Digital Himalayan Archaeology in the Time of Covid

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Abstract

The dawn of the digital age has brought us a remarkable change in study of heritage and its documentation, conservation and exhibition. And the onslaught of covid pandemic virtually changed the landscape of handling and looking at our heritage. Now at this time the digital heritage has become a norm. It is going to put new challenges to universities, museums and institutions with limited budgets and manpower and at the same time open new avenues to explore new technologies to showcase our heritage to the world through the most attractive AV or VR tools.

In this direction the Department of History and Archaeology, HNB Garhwal University, Uttarakhand, India started a collaborative project with Dr Bernard K. Means of Virtual Curation Laboratory of VCU (Virginia Commonwealth University) USA for not only to digitally document the archaeological antiquities of Central Himalayan region through 3D scanning but also to preserve and produce 3D digital and printed models of the artefacts in his lab at VCU.

Within this collaborative work till date, we have successfully scanned more than 250 most precious terracotta, sculptures, art objects and excavated archaeological artefacts of Garhwal Central Himalaya which are housed in the Museum of Himalayan Archaeology and Ethnography, and printed them in 3D for exhibition and study purposes at VCU by Dr. Means. Furthermore, this collaborative practice also allowed us to share the Himalayan archaeological antiquities and promote Indian art forms and Archaeology as well beyond the territories of India. For example, our partner institute (VCU) has already exhibited central Himalayan archaeological antiquity on various occasions at VCU and at many other places. Even all the scanned objects are not only printed in 3D but these all are also preserved in a digital database where all the artefacts can be seen and examined very precisely. This would help the researcher, students and public in accessing the central Himalayan archaeological antiquity for their interest. Our presentation will highlight the journey of this collaboration, its concept, methodology and results.

Key Wards: Heritage, Digital, Himalaya, Garhwal, 3D

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