

## CONSERVATION OF WORLD HERITAGE MONUMENTS AND MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

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The history of the conservation of monuments in India goes back to early centuries of Christian era. Inscriptional records and the literary reference available have provided that the monuments were cared and looked after time to time by the Kings, their subordinates, monks and merchants. The systematic conservation and the study of the antiquarian remains started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and regular legislations about the monuments and sites were framed in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning there was no concept of the management of the movements and the sites need to be maintained and preserved on a concept based management. The Archaeological Survey of India is the nodal agency for the upkeep of the monuments and the maintenance. The various legislations have strengthen the working of the Government organizations and now the monuments are being looked after and controlled on the concept of the public involvement.

### Keywords

Conservation of the monuments, Archaeological legislation, Management process, Qualification and training, Tourism and Development of the monuments.

“It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture”  
Constitution of India.

This moral and Constitutional responsibility of the Indian citizen enumerated in the Constitution of India is the total philosophy of our heritage management. It is very well-known that India is a great repository of ancient cultural and natural treasures of exceptional value. 17 Heritage, 5 Natural and 1 Industrial Sites have been declared as the World Heritage Monuments and Sites which are being maintained and preserved on a new concept of maintenance and management.

The history of the conservation of the monuments of India goes back to early centuries of Christian era. King Rudradaman (AD 130-150) repaired the Sudarshan lake which had developed huge breach. He made it stronger without changing the original character. A recent find of a copper plate inscription from Bagh caves (Central India) has revealed that for repairing the broken and dilapidated portions of the monastery, the king Subandhu granted lands. Similarly,

during the medieval period, Vijayanagar rulers of South India also carried out extensive repairs to Channakessava temple, Belur, Brihadeshwar temple, Tanjor and several other monuments in the capital city of Hampi, a World Heritage Site.

The Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal emperors also carried out extensive repairs to Quwwatal Islam Masjid, Qutab Minar and the Jama Masjid of Badaun in Uttar Pradesh. The Jama Masjid of Bagi Khattu in Nagore district of Rajasthan was repaired and restored by emperor Akbar. The benevolent ruler of Kashmir Zain-ul-Abadin (1421-1472) also carried out repairs to Martand temple built by Lalitaditya Muktapida.

Further during the year 1664 the visit of Dr. Bernier to Kashmir valley and the monuments in Mughal India opened a new chapter of antiquarian interest which gave birth to systematic collection of antiquities and then their preservation. In these activities pioneering work was done by Sir Willam John, the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, who formed, on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1784, the Asiatic Society, an institution for enquiring, among other things into history, antiquities, arts, sciences of the sub-continent. The formation of the Society organised the efforts of its members and contributions started pouring in from all quarters announcing new finds. The start made in Calcutta was soon followed in other parts of India.

The initial activities of the society were mainly oriented towards the study of the antiquities and the monuments, and, the concept of preservation was confined only to collection of antiquities. But with the arrival of Sir Alexander Cunningham, lauded by India's First Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, who observed that the preservation of historic monuments is the well deserving responsibility of the Government, and thus the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India was laid. Alexander Cunningham as the first Director General of Archaeological Survey of India surveyed Rajputana, Bundelkhand and certain areas of Punjab. He collected Indo-Greek coins in Kaushambi, all intimately connected with the life of Buddha. In Cole was appointed by the Government and he carried out the repairs of the monuments of Delhi, Agra and examined the conditions of the monuments if Kashmir, Rajputana, Bombay and

Madras.

With the turn of the century, Archaeological Survey of India entered into a new era. The arrival of the Lord Curzon as the Viceroy of India, archaeology got a new impetus. On 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1900 he announced that research could not be set behind the conservation and the conservation behind the research. Both are parts of any scientific scheme of any antiquarian work. He further stated that he was not one of those who could afford to patronize the one and ignore the other. He said it was his judgement, that it is equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, decipher and conserve.

Such was the task Curzon chalked out for the Archaeological Survey of India and to meet these requirements he appointed Sir John Marshall as the Director General of Archaeological Survey of India. While appointing Sir John Marshall he emphasised and declared that the most important function of the Director General to secure that the ancient monuments of the country were properly cared for, that they were not utilised for purpose which were inappropriate, that repairs were executed when required and that any restoration which might be attempted was conducted on artistic lines. Thus the Viceroy of India placed the Archaeological Survey of India on a sound and secure foundation. How on this foundation a pyramid was raised belongs to the more recent history.

In 1947, the far reaching political changes that affected India gave a jerk in the Archaeological working and management and in order to recoup what has been lost during the partition, the managers of the heritage launched a massive programme of research and conservation. New sites were discovered and the monuments which were lying neglected for centuries were taken up. In 1950, Constitution defined that : (i) Ancient and Historical monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains declared by or under Law made by parliament to be of National Importance should be in charge of the Central Government, (ii) Ancient and Historical monuments not belonging to the first category should be in charge of the State Government, (iii) Both the States and Central Governments will have concurrent jurisdiction for Archaeological Sites and Remains not belonging to the first and second category. This clearly defined the jurisdiction and also joint responsibility of the Union and the State Governments. The Constitutional provisions were vigorously followed and one after another monuments were given concerted attention, primarily aiming towards saving the monument from further decay and disintegration.

The introduction of country and town planning regulations, construction of dams, mushroom growth of colonies, expansion of roads, highways, rail-network;

appreciation of land values and industrial expansion caused gradually serious threats to the monuments and their environment. Today the monuments of India face serious challenges.

### **Archaeological Legislation in India**

For the maintenance and preservation of the monuments in India and to save the monuments and sites from the onslaught of unplanned development, the Government of India enacted Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act in 1958 and to regulate the activities in and around the monuments, Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules 1959. These two legislations, to a certain extent, saved the monuments from misuse and strengthened the process of management. In the pre-Independence India, a lay citizen hardly showed any concern for the Heritage Remains and in the grab of protecting the antiquities many were taken away from the country. In the post-Independence India 'treasure seekers' and 'antique-merchants' took the advantage of the ignorance of the people and disfigured many monuments by knocking the antiquities and art objects. Lack of resources and well equipped manpower further accelerated the vandalism.

In 1972 the Government realised the gravity of the situation and enacted the act known as the Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972. The enactment of this legislation came as a blow on the vandals and on antique-dealers. The various provisions embodied in the act made compulsory the registration of the movable objects and antiquities and several State Governments created in their respective archaeological organizations, the infrastructure for the registration of the objects lying with the individuals and kept a close watch on the movement of the objects. It was emphasised that anyone desiring the sale or transfer of the object was bound to have the details recorded with the Registering Officer. This legislation restricted the movement of the antiquities and the art objects.

To protect the adjoining land from mis-use, unplanned development, construction of buildings and quarrying, the Government in the year 1992 issued a declaration prohibiting constructional activity and mining operations upto 100 metres from the protected limits and further beyond it upto 200 metres prohibited and regulated. But these laws are not sufficient to strengthen the Heritage Management. Today we need comprehensive Heritage Laws where every component is viewed as total heritage-monuments, its fragments, adjoining land, traditional arts and craft of the area where monuments and sites are situated and the things alike. Further, the comprehensive legislation should be process oriented rather than a piece of restriction. Too much restriction, at times, produces negative results. The legislation, as a whole, be humanly

oriented and create a sense of belonging. Once the socially oriented legislation is formulated, the process of management becomes flexible and there is a greater scope of controlling detrimental impacts.

### **The Management Process and the Organization**

The archaeological research as a discipline was pursued more vigorously and widely. In the last four decades there had been a greater emphasis on the archaeological research and no serious attention was paid towards the management of heritage in real perspective. In the last 50 years the archaeological research and the heritage management remained as a mixed exercise of archaeological organizations. But an independent infrastructure for management was never thought indispensable. Now the archaeology has become a discipline and in most of the Universities of the country it is being taught as a subject. The fresh graduates from the Universities who join the archaeological organizations are much more oriented towards the research and have no protection of the management. I need not emphasise that the heritage management is distinct from the discipline of archaeology but in India the management of the monuments and their upkeep and archaeological research are handled by one individual. Whereas the management of the monuments and the sites requires a specific aptitude and qualification which most of archaeologists do not possess. To be more precise scientific investigations and management, though, form the part of the any systematic and scientific working but need independent orientation and involvement. An archaeologist may understand the implications of the management but cannot be a good manager whereas a manager may understand something of the archaeology but has to be a good manager. To discharge the responsibility of the management of the monuments and sites he is expected to be familiar with financial implications, personal management, legislation frame-work and working of the Government at different levels. Unless an infrastructure for managing the monuments/sites and other relics is created with basic knowledge of management and its varied components, the proper maintenance of the monuments and sites and places and their protection can not be achieved.

### **Qualification and Training**

For the effective management of the monuments and the sites, a concept based management is necessary which has two components: (i) those who manage from the administrative as well as from the academic side, and (ii) those who are mainly responsible for the management. The young youths who are to be recruited for the management be given rigorous training in management,

personal management, planning, communication, human relations, legislation, environment safety measures and the land use alongwith this, the working knowledge of the archaeology and other related subjects. For repairs, maintenance and conservation a separate set of workers be created with a knowledge of engineering and architecture and both should work in a manner congenial to the better maintenance and preservation of the heritage.

### **World Heritage Monuments in India**

India is an active member State on World Heritage Committee since 1977. There are 17 World Heritage Cultural Sites, 5 Natural Sites and one Industrial site inscribed on the Heritage list.

The responsibility of management and maintenance of the Cultural sites lies with the Archaeological Survey of India under the Ministry of Culture and the management and maintenance of the National Parks and Sanctuaries lies with the Ministry of Forest and Environment. The Archaeological Survey of India is primarily, responsible for the better upkeep of the monuments and sites of Cultural Importance and the historical places. Some twelve years back, the monuments which have been inscribed on the World Heritage list were cared and looked after in a general manner but since 1988, the World Heritage Monuments have been given extra care and attention and are being regularly monitored.

To create an awareness amongst the citizen of India about the importance of these monuments and many others spread all over the country a systematic awareness campaign is organized every year to popularise the monuments as well as to create a sense of belonging and care for the monuments. In these awareness campaigns school children, local citizens, people from different walks of life (Politician, Doctors, Lawyers, Industrialists, Social Workers, Administrators and professionals have been involved. With a view to disseminate the message of preserving the monuments at every World Heritage site in India, photo exhibitions of the structural conservation work, chemical preservation and environmental developments are organized. In the process school children and educational institutions take active part. School children also participate in the process of upkeep of the monuments and conservation processes. The process of involvement of the people has yielded encouraging result.

To equip the available work force and infrastructure, new techniques, study and training in the raw-material, conservation principles, methods and the philosophy are regularly updated through discussions and lectures. An experiment started on two World Heritage Monuments Sanchi and Khajuraho have provided new insight, i.e.

the monument is not the pile of stones but a past in itself, which illustrates the history of the people and their creative skill.

For the balanced development of the area falling within the close vicinity of monuments, some provincial governments have created Special Area Development Authority whose primary function is to develop the area in a planned manner and contain the adverse impact over the Heritage site.

### **Sustainable Tourism and Development of the Monuments**

Tourism is enemy of tourism. Excess of anything has adverse effect; so is the case of tourism. Today the tourism planners and managers do not realise the adverse impact which tourism is bound to inflict on places and people. It is also a fact that tourism boosts the economic well being of the people and provides a fairly solid economic base. But in the absence of any interaction between the heritage managers and the tourism planners, generally, adverse impacts have been noticed on the monument. The Taj Mahal, Qutab Minar, Ajanta Paintings and many more monuments which are today on the World Heritage list are under the threat of rampant tourism and as such

tourism also needs conservation. While tourism finds conflicts with the preservation of the heritage and of local cultures it is absolutely necessary to have a proper planned and managed tourism development without the places and the sites and monuments which are being cherished today by the human civilization will disappear very fast.

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