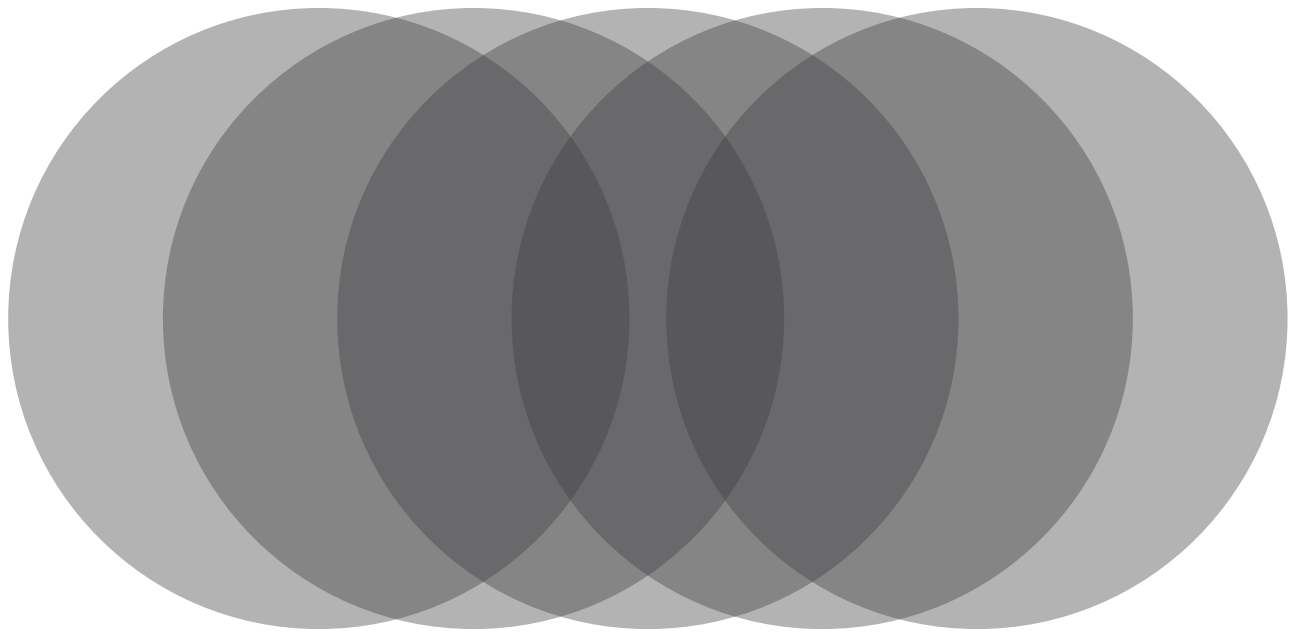


# THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE: TAKING THE CASE OF PHOOLWALON KI SAIR, MEHRAULI



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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted the arts and culture sector around the world. There is a severe research gap in studies for the knowledge of heritage with regards to the pandemic. The aim of this research paper is to understand the effect of the pandemic on intangible and built heritage, taking the case of Phoolwalon ki Sair, Mehrauli.

Phoolwalon ki Sair or the procession of the florists is a week-long festival where people of different faiths offer a floral chaadar and pankha at the Dargah of Khwaja Bakhtiar 'Kaaki' and the Yogmaya Temple in the heritage precinct of Mehrauli, Delhi. The procession takes place every year in the months of September-October. The pandemic years provided a unique opportunity to study the short and long term impact of the it on communities, livelihoods and built heritage linked with this festival. This may help perhaps propose a sustainable framework for a post pandemic world for heritage to remain relevant and help people recover a sense of continuity, dignity and empowerment.

The research for this paper was conducted in three stages, namely the literature review, primary data collection and secondary data collection. The literature review encompasses data sourced by searching with keywords related to the research topic and formulating it in terms of a scholarly interpretation. The primary data collection involved formulation data in form of visits to Mehrauli and interviews with stakeholders. The secondary data collection encompasses the literature study to further organize and create a framework for the primary data collected. The scope of this study was limited to the procession path of the festival in the precinct of Mehrauli. The limitation in this study was the enforcement of covid lockdowns, due to which data collection was affected but whenever during the two years of the pandemic i.e. 2020-2021 there were times when the world was open, research was conducted.

In conclusion, it was found that there needs to be support and aid from the government reaching the craftsmen and the artists. Social media could also be used as an effective tool to form an archive of the festival for future generations and we, as people need to create a discourse around this, come forward in these difficult times of the pandemic to create a better world.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Cultural heritage, Phoolwalon ki sair, Festivals, Traditional livelihoods, Sustainability

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

At the height of the global lockdown, a lot of countries had closed their World Heritage sites or monuments. It is estimated that the short and long-term economical consequences are would be massive as many of these natural and cultural sites solely base there revenue on tourism. These sites also use this revenue, in turn to carry out conservation or archaeological work. It is also said that ninety percent of these sites had closed for the public during the covid lockdowns and as many as one in eight may never reopen again (Wahba, et al., 2020).

Also, with the current scenario of covid-19, affecting the world as a global pandemic we are as a society at our most vulnerable. At such times of crisis, access to and care for the cultural heritage may help vulnerable people recover a sense of continuity,

dignity and empowerment. In the near future, what will be called the new normal, the acknowledgment and safeguarding of the cultural heritage, will be a strong anchor for the world in returning to normalcy (UNESCO, 2013). Further, the cancellation various events namely as rituals, festivals, and other different types of traditional practices will have a direct impact on the communities involved with them (Wahba, et al., 2020). For instance, for Phoolwalon ki Sair, there are certain communities involved like the weavers who weave the pankha or the fan.

The culture of a people, society or community always leaves its imprints on the built heritage (UNESCO, 2013). Tangible heritage includes archaeological sites, historic cities, areas and seascapes as well as gardens and places associated with historic events. UNESCO (2013) has also stressed on the importance of intangible cultural heritage, including oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive event. From Eid to Diwali, India plays host to a wide variety and styles of celebrations. Further, in Delhi, we also see a mix of celebrations taking place year round by different communities. This is evident when one studies a precinct as Mehrauli, a confluence of activity also reflects the same with the Phoolwalon Ki Sair and social heritage and other local traditions associated with which can be identified with the place, linking it to the built (Vasavada & Thakur, 1991). Phoolwalon ki Sair is a phenomenon related to built heritage touchpoints and placemaking, which have been explored further in this paper.

Historians such as Rana Safvi (2020), have also argued that the built heritage of Mehrauli is "living". According to her, the built heritage of Mehrauli is best understood as a continuing process in "time" (historical time) and "place" (Mehrauli). The act of building in the past was a physical manifestation of the philosophy, ideals, and building traditions. Phoolwalon Ki Sair or what is called the procession of flower-sellers rallies their way down the flower-sellers' market street in Mehrauli. There are dances of the Kathak form, songs sung in the form of qawwalis, a myriad of lights, huge pankhas or fans that are made of mostly palm leaves and are decorated with flowers and tinsel, and circus acrobats

The flower pankhas are transported through the narrow paths in Mehrauli in a massive parade that is accompanied by fire dancers. The Lodhis constructed the Jahaz Mahal lying at the banks of the Shamsi Talab near the Bazaar street, where the cultural event is held. The Jog Maya temple is nearby, hidden behind the mausoleum of Adham Khan, and it is a significant architectural landmark (INTACH, 2012a).

#### 1.1.1 ON MEHRAULI

Mehrauli is an important historic "urban village" of Delhi, it is also referred to as Lal Kot, which is one of the cities of Delhi. It is also synonymous to the Qutub complex which has been selected for nomination in the list of World Heritage sites (Vasavada & Thakur, 1991). Besides the complex, Mehrauli is home to a wide variety of other noteworthy buildings and clusters of

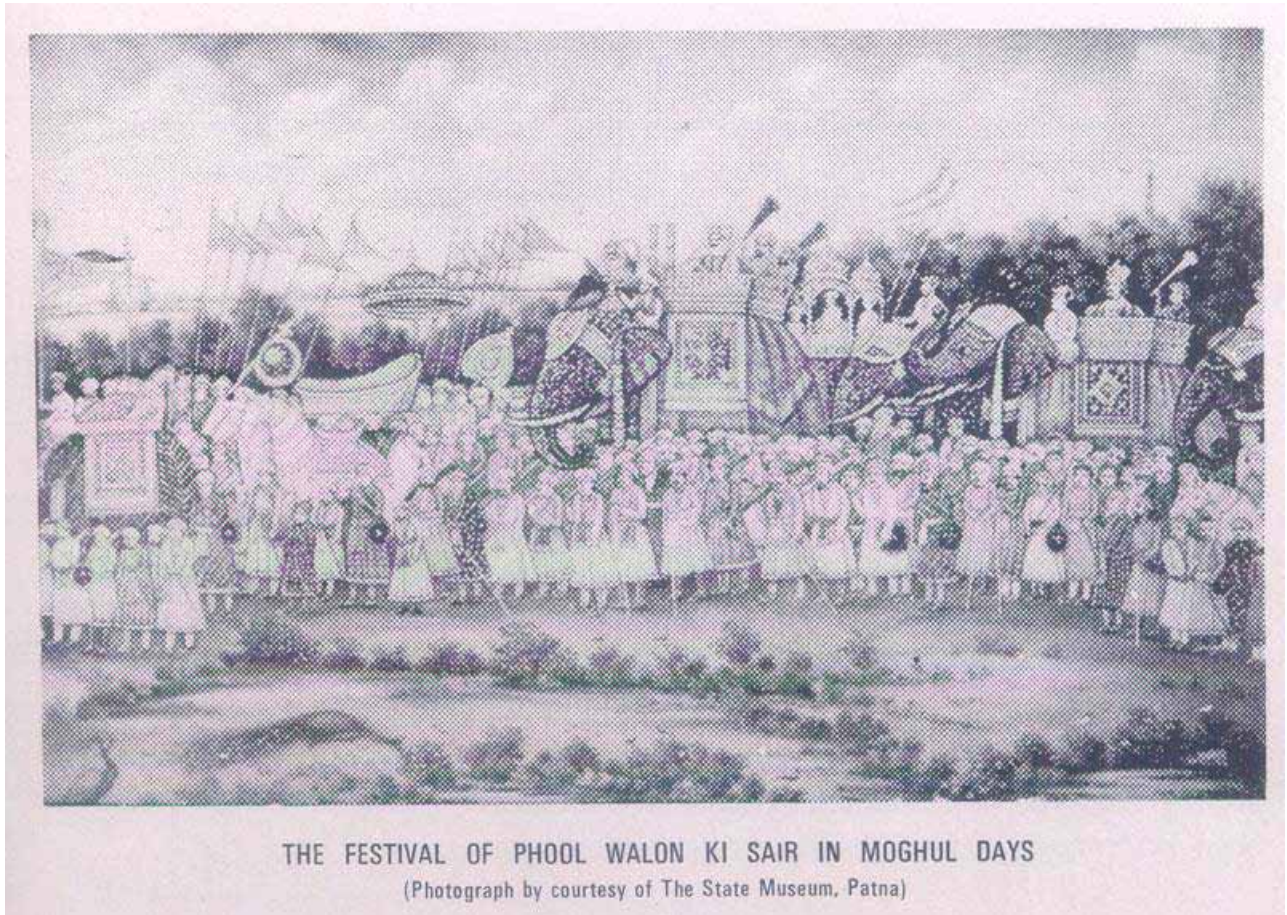


Figure 1: A Mughal miniature painting depicting the Phool Walon Ki Sair. (Source: [http://www.phoolwaalonkisair.com/gallery\\_old.htm](http://www.phoolwaalonkisair.com/gallery_old.htm))

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buildings that are surrounded by breathtaking scenery. Just outside the "urban village" is where the capitals of Rai Pithora and Lalkot once stood. Mehrauli in itself has a large amount of constructed heritage, must also be taken into consideration for preservation. Mehrauli, with its Phool Walon Ki Sair or the procession of florists, an annual celebration also reflects on its important association with the intangible.

### 1.2 AIM, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The aim of the study is to understand the effect of the pandemic on the intangible, such as Phoolwalon Ki Sair and also the built heritage that surrounds it.

The scope of this study has been constricted to the procession path of Phoolwalon Ki Sair in the precinct of Mehrauli. The main limitation in this study being the Lockdown, due to which data collection may be limited and affected. Also, during the primary survey all pandemic related safety norms will be followed for instance social distancing and this may have an impact on the data collection.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review encompasses data sourced by searching with keywords related to the research topic i.e. COVID-19 and Phoolwaalon Ki Sair and formulation of an data. The literature review shall be further divided

into subpoints. With this, a narrative framework shall be created of how to tie logically, all the points research. This shall help in the step of analysis.

### 2.1 Disasters and Pandemics in the Indian Traditions

Disasters and pandemics are historically known to have a strong impact on economy, the a relation with the growth rate and economies of countries have always been observed. It is also said in Hindu Mythology that prosperity follows peace (Pattanaik, 2018). Also, that natural disasters have always acted as great disruptors of peace. For instance, during the black death plague of 1348-49 in England had caused and economic depression and festivals and celebrations were the first to be cancelled (Ahmed, 2020). It can hence be established that out of the various expressions of cultural heritage, festivals are most fragile. Further, it is important to review the interrelationships between communities, practices and get an understanding of the various dimensions that impact festivals, particularly during unprecedented scenarios such as the current global pandemic.

### 2.2 Resilience and Vulnerability Assessment

Gonsalves (2011) talks about understanding resilience and vulnerability as a key element of effective disaster management. In particular, a resilience and vulnerability assessment can:

1. Identify the strengths of particular areas, communities or groups, in terms of resources, skills, networks and community agencies. These strengths and capabilities may be used and further developed to minimise the negative consequences of an emergency.

2. Identify vulnerabilities of particular areas, communities or groups, so that these can be managed in terms of prevention and preparedness activities, response activities and recovery programmes. These shall be found out via primary sources i.e. visits and interviews.

### 2.3 Impact on Festivals in the Global Context

Rappeport & Smialek (2020) discuss that a large global recession since the Great Depression is taking place and might worsen in the years to come is a result of the quickly evolving COVID-19 pandemic catastrophe having a great effect on how societies function by disrupting working life patterns and many firms suffering (ibid.). For instance, the Hong Kong arts festival, which features over a hundred performances and events has been cancelled for 2021 (Kenya, 2020). The lives and livelihoods of those linked with the festival have been irreversibly affected and many are looking at uncertainty in terms of their economic sustenance. Also, the decision to cancel the festival is historic, happening for the first time in its forty-eight year old history that it has been cancelled and what is further fascinating that it was held in previous years despite threatening situations such as political unrest.

### 2.4 Sensitivity of practices and economics

In India, this could be observed in the recently concluded festival of Ganesh Chaturthi. Every year, come Ganesh Chaturthi, various businesses related to the festival get invigorated – from idol-making to flower growers and sellers but this year is different (Jayasimha, 2020). A surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in the city has meant that people planned low-key festivities, which in turn meant that the festive season was not as fruitful for these businesses (ibid.). This reflects how sensitive practices and economic activities around festivals are.

### 2.5 Festivals as cultural heritage

Getz & Page (2007) emphasize the fact that festivals are a reflection of society and can be characterized as "a sacred event entailing celebration, highlighted in time by specific observances" and that they occur in almost all human societies. Festivals are presented in a number of venues, including both physical and virtual spaces, and they are managed by groups from the public sector, non-profits, and the corporate sector. (Newbold & Jordan, 2016) argue that festivals can be anchored in regional or religious customs, have a cosmopolitan reach, or be diasporic (like the New Year celebrations of the Chinese). Durkheim & Swain (1915) say that festivals have long been recognized as occasions of 'collective effervescence' that lead to the development and dissemination of a strong sense of community among their participants. They are indeed a manifestation of rich living heritage (Falassi, 1987).

### 2.6 A case of India

The Onion (2014) argues that, in a country like ours wherein the cultural diversity is significant and unique, it also gets manifested in artefacts, behaviour, feelings, values and beliefs. It is also said that India is a country with several different fairs, with unique fairs in each region. The National Portal (2014) provides virtual access to fairs and festivals in ancient towns like Varanasi as well in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Mizoram, Assam, Kerala, Sikkim, and Goa, to name a few. Tayeb (2003), further states that these fairs are not only a place to sell traditional products manufactured by local artisans, but are also centres of art, demonstrating local art forms and traditional methods of manufacture. The Rajasthan Tourism website also lists 43 fairs and festivals that take place throughout the state (Rajasthan Tourism, 2014). Also, taking a case of northern India, one of the very significant fairs, economically and socially, which is sponsored and managed by the state of Haryana is the "Surajkund International Crafts Mela", which takes place annually from 1st to 15th February. It showcases regional and international crafts and traditions and celebrates the unique diversity of Indian culture and traditions (Haryana Tourism, 2014). This Mela was held for the very first time in 1987 with a rural setting as indicated in the official website for the Surajkund Mela's of the Past, 2014. The vision of the Mela Authority, which is the organising committee is to preserve the arts and crafts of India and promote the skilled local artisans of India.

### 2.7 International Traditions

Internationally too, fairs portraying culture and traditions are held regularly. The "Westcott Street Fair", USA is held annually to celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of Westcott neighbourhood through its culture. Even though it is held only for a day visual and performing arts along with the local food are an integral part of the fair as mentioned on their official website (WSCF, 2014). Another example is "The Asian Fair" held annually on the South Florida Fairgrounds, is an annual event that started in 1992 and promotes the importance of cultural diversity in building a vibrant, prosperous and healthy community. It showcases the diversity of Asian culture and heritage as mentioned in their official website (asianfair.org). In New Zealand, "The World Food, Craft and Music Fair, held annually in the city of Palmerston North is also a fair to celebrate art, culture and lifestyle. A cuisine show called "A Taste of Culture" is also part of the fair (Eventfinda, 2014). From the above, it can be concluded that fairs are typically conducted to celebrate, spread, and instil a region's culture or, in the case of India, a subculture.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology is shown in Fig. 2.

The methodology for this research, started with referring to existing references in the form of books, research paper and articles. This in turn helped form the research question, which pondered on the research gap and hence the topic was selected. After that, a literature review was conducted on Phoolwalon Ki Sair and the impact of covid on heritage. Further, to establish a connection between the two, data

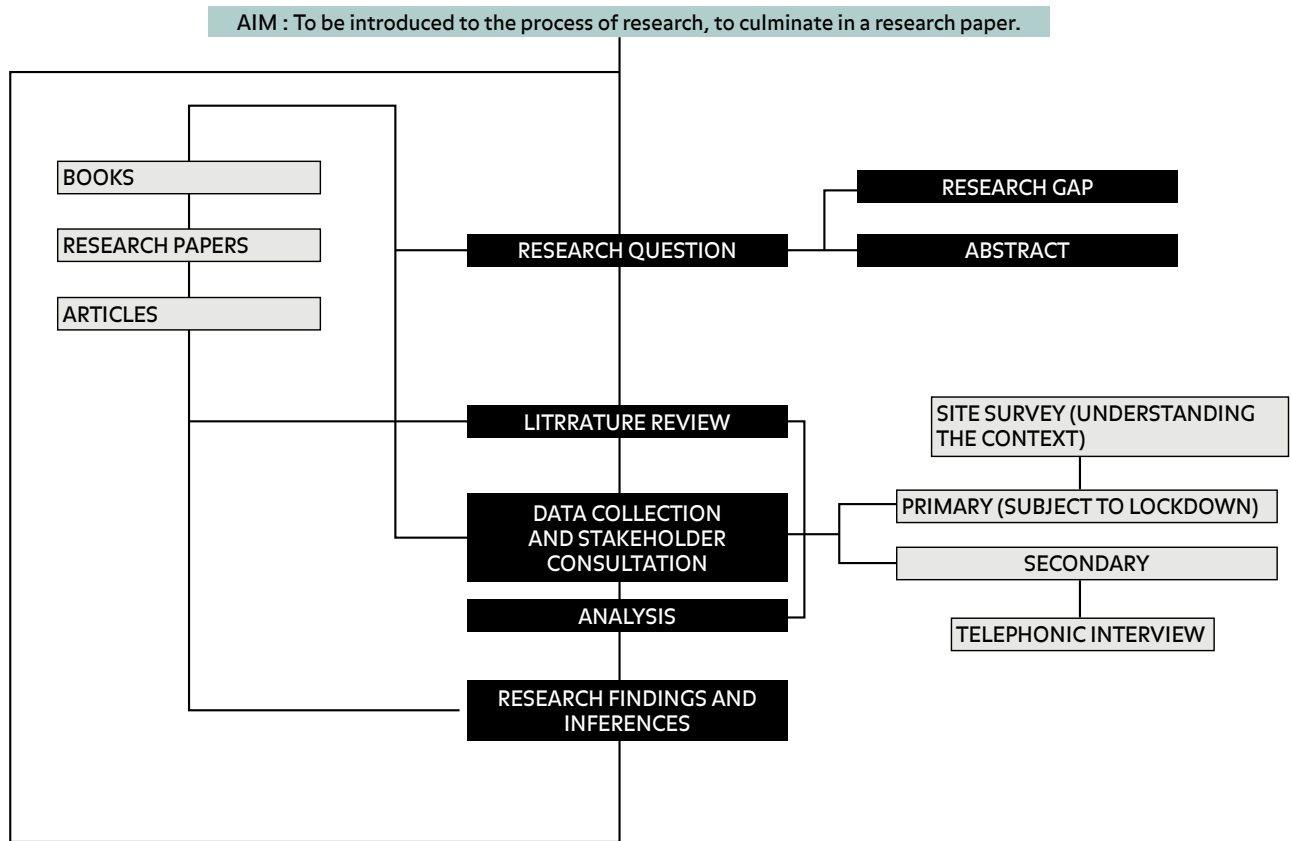


Figure 2: Methodology (Source: Author)

collection was done in the form of primary survey, along with stakeholder consultation focussing on first-hand information but also telephonic interviews (due to the enforcement of lockdowns). From these research findings, inferences were drawn and recommendations have been formulated.

### 3.1 Primary Data Collection

The primary data collection step within itself encapsulates data in form of interviews of various stakeholders as well as documentation of the procession, subject to its taking place. Interviews can also give an insight into additional question pertaining to the activities performed during procession along with photographic and video graphic evidence while visiting and being a part of the festival. COVID prevention measures such as distancing and wearing of mask have been followed.

### 3.2 Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data collection step involves the literature study to further organize and create a framework for the primary data collected. In addition to literature, various other media like podcasts and webinars will also be studied in detail to analyse various geographical, social, cultural aspects keeping Phoolwalon ki Sair at its core. Also, since the pandemic is a current scenario, the data would be current and up to date.

### 3.3 Analysis And Inferences

This step shall involve analysing the literature review and the various data forms (primary and secondary) to form inferences or recommendations.

### 3.4 Expected Outcomes

This research paper shall aim to fuse the two aspects, namely heritage and the pandemic and perhaps propose recommendations for a post pandemic world for heritage to remain relevant and help people recover a sense of continuity, dignity and empowerment.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 About Phoolwalon ki Sair

Sircar (2019) establishes that the festival of Phoolwaalon ki Sair, translated to Procession of the Florists can easily be designated as one of the most prominent and oldest festive events of Delhi. Spear (2002) says that although the event began in its modern form under the Nehruvian state's auspices in the early 1960s, its historical roots may be found in 1812, when Delhi was under the reign of the penultimate Mughal king Akbar Shah II. The event became an annual festival, continuing even after Akbar II, and the celebrations were at their peak during the time of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. It was stopped from being celebrated by colonial powers during the time of the Quit India Movement in 1942, but was reintroduced in 1961 as a symbol of communal harmony by then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

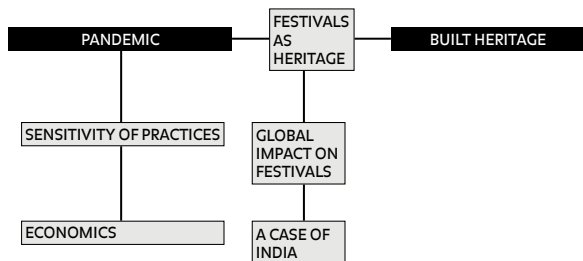


Figure 3: Conceptual framework (Source: Author)

Since 1962, this festival is being hosted by an organization named Anjuman Sair-e-Gulfaroshan with Ms. Usha Kumar (2014) at its head, in collaboration with the government of Delhi where it is coordinated by the Lt. Governor and the Chief Minister. This festival is celebrated every year, taking a procession route with two important touch points of built heritage, namely the temple of Yogmaya Devi and the shrine of Bakhtiar Kaki. The precinct of Mehrauli, is one of the oldest neighborhoods of the capital. Sircar (2019) refers to the festival as seeking to promote social parity and communal harmony between people of various faiths.

#### 4.2 Linkages with Built Heritage

Falassi (1987) also argues about the fact that festivals represent a temporality that is distinct from that of daily life, since communities do not celebrate festivals everyday but view them as specific events. Sircar (2019) observes the fact that festivals transfigure ordinary spaces into a special arena where their exceptional rites can be organized. This can also be connected to the case of the case of Phoolwalon ki Sair, which transforms the religious sites and urban spaces of Mehrauli from their everyday environment into temporary arenas for staging its myriad constituent rites. Gibson & Stewart (2009) also note that festive spaces act as “a point of convergence” where the different groups associated with the festival i.e. the organizers, volunteers, participants, sponsors amongst others can forge tangible, material and social networks among themselves.

In the case of Phoolwaalon ki Sair, this is true in the case of the Jharna, the Dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki and the Yogmaya Temple. Pankhas and chaadars of flowers are made at the Jharna and carried through Mehrauli village by Muslims and Hindus. As is the tradition, the chaadars are offered at the Dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki and the pankhas at the Yogmaya Temple. These three points i.e. Jharna, the Dargah and the temple are important linkages with the built heritage.

#### 4.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is seen in Fig. 3

The conceptual framework had two primary foci namely the pandemic and built heritage which were further broken down into concepts delving into festivals as heritage and the sensitivity of practices. After studying the global impact of the pandemic,

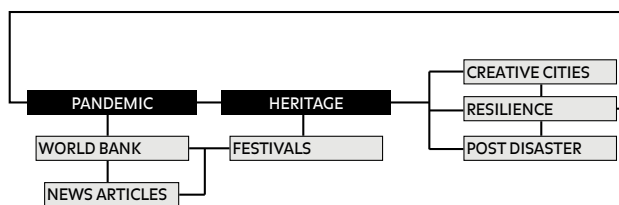


Figure 4: Theoretical Framework (Source: Author)

the study was narrowed down to India and finally to Phoolwalon Ki Sair in Mehrauli, Delhi.

#### 4.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is seen in Fig. 4.

In the case of formulating the theoretical framework, research was conducted using two main keywords, pandemic and heritage. The research into the pandemic, yielded an interesting article from the world bank cited at the beginning of this paper which spoke about the disastrous effects of the pandemic on the revenue of heritage sites. This further opened a window into the enquiry for resilience and post-disaster recovery (talked about in recommendations at the end of the paper).

#### 4.5 Historical Significance Of The Festival

Phoolwalon ki Sair, also known as Sair-e-Gul Faroshan, has now evolved into an annual three day celebration. The tradition was started by Begum Mumtaz Mahal, the wife of the Mughal Emperor Akbar Shah II. She had promised to offer a chaadar of flowers at the Dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli if her son Mirza Jahangir was released from British custody. When Bakhtiyar Kaki, in 1811 finally fulfilled the vow she had taken, the entire Mughal court accompanied her from Shahjahanabad to Mehrauli.

A elegantly woven floral chaddar was presented to Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's shrine. An enthusiastic flower vendor then proceeded to add a big floral pankha (fan) that was draped from the dargah's ceiling. To include the Hindus in the crowd to participate in the celebrations, it was then decided to offer the pankha at the neighbouring Yogmaya Temple.

The Delhi royalty along with the locals stayed at Mehrauli for seven days, while the males flew kites and swam in the baolis in Hauz-e-Shamsi or indulged in cock fighting and wrestling, the ladies enjoyed seasonal showers in the mango orchards or sang on swings suspended from mango tree branches.

#### Day-wise schedule of Phoolwalon ki Sair:

- Day 1: Pankhas and chaadars of flowers are made at the Jharna and carried through Mehrauli village. The Lt. Governor of Delhi, is the chief guest and the Chadar is offered at the Dargah of Bakhtiyar Kaki and a Qawalli ceremony is held. The dargah closes at 6:30 pm so the ceremony is wrapped up before that.

- Day 2: The festival moves on to Yogmaya Mandir and a Shehnai performance is held outside. The procession is formed by the Shehnai players and the Pankha is accepted by the temple priests. This pankha is made and offered by the citizens of Delhi.

- Day 3: On this day, the Jahaz Mahal and Shamsi Talab become important touchpoints. A sound and light show is held at the Jahaz Mahal. There is sports competition held near the Shamsi Talab. After this, another Pankha ceremony is held and Pankhas from all over India are exhibited. After this, one set of these Pankha's from all over India are offered to the Yogmaya Temple.

During this time, it seems as if a festive air prevails in the streets of Mehrauli, which are decorated with flowers (see Fig. 5). Also, stalls that sell various items like bangles, toys, garments, and handicrafts are set up. One can also see Temporary halls, shamianas (a cloth canopy or awning set on poles), and tents being set up to accommodate the large number of people which come to visit the festival. The next part discusses about the important placemaking points (shown in Figure 6), which were touched upon briefly above.

4.6 Placemaking Points

Fig. 7 has to be referred to.

4.6.1 Jahaz Mahal

Jahaz Mahal, is a palace building and is located on the north-east corner of Hauz-e-Shamsi, built during the Lodi period. The structure was named Jahaz Mahal as its reflection in the water seems to reflect the image of a ship. The building was constructed to provide accommodation for pilgrims who came to Delhi on religious visits. It has a rectangular courtyard in the centre with domed rooms on all four corners. A mihrab on the palace's western wall serves as a private mosque. On the exterior, blue tiles have been used on the bands. Six square chhatris adorn the roof, which is supported by six, eight, and twelve pillars (INTACH, 2012b).

4.6.2 Dargah Of Saint Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki

Bakhtiyar Kaki's Dargah is a rectangular enclosure adorned and topped by a dome. Aurangzeb embellished the dargah's western wall with coloured floral tiles (INTACH, 2012b). The Dargah Complex has several entry points and is located alongside the Palace Complex of Zafar Mahal. To its eastern entryway, known as the Hathi Gate, are a nineteenth-century mosque and a Mughal mausoleum. Many Mughal dynasty members had wished to be buried near the holy shrine of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (INTACH, 2012b).

The dargah is located near the Zafar Mahal (as shown in Figure 7). According to a source from the Dargah

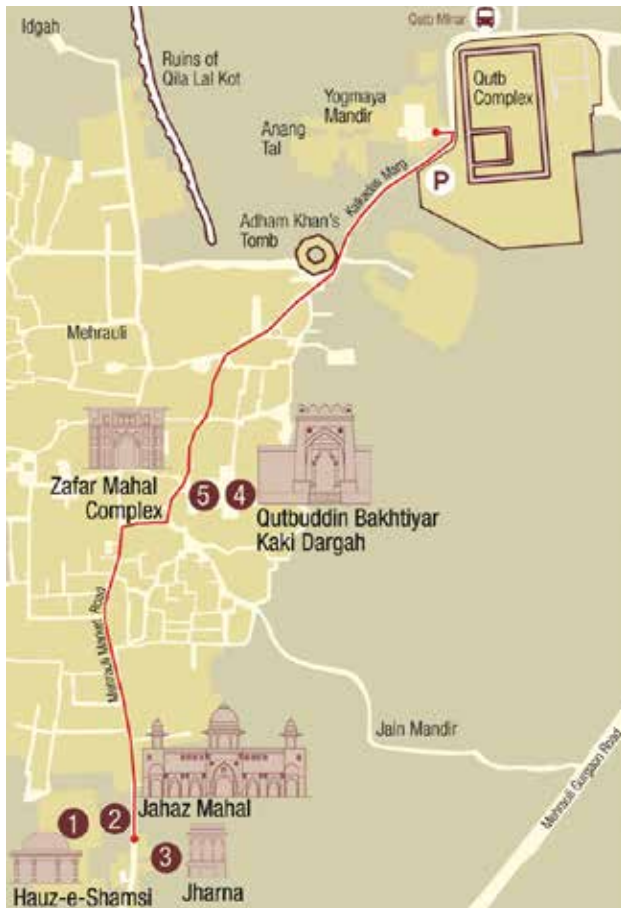


Figure 5: The procession path for Phoolwalon Ki Sair (Source: Delhi Chapter, INTACH. (2012). Mehrauli Village. World Monuments Fund)

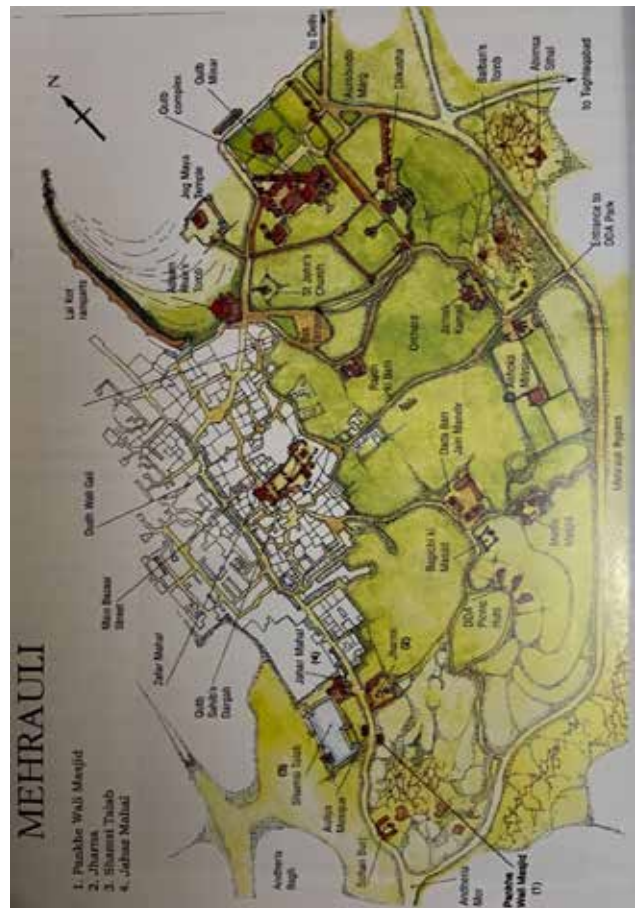


Figure 6: Map Of Mehrauli (Source: Kumar, U. (2014) Phool Waalon Ki Sair. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications)



Figure 7: INTACH board of the Dargah next to Zafar Mahal  
(Source: Author)



Figure 8: The state of collapse of the roofing of the Dargah.  
(Source: Author)



Figure 9: Tiling done on the Dargah by the committee- an insensitive intervention. (Source: Author)

management committee, it is a key placemaking point during the first and third days of the Phoolwalon Ki Sair festival. A qawwali competition is held on the first day, and a set of Pankhas is given to the Dargah on the third day. Despite the importance of the Dargah, the source laments the fact that there is no representation or help from the government for its preservation and care (see Figs. 8 & 9). The Dargah is entirely supported by the donations of tourists.

This is in contrast to the Yogmaya Temple, the Manager of which is a bonafide member of the Anjuman Sair-e-Gulfaroshan and which takes the onus of the cleaning of the Yogmaya Temple. Despite yearly visits by high ranking officials before the annual visit of the Lt. Governor of Delhi, there is no support. Due to this, the Dargah Committee has done insensitive repairs as per their budgets it seems that the historicity of the structure is at a loss. The Zafar Mahal, in contrast, which just abuts the Dargah was worked on by INTACH in 2017 while taking resources such as water and electricity from the Dargah for their work. The walls of the Zafar Mahal were restored with an admixture of lime and several indigenous ingredients like urad dal, the juice of bel and jaggery. Similar techniques could be used to repair the walls of the dargah and the baoli next to it as mentioned in the following section.



Figure 10: The pankhas from 2019 kept inside the Yogmaya Temple  
(Source: Author)

#### 4.6.3 Qutub Sahab Ki Baoli, Dargah Of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki

A baoli abuts the Dargah, completely hidden from view. Infact, very few people know about its existence. This structure is locally known as "Qutub Sahab Ki Baoli" and can be considered as hidden heritage. When the Delhi government released a calendar listing the city's major baolis in 2017, the Baoli was not included. Sources from the committee claim that they even wrote to the government after they forgot to mention the name of our baoli. The Baoli's structure is now dilapidated, and the water within the tank is hidden beneath layers of trash which reflect years of neglect and lack of upkeep.

Even the author and heritage activist Vikramjit Rooprai (2019).claims in his book that, While the majority of Delhi's baolis date back to the Tughlaq and Lodhi periods, this one was built just a decade before the British took over entirely. What amuses him, he says, is that despite the fact that Mehrauli was densely populated, a man was able to construct this massive structure.

The Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) began cleaning the baoli in 2011-12 and then the work suddenly stopped. A source claims that the SRDC stated that this was only the initial or the primary phase of work, and that the secondary phase which entailed maintenance and conservation, would begin later. Almost ten years later, there has been no action on this front, other than a mention of the project on the Delhi Government's official website. In fact, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) was also interested in reviving the baoli, but no further action has been taken, despite their work on the previously mentioned Zafar Mahal in 2017.

He further states that when water was discovered in the basements of nearby buildings a few years ago, there was a petition filed to determine the source of the leak. Following an investigation, the Jal Board of Delhi discovered that water from the baoli was seeping into the surrounding areas. Water samples were also taken, and it was discovered that after adding chlorine, the water quality was comparable to that of the Jal Board. LL According to Mr Fauzan Ahmed, on the managing committee of the shrine since 2008, Meena, a Delhi Jal Board official, inspected this baoli. Meena, on the other hand, denies that he conducted any inspection. "Because we already had a water body in place, we offered the board to use its water for nearby areas to ease restoration and maintenance," Fauzan continues. However, nothing happened. (Parichha, 2020)



Mr Ahmed suggests that this can be brought back to its original use. Furthermore, the baoli also could become an effective source of fresh water for the shrine and surrounding areas, which will also help in its maintenance and upkeep (Kapoor, 2020). This could also restore the intended historic use of the Baoli, the function which it was intended to perform.

#### 4.6.4 Yogmaya Temple

At the Yogmaya Temple, a source interviewed from the Yogmaya Mandir Welfare and Management Committee explains that the temple comes alive during the Phoolwalon Ki Sair as, on the last day of the festival one set of pankhas are sent here (Fig. 10) and another set is sent to the Dargah of Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki. The maintenance and upkeep of the temple is handled by the committee, whose members are the residents who live around the temple and every year one resident gets the chance to maintain the temple and also install a priest inside. The structures around the temple, were Brahmin Dharamshalas, out of which one still survives and the others have given way to modern plotted housing.

The association to the temple with the residents around is further strengthened as, if someone in the nearby cluster of houses passes away they decide to close the temple. Also, during the Phoolwalon Ki Sair, the onus of the decoration and cleaning of the temple lies with Anjuman Sair-e-Gulfaroshan with Ms. Usha Kumar (2014) at its head and the government of Delhi where it is coordinated by the Lt. Governor along with Delhi's Chief Minister. In addition, the head of the Yogmaya Welfare and Management Committee is also a member.

#### 4.7 Current Scenario

##### 4.7.1 Dwindling Down Of Participation

Popular participation in the procession is grossly missing, complain old-timers of the city of Mehrauli as well as historians (Adak, 2020). According a source who is a history enthusiast and conducts heritage walks in the area, there used to be a time when the entire Chandni Chowk and Mehrauli looked forward to winters for Phoolwalon ki Sair. He says, "I've been in Mehrauli since I was a child. The procession would begin with great fanfare. Families with children would participate. Shehnai was played by Ustad Bismillah Khan. Let alone other parts of Delhi, half of Mehrauli is unaware of it. Passes for the qawwali performances on Phoolwalon ki Sair have not sold in recent years in the quantities they used to be."

##### 4.7.2 Threat: Lack Of Action

Sultan (2019) and Verma (2020) report that dozens of unprotected monuments at Mehrauli Archaeological Park are fading away. Other non-ASI monuments lack sufficient archival details, in contrast to those under ASI protection like Rajon ki Baoli and Jamal Kamali, which have sufficient historical records and photographs. An official stated, "These monuments have been listed as cultural heritage, but there is not much of information available on these, such as their true height and who the graves belong to."

This is echoed by Sultan (2019), who states that according to a Delhi government official, conservation efforts at a few locations have to be abandoned due to opposition from the public, authorities, and encroachment.

#### 4.7.3 Effect Of Covid

Almost 400 artists and craftsmen are connected directly and indirectly with Phoolwalon Ki Sair. As an effect of the coronavirus pandemic, their livelihoods and future is shrouded in uncertainty. Ms. Usha Kumar (2014), the current convenor of the festival since 1962 says that this is the first time in almost fifty eight years that the festival hasn't taken place, due to the pandemic. Asif Khan Dehlvi, historian who also conducts heritage walks during the festival also reaffirms this and adds further that only once during the 1870's because of the unrest in the country at the time, the festival hadn't taken place. He also adds further that in addition to the artists and craftsmen, a lot of technicians and support staff also used to be employed which find themselves unemployed due to the pandemic. In addition to this, the flower market of Mehrauli was shifted in 2011 to Ghazipur but the flowers for Phoolwalon Ki Sair continued to arrive from Ghazipur so that entire network which was activated during this period has also been affected. Also, Dehlvi adds that numerous other support staff such as the drivers, who drove the artisans and craftsmen to the festival have also been heavily affected. The important placemaking points, discussed in the previous section are also deserted and seem in a state of disuse.

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The pandemic has caused a great strain on people, including the built heritage touchpoints associated with it. There should be a push for sustainable development and practice, for the post covid world that we are about to step in, most importantly from the government. It is therefore recommended that:

- The heritage sites along the route of Phoolwalon Ki Sair, need to prepare for adequate footfalls and introduce measures such as surveillance via drones, gates and entry points working as control points to prepare for the post pandemic world. The Yog Maya temple and the Dargah of Bakhtiyar Kaki are prime examples where this needs to be carried out as they can get crowded.
- The Qutb Sahab Baoli, along with the Dargah can act as one complex and can add to the historic value of the precinct. The original use of the Dargah can be restored, which will stop it from further deterioration, respecting its built heritage.
- There has to be an attempt to study and uncover the Built Heritage of Yog Maya temple as it has been completely made into a new structure by giving it the shell of a modern building, covering the old mandapa and garbagriha inside. According to some sources interviewed, there used to be rocks and stones from the earlier Yog Maya temple structure, which are missing now.

• An attempt also needs to be made to restore the built heritage around the area of Shamsi Talab which has a lot of ruins of earlier structures and traces of the mango orchards that used to be here, according to sources interviewed. These can also be revived creating another important heritage experience.

• Built Heritage, should be treated with utmost sensitivity, even while carrying out restoration measures as well as while during temporary beautification (for instance installing lights and flowers for Phoolwalon Ki Sair).

• Virtual heritage tours can be conducted to promote the Built Heritage, using technologies like LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scanning of monuments, in which an entire building/site is scanned in three dimensions and virtual models are created of the same which can be enjoyed in the safety of people's homes via their devices.

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