

Heritage Conservation – Need for people’s involvement

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Good Afternoon, and thankful to CMDA and all others for this unique opportunity and the topic is as rightly mentioned by the Chairperson it is little of the feel and also made it little challenging for me. It is neither historical nor technical but yet it is very very crucial important topic most relevant to today’s seminar theme. Heritage Conservation needs peoples involvement and I would begin with something which most of you all would be aware; just to remind on that. **No movement, no legislation whether for heritage or for anything else under the sun can ever succeed without people’s co-operation.** So we know that so it can be the base or basis of which I will talk for this day. I think some culled out some interesting historical and anecdotes about the need for peoples involvement in heritage conservation based on my earlier researches which I feel would be relevance for this.

Heritage conservation as we know today is a new thing. It may at the most date back to 19th Century. But the concept is not as new as that. Through out its history there are instances here and there and there may be much more for which concrete evidences not forth coming. We have instances where one dynasty tries to preserve the architectural and other forms of heritage of a previous dynasty and with due credit to them, political rivalries notwithstanding that did not come in that way. So we have several such instances of which I would just mention one or two here. There are some inscriptions of the Cholas who were very much in the lime light in the last few days, thanks to the millennium celebration of the Big Temple of their attempt to preserve the inscription of older period. When a temple was getting a rebuilt and old stone blocks have to be removed or replaced. The King gave specific instructions that the writing on those stones, even though it was not in detail, it may not decipher at The inscriptions may be either on the same stone or because it is so old writing or else, the same writing has to be copied on the new stone before the old stone was destroyed. Coming to a more recent period we have the Pandias in Tenkasi and other places we have specific epigraphical evidences to show and to show similar conservation efforts. Right from the Bragadheeswarar Temple of Thanjavour itself which you are seeing in this slide, the Raja Raja, he made enough endowments for the upkeep of the temple for several years, after him all the later political events in the history shows the later rulers were not true to this endowments some of them diverted it to other temples and on this action, there are historical evidences. The Thanjavour Marattas have done

much for restoring the old monuments and coming to temples, they have oddly built any temples. They were at a very later period of history when Hindu Architecture had reached zenith. It was a period of Muslim and the British political turmoil and the number of new temples built by this dynasty is very few. But the number of older temples of earlier dynasties were carefully restored or built and many of the restoration norms do not match today's stringent requirement of the ASI or the modern day criteria for restoration. Nevertheless I would say it was creditable to the needs of those types. To mention just one example before I proceed further one of these inscriptions in the Bragadheeswarar temple, the Nataraja sub shrine is attributed to this dynasty and the Maratta, if at all built any new temple whether in Thanjavour or Poona or Nagpur or any where, it was brick and plaster temple and even in Thanjavour few temples that they built were by brick and plaster. Temples which is a major departure from the old style that is quite well known in the Thanjavour temple. They wanted, everything else was in stone, the Nataraja temple was also done in stone to harmonise in the rest of the buildings in the campus and so much for what has done by the Kings and Historical Dynasties. Now coming to the subject proper, the people's involvement again, we have instances in history where people have rebelled to save monument. Not only today, in the 19th Century itself, even ages back, and often they have succeeded. One interesting piece of information lying in the History of Archieves is, believe it or not, as late as the early 19th Century there was a proposal that the Taj Mahal dismantled and part of the valuable, marble is sold for the benefit of the local people. They were having some drops and other things and part of it was parted away to the land lords and all transfers were finalised and finally it was the agitation of the local people which prevented the colonial government from going ahead with it. Otherwise we may not have had any Taj to day.

Soe thing coming to nearer in 1870s, when the lower anaicut was being built across Kallanai river, The Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple which is a ASI protected monument which is a UNESCO world heritage to day. It was then in a dilapidated condition. It was in semi dilapidated condition and the colonial authorities thought that the compound wall and part of the dilapidated Gopuram stones which were of course lying on the ground could be used for laying the foundation of the lower anaicut and there was a big agitation against it and yet most of it went off and today were seen deep inside the lower bed and a new wall was formed by the colonial Government.

More recently which comes to human memory, which all of us know is the Queen Mary's College where again public opinion reveal against the Government's decision and so the

people's involvement , people co-operation is the most important for Heritage Conservation and it has been going for ages. Whatever I told were a just few instances, culled out from history .It is much ,much more but till the 19th Century ,this public participation, involvement, co-operation has been, I can say so not in a organised fashion. But , it was in U.K. in Europe more particularly where the trend of reviving old art, traditions and so it was at its height and when the British power in Asia was also at its height and they had thought of the concept of national level trust which would be outside the government system that gives a some freedom even in western Government on this heritage decisions and policies and that was how the concept of National Trust was born and the oldest among them is the British National Trust which was 100 years old and after the second world war, US thought of a similar trust and wanted to have a National Trust for the U.S. and finally in 1947, the trust was conceptualized in the U.S. and the American Trust , the National Trust for Heritage Preservation (NTHP) which was started in 1949. and it is quite different from the British Trust Born out of these was the INTACH started in 1984 , the initial endowment came from UK which has its origin from British rather than America. INTACH is now regarded as the British Voluntary Organisation which is gearing up public opinion, public awareness and public involvement in heritage conservation through variety of programs, children programs, students program s to teach them through out their life they are sensitised to heritage ,plus other programs, workshops, training programs for non professional to get involved in whatever limited extent they could and the other stake holders in the process of heritage conservation.

Thank you.
