

Discursive Dynamics in Heritage Interpretation: A Study on Negotiating Narratives in Panam Nagar, Bangladesh

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Abstract

In the field of heritage studies, interpretation transcends the simple presentation of information; rather, it involves an intricate discourse with history and personal and collective memory. This paper delves into the discursive dynamics of heritage interpretation at Panam Nagar, a site emblematic of Bangladesh's layered history and community identities. This site was once a bustling town during the colonial era, but now stands as a silent witness to the passage of time and changing socio-political landscapes. The study employs critical discourse analysis to unravel the complexities in the negotiation of narratives within this heritage site. Central to this study is the exploration of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) and its implications in shaping public understanding of Panam Nagar. The paper critically assesses how dominant narratives are constructed, maintained, and occasionally challenged within the heritage space. It particularly focuses on the interplay between colonial legacies and national identity narratives, uncovering the often subtle processes of inclusion, exclusion, and emphasis in heritage storytelling. The study further investigates the audience's reception of these narratives, identifying gaps between the intended interpretation and public perception. This is achieved through visitor surveys and analysis of their interaction with the interpretative materials present at the site. The paper proposes a framework for more inclusive and participatory heritage interpretation practices, emphasizing the need to integrate diverse narratives, especially those marginalized in the current discourse. This approach contributes to a richer understanding of the site's past and fosters a more inclusive dialogue about heritage and identity in contemporary Bangladesh.

Keywords: Heritage Interpretation, Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), Panam Nagar, Narrative Negotiation, Participatory Heritage Practices.

1.0 Introduction

Heritage sites are recognized as an important contributor to the cultural sector in Bangladesh (Rayhan, 2011). Despite many of the significant sites being listed and protected by government agencies and authorities, the need for heritage management and attempt at proper conservation is not getting enough attention from the government (Niaz Morshed, 2014), nor the sites are properly interpreted by the audience. Since there is a limitation at the degree of heritage preservation in the context of Bangladesh, this study will analyze whether the current interpretive process in this case site plays any significant role in representing and negotiating subject matters and will suggest scopes for expansion and potential alternate interpretations. This paper aims to critically reflect upon the discursive nature of heritage interpretation and explore its existing framework and logical organization to find out scopes for improvement in terms of its existing gaps and discourse regulations. In doing this, the focus of this paper is to explore how narratives are constructed and negotiated within this context.

Panam Nagar, situated approximately 26 kilometers away from Dhaka city, is an abandoned town with a rich historical tapestry dating back to the colonial period. This township, developed during the British colonial era, represents a unique architectural and cultural heritage within Bangladesh. Characterized by its distinctive street-front buildings and the encompassing moat, Panam Nagar stands as a testament to the region's past – a period marked by significant trade and cultural exchanges. The site's historical narrative encompasses the intricacies of colonial rule, the interplay of various social classes, and the transitions that shaped present-day Bangladesh. As such, Panam Nagar is not only a physical embodiment of historical architecture but also a symbol of the complex socio-cultural dynamics of the past. Its recognition and preservation by the Department of Archaeology in Bangladesh underscore its importance in the nation's heritage landscape.

To critically analyze the interpretation in the context of the heritage site, central to this investigation is the concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), a framework that helps in understanding how certain narratives are prioritized while others are marginalized or omitted in heritage sites. By scrutinizing the prevailing interpretative approaches at Panam Nagar, the study aims to uncover the underpinnings of these narratives and to challenge the dominance of AHD in shaping public history and memory. The research seeks to critically assess how history is presented to the public and to explore alternative narratives that could offer a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the site's past. The methodology employed in this study combines qualitative approaches with critical discourse analysis to dissect the narratives and interpretive strategies at Panam Nagar.

Primary data collection involves on-site observations, interviews with stakeholders including local community members, visitors, and officials from the Department of Archaeology, as well as analysis of the physical interpretation tools present at the site. Additionally, the study draws upon a range of secondary sources, including historical documents, academic journals, and government records, to construct a comprehensive understanding of the site's historical and cultural background. This multi-faceted approach ensures a thorough investigation of both the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage interpretation at Panam Nagar.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part illustrates the overview of Key concepts such as Heritage Interpretation, AHD, and Narrative Theory while identifying the gap within the existing literature. The second part discusses a brief history of the site signifying its heritage value and focuses on the meaning and responses of the existing interpretation. The third part is the 'analysis' of the relevant context to locate the gaps and investigate the limitations of the interpretation to clarify whether it purposefully excludes socio-political narratives or restrains accessibility and participatory involvement of groups in favor of or to reinforce Authorized Heritage Discourse. Based on this analysis, the fourth part explores the potential to suggest an inclusive framework for heritage interpretation. It should be noted that being a township, the site is large in scale, and most of the buildings within the site are inaccessible to its audiences; as a result, the scope of this study is limited to the accessible public spaces including the exterior part of the buildings of the site.

2.0 Literature Review

Interpretation is considered a strategic tool as the core aim of it is to manage the visitors while also informing them about the past. According to ICOMOS, 'Interpretation can include professional and popular publications, public lectures, on-site installations, formal and informal educational programs; community activities; and on-going research, training, and evaluation of the interpretation process itself' (2007). The principle of interpretation of a heritage site includes access and understanding, acceptable evidence sources, authenticity of the evidence, sustainability and inclusiveness, and continuation of research, evaluation, and training (ICOMOS, 2017). So, a successful interpretation offers scopes for the audiences in fostering personal and collective engagement with a resource's significance, guiding them to a focused understanding through cohesive concepts rather than mere factual recounting (Jameson Jr, 1997).

Thus, in shaping visitor experiences at heritage sites, interpretation can stimulate personal reflection on identity and social relations across time

(Burnett, 2001) . Yet, interpretation often offers a singular narrative, overlooking the diversity of visitor interests, which may be educational, emotional, or recreational (Poria, Biran, & Reichal, 2006). Moscardo (2010) suggests that storytelling enhances visitor engagement more effectively than factual presentations. Meanwhile, Black (2001) emphasizes the need for clear thematic interpretation aligning with site objectives. Poria et al. (2006) advise that visitor perceptions should guide the marketing and presentation of heritage sites, with distinct interpretive approaches catering to varying visitor motivations. Tilden's principles of interpretation underline the progression from understanding to appreciation and protection (Tilden, 2007). It can be further stretched to advocating for interpretive writing that engages visitors and meets scholarly aims, utilizing multisensory media for transparency. Austin (2002) indicates that visitor expectations and reactions to site presentations can influence management practices, necessitating feedback mechanisms to assess interpretive effectiveness. Heritage managers are encouraged to adopt 'responsible interpretation,' presenting multifaceted narratives (Poria, Biran, & Reichal, 2006). Interpretation techniques have been studied for their effectiveness, suggesting the importance of having interpretive goals and objectives (Timothy, 2011).

On the other hand, Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) often emphasizes monumental architecture and material culture, shaped largely by Euro-American values. This discourse has been critiqued for its limitations and exclusivity, as it often overlooks the intangible elements of heritage that are significant in many cultures (Harrison, 2013). Rudolff and Buckley (2016) have called attention to the "problem of Eurocentrism" and "the problem of inclusion" as central issues within the heritage sector. Waterton and Watson (2015) further distilled these concerns into the concepts of "identity", "community", "authenticity", and "commodification".

The AHD's focus on materiality has marginalized other forms of heritage, such as the non-monumental cultures or traditions like those seen in the Imperial Shrine at Ise in Japan, which is periodically rebuilt, thus defying Western notions of age and permanence (Logan, Craith, & Kockel, 2016). Despite bringing these issues to light, the AHD has struggled to propose effective solutions for more inclusive heritage practices.

The democratization of heritage, emphasizing public participation over expert opinion, has been advocated as a solution to these limitations (Logan, Craith, & Kockel, 2016). Morgan et al. (2010) criticized the US National Register of Historic Places for prioritizing tangible heritage, arguing for a system that also values intangible heritage. Atkinson (2008) highlighted the dynamics in Hull, where community groups sought recognition for their heritage against the singular narrative offered by official heritage recognition.

Ludwig (2016) found that in England, despite a theoretical shift towards inclusivity, material concerns remain predominant in practice, with alternative narratives often excluded from official heritage lists. Conversely, in New Zealand, public interest and activism have influenced heritage preservation, though this has sometimes led to new forms of expert dominance rather than true community engagement (Trapeznik & McLean, 2000). Thus, while there is growing recognition of the issues within AHD, further research and practical reform are necessary to ensure heritage interpretation is truly inclusive, recognizing the full spectrum of heritage values.

While studies have highlighted how colonial and post-colonial narratives within heritage sites are often fraught with tensions and competing interpretations (Harrison, 2013; Graham B. A., 2000), in the context of South Asia, Ananya Kabir, and Dipesh Chakrabarty have contributed significantly to understanding how colonial legacies continue to shape heritage interpretation. Their works explore how post-colonial societies grapple with and often renegotiate their colonial pasts within the framework of national identity and cultural heritage. These studies underscore the need for a more nuanced approach that acknowledges the layered histories and multiple narratives inherent in heritage sites (Chakrabarty, 1992; Kabir & Williams, 2005).

Despite the rich discourse on heritage interpretation and AHD, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature specifically addressing Panam Nagar. While general themes of colonial and post-colonial heritage in Bangladesh have been explored by several scholars, focused studies on Panam Nagar are relatively scarce. The existing literature primarily addresses the architectural and historical significance of the site but does not delve deeply into the interpretive narratives and audience reception at Panam Nagar. This lack of specific focus on Panam Nagar's heritage interpretation presents a unique opportunity for this study to contribute to filling this gap. By focusing on the discursive dynamics at this specific site, the research aims to add a new dimension to the understanding of heritage interpretation in the context of Bangladesh's colonial and post-colonial heritage.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context of Panam Nagar

Panamnagar is a distinctive township from the British colonial period, featuring fifty-two street-front buildings arrayed along a 600-meter street, all encircled by a U-shaped moat. This settlement served as a domicile for the affluent Hindu trading community. Ray (2016) delved into the annals of Bengal's ancient cities, examining accounts from historical travelers like James Taylor and W.W.

Hunter, and identified Panam as a crucial hub for 'cotton, chiefly English piece goods' trade and for moneychangers.

Despite its proximity to Sonargaon, the erstwhile capital during the Muslim Sultanate period, Husain (2007) notes that Panam bears scant archaeological hallmarks from the pre-Mughal era.

The architectural legacy of Panamnagar's centennial buildings stands as 'tangible proofs' of its rich historical fabric, marking the township's prosperous past (Vijeo-Rose, 2014). Referencing the Burra Charter guidelines (Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, 2013), the township's cultural heritage significance is multifold: historically, it holds associations with several pivotal periods, including the Mughal and Sultanate regimes, the British colonial era, the partition of Bengal, Indo-Pakistan warfare, Hindu-Muslim riots, and the Bangladesh Liberation War.

Socially, it is significant for both the community that resided there and the surrounding populations, encapsulating their shared identity. The township also possesses spiritual value for the Hindu minority and boasts a unique aesthetic derived from its street-front buildings and the adjoining landscape. In recognition of its value, the Government of Bangladesh's Department of Archaeology officially listed and protected Panamnagar in 2004 (Husain, 2007). Figure 1 provides a site map of Panam Nagar, illustrating the township's layout and heritage structures, as documented by Professor Dr. Qazi Azizul Mowla (2008).

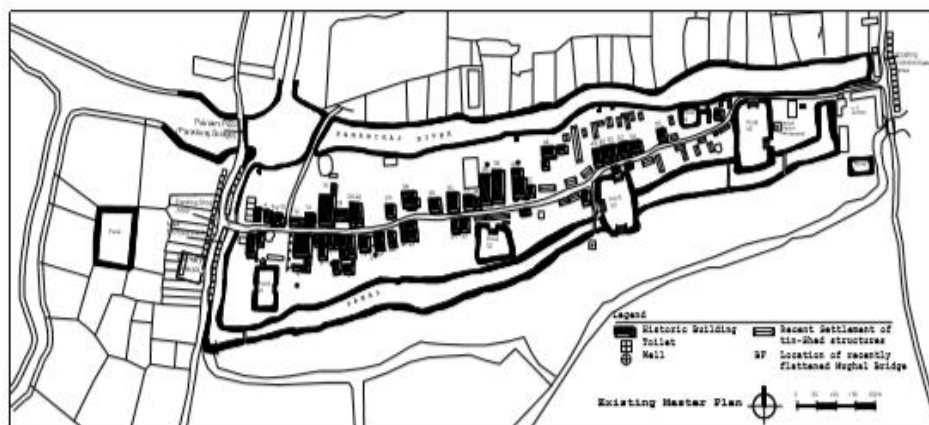


Figure 1: Site Map of Panam Nagar.
Source: Professor Dr. Qazi Azizul Mowla

At the entrance of the heritage site, a prominent open book-shaped installation presents a bilingual narrative in Bengali and English.

This 'official' interpretation predominantly recounts the history of 'Subarnagram', the broader district, rather than detailing the specific site which is part of it. It traces the district's evolution from a Hindu regime hub in the thirteenth century to its significance during the Sultanate era in the early seventeenth century. The installation also touches on architectural styles, noting European and Mughal influences, the primary use of brick and lime mortar, and the site's decorative features. However, it only briefly mentions significant buildings within Subarnagram, not within the immediate site. Despite its status as a national heritage site, the site lacks supplementary interpretive materials, programs, or activities to further engage visitors with its rich history.

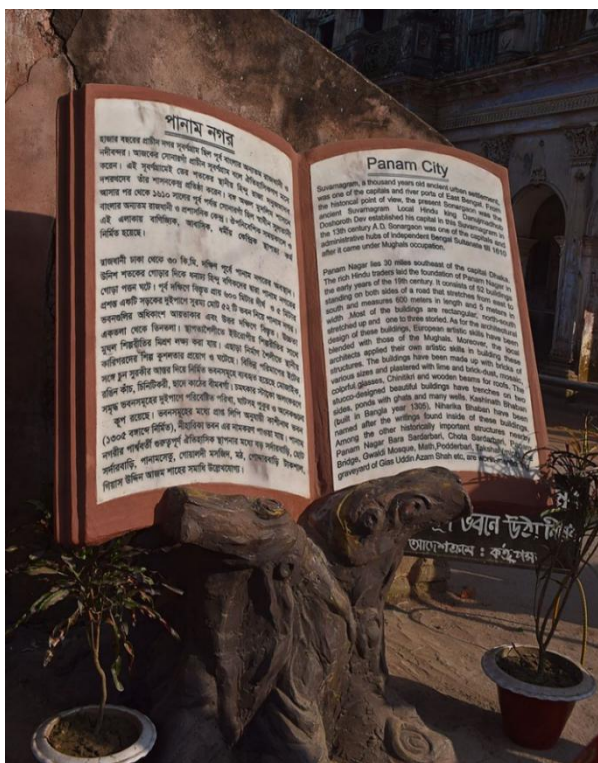


Figure 2: The installed Interpretation Panel. Source: Author.

4.0 Research Design

This study employs a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, as articulated by Norman Fairclough (2003) and Ruth Wodak (2015), to scrutinize the narratives and interpretive strategies at Panam Nagar. CDA is particularly adept at revealing the underlying power relations, ideologies, and social inequalities embedded within textual and communicative practices.

In the context of heritage interpretation, CDA enables a nuanced examination of how historical narratives are constructed, presented, and perceived, paying special attention to the roles of AHD in shaping these narratives. This approach aligns with the study's objective to explore the discursive dynamics in heritage interpretation and to understand the processes of narrative negotiation at the site. The data collection for this study is multi-pronged, encompassing on-site observations, interviews, and document analysis.

1. **On-Site Observations:** Visits to Panam Nagar were conducted to gather first-hand information about the current state of heritage interpretation at the site. This involved examining interpretive materials such as plaques, information boards, and other forms of public engagement tools present at the site.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including local community members, visitors, heritage professionals, and officials from the Department of Archaeology. These interviews aimed to gather diverse perspectives on the site's interpretation and its impact on public understanding of Panam Nagar's history.
3. **Document Analysis:** A thorough review and analysis of relevant documents was undertaken. This included historical records, government documents, previous academic studies, and policy papers related to heritage management and interpretation in Bangladesh.

The analytical process involved both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret the data gathered from interviews and on-site observations. This analysis focused on identifying themes, patterns, and discrepancies in the narratives and perceptions about Panam Nagar. Quantitative analysis was employed to evaluate visitor survey data, using statistical tools to discern patterns and trends in visitor responses and perceptions. This mixed-method approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the heritage interpretation at Panam Nagar, capturing both the nuanced details of individual narratives and the broader patterns evident in visitor perceptions.

5.0 Analysis and Findings

The components of interpretation and representation of this site can be broken down into the following, based on the frameworks suggested by Shanks and Tilley (2016):

Table 1: Components of Interpretation and Representation

Components	Details
Objects	The 52 buildings and their facade, A Temple, The 'Panam' Street, and The Surrounding Moat.
Audiences	Audiences from different ages and educational backgrounds, both local and foreign.
Human Subjects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The absent community who once owned the township 2. The community that used to settle after the abandonment 3. The neighboring community who are associated with religious rituals at the temple 4. The Department of Archaeology (DoA) as the custodian of the site 5. Local management and an advisory committee formed with DoA members, civil representatives, and regional government officers.

5.1 Interpretation

Although the interpretive panel highlights the buildings being constructed and inhabited by the affluent merchants, it doesn't clarify when and how the township was abandoned. Since Panamnagar is not connected with neighboring heritage sites in a designed trail, the logical organization of the texts might be irrelevant in the sense that 'Sonargaon' is being more prioritized than the site itself. While visiting the site it was evident and the study of Husain (2007) also illustrates that Panamnagar is mostly misunderstood by the audiences as the ruined old capital of Isa Khan from the 16th century. It may seem reasonable to assume that the lack of relevant and necessary information at the physical installation is the primary reason for the decontextualization of interpretation for the audience but to analyze the situation critically, the following three issues that are deeply located within the heritage context and will be analyzing those issues in light of theoretical premise to locate the gaps: the political history, social perspectives, and spatial context.

5.1.1 Interpretation of Political History

While 'Sonargaon' district was predominantly known for its historical significance from the pre-Mughal era, the establishment and emergence of Panamnagar in the early 19th century revived this once-affluent district during the British Colonial period (Husain, 2007; Shaikh, 2009). The British colonial period was not only an expansion of the European power to South Asia, but it

also associated trade, commerce, and exchange of culture with the people at that time. (Shaikh, 2009) showed in his studies of historical imprints that Panam became an important place for commercial and business activities under the East India Company. Focusing on the context of Eurocentric colonialism over Asia and other parts of the world (Loomba, 1998) emphasizes two attributes of modern colonialism that also align with this context. Firstly, it has a connection with Western capitalism and secondly, the complex relationship between the colony and the metropolis impacted to restructuring of the economy of both by the flow of natural resources. This notion of colonialism is a challenging discourse from the different perspectives of the people, (Shohat, 1992) and the study denotes that not all people were in the same extent of ‘oppression’ by the colonizers in the same way. The significant and aesthetic architecture of Panam is undoubtedly a ‘proof’ of the economic development, wealth generation, and profit in the business of the community that inhabited the locality. At the same time, it also clarifies the inhabitants of not being at the bottom of the social hierarchy and the township was developed as a byproduct of the close interaction with the discourse of power.

Although 1947 marks the end of colonialism of the British Raj in the Indian region, (Loomba, 1998) suggests that it doesn’t necessarily imply the demise of colonialism, at least to the communities who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. On the contrary, a decline of the economy was prominent in the merchant community residing in Panamnagar when their products were no longer exported to the ‘metropole’.

The contemporary notion of the Bangladeshi government in disinheriting the colonial affiliation could be seen in recent political decisions where signs, buildings, and monuments that depict the colonial affiliation are being erased, removed, and dilapidated due to negligence. Although this notion was previously subliminal, it had been bolstered by the proclamation by the Prime Minister herself regarding the preservation of ‘unnecessary’ colonial heritages in the long-term planning for the new urban development (Bdnews24, 2014; BanglaNews24, 2014; Daily Manabzamin, 2014; Daily Samakal, 2014).

This phenomenon is directly reflected in the interpretation installation of this site, where the ownership of the Hindu merchants and their affiliation with the colonial power is completely censored to the global audiences as the English transcription of the bilingual interpretation omits the sentence ‘the development of this township was done under the colonial influence in colonial period’. This issue can also be explained as regulating meanings in the representation of superiority and achievement which doesn’t support the government’s manifestation. Here the government’s understanding and dominant attitude toward controlling the interpretation of heritage can be

referred to as the conventional notion that (Smith, 2006) explains as ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ or AHD.

5.1.2 Interpretation of Social Perspective

While analyzing the interpretation of the site from its inhabitant’s and local’s viewpoints, another form of a hegemonic aspect of AHD can be identified which brings us to the second context- the social perspective of Panamnagar where the people of the community being the subject for interpretation associated with displacement, eviction, and separation. Although several houses were constructed in the early 19th century, the businessmen who held the ownership of the houses started residing here permanently from the beginning of the 20th century (Husain, 2007).

The concept of ‘local’ in this site has been influenced by a political and economic discourse that significantly originates, as (Long, 2000) suggests, with the center of power and influence. The capitalist and bourgeois class who dominantly inhabited this place during the colonial period faced the form of ‘disinheritance’ which primarily began in nature due to the decline of trade and commerce at the end of colonialism and sooner it started to take the shape of hostility when territorial integrity of the two mutually exclusive religious communities was dissolved in illegal occupation and forceful eviction. Compared to the European nation-state formation, and romanticism, which (Graham B. G., 2016) refers to as the nexus of Nationalism, here the ethnic consciousness among the citizens has impacted in forming of religion-based states which reshaped and reformed national identities and eventually changed the social identity of the community residing in Panam.

Further decline of this settlement started when political conflict took shape in riots during 1965 at Indo Pakistan and the people of this community found themselves as (Butalia, 1998) refers - in the ‘wrong state’ and had to abandon this land. The tension and riot acted as a catalyst to stir the process of ‘othering’ once the legitimately settled community went into exile. After the partition, the legitimacy of the cultural heritage was on the verge of threat and changed its meaning over time when the site was authorized by the non-Hindu majority. After the liberation war in 1971, some of the residents who occupied the buildings, yet it is debatable, claimed to be the successors of the previous owners. This community can be referred to (Watson, 2019)’s definition of the ‘others. This community left their footprints for about forty years and has been forcefully evicted thrice from residing at this site from 2006-2008 (Alam, 2019) and is now bearing the identity of outsiders.

The local marginal people who once lived in the site most of the time refrained from entering for prayer at the public temple inside the site. Also, since the theorization of the national identity of Bangladesh in a sense is underpinned by the spiritual discourse of 'muktijuddher chetona' or 'the spirit of liberation war', this site has another interpretation of what (Graham B. A., 2000) refers as 'heritage of atrocity', since the Pakistani Army adopted this site as military camp associated with the genocide during the war in 1971.

5.1.3 Spatial Context-based Interpretation

Studies (Shaikh, 2009) show that the rich and ornate collection of motifs and decorations in the building edifices are the fusion of Mughal, Greek, Roman, Renaissance, and Colonial styles which makes the site unique and at the same time mystic to its audiences. In his studies (Mowla, 2008) describes four types of buildings that are seen on both sides of this street which are unique in a way by following a pattern language of symmetry, axiality, façade treatment, and opening. (Farida Nilufar, 2015) her studies of searching the genotypes confirm that the settlement resembles the urban residential house forms of Dhaka. A visual symphony of the richly detailed edifices along the Panam street created by each of the houses also reflects the subtle competition of the community to reflect their socio-economic status.

Besides the remarkable architectural and archaeological significance, it is evident that the local community's attachment and memories (Harvey, 2008) referred to as the 'collective past' are embedded within the fabric of the site. (Pabon, 2003) her studies suggest architectural 'phonocentrism' is guided by materiality and often acts as a 'trap' by focusing on the tangibles and creating deception to the cultural significance that might be built on emotion and lacks physical evidence. All the buildings have been sealed by the Department of Archaeology since 2015 (Alam, 2019) and the visitors are restricted to observing the internal architectural accouterments by the 'others.

Several times the evicted people attempted to reclaim the land and formed protests. The establishment of their contested identity can be reflected in the graffiti drawn on walls and boundaries within the site.



Figure 3: Graffiti on the wall of the buildings.
Written in Bengali: We will never leave Panam.

5.2 Audience Reception and Perceptions

‘Interpretation’ can be conceptualized as the process of making meaning of the sense of experiences and then to represent that meaning or sense. This actualization process of understanding is a balanced repetitive movement that aims to achieve ‘greater truth’ and is a progression of dialogues between the whole and the parts of a work and acquisition and rejection of ideas that are underpinned by time factors and reassertion of foreknowledge and historicity which (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999) refers as ‘Hermeneutic Circle’. To analyze audiences’ primary understanding of the meaning of the site, a site survey and sampling of opinion from the visitors have been done. While defining the relationship between ‘time’ and ‘modernity’, (Harrison, some definitions: heritage, modernity, materiality, 2013) suggested that the objects from the past are in continuous threat of decline and cessation.

To measure the relevance and meaningfulness of the interpretation, we have recorded the audience’s pre-existing understanding of Panam being an old city, explained the historical background, continuous threats of cessations and heritage significance through informal discussion with individuals and groups and documented their responses for alternate interpretation.

Table 2: Responses from the Visitors

Audiences' Category	Number of Respondents	Objective of Visit	Pre-visit idea of the site	Suggestion for alternate interpretation after explanation
Family	7	Leisure/ Picnic: 4 Educational Purpose: 2 For Prayer: 1	Houses of Merchants: 1 Houses of Sultans in the Muslim Period: 1 Palace/ Jaminders: 5 Administrative Offices: 0 Sacred Place: 0 Unknown: 0	Inclusion of map: 5 Revising contextual texts:7 Community involvement: 0 Activity-based planning: 0
Groups	5	Study Tour:2 Corporate Tour: 1 Site Seeing: 2	Houses of Merchants: 0 Houses of Sultans in Muslim Period:1 Palace/ Jaminders:3 Administrative Offices: 0 Sacred Place: 0 Unknown: 1	Inclusion of map: 3 Revising contextual texts:5 Community involvement: 0 Activity-based planning: 0
Individuals	21	Research: 2 Photography: 7 Trespassing: 7 Hawkers: 4 For Prayer: 1	Houses of Merchants: 1 Houses of Sultans in the Muslim Period:3 Palace/ Jaminders: 9 Administrative Offices:1 Sacred Place: 2 Unknown: 5	Inclusion of map: 9 Revising contextual texts:7 Community involvement: 15 Activity-based planning: 2
Foreigner/ International Visitors	3	Research:1 Educational Purpose: 2	Houses of Merchants: 1 Houses of Sultans in the Muslim Period: 2 Palace/ Jaminders: 0 Administrative Offices: 0 Sacred Place: 0 Unknown: 0	Inclusion of map: 3 Revising contextual texts:3 Community involvement: 3 Activity-based planning: 3
Children	12	Trespassing: 6 Playing in the Open Spaces: 5	Houses of Merchants: 0 Houses of Sultans in the Muslim Period: 10 Sacred Place: 2	Inclusion of map: 9 Revising contextual texts:5 Community involvement: 0 Activity-based planning: 0

The pre-understanding and understanding after visiting the site were recorded from the audience. From the responses, it can be understood that very few of the visitors have a prior understanding of the cultural significance of the site. Based on the respondent's suggestions alternate interpretations and expansion of the primary interpretation as adding maps and images and logical organization of the texts have been derived. Also, to interpret the unseen, community involvement, and potential activity-based planning to enhance the understanding of this cultural heritage were also given priority by some of them.

The surveys, comprising questions on visitors' background knowledge, interest in the site, and feedback on the interpretative approach, highlighted varying interpretations and connections with the heritage narratives. For instance, locals displayed a deeper emotional connection to the site, often interpreting it considering personal or community histories. Tourists, on the other hand, showed interest in the broader historical and architectural aspects, but often lacked depth in understanding local cultural nuances. Students and heritage professionals provided more critical feedback, often pointing out gaps in narrative inclusivity and interpretive depth. The data analysis utilized statistical tools to identify patterns in visitor responses. It became apparent that engagement levels varied significantly depending on the visitor's background and prior knowledge, indicating a need for more tailored interpretive strategies.

A comparative analysis of the objectives outlined in interpretive materials against visitor feedback revealed notable gaps. Many visitors, especially those from marginalized groups or with limited historical background, found the narratives either too narrow or disconnected from their perspectives. The interpretive materials, while rich in historical information, often failed to resonate with visitors who sought more inclusive and relatable stories. The analysis highlights the need for interpretive strategies that not only inform but also connect with diverse audiences on a personal level. The gap analysis underscores the importance of understanding visitors' backgrounds in shaping their perceptions and underlines the necessity of incorporating multiple perspectives to make heritage interpretation more inclusive and effective.

6.0 Conclusion

The study at Panam Nagar reveals the complexities in heritage interpretation within a post-colonial context. It uncovers how current interpretive practices, while rich in historical detail, often overlook the diverse narratives and emotional connections that visitors seek. Many visitors come to Panam Nagar seeking a glimpse of the past, a form of 'nostalgia' as described by Boym (2001), longing for refuge from modern life's alienating aspects. However, the

current interpretation does not fully cater to these needs, leading to a gap between intended and perceived narratives.

To address these shortcomings, the following recommendations can be proposed:

- a. **Revision and Expansion of Interpretive Materials:** This involves updating and broadening the current interpretive materials to include a more diverse range of narratives.
- b. **Digital Storytelling and Interactive Exhibits:** Using digital platforms and interactive exhibits to create dynamic, engaging experiences that resonate with visitors' desires for deeper connections with the past.
- c. **Community-Led Tours:** Empowering local communities to share their narratives, adding authenticity and depth to the visitor experience.
- d. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Encouraging collaboration among various stakeholders, including local communities, historians, and visitors, for a continually evolving interpretation of the site.
- e. **Addressing Resource Constraints:** Recognizing challenges such as limited funding and human resources, strategies should be designed to be resource-efficient while maximizing impact.

Finally, the findings of this study are crucial for advancing heritage studies, underscoring the importance of adopting more inclusive and participatory methods in heritage interpretation. The insights gleaned from Panam Nagar offer valuable guidance for enhancing engagement and deepening the understanding of diverse cultural histories at heritage sites, particularly those with post-colonial legacies. Future research should focus on several key areas: evaluating the long-term impact of updated interpretive approaches on visitor perceptions at Panam Nagar; conducting comparative studies of heritage interpretation practices at other colonial-era sites to explore varied narrative approaches; investigating under-researched historical narratives to broaden the scope of interpretation at Panam Nagar; and exploring effective strategies to address resource constraints in the implementation of more comprehensive interpretive strategies.

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