
Tourism and Fusion of Cultures

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"No day shall erase you from the memory of time." - Virgil

Introduction

Heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as biodiversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences. It records and expresses the long processes of historic development, forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous and local identities and is an integral part of modern life. (ICTR 1999). Every human being has a right and responsibility to understand, appreciate and conserve its universal values. The natural and cultural heritage belongs to all people at the holistic level.

A vital orientation point and positive means for growth and change, the characteristic heritage and collective reminiscence of each locality or community is inimitable and an imperative basis for development, both now and into the future.

Defining Heritage

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre defines heritage as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration." The concept of heritage has widened past tangible objects (museums, historic sites, landscapes) into daily life and community memory, or the intangibles.

According to UNWTO, Tourism is expected to continue to grow rapidly. International tourism arrivals are estimated to increase 43 million a year reaching 1.8 billion by 2030. Cultural and natural heritage are key to tourism. Tourism becomes a really important factor: if it is assessed and utilised in the right way to provide one of the most important means for a sustainable development of historic towns. By developing infrastructure, decision-makers try to serve tourism that becomes more and more self generating.(Barco B.2002)

What is Heritage Tourism?

Heritage tourism can be defined as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past," and heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources. (National Trust for Historic Preservation)

Sustainable tourism is an important element of conservation practices. World Monuments Fund work towards this elemental need and convey a critical message around the world, as heritage sites balance protecting fragile, historic materials and providing a safe and pleasant experience for tourists.

At times, communities do not realize the full potential for their own history and heritage to serve as high-value attractions and tourism resources. A good heritage tourism program improves the quality of life for residents as well as serving visitors. International Cultural Tourism Charter, (1999) has defined the objectives which are based on specific aspects interlinking the Heritage conservation and management with propagation of tourism. These include formulating plans and drafting policies; safeguarding the interest of host communities and locales as well as the visitors.

The principles of the charter stands believes in defending the objectives defined by the charter; The rights and interests of the host community, at regional and local levels, property owners and relevant indigenous peoples who may exercise traditional rights or responsibilities over their own land and its significant sites, should be respected. They should be involved in establishing goals, strategies, policies and protocols for the identification, conservation, management, presentation and interpretation of their heritage resources, cultural practices and contemporary cultural expressions, in the tourism context.

Conservation and tourism programmes should present high quality information to optimise the visitor's understanding of the significant heritage characteristics and of the need for their protection, enabling the visitor to enjoy the place in an appropriate manner.

Respect for the sanctity of spiritual places, practices and traditions is an important consideration for site managers, visitors, policy makers, planners and tourism operators. Visitors should be encouraged to behave as welcomed guests, respecting the values and lifestyles of the host community, rejecting possible theft or illicit trade in cultural property and conducting themselves in a responsible manner which would generate a renewed welcome, should they return.

Relevance of Architecture

Architecture over time reflects history, culture, craftsmanship, trends and beliefs while standing as testimony to progress. The architecture of any place makes a town or city what it is. It manages to define the distinctiveness of a locale. It is important to protect architecture of the past through conservation or adaptive reuse because it forms part of our collective memory and hence sense of identity.

The practitioners of architectural conservation consider the historical significance of existing structures. The challenge of working with existing structures is to extend, adapt or reinvigorate with solutions will not be detrimental to the original material. Such designs offer opportunity for strategies that; blend or contrast materials, use recycled or new materials, replicate existing materials or incorporate new technologies. Working within the legislated norms to conserve the past while designing for a changing audience.

There is growing acceptance that conserving heritage buildings provides significant economic, cultural and social benefits (Bullen and Love, 2010). In many developing countries, the attitude of the population itself can contribute to the degradation of heritage. Heritage protection is often thought of as the business of historians, conservation professionals and people nostalgic for the past. Yet culture, and heritage in particular, is first of all the expression of a society's identity and creativity. (World Heritage papers, 2002)

Tourism and Architectural Conservation:

This is a concept paper addressing the Architectural history to explore the possibilities of revitalizing the interest of tourists in architectural legacy of the yester years through various approaches.

On the basis of literature available it is important to categorize the approaches to conservation of classified heritage structures and built environment from the other era that may contribute to a more sustainable environment for today. It is important to educate both the host and the tourist about the past contexts and present condition of the structures so that appropriate respect is maintained for conserving as well as appreciating. People are interested in the historic environment. They want to learn about it, help define it, and be involved in decisions affecting it. (Figueiredo P., 2002)

The approaches can be identified as:

A) Historic importance:

The backdrop of history and events which cause and influence the creations of certain magnitude, style, ethnic influences of the ruling community are the important associations with the structures.

- Association with period
- Events
- Influences

B) Cultural influences :

Climatic variances and availability of resources are basic influencing factors. The pressures of invasive cultural as the years progress also decide the architectural landscape of any place. Artistic stylization which has evolved from the artesian community of any era. Taj Mahal architecture can be renowned as the largest model combination of the derivative of Byzantine, Persian, Indian and Islamic architecture. Cultures can leave a distinct stamp on the structures through different mediums.

- Skill of the artisans
- Occupation
- Lifestyle
- Customs and traditions

C) Scientific principles:

Understanding the technological genius in creating the massive structures of the past. Appreciation of skill in times of basic implements. Many of the old buildings were designed with sustainability in mind. Many features of historic buildings were built with aspects like

climate and site situation in mind to give a sustainable build.

Respect to the scientific approach in design, on the basis of climatology, availability and use of materials and final finesse in presentation due to surface treatments. Monolithic rock cut Ajanta and Ellora caves, forts and palaces, temple architecture etc. The water fountains which worked on scientific principles than mechanization.

- Principles in design
- Purpose of the structural style
- Engineering technology
- Construction materials and their availability
- Treatments rendered to the structure for sustainability

D) Aesthetic Appreciation :

- Philosophy of beauty, through senses
- Tactile and sensual appreciation of the structures
- Sensitivity to appreciate and not cause harm to the structure

The carvings, sculptures, bas relief works which are a pronounced feature in the marble and sandstone monuments of India, invoke the human senses, and awaken the meditative part of the mind. The symmetry and precision in replicating motifs with bare minimum tools is an art which defies imagination in today's times, where every millimeter of space can be computed by machines.

E) Structural Stability :

- Soundness or Fragility of the structure

Considering the extent of deterioration of the structure and the restorative measures, the managing authority needs to exhibit discipline. The local population needs to treat the important architectural structures with the same passion as their home and safeguard its interests.

The signage, barriers and guards are a subtle reminder for people to be respectful of the ancient monument. There are many conscientious travelers around the world who are aware of the fragility of ancient structures, but it is imperative to educate people about the irreversible damage that can be done to historic place due to ignorance.

- Restrictions on entry
- Appropriate vigilance
- Signage and instructions

F) Adaptability to present needs - Adaptive reuse

The correct preservation can maximise the use of the existing materials and infrastructure and in return reduces waste caused by demolition and energy put into the production of new materials and construction. The 'Fort' area in city of Mumbai can easily reflect the sustainability of structures built in the British era. Building Adaptation is one of the seven levels of interventions for maintaining old heritage buildings. This is closely associated with historic restoration and conservation.

- Generic –Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Commercial development of the structures
- Live monuments – Sonar Fort, Jaisalmer
- Tourism perspective (Heritage Hotels)

A multi-stakeholder approach is crucial to safeguard heritage as well as for promotion of tourism. The above list of approaches can be applied to critically appreciate the architecture as a local resident as well as a tourist.

Reviewing the approaches it is important for various agencies to work together and create a platform with conscious effort to first educate the local inhabitants about the precious resources from the past. This educational practice can be introduced to the tourist and visitors by interesting means.

Architectural History and Tourism : Summary of Mumbai

Heritage structures form an integral part of the Indian subcontinent. UNESCO has inscribed 32 Indian properties on the World Heritage List. Brief overview of Mumbai in the context of heritage Tourism and Architectural Conservation is presented as a reference.

Mumbai, the city of dreams, is steeped in rich history and culture that spans several centuries. The city is filled with monuments and buildings that draw in massive crowds each year simply to gaze upon the many sites Mumbai has to offer. Some major architectural styles with invasive influences seen around the city. They date as far back as to Gothic and Victorian styles and cover a timeline that eventually leads to contemporary architecture in Mumbai. Iconic structures such as Rajabai Tower, Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai University, Gateway of India stand the test of time in all respects.

The rule of the islands have changed hands with the passing of time. From the colonial rule of the Portuguese, it went finally to the British. This heralded a great era of construction in the architectural history of Bombay when a number of monumental public and institutional buildings came up. The influence that the Portuguese and British had on Mumbai can be seen in important architectural sites that still stand proud in Mumbai. Simply looking at these buildings and monuments can take one on a ride into Mumbai's rich past in a span of minutes. This ride to the past is facilitated by Heritage Tours – Bombay.

Founded by city architects, Abha Bahl and Brinda Gaitonde Nayak, The Bombay Heritage Walks (BHW) group has been organizing walking tours around the city's heritage precincts since April 1999. The walks aim to raise the awareness of the people of Mumbai and visitors, about the city's architecture and heritage monuments.

Personalized, educative and enjoyable, the walking tours highlight a vast range of architectural styles, construction methods and materials, planning elements and ornamental details. The spatial, social and cultural history of the city is brought to life through fascinating stories and anecdotes. It is an attempt to bridge "heritage" and "contemporary" aspects of Mumbai to create meaningful and memorable experiences for participants.

The BHW, believes that one cannot experience the multitude of architectural styles and heritage precincts by merely traversing the city in a car or by leafing through travel brochures or guidebooks. The real essence of Mumbai can only be discovered on foot and with someone who is knowledgeable about the city – its people, its history, its architecture, its culture and intimately familiar with its streets. People taken on discovery walks in little known heritage precincts all over the city. A variety of locales have been covered from Banganga Tank - a holy Hindu pilgrimage centre to Ballard Estate - an early 20th century Edwardian neo-classical business

district. In the foremost effort of its kind, citizens and visitors were invited to explore the city's architecture and exposed to terms like 'Bombay Gothic,' 'Indo-Saracenic' and 'Art Deco.' For the first time ever in Mumbai, public entry was permitted into many otherwise off-limits Government-controlled heritage properties like the administrative wing of the Victoria Terminus and the 1800s Gothic-style State Police Headquarters. To encourage public participation, private homeowners in residential enclaves like Khotachiwadi and Ranwar proudly opened up their heritage homes. Mumbai residents were educated about the fact that, their city had so much history and architecture. The educative facet of the tour encompasses orientation in multiple ways;

- Showcase South Mumbai's amazing collection of historic Colonial landmarks and architectural gems, built in a vast array of materials and styles.
- Encapsulating history of Mumbai's kaleidoscopic past.
- Introduction of the walk route and specific area to be covered.
- Each building of historic or architectural merit is then pointed out enroute, highlighting any special cultural or social anecdotes.
- Visual aids like maps, archival images and photographs of building interiors.
- Architectural styles, construction materials and methods, planning elements, ornamental details as well as any conservation efforts or structural modifications are explained to the participants.
- Participants are encouraged to share their views along the way as well.

(*Courtesy : The Bombay Heritage Walks*)

The concept of 'Heritage Walk' has exemplified the amalgamation of the heritagetourism and architectural conservation on the basis of principles of partnership and achievement.

Conclusion:

Conservation is the primary concern of today. With the exhausting resources, the human race has woken up to the call for positive change in all concern. The old architecture recreates images of history, not only of people and their civilizations but also scientific approach and technologies of ancient times. Maintaining significant built structures is linked to preserving a rich visual history for future generations. As the needs and purpose of a building or space may change, it is important to maintain history of these sites wisely. It is vital to have a congregation of agencies with common goals but which can contribute independently to the growth of tourism and also aid conserving the evidence of glorious past with due care and respect.

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