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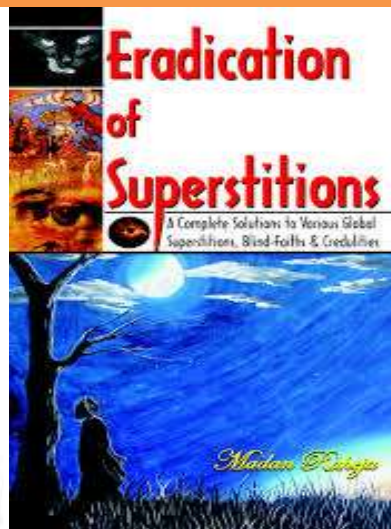
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The future of
retail



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It was after world war one the idea of initiating an international movement to protect heritage arose. The UNESCO Convention of 1972 was developed with the objectives regarding world heritage sites -to define World Heritage in both cultural and natural aspects, to promote cooperation among all nations and people to contribute for the protection of these universal treasures intact for future generation. It is prestigious for a country to have a site listed on the World Heritage list. This citation gives boost to tourism and helps local economies to prosper. The recorded sites on the World Heritage list now stands at 962, which includes 745 cultural properties, 188 natural properties and 29 mixed properties.

The World Heritage Sites can be a natural, cultural or a mixed site. A total of 29 sites in India had been approved as WHS till February 2013. Out of these, 19 sites (all cultural) are currently under the administrative control of the ASI. Two are with the Ministry of Railways, one with the State Government of Rajasthan, six with the Ministry of Environment and Forest and one with a temple Management committee Bodhgaya in Bihar. Ajanta and Ellora Caves are exceptional for mural painting, sculpture and art-architecture which represent Indian religious and artistic thoughts of ancient people. These are the assets of our cultural heritage which need to protection, conservations and preservation of the natural views and history.

The Ajanta Caves in India are about 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments which date from the 2nd century BCE to about 480 or 650 CE. The caves include paintings and sculptures described by the government ASI as "the finest surviving examples of Indian art, particularly painting", which are masterpieces of Buddhist religious art, with figures of the Buddha and depictions of the Jataka tales. The caves were built in two phases starting around the 2nd century BCE, with the second group of caves built around 400–650 CE according to older accounts, or all in a brief period of 460 to 480. The site is a protected monument in the care of the Archaeological Survey of India.



Mural painting of Ajanta Caves

The rock cut caves near Ajanta contain perfect specimens of Indian mural Paintings. These were discovered in 1819 by British Officers while hunting. They were excavated between second century BC and seventh century AD. They were excavated in a semi-circular scarp overlooking a narrow sinuous gorge. The total area of painting at Ajanta Caves was approximately 2994 sq mts. The caves were notified in November 1951 and inscribed as World heritage list in 1984.

Ellora represents the epitome of Indian rock – cut architecture. The 34 "caves" are actually structures excavated out of the vertical face of the Charanandri hills. Buddhist, Hindu and Jain rock-cut temples and Viharas and Mathas were built between the 5th century and 10th century. All the Buddhist caves were constructed between 630-700 CE. The 12 Buddhist, 17 Hindu and 5 Jain caves, built in proximity, demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history. It is a protected monument under the ASI.

Performance of the Archeological Survey of India

The ASI was the nodal agency on behalf of the Government of India for all World Heritage related matters. There were no written orders to this effect available with the ASI. In the absence of these basic orders, unable to derive full assurance regarding the ASI's assigned role and performance. Our understanding of the ASI's role was in accordance with practices as found in the records. The ASI should adopt a systematic approach for the development of tentative world heritage sites through conservation and site management. This alone can ensure final inscription of the site. Besides, the ASI was trying its best to maintain the prospective World Heritage Site in a good state of conservation.

Site	Remuneration (in lakh)	Commencement Of work	Finalisation of SMP/IMP/CCMP	Status of implementation
Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra	92.13	2007	Not yet finalised	Not implemented

Ellora Caves, Maharashtra	94.60	2007	Not yet finalised	Not implemented

The grant of World Heritage status did not translate into better availability of facilities, funding and staff for these sites. For all practical purposes of conservation, security and maintenance, the ASI did not differentiate between other sites and World Heritage Sites.

Present Condition

The unstable micro climatic conditions in the caves affected the state of conservation of the mural paintings. Due to the impact of variation in relative humidity, a portion of painted plaster along with mud had fallen from its stone carrier. Falling of white pigments from the ceiling of cave No.2 was also noticed. The thick coat of protective layer applied on the paintings by the earlier, restorers, accumulated dust, soot, excreta of bats etc had created an obscuring haze over the murals.



Cave Number 17 East wall, Removal of chalkiness

The solvents, chemicals, etc. used for cleaning were changed frequently and the indiscriminate use of solvents caused chalkiness on the paintings.



Nataraj in Kailash Temple at Ellora cave no 19, Wall carvings at Ellora cave

Conservation

The identification and execution of the projects of chemical conservation of the paintings and other monuments of the Ajanta caves was the responsibility of the “Field laboratory at Ajanta’ under Science Branch. An analysis of the chemical conservation and preservation carried out on the paintings at Ajanta, revealed the following:

- 1) There was no mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the results of cleaning and fixing responsibility against defective execution.
- 2) There was no laid down documented policy for chemical cleaning/conservation of the paintings.
- 3) Inventory of the paintings had not been prepared.

Impact of visitors

I was visited Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta caves end of Oct. 2013 and saw at these World Heritage Sites no audio guide service was available. Security Equipments like hand held metal detectors, scanners etc were not available and CCTV was not installed in the sites. □ Facilities for differently-able visitors were not available. No toilet facility was available for the physically challenged. No cloak rooms were available for the visitors. The strength of private security guards deployed rather the visitors took photos on mobile and Digital Cameras, reflection of flush-light damaged the murals but no action taken by the guards or taken fine. State police also did patrolling in the Ajanta Caves. At Ellora status is very stunning also. There was security guard, CCTV or audio guide not available. Even visitors were not controlled by the authority. In the Kailash Temple at Ellora cave visitors were took photography on the lap of the stone sculptures or deities which was not prohibited by authority. These are also the cause of damage of the caves sculptures and paintings.

Government of India should take steps “to conserve and preserve monuments and also natural resources around and improve the infrastructure and visitor management, carry out tourist development activities and training program for higher quality of the life of local population in Maharashtra, predominantly in Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta caves”. Entry of visitors was to be restricted to 40 inside the caves but this was not enforced leading to a reported increase of six to seven *per cent* in relative humidity. The impact of visitors inside the cave also increased carbon dioxide concentration. This highlighted the need for controlling the number of visitors inside the caves at a time. Also no emergency evacuation plan has been prepared till date. Keeping in view the high influx of visitors and fragile condition of the caves, Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), in August 2012, initiated a project to create a replica of these caves with the aid of foreign technologies and financial assistance. The Ministry should develop a separate project for maintenance and security of World Heritage Sites. There should be proper assessment of funds, security and conservation requirements.

Promoting tourism, preserving heritage

At Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta caves we observe that the status of these World Heritage Sites. Due to improper maintenance, security, unstable micro climatic conditions, relative humidity and influx of visitors are in the caves affected the state of conservation and preservation. Also observe that whether the World Heritage list’s meaning has been watered down by its rapid expansion and if both tourism and development that are often left unchecked at listed sites can do more harm than good to places so anointed by the honour. It is prestigious for a country to have a site listed on the World Heritage List. This citation gives boost to tourism income as well as heightened interest which business agencies certainly well aware of and helps local economies to prosper. Consequently how should the effects of increased tourism and development dealt with?

Since, both public and private sectors around the world have attached growing importance to safeguarding and conservation of selected cultural and natural objects, focusing on physical, tangible characteristics. These heritage sites receive major publicity and as a result become notable attractions for large numbers of tourists from all over the world. However in spite of the clear economic benefits and political prestige, this massive influx of tourists disrupts and in most cases, in the long run, destroys the social quality of the indigenous community. The deterioration of quality could ultimately undermine the application of conservation policies.

We know that the most outstanding sites are preserve for future generation and for humanity. Heritage professionals have been debating the World Heritage Scheme and its future. There are arguments for the list to be limited, with the warning that its significance might be lessened. To maintain credibility the priority should be on managing the existing sites rather than on inscribing new one. An overwhelming 92.3% of heritage professionals felt that World Heritage

status 'had become more important for the purposes of the tourism industry than on conservation'.

The Convention of UNESCO is a primary symbolic attempt to preserve the natural cultural heritage of humanity at the international level, Van der Aa observe in 'Preserving the Heritage of Humanity'. 'The step to national to global heritage is predominantly a symbolic one, as the World Heritage Convention hardly leads to a better preservation of listed sites'.

While it is difficult to ascertain that tourism is a direct consequence of a World Heritage award, the fact remains that heritage sites are increasingly being commercialized through tourism development. We think that by putting a site under spot-light (through inscription), it is under a great danger as it attracts a large numbers of visitors, and heritage preservation seemed to have a very problematic co-existence with tourism at these World Heritage sites as seen during Ajanta, Ellora visit.

Certainly, more critical assessments of its outstanding contributions toward preserving these more outstanding heritage properties are to be expected. Such as by rendering more emphasis on the international rather than national in the selection of site and impact of listing; addressing the two major management issues of 1) reconciling conservation and commercialization, and 2) dealing with an increased number of visitors to sites and ensuring that the value of World Heritage Status will not depreciate as more sites and properties are added to the list.

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