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**Revisiting Svayambhunath and Other Heritage Sites in the Kathmandu Valley  
after the Earthquakes of 2015**

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The earthquakes of April and May, 2015 (with a magnitude of respectively 7.8 and 7.3) caused some 9,000 deaths and widespread damage in the Kathmandu Valley. This includes the seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in the Valley, viz.

- the Buddhist Stupas of Svayambhu and Baudha, the former serving the Newar Buddhist community, the latter serving Tibetan Buddhist communities
- the Hindu temples of Pashupatinath and Changu Narayana, dedicated respectively to Shiva and Vishnu
- the royal squares of the Valley's three historical capitals, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur.

and the vast majority (reportedly 90%) of other heritage sites of the Valley such as

- the Vajrayogini temple above the devastated village of Sankhu
- the so-called Bhimsen Tower of Kathmandu

Some important terms:

- traditional Indic conception of renovation (*jirnoddhara*) in terms of replacement (which may be ritualized as rebirth) rather than repair, versus the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, agreed upon in Venice 1964.
- the stupa's central element is a wooden post, called life tree (Tibetan: *srog shing*; Sanskrit: *yaṣṭī*), traversing the stupa
- the Newars are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, who speak a Tibeto-Burmese language, even while Indic in their cultural and religious practices

Suggested Reading:

Gellek, Tsering Palmo and Padma Dorje Maitland (eds.), *Light of the Valley. Renewing the Sacred Art and Traditions of Svayambhu*. Cazadero, California: Dharma Publishing, 2011

Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. *Nepal Patan Darbar Square: Earthquake Response Campaign : Documentation of Work to Date, September 2016*. 2016. <https://kvptnepal.org/2016patandarbarworktodate/>

Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust. Patan Darbar Earthquake Response Campaign at Patan Darbar Square UNESCO World Heritage Site. 2017. <https://kvptnepal.org/2017eqresponsecampaign/>

Alexander von Rospatt. "Buddhist Strategies of Keeping its Sacred Images and Shrines Alive. The Example of the Svayambhū-caitya of Kathmandu." in David Park, Kuenga Wangmo, Sharon Cather (eds). *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and its Conservation*. London: Archetype Publications. 2013, pp. 275-285.