

6. Archaeological Heritage Management Issues in Western India

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Abstract

Cultural heritage is the legacy of objects and intangible and tangible attributes of a society that are inherited from the past generations, maintained in the present and passed onto the future generations. Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art and artefacts), intangible culture (such as performing arts, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity). In the Indian context, it is the responsibility of the Government to protect and preserve the heritage sites and structures. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), a department of the Central government of India, has been entrusted with the responsibility and has the mandate of performing the aforesaid duties. ASI has listed nearly 369 monuments as monuments and sites of national importance which include 29 World Heritage cultural properties. There are also 42 properties in the tentative list. Western India has eleven cultural properties which include Elephanta caves, Rani-ki-Vav, Ajanta and Ellora Caves Historic city of Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Champaner–Pavgadh Archaeological Park. Management of World Heritage properties is a complex issue with an emphasis on the preservation of the heritage structures, which are inseparable from the local communities. The current thinking adopts the view that cultural heritage belongs to the people, and therefore community involvement has to be ensured in most of the contexts. The solution to many of these issues are multi-dimensional and lies in Proper Conservation, Environment Development, Increasing Public Awareness, Public Involvement, Tourist Management, Planned Urban Development and Security. Developing well-drafted Master Plans prepared by a composite team of historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, town planners, landscape architects, engineers and conservation experts is a mandatory requirement. The challenges

of heritage management in India and the efforts made to address the challenges are presented in this paper.

Keywords: Heritage Management; Western India; Champaner–Pavagadh; Ahmadabad, Mumbai

Introduction

Cultural heritage is the legacy of objects and intangible as well as tangible attributes of a society that are inherited from the past generations, maintained in the present and passed onto the future generations. Cultural heritage includes tangible cultural properties such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art and artefacts, and intangible cultural aspects such as performing arts, traditions, language and knowledge, and natural heritage elements including culturally significant landscapes and biodiversity. Objects and buildings are a part of the sources of study of human history, because they provide concrete evidence of our ancestors' ideas and technology. Their preservation demonstrates the recognition of the necessity of the past and of the importance of material culture that tells its story, in the contemporary context.

It is important to preserve the heritage remains, but at the same time it is also highly challenging due to the laws of nature, i.e. 'everything in nature shall deteriorate and disappear. They are in a constant state of chemical transformation'. This means what is considered to be preserved is actually changing; it is never as it once was when constructed or produced. The changes happen not only because of natural factors, but also due to human-made factors such as pollution (vehicular and industrial), high tourist inflow and poor conservation. Similarly, changing is the value of the property that each generation may place on the past and on the artefacts that link it to the past.

In the Indian context, it is the responsibility of the government to protect and preserve the heritage sites and structures. It is enshrined in Article 49 of the Indian Constitution that '*it shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, [declared by or under law made by Parliament] to*

be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be’.

The 74th amendment of the Constitution empowers the local bodies to be proactive in urban conservation. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), a department of the Central government of India, has been entrusted with the responsibility of performing the aforesaid duties of conservation of cultural properties.

Management of Protected Monuments and Sites

At present, there are 3691 centrally protected monuments in India. India has 29 cultural sites in the World Heritage list, out of which 27 sites are protected by the ASI and two are protected by the state governments and one by a trust. Besides, there are seven natural heritage sites, one mixed property and two railway properties.

Western India, comprising the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra (Fig. 1), has 11 World Heritage properties, which include Elephanta caves, Rani-ki-Vav, Ajanta and Ellora Caves, historic city of Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Champaner–Pavgarh Archaeological Park. Each of them is unique and has impeccable outstanding universal value. The challenges that they pose are also different. India has enacted two legislations: (a) Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and (b) Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, to take care of the diverse varieties of archaeological cultural heritage. The former Act defines prohibited and regulated areas around the centrally protected monuments and imposes restrictions on constructions, reconstructions, renovations and repairs. The permissions for such repair and renovation activities in the prohibited area are given by the designated competent authorities at the state level and, in the regulated areas, permissions for new constructions are given by the National Monuments Authority, New Delhi. Simultaneously, monument-specific by-laws for each of the centrally protected monuments are being prepared with an intention to regulate height and façade designing. Features such as visual impact, skyline, vernacular architecture, effects of vibration and pollution are considered in the preparation of such by-laws.



Fig. 1. Map of the Circles of Archaeological Survey of India in the Western Region (Source : ASI)

Management of World Heritage properties is a complex issue with an emphasis on the preservation of the structures and monuments, which are inseparable from the local community. Modern thinking takes the view that cultural heritage belongs to the people, therefore community involvement has to be ensured for a better management of the heritage sites.

Challenges in Heritage Management

Heritage management in India is a complex issue with the involvement of numerous stakeholders and agencies. The challenges faced by the heritage managers in India include the following:

- Threat from population growth and drift of population from rural area to urban areas seeking jobs
- Growth of industries and urbanisation
- Demand for housing and government policies and schemes
- New constructions and commercial activities
- Increase in vehicular movement resulting in the construction of flyovers, roads, metropolitan transport systems leading to pollution and visual impact
- Creation of tourism circuits and tourism-related infrastructure
- Result of urban pressure; about 50% of Indian population lives in cities
- Lack of awareness among public sometimes even among the town planners
- Vandalism of various kinds

We shall describe some of the important World Heritage properties in the western region of India before looking into the specific management issues that these monuments face.

World Heritage Properties of Western India

Ajanta Caves (1983)

The earliest Buddhist cave monuments of Ajanta are datable to 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. Later, during the Gupta period (5th and 6th centuries CE), many more richly decorated caves were added to the original group of monuments. The caves, paintings and sculptures of Ajanta are considered masterpieces of the Buddhist art and architecture across the world. This property was inscribed in the World Heritage

list in 1983. As the caves are located in the reserved forest area, the caves face less threat from the urban development but are impacted by tourism activities.

The Elephanta Caves (1987)

They are located on the Elephanta Island (otherwise known as the Island of Gharapuri), in western India, which features two hillocks separated by a narrow valley. The small island is dotted with numerous archaeological remains that stand testimony to the rich cultural heritage of this area. These archaeological remains reveal evidence of occupation from as early as the 2nd century BCE. The rock-cut caves were excavated around the mid-5th to 6th centuries CE (Fig. 2.). The



Fig. 2. A view of the Elephanta cave (Source : ASI)

most important among the caves is the Cave 1, which measures 39 metre from the front entrance to the back. On plan, this cave in the western hill closely resembles Dumar Lena cave at Ellora. The main hall of the cave, excluding the porticos on the three open sides and the back aisle, is 27 metre in square and is supported by rows of six columns each. The 7-metre-high masterpiece “Sadashiva” sculpture dominates the Cave 1. The sculpture represents three aspects of Shiva, the creator, the preserver and the destroyer, identified, respectively with Aghora or Bhairava (left half); *tatpurusha* or Mahadeva (full face in the centre) and Vamadeva or *Uma* (right half). Representations of Nataraja, Yogishvara, Andhakasuravadha, Ardhanarishwara, Kalyanasundaramurti, Gangadharamurti, and Ravana anugrahamurti – various forms of Lord Shiva – are also noteworthy for their concept, dimensions, themes, representations, content, alignment and execution.

The layout of the caves, including the pillar components, the placement and division of the caves into different parts, and the provision of a sanctum or *garbhagriha* is an important development in rock-cut architecture. The Elephanta Caves emerge from a long artistic tradition but demonstrates refreshing innovation. The combination of aesthetic beauty and sculptural art, replete with respondent *rasas*, reach an apogee at the Elephanta Caves. Hindu spiritualistic beliefs and symbology are finely utilised in the overall planning of the caves. The property is protected primarily by the ASI, which also undertakes the management of the Elephanta Caves with the assistance of other departments, including the Forest Department, Tourism Department, Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (MMRDA), Urban Development Department, Town Planning Department and the gram panchayat of the government of Maharashtra, all acting under the various legislations of the respective departments. The management issues here are limited to high tourist footfall, leading to tourism-related infrastructure development, unauthorised vendors and conservation problems arising from natural weathering of rock and coastal climate conditions. A masterplan has been prepared by the Maharashtra state government, wherein relocation of vendors, expansion of approach pathway, tourist facilities like shopping plaza, food plaza and even

a ropeway from main land to Elephanta has been proposed. The conservation issues are addressed by the ASI.

Champaner-Pavgarh Archaeological Park (2004)

Located in Panchmahal district in the state of Gujarat, this is a concentration of unexcavated archaeological, historic and living cultural heritage properties cradled in an impressive landscape, which includes prehistoric (Chalcolithic) sites, a hill fortress of an early Hindu capital and remains of the 16th-century capital of the state of Gujarat. The site also includes, among other vestiges, fortifications, palaces, religious buildings, residential precincts, agricultural structures and stepwells and tanks, dating from the 8th to the 14th centuries.

Ellora Caves (1983)

Ellora is another important site with numerous rock caves, some of which are excellent representations of Indian architectural tradition. Here there are 34 caves spread across a 2 km distance, which are carved along a high basalt cliff. The monolith of Kailasanatha is a masterpiece of the Rashtrakuta period (Fig. 3.). With its uninterrupted sequence of monuments dating from 600 to 1000 CE, it represents a high degree technological and artistic skill, and religious harmony of the day. The management issues include high tourist footfall, tourism-related infrastructure development, heavy traffic in the vicinity, conservation problems due to natural weathering, heavy rainfall and bat-droppings. The solution lies in proper conservation, environment development, increasing public awareness, public involvement, tourist management, planned urban development and security. Having a well-drafted masterplan prepared by a team of historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, town planners, landscape architects, engineers and conservation experts is a mandatory requirement in this context.

Historic City of Ahmedabad (2017)

The historic city of Ahmedabad founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in 1411 CE on the pre-existing historic sites of Ashaval and Karnavati is bestowed with magnificent Indo-Islamic monuments and exquisite Hindu and Jain Temples. The traditional settlement planning of the old city, comprising numerous pols, self-contained neighbourhood, traversed by narrow streets, usually terminating at a square or chowk



Fig. 3. A View of Kailasanatha Temple, Ellora (Source : ASI)

with community well, bird feeder and Mohella Mata temple (local deity) is unique to the old city of Ahmedabad. It is for this outstanding universal value that the city has been inscribed on the World Heritage city by the UNESCO under criteria (ii) and (v), which are listed below.

Criteria (ii): Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.

Criteria (v): Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment specially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), realising the need for the conservation of the city's rich heritage, set up the first ever heritage cell in the country in an urban local body (ULB) as early as in 1996. Since then, a number of heritage conservation initiatives right from awareness creation, launching of heritage walks, listing of heritage buildings and structures, lectures, seminars, celebrations of

World Heritage Week and World Heritage Day, approval of heritage regulations, appointment of expert Heritage Conservation Committee by the government of Gujarat, including conservation and restoration of heritage buildings, which has led to the World Heritage inscription of Ahmedabad in July 2017.

The city has 54 ASI-protected monuments, out of which 28 are located within the historic World Heritage city, and three among them are state-protected monuments. AMC has listed and notified 2236 residential and 449 institutional buildings in the historic city. The World Heritage city (property) covers the entire walled city area and at least 200 metre all around has been taken as buffer zone for the World Heritage City inscription. The world heritage property area spans 5.5 square metre approximately with a population of nearly 400,000 people.

The property is governed by quite a few legal frames works such as Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976 and its Rules, 2007. The centrally protected monuments are governed by the AMASR Act, 2010 (amendment).

The major issues include thick population, business activity in the walled city with residences, shops and warehouses with ever growing demand for new constructions, renovation and additions. It is impossible to curb business activities as the livelihood of large number of people depend on these commercial activities. One cannot alienate a segment of the stakeholders, i.e., the local community. There is also possibility of unauthorised constructions, expansion and encroachments. Heavy traffic in the area causes pollution. The above-said acts and legal frameworks regulate constructions and repairs. The state government has made efforts to regulate traffic by declaring some parts of the walled city as no-vehicle zone and offering alternate land to the local community.

An interesting scheme was introduced by the Ahmedabad Municipal Council named Transferable Development Rights (TDR). Broadly speaking, it is the development potential of the land (benefit arising from land), which was suspended because of the reservation of land in the Development Plan for Ahmedabad to be acquired for

public purposes (reserved land). In order to avoid the payment of heavy compensation and the lengthy proceedings involved, the state government found an exclusive way of compensating the landowner under which the development potential of the land is detached from the reserved land itself, the land stands transferred to the government and, in return, the development rights, equal to the development potential attached to the reserved land, are transferred to the owner, to be used in some other land. The owner of the reserved land is thus compensated by additional floor space index (FSI), which can be used on some other land over and above the normal FSI permitted in relation to that piece of land. The scheme has become highly successful and has reduced development pressures in the World Heritage area.

Hill Forts of Rajasthan (2013)

The serial nomination of six imposing forts, situated in the state of Rajasthan, includes the ones located in Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Sawai Madhopur, Jhalawar, Jaipur and Jaisalmer. The grand architecture of the forts, some with up to 20 km in circumference, bear testimony to the power of the Rajput princely states that flourished from the 8th to 18th centuries. Enclosed within defensive walls are palaces, temples and other buildings including some structures, which may predate that the fortifications itself.

The overall management of the six properties (hill forts) is steered by the State Level Apex Advisory Committee, which was established by the Rajasthan government in 2011. It is chaired by the Chief Secretary of Rajasthan and comprises members of the concerned ministries, namely Environment and Forests, Urban Development and Housing, Tourism, Art, Literature and Culture, Energy and various representatives of the heritage sector including the ASI. The Apex Advisory Committee meets on a quarterly basis and is designed to constitute the overall management framework of the serial property, guide the local management of the six serial components, coordinate cross-cutting initiatives, share research and documentation, share conservation and management practices and address the requirements of common interpretative resources.

Different forts throw different management challenges. To quote an example, the Jaisalmer fort rests on a succession of medium to coarse-grained sandstones with interbeds of shale, claystone and occasional lignite that rest over Lathi Formation. Its very crust is soft rock and hence susceptible to collapse. Another major issue is the commercial exploitation of the fort. Inside the fort there are heritage buildings, residences and commercial establishments. There are encroachments on the fort wall and bastions resulting in excessive load on the walls. Night soil is also released into the fort walls. The advisory committee has made efforts to address these issues. The heritage management plan is under preparation.

Rani-ki-Vav (2014)

‘Rani’ means queen and ‘Vav’ means well. Rani-ki-Vav is an exceptional example of a distinctive form of subterranean water architecture of the Indian subcontinent – the stepwell, which is located on the banks of the Saraswathi river in Patan (Figs. 4-6). Initially built as a memorial in the 8th century CE, the stepwell was constructed as a religious as well as functional structure and designed as an inverted temple highlighting the sanctity of water. Rani-ki-Vav is a single-component water management system divided into seven levels of stairs and sculptural panels of high artistic and aesthetic quality. It is oriented in an east–west direction and combines all of the principal components of a stepwell, including a stepped corridor beginning at the ground level, a series of four pavilions with an increasing number of storeys towards the west, the tank and the well in the tunnel shaft form. More than 500 principal sculptures and over a thousand minor ones combine religious, mythological and secular imageries, often finding references in the literary works.

Rani-ki-Vav impresses not only with its architectural structure and technological achievements in water sourcing and structural stability, but also in particular with its sculptural decoration of true artistic mastery. The figurative motifs and sculptures, and the proportion of filled and empty spaces, provide the stepwell’s interior with its unique aesthetic character. The setting enhances these attributes in the way in which the well descends suddenly from a plain plateau, which



*Fig. 4. Rani-ki-Vav
before Conservation
(Source : ASI)*



*Fig. 5. Rani-ki-Vav
after Conservation
(Source : ASI)*

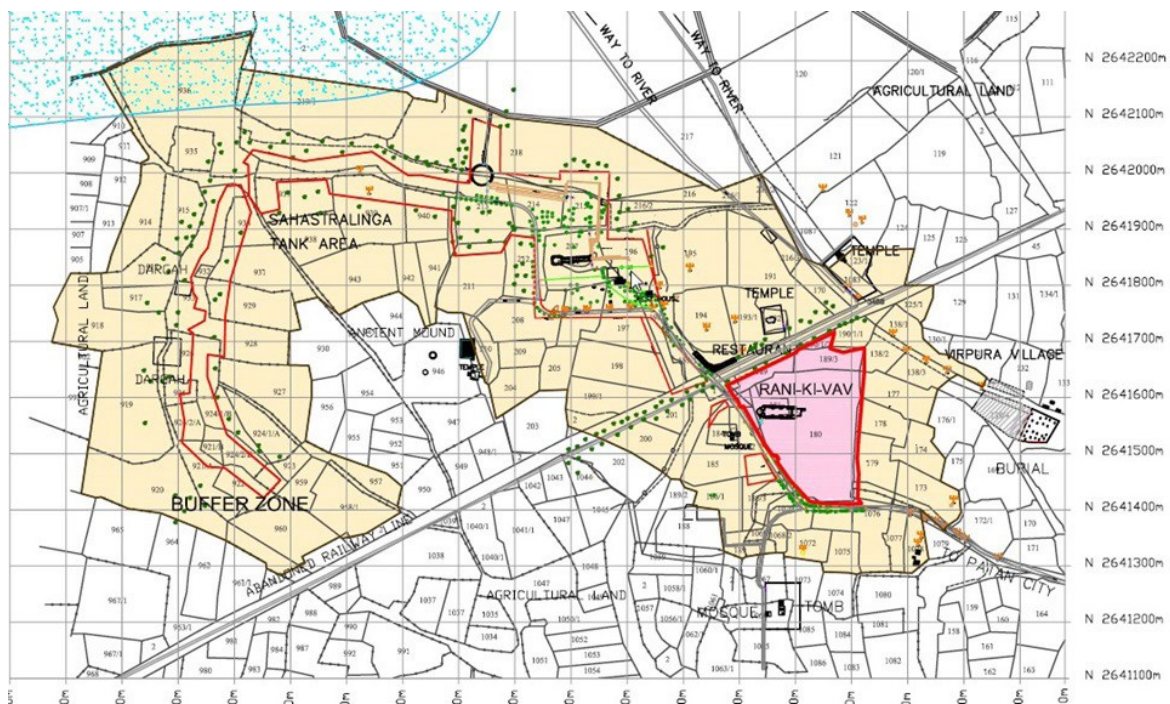


Fig. 6. Rani-ki-Vav Core and Buffer Areas (Source : ASI)

strengthens the perception of this space. The property does not face much management issues, except the laying of dedicated cargo railway line in the vicinity. With much persuasion, the railway line has been shifted to a safe distance.

Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018)

Mumbai implemented an ambitious urban planning project in the second half of the 19th century. It led to the construction of ensembles of public buildings bordering the oval *maidan*-open space, first in the Victorian neo-gothic style and then, in the early 20th century, in the art deco idiom. The first one includes Indian elements suited to the climate, including balconies and verandas. The art deco edifices, with their cinemas and residential buildings, blend Indian design with art deco imagery, creating a distinct style that came to be known as Indo-Deco. These two characteristics bear testimony to the phases of modernisation that Mumbai underwent during the 19th and 20th centuries. As far as management issues are concerned, they are very similar to the one faced by Ahmedabad, rapid urbanisation and lack of landscape to expand horizontally and hence Mumbai is growing vertically.

Conclusion

Managing the World Heritage property is the primary duty of the state. The NGOs and the local community have an important role to play. The advantage is the strong legal framework that exists in India. It is imperative that the government and the travel operators understand that exploitation of the monument and site would only endanger the property, leading to the loss of a valuable cultural resource. The regulating agencies shall know that heritage is not an industry to generate profit and shall perform duties keeping in mind long-term implications of mismanagement. Sustainable tourism is the only way forward. Also, in the recent past, emphasis on preservation of material culture to encompass the broader concepts of culture, which are inseparable from the lifeways of the local communities. Modern thinking takes the view that cultural heritage belongs to the people, therefore, their easy access to cultural heritage has to be ensured.

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