

Interfacing Heritage and Conflict Areas – A Sensitive Approach for Managing Heritage in Indian Context

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Abstract: Globally by the end of the twentieth century, the definition of 'heritage' has expanded from built heritage (monuments), historic urban areas, gardens to intangibles including the entire living environment with its cultural traditions and changing lifestyles. With this changing notion of heritage, the concept of conservation of heritage has become less static and more dynamic, taking into account their tangible and intangible dimensions with reference to the culturally sustainable management of heritage resources. The underlying theme of conservation is community development together with the revival of intangible heritage which requires a multi-disciplinary approach which will include the overall environment and involves the local community. The paper investigates through understanding the protection of heritage in the Indian context, and various approaches adopted in few case examples where heritage was at stake or benefitted through various interventions by stakeholders and agencies involved. It will try to underline the need for a holistic and integrated approach to planning in case of protection of and intervention in the heritage areas or precincts. As the present approach for conservation and protection of heritage areas is inappropriate to carry the aspirations of physical and spiritual aspects.

Keywords: **Heritage, Protection, Intervention.**

Introduction

In the growing world of globalization, we have been sensitized enough to bring our resources in the eye of the world but, also the concern lies in the protecting our cultural traditions so that they are not lost in homogeneity.

The notion of heritage:

Heritage can be defined as an asset or group of assets, natural or cultural, tangible or intangible, that a community recognizes for its value as witnesses to history and memory while emphasizing the need to safeguard, to protect, to adopt, to promote and to disseminate such heritage.

The notion of heritage has extended including the entire living environment with its cultural traditions and changing lifestyles. With this changing notion of heritage, the concept of conservation of heritage has become less static and more dynamic, taking into account their tangible and intangible dimensions with reference to the culturally sustainable management of heritage resources.

Due to development, our tangible and intangible heritage is on the verge of transformation. India is known for its diversity of culture and traditions. Thus the solution for its protection and conservation cannot lie on the same forum. The diversity does not prevail only in the type of heritage but also in the aspect measures to deal with it. Hence, resulting in conflict and conflict areas.

Provisions for protection of heritage in India

India has a wide range and quantum of heritage, thus legislation may emerge out as an effective tool for its protection. Though there are no clear provisions for the protection of holistic environments along with their living traditions and customs.

The fate of heritage protection in India is defined by the amalgamation of various attributes which are directly or indirectly conveying the heritage. The various acts which contribute are Ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remain (AMASR) Act of Archaeological Survey of India (A.S.I), Town and country planning Act, Environment Protection Act, Coastal Regulation Zone etc.

The A.S.I. protects monuments under the AMASR Act, the essence of which contributes to the static and monumental features by 100 meters of prohibited area and 200 meters of regulated area. But this Act sustains a European perception which usually fails to illustrate the dynamic perception of Indian heritage. Presently there 3683 monuments¹ in India are protected under the AMASR Act by Archaeological Survey of India.

In India, the culture thrives along the historic monuments, where not only the monumental value pertains but also the dynamics evolved in the trends and tradition of evolving communities which emerges with a number of physical and spiritual aspects of heritage defining the settlement.

Thus a huge concern here is how we see our rich cultural heritage and define strategies with handful resources for its sustenance and protection under the heads of bureaucracy and politics.

Understanding approaches adopted for protection of heritage through case examples

Construction of V.I.P road, Bhopal – the story of Gauhar Mahal

The heritage is at stake, more often when it comes to development in the core of the city. Guahar mahal (1860A.D.)

¹ http://asi.nic.in/asi_monu_alphalist.asp

the monument signifies the glorious history of the first female nawab of Bhopal - Qudsia Begum. Initiation of Construction of V.I.P road in Bhopal led to the de-listing of the Gauhar Mahal from the List of monuments of Archaeological Survey of India. This was a result of the layout of V.I.P. road which was breaking through this National monument. In order to implement this layout of the road, a significant portion of Gauhar Mahal was required to be demolished. Hence for this, the property was de-listed from the list of National Monuments of A.S.I for required demolition. The property was then under the ownership of State handloom department. However, due to this transfer of ownership of the property to the State led to the work of Conservation that was undertaken by INTACH in the year 2004.

World Heritage Site – Group of monuments, Hampi - Removal of ancient bazaar from the vicinity of the Virupaksha temple

“The heritage boundary is no longer an exercise of scholarly discourse but an antagonistic boundary between human rights and world heritage.”²

The Group of monuments at Hampi were nominated in the World Heritage Sites of UNESCO in the year 1986. In the year 1999, the group of Monuments were classified in the Endangered List of Monuments due to two reasons, first, for haphazard pattern of informal urbanization along the ancient bazaar of Hampi and second due to the construction of two cable suspension bridges across the River Tungabhadra which hampered the integrity of site and would lead to increased mining activity in the region

In order to remove the monument from the endangered list monuments, in 2002 the Karnataka State Assembly formed The Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority, Bill. In no instance, the Bill recognizes Hampi as the living heritage site and Hampi is defined according to the static monuments and boundaries as opposed to the fluid and dynamic exchanges between the people and landscapes. As a result of the same, the traditional bazaar which was the essential element of the living heritage of Hampi was removed. Due to this act, over 320 families lost their residences and livelihoods. In the year 2006 Hampi was removed from the endangered list of Monuments of UNESCO.

Humayun’s tomb – Sundar Nursery - Nizamuddin Basti - an urban renewal project in India

The project has been undertaken by The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (Delhi). This has been done with the partnership with ASI, CPWD (Central Public works Department), Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Ministry of Culture and the local community. For conservation and urban regeneration to be sustainable and self-supporting local community and NGOs were involved.

The aim of the project was to unify the three segregated areas of Humayun’s tomb (16th Century), Sunder Nursery (20th Century), and Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti (14th Century) in an urban

conservation area. The project aimed to integrate conservation, socio-economic development, and environmental improvement. The partnership approach has helped in the mobilization of resources from international agencies, corporate sector, Government and other sources for the conservation of heritage and urban regeneration. This process has also linked to the process of economic regeneration.

The diverse examples reflect various circumstances under which conflict had arisen. Thus there is a need to envisage specific values.

In case of Indian monuments either the monuments are protected under ASI or regulated by the indigenous communities. Thus, approach to clear such areas may vary so as to avoid conflicting situations in order to safeguard them.

In case of Gauhar Mahal the growing developmental and infrastructural pressure over the historic landscape reformed its cultural context and integrity. The existing bye-laws and present planning approach fail to accompany a larger context of heritage.

In case of Hampi World Heritage Site, the planned intervention reduced the conflicts of ownership but lead to the loss of indigenous protection practices. The removal of ancient bazaar which was an integral part of heritage was lost, so as its integrity.

Humayun’s tomb was not a single monument; it also sustained a huge Basti which shaped its heritage. The regeneration scheme planned carried not only the static approach but also the active participation of community as a stakeholder. Thus, minimizing the conflict areas.

Conclusion

There is need to incorporate typologies of heritage and its cultural context. In order to facilitate heritage process the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage into the spatial development plan and introduce relevant core and buffer zones to facilitate and regulate further development. This will not only minimize the conflict areas but also define a direction for the future of our past.

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