

Heritage – The story of everyone and everything

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Author highlights the importance of heritage and heritage conservation. Heritage is anything, which is inherited. There are different categories of resources which come under the purview of the term heritage-cultural heritage which includes monuments, archaeological sites, architectural works etc. All over the world people look to places of memory, linking to the past, in order to chalk out a course for the future. It is argued that heritage is not only a shared resource of the community but has also become a product in new age economy. Protection, preservation and conservation of heritage have become important which can be accomplished through legal framework. Tourism is also an excellent way by which the past can be preserved and kept alive in the memories of the public. Note highlights the importance of tourism for preservation of heritage and vice-versa.

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Anything that is inherited is heritage. The UNESCO has decided that any monument that is 100 year old, should be considered as heritage. Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as cultural environment. The term includes landscapes, historic places, sites and built environment, biodiversity, cultural practices, living experiences, etc. The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by the 17th session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972 has defined Cultural Heritage as follows; "Cultural Heritage includes monuments--architectural works, sculptures, paintings, inscriptions, cave dwellings, groups of buildings; sites--archaeological sites etc, which are of outstanding universal value, from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view."

Natural heritage according to the Convention includes natural features such as physical, biological, geological formations and areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals, plants and natural sites or areas which are of outstanding universal value, from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty. Within sites of environmental or scenic beauty, includes water bodies, tanks, wells, open areas, gardens, wooded areas, sacred groves etc. The built heritage is an integral part of the cultural landscape.

The Convention lays down that "effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation, and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory". The convention also undertakes for each country-

- To adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community, and
- To set up within its territories, where such services do not exist, one or more services for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural

heritage with an appropriate staff, and

- To take appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage etc.

It is known that a monument does not belong to the past alone, it belongs to the present and future and it should be protected for posterity. Thus a heritage site does not belong to any one nation. World Heritage is shared wealth of human kind. Protecting and preserving them requires the collective efforts of the international community.

At a time of increasing globalization, the protection, conservation, interpretation, and presentation of the heritage and cultural diversity of any particular place has become a necessity. Heritage is considered to be important because it speaks about us, our origin, culture, our identity, the material and industrial life of the people in the past, etc. How to recreate our heritage and showcase it to the tourists, is a part of the Heritage Industry which is now a days an integral part of the ever expanding Tourism Industry.

A primary objective of managing heritage is to communicate its significance and the need for conservation, to the visitors and to the host community. It is our duty to respect the heritage values, the host community, custodians or owners of historic property.

Heritage is now-a-days considered as a resource. Heritage is considered to be heritage, when the object, monument, etc is considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. Thus protection, conservation and preservation have become very important.

So far as India is concerned, the built heritage which forms part of our cultural heritage is a priceless treasure, handed down from generations. The heritage resources are now facing threats from the vagaries of nature, human encroachment into the heritage site, vandalism, terrorism etc. According to the Mission on Monuments and Antiquities, set

up in 2007 in India, for the purpose of documentation of built heritage, the scope has been enhanced to include any structure that belongs to pre independence period, and 1950 has been set as the cut off date.

Major developments come from heritage resources. They are tourism, education, e-commerce etc. Tourism is a leisure activity which ranges from adventure, sports, eco tourism, cultural voyages, etc. Since we have the heritage resources we have a thriving Tourism Industry. So the connection between the two is strong.

The information that we receive from heritage resources is the base for understanding the roots of our identity and the origins of our civilization or even our biological origin. The latest form of development surrounding heritage resources is through the Internet, by which electronic brochures advertise the potential to visit these locations.

In each of the World Heritage sites, it is important to bring forward comprehensive management plan of how the governments and the local authorities that own the sites, protect them for the future and conserve them.

Preserving heritage

Heritage will not survive forever if it is not followed by conservation. Thus legislations are required in order to ensure proper protection of the cultural and natural heritage sites and objects, so that they can be preserved for posterity. Legislation has a role in the identification, management and protection of heritage places and objects. The legislations provides for protection of a wide range of cultural heritage places and objects including-

- i. historic archaeological sites and artifacts;
- ii. historic buildings, structures and precincts;
- iii. gardens, trees, cemeteries;
- iv. cultural landscapes;
- v. significant objects etc.

India has two such important legislations. (i) Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and (ii) the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972.

The Ancient Monuments and

Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, aim to provide for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance. Besides it has many other objectives. Similarly, The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, besides having other objectives provides for effective control over the movable cultural property, consisting of antiques and art treasures and regulations of export trade in antiquities and art treasures and for preventing smuggling etc. Both these acts encompass the whole of India. It is to be mentioned here that India has twenty seven World Heritage Sites which are under the control of these legislations.

Tourism is an excellent way by which the past can be preserved, protected, and even popularized. It is the largest revenue earner for most countries of the world. And in many countries, the "heritage industry" as it is called now-a-days, is a highly significant part of the tourism prospect.

Preserving and showcasing the past is an industry which produces and markets the various tourism products. Heritage has become a big business and part of the entertainment sector. Thus the past has been used and recreated as it is, to find out how an old city would look like. For presenting the past to the public, the Heritage Industry is now adopting techniques such as holograms of artifacts, and other kinds of computerized technology. Thus the knowledge of the past can help us live our present in a variety of ways-ideological, touristic, agricultural, constructional, medical etc.

Ethics is also said to be rightly associated with heritage. Thus when the Tourism Industry is showcasing the heritage of a nation or a region, it has to be sensitive to the public so as not to hurt their sentiment by destroying their heritage.

Heritage is a strong part of our identity. To build up our identity, archaeology is used. Because archaeology can tell us about long periods of time and the social and cultural changes brought thereby. Hence if our heritage is conserved properly, archaeology will live to tell the tale of societies, races, objects of arts, artifacts, potteries, etc to future generations.

In order to help our heritage to retain a continued existence, it is our duty to create awareness i.e. to introduce public awareness campaign on the importance of heritage conservation. These can be done by holding exhibitions, seminars, guided tours, by organizing local heritage field trip, giving people the taste of the living environment etc. Other ways by which people can be made to feel the need for heritage conservation is by creating local conservation awareness in the places where the heritage sites are located. Strategic conservation education activities with the involvement of the community will help educate and enrich the visitors to the sites. Raising awareness in schools, through educational services of museums, municipalities, media etc are necessary. ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) which has been created in 1956 and established in Rome in 1959 is now encouraging initiatives in responsible conservation in the Tourism Industry. Important conservation messages from ICCROM includes -

- Cultural heritage is fragile and it is disappearing all the time;
- Cultural heritage belongs to all of us;
- Together, conservation professionals, the media and the public can preserve it for the future.

Last word

Tourism is useful to heritage just as heritage is useful to tourism. Herb Stovel opined in Risk Preparedness: A Management Manual of World Cultural Heritage conservation as, "measures to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening transmission of its significant heritage messages and values". Recovery on the other hand has been defined as "measures taken to overcome physical, social, environmental, and cultural losses during disaster and to minimize the likelihood of future occurrences".

To put the work of conservation into proper service, there is Culture Resource Management Policy (CRM). It is a set of laws, regulations and professional practices designed to manage historical buildings, sites, cultural landscapes, and other historic places. America is the only

country having CRM. CRM keeps files on historic and pre historic sites, structures, buildings, landscapes etc with a view to avoiding adverse effects on the sites. Other similar kinds of agencies created for heritage preservation is English Heritage (England); Australian Heritage Commission (Australia); Historic Places Act (New Zealand) etc.

Our heritage is our asset. It is now time we realize the importance of the heritage around us, which is a strong expression of our identity. The idea of heritage is a universal one, and it will flourish only if the people act as its stewards. In 2006, "Your place or mine" was organized jointly by the English Heritage and the National Trust in England. The issue that was discussed was "how do we reach out to wider audiences and tell the stories of the diverse communities who make up our society" This is the essence of heritage; it is the ability to include and value the past, the people and the environment. Conservation of the Heritage Sector is to preserve the stories of everyone and everything.

