PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The Archaeological Survey of India and other organizations have been working on preserving ancient monuments since the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904. The Department of Archaeology has a long-term program, focusing on partial restoration, removing modern accretions, and providing material support. The objectives include preservation without disfigurement, maintenance, examination of remains, and preparation of monographs. Protecting monuments from vegetation is crucial due to heavy rainfall and monsoonic conditions. Conservation works have been undertaken on various types of monuments, including megalithic burials, rock-cut temples, Buddhist stupas, toms, forts, mosques, palaces, mahas, excavated remains, painted caves, and carvings.

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Introduction

The Archaeological Survey of India and other organizations in India have been working on the preservation of ancient monuments since the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904. The Department of Archaeology has been engaged in a long-term program of preservation, with partial restoration or pinning up allowed to secure parts of the fabric likely to collapse. Modern accretions are removed and material support is provided to harmonize with the old fabric. The department has enunciated broad principles of preservation, which were embodied in a Conservation Manual issued in 1907 and 1924. The objectives of monuments include preservation without disfigurement, maintenance in a proper and attractive condition, complete examination of remains and documentary evidence, and preparation of monographs, guide-books, and reports. The need to protect ancient monuments from vegetation is crucial due to heavy rainfall and monsoonic conditions.

Plants and mushrooms can cause structural fractures and disintegration of structures, leading to the growth of water and vegetable matter. To preserve masonry, it is important to clip back vegetation and examine the damage before cutting large stems. If roots are growing in the ground, they should be grubbed up, but if they spring from the wall, they should be killed with corrosive acid. When plant growth is withered, it can be removed easily, but care should be taken to avoid dislodging loose masonry. Saplings and small shrubs can be removed without disturbing the masonry, but large ones should

be cut off near the roots and killed. Decayed roots and vegetable matter should be completely eradicated. Conservation works have been undertaken on various types of monuments, including megalithic burials, rock-cut temples, structural temples, Buddhist stupas, toms, forts, mosques, palaces, mahas, excavated remains, painted caves and temples, inscriptions, sculptures, and carvings.

The various challenges that conservators face in preserving ancient monuments are not exhaustive, but they provide an overview of their diverse and extensive range. Ancient Monument means any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years and includes,

- Remains of an ancient monument,
- Site of an ancient monument,
- Such portion of land adjoining the site of an ancient monument as may be required for fencing or covering in or otherwise preserving such monument, a
- The means of access to, and convenient inspection of, an ancient monument;

Archaeological site and remains means any area which contains or is reasonably believed to contain ruins or relics of historical or archaeological importance which have been in existence for not less than one hundred years, and includes,

- Such portion of land adjoining the area as may be required for fencing or covering in or otherwise preserving it, and
- The means of access to, and convenient inspection of the area;

Protection of monuments

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under the provisions of the AMASR Act, 1958 (as amended in 2010) protects monuments, sites and remains of national importance. It gives a two-months' notice for inviting objections, if any in this regard. After the specified two-month's period, and after scrutinizing the objections, if any, received in this regard, the ASI makes decision to bring a monument under its protection. There are at present more than 3696 ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance. These monuments belong to different periods, ranging from the prehistoric period to the colonial period and are located in different geographical settings.

They include temples, mosques, tombs, churches, cemeteries, forts, palaces, step wells, rock-cut caves, and secular architecture as well as ancient mounds and sites which represent the remains of ancient habitation. These monuments and sites are maintained and preserved through various Circles of the ASI spread all over the country. The Circles look after the research on these monuments and conservation activities, while the Science Branch with its headquarters at New Delhi carries out chemical preservation and the Horticulture Branch under circle offices is entrusted with the laying out gardens and environmental development.

It is not our endeavour to detail here the numerous measure carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India and similar other organisations in India, as in Hyderabad and Mysore, for the preservation of ancient monuments. Works of an annual routine nature, such as clearing jungle, repairing cracks making good missing parts, are not described here, though they are vital for the preservation of the monuments. The principles of preservation, followed by a few conservation-measures of outstanding interest and of large-scale programme, are alone briefly described in the subsequent pages. Since the passing of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904, the Department of Archaeology has been engages in a long-period programme of preservation of ancient monuments and sites throughout India. Though preservation, not restoration, has been the rule, deviations from this rule were sometimes necessary, particularly at the initial stages. Partial restoration or pinning up may be permitted to secure parts of the fabric likely to collapse, or even some protective cover or roof may be provided. When roofing is found necessary, the evidence of the original design in invariably followed. For

partial rebuilding new material is not necessary, as the fallen debris on the site itself will provide the needed material.

Comparatively modern accretions are noticed in most ancient monuments when they come under the charge of the department. If they are without any purpose and obscure the original plan, it is the practice to remove them and to provide any material support which harmonizes with the old fabric. In such cases a record is kept of the work done. The fifty years' experience of the department in maintaining monuments of various periods and materials has enabled it to enunciate some broad principles of preservation which may be of general interest. They were embodied in a Conservation Manual issued first in 1907 and again in 1924 by Sir John Marshall and by periodical staff memoranda of the Directors General.

Aims of Monuments

- Its preservation without disfigurement or alteration of its character
- Its maintenance in a proper and attractive condition
- The complete examination of its remains and documentary evidence concerning it
- The preparation of monographs, guide-books and reports,

So that it's historical and artistic interest may be brought home to the scholar and the visitor and may rouse general interest in the past relics of the country. Much ingenuity, care and patience are needed for the successful preservation of monuments.

The need to protect ancient monuments from vegetation

Owing to heavy rainfall and special monsoonic conditions, the ancient monuments of India generally become the home of vegetation and undergrowth. The first code for rigid observation in conservation is that all destructive vegetation must be removed, as otherwise very serious damage may be caused by the unchecked growth of plants on buildings. The Indian pipal and banyan in particular are the most destructive, for they share with the eider, ash and sycamore of Europe large root-growths which penetrate long distances into the masonry. The growth of such vegetation is rapid and persistent, for its tendrils penetrate into the crevices, loosen and dislodge stones and often part as under sections of masonry, particularly face-work with weak and insufficient bonding with the core of the wall.

Plants create fractures, enlarge those already existing and eventually lead to the complete disintegration of the structure. The roots and tendrils of some plants and mushrooms draw their nourishment from lime-mortar, causing is to break up and lose its virtue. As the roots expand, disintegration is accelerated, resulting in easy penetration of water and vegetable-matter, thereby augmenting the sustenance upon which it thrives. If the walls of a building are thickly clad vegetation should first be clipped back. This will enable a closer examination to be made, so that the extent of any damage to the wall may be ascertained before cutting large stems. All stems should be cut at convenient places above the roots. If the root is growing in the ground, it should be grubbed up at once, but if it springs from the wall, it should be killed by pouring a corrosive acid into holes bored into the stump.

When the plant-growth is withered it can be removed easily, but care should be exercised to avoid dislodging any loose masonry. By cutting the withered stems around and tying a rope to the centre, the plant can usually be pulled off in one operation. Saplings and small shrubs can usually be removed without disturbing any large part of the masonry, but where they are large they should be cut off as near the roots as possible and the stump killed. Subsequently the decayed roots can be removed more easily. When treating masonry affected in this way, care should be taken to see that all decayed roots and vegetable-matter are completely eradicated.

Great works in preservation of Monuments

A few outstanding and large-scale conservation-works undertaken from time to time are described below.'

All types of monuments megalithic burials, rock-cut temples, both cut in and cut out, structural temples, Buddhist stupas, viharas and chaityas, toms, forts, mosques, palaces, mahas, excavated remains, painted caves and temples, inscriptions, sculptures, carvings have received their due share of attention. It would be readily appreciated that the problems of each category of monuments and different. 'In ruined standing monuments the chief tasks have been the clearance of their plans by rescuing them from heaps of fallen debris; the preservation of the core of masonry or brickwork exposed by the facing having fallen off; filling up and grouting cracks; underpinning worn-out bases of walls; resetting perilously out-of-plumb walls, making ruined wall-tops watertight; pointing open joints; eradication of vegetation, etc. In Muslim monuments additional complications are often introduced by the presence of damaged arches and domes.

In the rock-cut caves and temples of west and south India the gradual wearing out of the rock has been the chief problem. While chemical preservation is called for in some cases, in the majority of them the percolation of water from one or more sources, which may be at a considerable distance from the monument, is generally hard to detect and check. In excavated remains with buildings of more than one period the problems are necessarily different: the preservation is concerned with the overhanging later structures, often resting on nothing more than loose earth or debris, and sometimes with the drainage of rain-water from the lower levels much deeper than the adjoining surface. In the excavated areas of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa salt starts disintegrating the brickwork immediately after it has been exposed. The use of over-burnt bricks was found to be nothing more than a palliative and the practice has now been stopped. The above categories or work do not by any means exhaust the numerous problems the conservator has to face in preserving ancient monuments but convey some idea of their variety and wide range.'

Conclusion

India is one of the world's oldest countries which is deeply rooted in the ancient history of human civilization. Hence these heritage sites still remain perfectly preserved to date. Hence it is our responsibility as a citizen of India to preserve these beautiful monuments for our future generations. Our various art forms, literature monuments, tradition, and culture form a part of our heritage. These works have been appreciated worldwide. We should be proud of such a vivacious culture that prevails in our country. India's natural heritage invokes a sense of pride in each and every citizen of this country. The diversity adds beauty and richness to this country.The Indian government is making various efforts to protect such monuments, so we, the citizens of India, will also protect these monuments and hand them over to our future generations.

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