

# Department of Art and Culture and Department of Archaeology

## 1. Introduction

According to writer William Dalrymple, '*only Rome, Istanbul and Cairo can even begin to rival Delhi for the sheer volume and density of historic remains*'.

Delhi is a historical city whose remnants are spread right from Mehrauli to Shahjahanabad. The built heritage of Delhi is an irreplaceable and non-renewable cultural resource. Besides being part of life for many, it has educational, recreational and major tourism potential. It enhances Delhi's environment, giving it identity and character. It encompasses culture, lifestyles, design, materials, engineering and architecture. The heritage resources include symbols of successive civilizations and cities that came up over the millennia, historic buildings and complexes, historical gardens, water engineering structures and their catchments, the remains of fortified citadels, places for worship and for the deceased, historic cities and villages, unearthed heritage and their components.

Surveys conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1911 identified 1321 historical monuments, sites and buildings. Out of these, 170 monuments have been declared as protected. In addition the Municipal Council of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and State Archaeological Department have published lists of heritage buildings. In case of major monuments it is necessary that the surrounding area should be identified in the layout/detail plan, and should have building controls in relation to height, material and spread of the monuments.

It took 2,000 years of recorded history and more than 1,000 tombs and forts for Delhi to emerge as India's first possible 'World heritage city'.

The city-based Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) signed a MoU with the Delhi Government, so that urban development happens in sync with the Capital's architectural marvels.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protects only 174 monuments in the city. The rest (out of an approximately 1,200 monuments), which are taken care of by NDMC and MCD, are

gradually disappearing blame the hoodlums and general indifference. “We drive past them, take a shortcut through them, walk our dogs on their grounds,” says Ms. Rakhshanda Jalil, author of *Invisible City*. Mr. AGK Menon, INTACH Delhi chapter convener says “We will consult the government on the protection of legally unprotected monuments.”

## **2. Department of Art & Culture**

This Department of Delhi Government includes the following:

- Delhi Archives
- Department of Archeology
- Art, Culture & Languages Department
- Sahitya Kala Parishad
- Hindi Academy
- Punjabi Academy
- Urdu Academy
- Sanskrit Academy
- Sindhi Academy
- Delhi Gazetteer Unit

The focus of this chapter is primarily on Department of Archeology with an emphasis on conservation of heritage monuments in Delhi bringing insights for same; in addition, the paper also attempts to bring out possible recommendations regarding effective functioning of public libraries and museums in Delhi.

## **3. Ministry of Arts and Culture**

The government's medium term strategy framework, reflecting the mandate by the people focuses on three areas:

- The need to accelerate growth and promote an equitable economic development of the country and its people
- Stepping up efforts to achieve social cohesion and to nurture national identity, to realize the goals of non-racialism, non-sexism through a deepening and expansion of democracy;
- Installing robust mechanisms and systems to monitor and evaluate progress on all objectives, strategies and plans of government in relation to the above priorities

The strategies, plans and expenditure commitments of the Department of Arts and Culture proceed from this medium term framework and seek to align its budgetary patterns with it. This speaks directly to needs of the majority of the people.

#### **4. Library and Museum**

Constitutionally, the subject 'libraries' is the responsibility of the individual states in India. The hierarchy includes the national central library at the apex, followed by state central libraries, district libraries, block (subdistrict) libraries and panchayat (village) libraries.

The main problems facing libraries in the city are:

- The system of funds and grants both at central and state level.
- The non-uniformity of the maintenance and legislation aspect.
- Question of private and other regional libraries ensuring qualitative influx of resource material.
- The lack of modern technology in the library system.

##### **a. Delhi Public Library**

Delhi Public Library (DPL) was formed by the joint efforts of UNESCO and Government of India in 1951 followed by the full-fledged acquisition of the building in 1953. DPL was set up with the primary objective of sharing and devouring of knowledge. DPL has been a pioneer in providing the visually challenged with a huge collection of Braille books. Truly DPL has surpassed all other libraries by its valuable patronage for the visually challenged, the people from the lower strata of the society, the children and even the prisoners. DPL also has DELNET and computer facilities.

It has membership of over 45,000, with more than 1.5 million books available at the Central Library alone. DPL offers free membership to citizens of Delhi and provides mobile library services as well as a prison library service to Tihar Jail. The library has a special Braille section for the visually challenged. The DPL is being totally revamped; including a new look for the children's section. So visiting this library need no longer mean roaming through damp alleys of musty bookshelves. The DPL also offers its services to Residents' Welfare Associations across the city to set up their own libraries or have the mobile library van visit the area. The DPL already has branches in over 26 locations across Delhi along with 21 Residential Colony Libraries.

The DPL is not only the largest public library system in India; it is the busiest library in all of South East Asia. With so much history and a host of new offerings, Delhi Public Library is definitely worth a visit, if not its membership.

## **b. Recommendations**

### ***i. Library***

- System of mobile library should be rapidly increased specially in the rural areas of Delhi. This already has been very successful in Chennai, Bangalore and Ludhiana.
- The concept of ATM Library should come in effect.
- How many of us know where Delhi Public Library is in South Delhi? [It's in Sarojini Nagar]. There is a need for mass awareness and youth outreach programmes.

### ***ii. Museum***

- There is a need for the Delhi Government to give grants to museums as it gives SPICMACAY to carry out concerts in nooks and corners of Delhi.
- The concept of 'traveling exhibitions' can take into prominence after carrying out detailed cost-benefit analysis.
- In India the voluminous artifacts and remains are in a bad state due to mismanagement and poor maintenance. So curators could be appointed with an attempt to classify between the 'most preserving remains' and the rest. Auction of the remains gives a probability to generate huge economic profit as there is a huge demand for Indian art across the world. This will also result in effective utilization of all the neglected, otherwise improperly depleting artifacts. This idea definitely has worked out in UK for Christi's auction, where Princess Diana's possessions were auctioned.
- Schools and colleges can play a major role in the maintenance of museums and various trips could be arranged periodically for greater awareness.
- It will be a very significant idea to have collaboration between Department of Education and Department of Art and Culture to jointly manage the development of library and museum in Delhi more effectively, particularly in terms of reach and preservation of quality.

## **5. Department of Archaeology**

Activities:

- Protection & conservation of monuments
- Mass awareness programmes
- Departmental publications
- Strengthening of the department
- Grant-in-aid to RWAs / NGOs for upkeep and maintenance of monuments

In order to arouse consciousness among the children and citizens of Delhi about their rich cultural heritage, it is proposed that it undertakes awareness programmes including:

- Establishing Cultural Clubs in schools,
- Organization of exhibitions
- Launching mass awareness campaigns through the media appealing the citizens to safeguard the monuments from the vandalism and maintain them for posterity and;
- Ensuring maximum involvement of public including NGOs and Residential Welfare Associations in these activities.

## **6. Conservation - Who is Responsible for it?**

The agencies concerned with the protection of Delhi's Built Heritage are ASI, Government of NCT of Delhi, State Archaeology Department, NDMC, MCD, Cantonment Board and DDA. With the aim of framing policies and strategies for conservation, appropriate action plans may be prepared by all the agencies that should include:

- a. Promotion of conservation of the civic and urban heritage,
- b. Architecturally significant historical landmarks, living monuments, memorials and historical gardens, riverfront, city wall, gates, bridges, vistas, public places, edicts and the ridge.
- c. Maintain close interaction and coordination between all these agencies keeping in view the following objectives and requirements:
  - i. Maintain and update a database.
  - ii. Develop organizational capacity for heritage management.
  - iii. Define all the applicable terms
  - iv. Listing of Heritage Buildings based on the following criteria:

- The age of the building
  - Its special value for architectural or cultural reasons or historical periods
  - Its relevance to history
  - Its association with a well-known character or event
  - Its value as part of a group of buildings
  - The uniqueness of the building or any object or structures fixed to the building or forming part of the land and comprised within the cartilage of the building.
- v. Prepare guidelines for development, redevelopment, additions, alterations, repairs, renovation and reuse of the heritage buildings.
- vi. Implementing programmes for education and awareness.

Heritage conservation is a social responsibility. It demands professionalism and huge investments. Realizing that many of the monuments in Delhi are withering away due to sheer neglect or bad management, the government is now relying on corporate entities.

The Conservation Society of Delhi (CSD) has taken up arms to preserve the rich heritage. Their activities are participatory in their approach and involve people from different walks of life such as students, local communities, professionals and the general public. Awareness building is one of CSD's major activities.

CSD's other objectives include organizing and conducting study courses, seminars, lectures and workshop demonstrations on subjects related to Delhi's heritage, involving children in conservation activities by holding special camps and workshops and assisting other agencies like the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and INTACH.

## **7. Analysis**

In India there exist certain agencies, which are coming up and working with governmental agencies (like - Archaeological Survey of India) towards the noble cause of conserving the monuments. The agencies like INTACH have, however, the growing body of knowledge to be gleaned from their indigenous experience and international networking on the guidelines for conservation of our architectural and urban heritage. Also, the works of the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLCCP) at Lucknow, which has

started addressing itself to the problems of conservation, is important in this regard.

The shortcomings in the conservation of monuments are in reality, due to the lack of systems for the management, training and infrastructure. Another major problem that must be addressed is the lack of legislation as regards monuments which are not under the Archaeological Survey of India. Inadequate management coupled with rapid urbanization and the new development agenda makes heritage conservation excruciatingly difficult. Other threats to conservation include misinterpretation, encroachment and misuse of property. In this scenario the need of the hour is to conserve those aspects that contribute in making the historical places significant like promoting the heritage sites giving special tourist interest and value. These elements are all inter-related and have to be understood and interpreted holistically as they are a response to varying factors like topography, available resource and the local climate.

## **8. Conclusion**

Conservation is an attitude that has been negated by modern city planning and as a result the conservation in India is at the crossroads. In India there is an oriented. The existing town and country planning Acts do have provisions for conferring special status to buildings and heritage areas. However, for many reasons (including political and social factors) this has never been enforced. In order to focus attention and action on heritage buildings, recent initiatives such as those by INTACH and various other environmental organizations that have pushed for a separate Heritage Acts/Regulations, would be helpful. However, this requires help from administrative and legislative quarters, as well as adequate support from the judiciary. Above all, it can provide the impetus and ideology for a conservation-oriented development policy, which seems to be the need of the hour.

- Concept of Authority Security Force should come into play for the better protection and security of the public property within the heritage area including prevention of encroachments and for removal thereof;
- Aid the officers of the Authority in the detection and investigation of any matter relating to leakage of revenue or any amount payable to the Authority;
- Carry out a survey of the Heritage Area and prepare reports on the surveys so carried out;

- Prepare development plan of the Heritage area and formulate schemes necessary for implementing the development plan;
- Secure and coordinate execution of the development plan, town planning schemes and the development of the Heritage Area in accordance with the said plan and schemes;
- Raise finance for any project or scheme for the development of the Heritage Area and extend assistance to the local authorities in the Region for the execution of such a project or scheme;
- Raise local, regional, national and international awareness about the significance of the Delhi Heritage Site;
- Promote and encourage proper research to understand the archaeological, historical and environmental values of the Delhi Heritage Site;

## **9. Recommendations**

In the last decade or so an idea that “old and ancient buildings could be restored and reused” had gained prominence. One has to understand that in addition to the historical interest, cultural heritage buildings are valuable because they contribute to the economy by providing key attractions, in a context where tourism and leisure are major industries in the 3rd millennium. Henceforth it is not just a cultural requirement but also an economical and development demand which must be met by adequate public-private partnerships between the government, the corporate sector and civil society.

1. Protected monuments can be outsourced to private players. The private players will invest in the maintenance and upkeep of the monuments. In return they would be allowed to display a plaque near the monuments publicizing their involvement in the site.
2. The role of awareness programmes has to be prioritised. For example, through exhibitions and launching mass awareness campaigns in media. Furthermore, the concept of celebrating ‘heritage month’ or ‘heritage week’ wherein possible exhibitions could be held and more people can visit the heritage sites. There is a need for more programmes such as ‘saga of Shahzanabad’ through which an appeal was made to citizens to safeguard monuments from vandalism.
3. If we can have a marathon for ‘Green Earth’ why can't we have a similar kind of ‘Heritagathon’ for protecting the heritage sites? Just remembering the sites on Independence Day or Republic Day does not show our determination to protect them.

4. There should be strict punishment for those found exploiting the heritage sites. The punishment should include fine resulting in considerable revenue generation for the site.
5. Taking the cue from the 'Konark Dance Festival', if the Department of Archeology could organize musical concerts and cultural festivals, it could enable the generation of revenue contributing to effective maintenance of the premises.
6. The conversion of mere monument site to 'Heritage Tourist Hotel' could also have lot of scope for revenue generation. This would not only help in proper maintenance but also result in the popularity of the site.
7. After several success stories including Vijay Mallaya bringing back 'the sword of Tipu Sultan' and 'Gandhiji's memorabilia', if a scheme outlines a procedure to adopt a monument, maintain it and generate revenue, both the government and the private player would benefit from it and would improve the condition of the monument.
8. Significant historic places may require the preparation of a 'Brochure' which can help a visitor understand the significance of a place enriching her interest, enjoyment and appreciation of that place. The Brochure may include historical information about the asset or the use of a part of the building for heritage display.
9. Promotion is of vital importance for development of a monument as a tourist attraction and private sector can do this efficiently if given proper incentives, like share in revenue from tickets. Extensive marketing and advertising campaigns may also be undertaken in this regard.
10. For unprotected monuments framing a policy for protection against destruction, illegal construction and encroachment would be essential.
11. The shortage of supervisors, conservation staff and engineers needs to overcome along with the issue of labour crunch at ASI.
12. Issues such as lack of co-operation from MCD need to be looked into by concerned authorities. Accordingly the government should act only as a catalyst and not the owner. Its role should be that of a felicitator and not a '*karta*'.
13. Many NGOs are already working and government should identify such institutions and provide required assistance to them. RWAs should be also playing a prominent role in safeguarding monuments.

14. Going by the recommendations of a Nature Conservation Foundation member, several conservation works can be taken up simultaneously if bureaucratic hurdles are removed.
15. The Delhi Government should encourage students take up research studies on heritage conservation under the 'Directorate of Higher Education'.
16. Evidently, the Commonwealth Games 2010 will provide a great opportunity to promote the heritage sites in Delhi. A committee advising the same should work on this aspect as large number of foreign tourist would turn up and provide a great opportunity for revenue generation.

**- Prepared by Chitra Mishra**  
**(student of BA Hons History, Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi)**

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