the Taiwanese have taken an incredible amount of interest. I am a member of your ANIH. I just saw your newsletter last week. They have come up with a good newsletter, there is tremendous amount of work being done. We must get the centre of gravity into New Delhi. This is something which we can make happen in 2020. It is only February now, if we can get our act together in the next two months, the possibilities are immense. A huge amount of work also has been done, that can be brought together. You [Smita] are working with school children and exciting ideas, they're the future, that's whom heritage has to be saved for. Every part of society – the women, couples, sponsors,

schoolchildren – is interested in conserving our heritage and trains are exciting. We've got a lot to cherish.

We need a call to action! Baithaks like these should not just be restricted to concerns.

Aishwarya Tipnis : I would like to address another elephant in the room, which we're not talking about in the profession, about heritage and development going together. Everybody's been flooding our inboxes with what's happening with heritage being compromised for development and we know that the Railways is going through an extensive program of Railway Station redevelopment. So how does heritage fit into that program is something which we also have to discuss. Is it just the four world heritage sites or are we going to look at the bigger narrative of how heritage is answered in every development programme?

Rajesh Agarwal : Mr Viridi rightly said that heritage for the Indian Railways is a peripheral activity. And I not so sure how much will be taken up by the Railway Minister or the top brass of the Railway [Ministry] in actually keeping it as the front focus.

Railway station is for the passing of trains but the railway station also becomes the cultural center for the town or city where it is. The Mumbai CST building today is the most photographed building in the country, more than the Taj Mahal. So the railway station is more than simply train station, thus the other bodies also need to come together. For the railways, the other bodies are simply not coming together. The Cultural Ministry, the Environment Ministry, the Urban Development, the Rural Development, the Engineering Department; they do not pay attention. Railway Heritage is a billion-dollar industry today in the world scenario. There is a spinoff in heritage and culture; huge spinoff in environment; huge spinoff in community – women, child development, marginalized communities, tribal groups; huge spinoff in architecture and design – today the chief minister of UP is doing work on the infrastructure in Agra; and finally there is a huge spinoff in tourism. So there is a huge spinoff in five areas, that's where the stakeholders need to come together. When I was working with UNESCO we had a committee with all the concerned ministries and we got a lot of support. So we need a kind of stakeholder framework with that. Let's not only pin it as the responsibility of the Railways

Moulshri Joshi : This is where the importance of citizen groups and professional groups come in. Vikas here represents the Indian Institute of Urban Designers and it's a small but very unique body critiquing urban development. He has been at the forefront critiquing the Central Vista redevelopment and talking about loss of Urban Heritage.

Vikas Kanojia : I think we are talking about our national network. Railway stations happen to not only be the gateway to a city but these have been the area where the economic impetus began. I have worked with Malanpur industries on two of their master plans – one was in Yamuna Nagar, second one was in Malanpur. It is also important how our national leaders like Pandit Nehru gave the vision of independent India for industrialization. It was his vision that was taken forward and not Mahatma

Gandhi's vision. We can see there is a very good relationship with the railways and these [industrial] precincts. Railways should take that into cognisance and make a map where these industries are. It is not only industries, it is also the people who work in those industries and the towns that have developed around these industries. The colonial buildings built here are a very important part of industrial heritage.

Moulshri Joshi : Vikas, what can non-governmental groups do during redevelopment of railway stations? We will lose some very historic structures and as you're saying, it's an urban design that we will lose.

Vikas Kanojia : That would be really sad. Something that works in our country is that anything 100-year old is actually heritage. It is important to map which were the important stations built during the colonial era.

Rajesh Agarwal : Vikas I'd like to remind you that don't look at railway stations as one entity. India is a huge subcontinent, we have city railway stations which were imperial statements. We have town railway stations. Kharagpur did not exist before the railways came to Kharagpur and today it is the largest agglomeration after Calcutta. Then we have the village railway stations. And they all had their own character. I'll share with you the articles on that. We have to recreate that character. If you see the stations of Darjeeling, I'll share with you articles we have written, where the window panes, doors, pillars had a character. All the stations from Sukna all the way to Darjeeling had a certain character. The suburban station of the harbour branch in Mumbai, even the benches on the platform have a character. We've lost that character, today we just put some shape over there and say that this is for sitting for passengers. So we have to recreate this in order to preserve and highlight heritage.

Aishwarya Tipnis : You rightly said that it isn't the lone job of the railways. Stations sit in a context; that context has a certain administrative quality – whether municipality or city. The gorge where we fall into, the trap, in my experience of 10 years with the railways – I also worked on the Bandra Station masterplan, there was full support from the Western Railways – the gap was the local municipal counsellor who did not give the land outside the station which actually belongs to the Railway but is encroached upon by multiple other people. It was a problem that needed to be solved at the Municipal level and the support was lost at that level. I don't think there is anything wrong with the intent. It's the process that falls flat. As experts working with civil society we have to get the process right. Once you get the process right, things will fall into place.

Rajesh Agarwal : Let the group get the process right, you will get railway support

Moulshri Joshi : But we also have to be better pressure groups.

Aishwarya Tipnis : Yes, I support that. I have literally grown as a heritage architect with the railways since 2010, talking and failing for multiple years, and their support has never dwindled, it's always been there.

Vikas Kanojia : The brief has to come together and from multiple layers – transportation, heritage, human networks around the stations.

Rajesh Agarwal : Let's put a process together and take it through.

Aishwarya Tipnis : I think that's what ICOMOS India should do – facilitate a process. What happens with ICOMOS India is that people are wearing multiple hats. We have to be very conscientious with that. It's not about getting projects, it's about setting a process. Doing things as a collective – not as individuals – will make a big difference. Often things fall flat because everybody is wearing multiple hats and its leading to a project or personal gain.

Vinita Srivastava : One learning I've had when we need to close a programme where there are tonnes of very, very dedicated professionals is to distilling everything down to a very short phrase. When I worked in Culture, my favourite phrase was 'culture is what you are left with when everything else is gone'. My favourite phrase for railway heritage is 'a railway is a vehicle that can't leave its track, all else is detail'. When it comes to the inherent conflict between engineers who build and architects who put in the brain and the design; is that it is a very yin-and-yang thing. Railways are moving lines and stations are places where railway meets society. We cannot let one overshadow the other, like Darjeeling, the road and rail have to meet and part, and meet and part. What we need to do is take away learnings and that way it is fantastic that all of you could put your minds to this. Thankyou for being the muse of the museum today. We hope your connect will always be there.



The discussion lingered on even after the Baithak was formally concluded. Image courtesy : Sahapedia

Conclusion

This Baithak brought together speakers across diverse backgrounds and experience with Railway Heritage in India to help shed light on the various facets of this complex and all-encompassing heritage. This enthusiastic melange of people – speakers and attendees – agreed on the need to work across disciplines, build upon the individual research and lived experience of Railway Heritage in India to form a complete picture of a collective Railway heritage in India – one that is *yours, mine* and *ours*.

Key Takeways

1) Short-term :

1. Need to conduct more cross-disciplinary meetings of Rail enthusiasts, scholars, educators and government officials in order to better understand and define Railway Heritage in India
2. Need to include people of all age groups, social, economic and educational backgrounds to contribute to protecting the Railway Heritage of India. This necessitates not talking down to people – especially children and minorities – but seeing them as partners in building the framework for safeguarding our heritage.

2) Medium-term :

1. Heritage must not be restricted to museums and protected behind barriers. Wherever possible, people must be encouraged to engage with heritage. This can be done by :
 - a) investing in the revival of locomotives (whether by the government or private CSR initiatives)
 - b) Democratization of Data – information on Railway heritage in the public domain online.
2. Heritage Studies must be included in education curriculum – at various levels – in order to sensitize people and to show them the value of our heritage and how they can contribute.

3) Long-term :

1. Move away from the 'Look-West' approach and define what 'Railway Heritage in India' is for Indians. Adapt Global Frameworks for Local Contexts.
2. Putting 'People' at the heart of Heritage Management.

Detail of Participants

S. No.	Name	Affiliation
01	JL Singh	Founding Member, Secretary and Editor – Rail Enthusiasts' Society
02	Ranjit Singh Viridi	Former General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway President, Indian Steam Railways Society (ISRS)
03	Vinita Srivastava	Executive Director (Heritage) - Indian Railways Member – TICCIH, ICOMOS India, RES, ISRS
04	Aishwarya Tipnis	Conservation Architect, Founder – Aishwarya Tipnis Architects Member – ICOMOS India
05	Smita Vats	Founder - ITIHAAS
06	Rajesh Agarwal	Former Executive Director (Heritage), Ministry of Railways, India Former Member, Railway Board
07	Moulshri Joshi	Architect, Founding Partner – SpaceMatters Member – mAAN, TICCIH, AINH, ICOMOS India
08	Willy Wu	Ministry of Culture, Taiwan
09	Vikas Kanojia	Urban Designer, Founder – Studio CoDe
10	Dhriti Nadir	Architect, SpaceMatters
11	Sankar Krishna Das	Member – ICOMOS India
12	Mayuresh Hucheche	Student – IIT Delhi, Railways Enthusiast
13	Daksh	Student – IIT Delhi, Railways Enthusiast
14	Shubham	Student – IIT Delhi, Railways Enthusiast
15	Keshav Dewan	Heritage Enthusiast
16	G. Shankar	Member – Indian Steam Railways Society
17	Ranjeet Sindhi	Member – Indian Steam Railways Society
18	Rohit Mishra	Entrepreneur, Railways Enthusiast

19	Ashish Gundan	Director, National Railway Museum
20	Sindhuri Aparna	Program Coordinator (Outreach), Sahapedia
21	Shubhojit	Rail Historian and consultant
22	Honey Chawla	Railways Enthusiast
23	Akshat Pathak	Railways Enthusiast
24	Amitosh	Railways Enthusiast
25	Srinivas Varanasi	Railways Enthusiast



A photograph of all the attendees of the Baithak outside a colourful graffiti wall of the National Rail Museum, New Delhi. Image Courtesy: Sahapedia