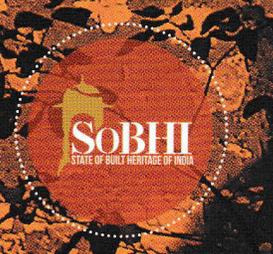


STATE OF BUILT HERITAGE OF INDIA

CASE OF THE UNPROTECTED



INTACH
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE DIVISION



the interior cool. The curved wooden brackets support the roof, which overhangs more than three feet. When one looks at a building, one sees the roof first. A Malayali will say, 'I am going to my roof' instead of to the house.



The roof comes down very low protecting the walls from the sun; Thekke Kottaram, a building which is part of the Padmanabhapuram complex.

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

The poor lived in similar buildings, but with less permanent building materials such as mud, bamboo and coconut leaves. But all the predominant features are visible in those houses as well. Commercial buildings such as shops, warehouses and factories were also built according to the same basic principles.

MATERIALS

The building materials used in Kerala were also different and the use of laterite and timber was unique. Laterite blocks dug out from the earth are still widely used in building construction. It is a hardened earth layer formed due to the weathering of acid rocks. It is very porous and cannot hold water. Since it is not hard enough, carving is difficult. Usually, they are found in layers of 10 to 15 metres. The top one to two metres will be soft. Towards the bottom, it merges with the clay layer. Laterite can be called the 'Blessing of Kerala' since 80% of Kerala's surface is covered with it.

Timber is the most predominant building material. It is widely available and many varieties are very durable. In traditional architecture, timber was used for walls, doors and windows, intermediate floors and roofs. The carpenter was the head craftsman and there is little masonry, although as timber began to be scarce, masonry began to gain importance.



Timber is the most predominant building material used in Kerala; Exterior of a building in the Padmanabhapuram Complex

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose



Timber is the most predominant building material used in Kerala; Interior of a building in the Padmanabhapuram Complex

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

TOWNSCAPE

Except for the Jews, Tamil Brahmins, some Muslims and the Eurasians, people from no other caste lived in row houses. Each man had his own castle, even the poor. The houses are generally surrounded by lush green vegetation, and as most of them are situated far from the village centre, they are not visible from the main road. Buildings are spread throughout the State, and it is often impossible to say where a village begins or ends. Thus the townscape value is very different from that in many other countries. From a high point, one can see the varying rooflines among the coconut trees or the shops along the sides of a canal or the shop-cum-residences in the village centre.

BUILDINGS BEING DEMOLISHED AT REGULAR INTERVALS

It was in 1984 that I read in the newspaper that the Akavoor Mana⁵⁸ was demolished. This building had the largest courtyard in the whole of Kerala State. It was quite sad that such important landmarks in Kerala's heritage were being pulled down without any protest or attempt to save them. During my field trips throughout Kerala, I found that more buildings were going to follow the fate of Akavoor Mana which was a great pity.

The planning of the layout of the old houses depended on the social and religious customs rather than technology. The houses of each caste and religion differed according to the customs and practices prevailing at that time. This has lost much of its relevance today because of the changing social relationships and lifestyle. In houses with large courtyards, the light and ventilation depended on the internal courtyard. The female members of the family had an internal community life, while the males spent their time in the front portion of the house. Such houses had an entrance hall where the men sat during the daytime and received visitors. The bedrooms were meant purely for sleeping, hence they were dark.

Old buildings are considered 'old-fashioned'. The room height is low without large window openings. The old buildings do not have attached bathrooms, which is another reason why they are considered 'old-fashioned' leading to their abandonment. People used to have baths in large ponds. The high caste Namboothiri Brahmins believed that they were purified only by submerging their heads in water and not by pouring water over their heads. So a pond was absolutely essential for them. Now many of them live in cities where they cannot practise their old customs. Thus with the change in the social system, many of the ponds are redundant. Large houses had as many as four ponds - one each for men, women and the public and one attached to the family temple.

The modern style of living is very different. The status of the women has increased and the literacy rate has gone up (now people want to read in their bedrooms). Instead of putting in more windows, the tendency is to demolish and construct a new concrete roofed house, which gives the family more status. If the old building has rich woodcarvings, they would probably be sold and the money used for new construction.

For some reason, people thought that concrete buildings are easier to maintain and long-lasting. They have come to realize now that this is not true, after experiencing the difficulty in maintaining the concrete buildings.

PADMANABHAPURAM PALACE AND MEASURED DRAWINGS | 1984

No in-depth studies have been done to understand the architectural history of Kerala. In the case of the Padmanabhapuram Palace, the most important and famous monument which is now on the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, there was not even a measured drawing until 1984.



Entrance of the Padmanabhapuram Palace
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

I was part of the INTACH team, which was led by Mrs. Banashree Mitra, that did the measured drawings by INTACH. The amount which was given by the Tamil Nadu Chapter (the Kerala Chapter had not come into existence then) was rupees three thousand. The Louis Kahn Trophy instituted by the famous architect Sri B.V. Doshi in 1981 has triggered some interest in studying historic environments. It is much later that doing measured drawings of historic buildings became part of the curriculum in the different architecture schools in India.

58. The Namboothiri houses were called 'mana' by others. But a Namboothiri will refer to his own house as "illam"



Padmanabhapuram Palace Front View
(**Thai Kottaram, Uppirikka Malika of the Palace Complex**)
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

DESHAMANGALAM MANA | 1985

Before Independence, many of the prominent Hindu castes followed a joint family system. In some cases, there were more than 100 members in one single family, which made large houses essential, with some of them having as many as eight courtyards. The joint family system has been diminishing for a long time and family members live in different places, even outside India.

In many of the large country houses, one or two old people can be found living even now. When I visited the Koodallur Mana in Thrissur district in 1984,^[59] the lone resident was an 84-year-old lady. It was the same in the case of Deshamangalam house near Trichur, which was demolished despite public protests.

Although Deshamangalam Mana was constructed in early 1930s, this was a typical Namboothiri house in its layout, with many elements of traditional architecture. The main house was a three-storey building with four courtyards. Adjacent to it were other buildings such as a granary, dining hall, guest house, bathhouse and gatehouse.

When the partition of the family property occurred in the early fifties after the breaking down of the joint family system, the main house and the adjacent buildings were set apart as common property. In 1985, there were 54 heirs to this house, which was the main obstacle for developing it. They did not want to sell the building because they believed that there was treasure buried under the foundation and they preferred to demolish it.

59. I had made some trips with Dr. Deborah Thiagarajan, present President of the Madras Craft Foundation and founder of Dakshinachitra, as part of the research on secular architecture and to find a suitable house to be transplanted to Dakshinachitra on the outskirts of Chennai

There was only an old lady living there and she moved into a small house outside the main compound. Five younger members formed a committee and organized the demolition with the blessings of the older generation. They invited tenders for all the buildings. There were wide public protests against this and people came to see the building from faraway places. There was little chance of an organized protest, and some of the local politicians were among the bidders.

The majority of the members of the family were rich and could have borne the cost of maintenance when divided among them, which would have been very little. They would have found it difficult to spend a large sum on a building for which they were not able to find a suitable use. Some of the government establishments were looking for office space in the same locality, and although a pity, convert this building for office use. The Chief Minister was asked if he would give his support in this matter and although he replied that he would look into it, nothing came of it. That was how this “*tharavad*” house (ancestral home of the Nair families) came to be demolished.

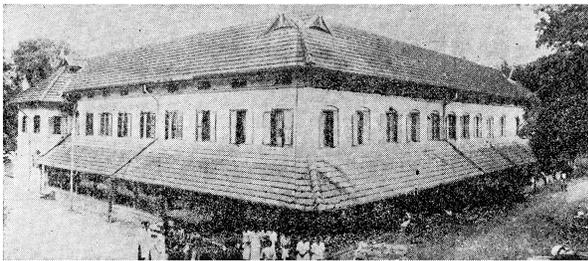
I had visited the Deshamangalam house, during one of my field trips. I went there once again when the tenders for the demolition of the house were to be opened. The demolition contractors and timber merchants were looking at one of the symbols of the heritage of Kerala in a way very similar to the manner a butcher looks at the cattle he is about to slaughter the next day. The youngsters in the family who had little attachment to their ancestral house were leading the move to demolish. I saw the sadness in the eyes of the senior members of the family.

But finally, the demolition of a historic building became much more than news. When it appeared in the Malayalam and English newspapers, it roused many people to protest the demolition. Kalakaumudi, one of the Malayalam magazines carried an article, at the national level, and a prominent news magazine during the period, the *Illustrated Weekly of India* carried an article with photos (taken by me) of the *mana*.

Why Buildings Are Demolished

Land reforms were introduced in the sixties, according to which no person can own more than 15 acres of land. It was a shock for the big landlords who lost their agricultural fields. The granaries where 300,000 kilograms of paddy were stored have no use today. The dining hall where 500 people were fed daily was now empty.

Although this is considered a major reform, it had far-reaching effects on old buildings. Since the landlords lost their wealth, some of them even found it difficult to maintain their large houses. When they were in financial difficulties, they demolished the granary and sold it, along with many other craft objects, essential for a feudalist society, which went for their scrap value.



The historic main complex of Desamangalam Mana

A monument as scrap

Express News Service
TRICHUR, Nov. 3: The process of selling out of the historic Desamangalam mana buildings began today.

The magnificent ancient mana complex with high architectural and cultural value will only remain in memory hereafter as the family committee consists of the younger elements decided to sell out the buildings and share the proceeds among the legal heirs numbering 31.

The tenders called for sale of huge structures of the main mana building and the adjacent buildings, equally noted for architectural and cultural value, were opened today at the mana by the five-member family committee.

Tenders for all buildings except the main building were accepted and these buildings would be demolished immediately.

The "padipora" of the mana contains many a rare paintings and such other art forms were tendered out for Rs 1,00,000 to Purohit Thattai Nair of Wadakkimberry.

The "Mangalavasiyan" building where the Mangalavasiyan priests and its buildings have functioned was taken by Koppas Kishu Nair for Rs 9,500. He also got the "rootapura" complex for Rs 50,000.

The tender of A. M. Hassan of Desamangalam, quoting Rs. 4,500 for the "pathayappara" was also accepted. The family committee did not

accept the tender for the main building as it felt the amount quoted was very low.

The maximum amount quoted for the main building in the tender was Rs. 10 lakh and the tender belonged to Punmatthar Thirudai Nair. There were nine tenders for this building. The second largest amount quoted was Rs. 6 lakh.

The committee has decided to call for fresh tenders for the main building.

When the proposal to dispose the mana complex came up, Vishnuadatha Antharjanam, 84, who is living there with the memories of her husband, stoutly opposed it. But later she had to fall in line with her children and other relations with much hesitation.

There were altogether 23 tenders but only 20 deposited the required earnest money today and participated in the sale. The tenders included three from K. V. Nair, N. S. Nair and P. Nair. The highest bid came from various parts of Kerala.

The three buildings adjacent to the main mana building will be taken over by Muslims. It is reported that Hassan of Desamangalam took up the pathayappara for over Rs 4 lakh for setting up a Muslim Sunni complex at Desamangalam.

The family committee is making arrangements for shifting Vishnu-

adatha Antharjanam to a nearby building.

An old building near the main mana building is being remodelled to accommodate the Antharjanam as she is refusing to leave Desamangalam. She wanted to spend the rest of her life too in the mana complex itself where her husband breathed his last.

Vishnuadatha is now preparing herself for the change. She herself had suggested some changes which should be made in the new building and arranged for "personal staff" to be ready for a shifting.

The new "mana" for Vishnuadatha would be completed in three months. The renovation of the old building, which is the personal property of the Antharjanam, would cost over Rs 1 lakh.

The local people seem to be very sad in the sale of the mana which had overruled much to the architectural, cultural and the literary records in the Malabar area. Incidentally, this is the biggest stone-masonry building in the erstwhile Cochin State commanding the attention among the local people.

Some minor structures attached to the mana had already been sold out for Rs 40,000. Some huge "china jars" were sold out for Rs 17,000 recently. Apart from this, about Rs 2 lakh worth trees in the 18-acre compound of the mana were also sold in auction. Household articles worth lakhs of rupees were shared among

the heirs of the mana. These included rare varieties of copper and brass vessels and furniture.

The idea of the family committee is to dispose of the mana property piece by piece in order to earn more money.

The "padipora" mulla, the "ootupura" and the Mangalavasiyan building are century-old. The "ottolathay" and "pathayappara" were constructed 60 years ago. Many rooms in the "ottolathay" have foreign-made mosaic flooring.

A. K. T. K. M. Gopalan Nambodiripad, 50, now living in Calicut, is the oldest living member of the family. Vishnuadatha Antharjanam is the wife of his brother Narayanan Nambodiripad.

The first 145 men from the Nambodhiri caste belongs to Desamangalam mana. He is Mr. D. K. Sankaran, now working in the central secretariat. From older days itself the Nambodiris of this mana were progressive in outlook. At a time when even travel was barred to Nambodhiri, members of this mana went to Bombay and Madras and engaged themselves in business. It was Vaisa Narayanan Nambodiripad of this mana who started the Malabar Serridge Mills in Calicut and a tile manufacturing unit in Shoranur much to the displeasure of other Nambodhiri families. The children of Gopalan Nambodiripad are still noted rice dealers in Calicut market.

There was an interesting example in the case of the main *tharavad* of the Kalyat Thazhathu Veedu. It was partitioned or followed what we might call an economic system, which protected it. The oldest member of the family had the privilege of staying in the *tharavad*. When I visited the house in 1985, Mrs. Janaki Amma, an 84-year-old lady was staying there. The house is an *ettukettu* (*ettukettu* is a house with two courtyards) facing east. The *poomukhom* (entrance area of a house) is quite big; the eastern side of the first courtyard is only a verandah. The southern side is a raised hall. On the western side are the store and *pooja* rooms. The house is two-storeyed on all the four sides and stands alone as all the adjacent structures have been demolished.

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

The buildings owned by the ecclesiastical institutions suffer generally from bad restoration and additions done during the 1980s and 90s. In the case of wealthier temples, one can find even multi-storied buildings being constructed very close to them, usually owned by the temple authorities themselves. In the more common case of temples, which are not wealthy, the copper roof is often removed and replaced by a concrete roof. According to the temple authorities, this causes fewer maintenance problems and they can spend the money gained from the sale of copper, for the temple administration. The recent trend is that on top of the concrete roofs, Mangalore tiles are paved to retain an aesthetic appearance.

What has been said about the temples is also true in the case of churches and mosques. Once churches looked like temples. But with the advent of Europeans from the 15th century onwards, a process of Westernization began. One can still find churches with typical traditional elements, but with a Western façade. This has happened to almost every church, whether large or small because in general, the Christians were wealthy.

In the case of mosques, the same process has happened during the last five decades. The traditionally built mosques are undergoing changes with the addition of domes and minarets. Some mosques have escaped these changes and are left intact.

CHANDRASEKHARAN NAIR STADIUM | 1985

In many cases, the objections of the experts are not taken into consideration or they bow before vested interests. In the case of the remodelling of the Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium in Trivandrum in 1985, a town planner had objected to the plans. The decision to construct a structure 250 metres long

An Indian Express article dated 4th November, 1985
Courtesy: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

In the case of old buildings in rural areas, the pressure on land is little. The majority of them are not demolished for structural reasons either. But quite simply, in those days, nobody thought about conserving an old building.



Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium gallery at the beginning of the construction, 1985

Source: Dr. Benny Kuri akose

and 18 metres high (as high as a five storey building) was that it was planned as a stadium-cum-shopping complex in the city centre. Under the pretext of recreation, commercial interests were slipped in. The construction of the gallery was against all the rules and regulations, which were in force at that time. The master plan for the city approved by the Government in 1978 was flouted.

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), poetess Sugathakumari and many other citizens of Thiruvananthapuram protested against the construction, which came up all around the stadium. Indian Express at that time carried an article with the title “Concrete Disfigurement of the City’s Open Spaces”.

A Public Interest Litigation case was filed in the high court. The judgment of the high court had the following rulings:

1. The flyover to be built in the next one year.
2. More parking to be provided for the stadium by demolishing some quarters of the building.
3. The space under the gallery to be used only for sports-related activities and not even for the offices of the police department.
4. The construction of the gallery should not continue and should be stopped immediately.

The flyover was built in one year. The parking to the stadium was added by demolishing some of the buildings. The government carried out the road widening by reducing the footpath widths. The construction of the gallery was stopped immediately as per the High Court’s judgment. The space under the gallery was unused for a very long time.

After more than twenty years, the whole space under the gallery is now being used for commercial purposes. The space under the gallery is being used as an “auditorium” and the stadium is used for award ceremonies rather than for sports activities.

This is a typical case of many of our developmental activities. Even after 35 years, we are not learning from the mistakes of the past.

The approach of the different courts in India towards the Public Interest Litigation cases has also changed over the years. Many buildings including the police headquarters building in Chennai have been saved by the court. But recently in 2012, the High Court of Tamil Nadu imposed a fine of Rs. 5 lakhs on INTACH for challenging the demolition of the rear portion of a Chisholm building. INTACH was asked to pay the costs to Tamil Nadu State Legal Services Authority.

CHARLES WALLACE INDIA TRUST SCHOLARSHIPS | 1985

In 1985, Charles Wallace India (Trust) started giving long-term scholarships to Indians to pursue master’s level studies in conservation in the United Kingdom. INTACH and the British Council selected the candidates in the early years and all of them went to York University. The idea was to fill the gap of the lack of qualified professionals trained in conservation. The scheme was later extended to include short-term grants for mid-professionals in India. Subsequently, a post-graduate course in conservation was started in India in the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. All these steps led to the training of many architects and a few engineers in conservation in the country.

TRANSPLANTATION OF SRISAILAM TEMPLES | 1985

Transplantation is the last resort in conservation if there is no other way to save the historic buildings. In Srisailam, more than 60 temples were transplanted because these were going to be submerged in water due to the construction of a dam for the hydroelectric project across the river Krishna. This was one of the first and the biggest transplant projects carried out in India.

UNESCO has carried out a similar transplantation project when the Aswan dam was constructed across the Nile river. Two of the massive Abu Simbel temples, which are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as “Nubian Monuments” dating back more than 2000 years, were transplanted in 1968.

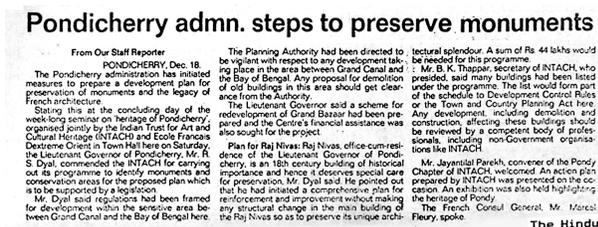
The relocation of the temples in Egypt was undertaken as the joint massive effort of many countries. In Andhra Pradesh, a similar operation was carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India and the State Department of Archaeology. Although the salvage operation had begun in 1979, the last of the temples was dismantled in 1985.

PONDICHERRY WORKSHOP | 1988

A workshop and seminar was jointly organized by INTACH and Ecole Francais d'Extrême Orient, from 11-17 December, 1988. The author was the coordinator for this workshop which was attended by students and architects. Dr. B.K. Thapar, Prof. K.T. Ravindran, Mr. Pierre Pichard (Architect) and Mr. Ismeth Rahim (Architect, Sri Lanka) were the main resource persons apart from the author.

It was a meeting between Mrs. Deborah Thiagarajan (Tamil Nadu INTACH Chapter Convenor), Pierre Pichard from Ecole Francais d'Extrême Orient and I which triggered the workshop. The workshop was funded by INTACH and Mr. Jayanthilal Parikh was the Convenor of the Puducherry Chapter.

It was one of the first workshops happening in conservation. There were more than twenty five faculty and students coming from all over India. There were numerous applications that came from many of the architecture schools, and five students and one faculty from each school were selected. In the morning, there were lectures given by the experts. The participants would go to the field in the afternoon, and then come back and start drafting in the evening. Those days when there was no computer, all drafting was done manually. The participants made the sketches and drawings, and then they made proposals for a site in Puducherry. Three streets and three houses were taken as case studies. The proposal was given for these three houses that were going to be demolished at that time. We made an analysis of why they should not be demolished.



Pondicherry Workshop Article, The Hindu, 19th December, 1988
 Courtesy: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

At the end of the workshop, the works done by the participants and all the work done so far by INTACH Puducherry Chapter was mounted as an exhibition,

which was held in Hotel de Ville which was the town hall. The exhibition was titled “Au Revoir Puducherry?” meaning goodbye Puducherry, with a question mark. It explained why Puducherry heritage should be preserved. There were some beautiful black and white photographs from the archival collections, which showed Puducherry streets of yesteryears.

The workshop led to some of the successful experiments in conservation, which happened in Puducherry later. This was possible because of the extensive documentation of the buildings. The exhibition and the workshop created the awareness among people and laid the foundation for the conservation movement.

STORY OF POOMULLI MANA | 1988

Major parts of the old *mana* were demolished in the early 1990s. Although the decision to demolish the main building was taken early in 1988, the then cultural minister Sri T.K. Ramakrishnan had issued a stay on the demolition. I have visited this *mana* many times and met Mr. Raman Namboothiripad, who was the head of the household. He would sit in the front verandah and tell many stories about the history of the family and the house etc. He said that within a mile radius of the *mana*, the crafts and arts have thrived. There were only five members living in the palatial house when the decision to demolish the historic building was taken. This was one of the large houses in Kerala at that time. The entrance hall (*poomukhom*) and the large open hall in front were big enough to hold at least 200 people. There were four dining halls, which could feed upto 500 people at a time. The *pathayappura* or the granary could store upto 300,000 kgs of paddy. Sri Ramaswamy Temple at the entrance to the old Mana still survives in its original condition. An ayurvedic centre is functioning in some of the outhouses of the *mana* now.

INITIAL EFFORTS OF INTACH

Although there were many trained people in India by the early 1990s, many of the conservation efforts by INTACH were not actually carried out. Many were in the form of inspection reports only and the conservation works were actually carried out many years later. The conservation report on the Ross Island^[60] in Andamans, which was done in 1989 was partly implemented in the late 1990s. Another case was the preliminary conservation report on the Senate House^[61] done in 1989 which was also carried

60. The Preliminary Report on the Conservation of the Church and the Bakery was carried out for INTACH by the author in July, 1989
 61. The Preliminary Inspection Report on the Senate House was carried out by the author in 1989, but the detailed report was done by INTACH Chennai more than a decade later. The conservation works were carried out even later.

out more than a decade later. Many other similar cases show very clearly that conservation is slowly maturing into a discipline of its own.

ROLE OF LEGISLATION

In India, several laws have been introduced during the last few decades for the protection of the natural environment. This shows the increased concern of the Government for environmental issues. One of the major reasons, which prompted the Government to legislate, was the pressure exerted by the various environmental groups. However, in the case of built environment and the protection of historic buildings, legislation has not played any major role, even in those cities where they exist.

The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958 was a modification of the Ancient Monuments Preservations Act, 1904. Subsequent revisions to the above Act were made in 1979 and 2010 to take into account the new developments that have taken place.

Today, a historic building is regarded as part of its setting – an ensemble; even vernacular architecture is regarded as forming part of architectural heritage. The present Act deals only with the protection of the ancient monuments and is silent on such matters, with the result that secular or vernacular architecture in historic towns is fast disappearing, under the pressure of modernization. Because of pressure on land in big cities, high-rise buildings are constructed in close proximity to historic buildings, thus changing both the historic character and setting.

In India, even if the laws are in place, the effectiveness of them is doubtful. In Fort Kochi, the Government of Kerala declared it as a heritage zone. But many owners pulled down their historic buildings and replaced them with ugly concrete buildings. The local bodies were not able to control the demolitions or ensure that the new buildings, which replaced them followed the historic character of the area. Now the National Monuments Authority has also been formed and the effectiveness of the legislation is yet to be seen.

Resources for Conservation

Conservation does not always require large physical resources. Steps such as not allowing tall buildings in the vicinity, good traffic planning, public education and providing essential services such as drainage can be done with limited funds available. The demolition of many historic buildings has been not for lack of resources for conserving them. In fact, much of the historic stock in India has been lost during periods of economic boom. The biggest threat comes when there is a boom in new buildings, as a result of the availability of financial resources.

The question to be asked is whether the limited resources available are used in the best possible way. The success of a conservation programme is not to be measured by the number of resources put in, but by how they are used.

One of the advantages of conservation over new construction is that it is labour intensive. It is very important that all agencies involved in conservation must look at indigenous sources of funds. What the people need is not charity, but solutions, which will get rid of their problems permanently. If the people can be helped to solve the problems themselves, then that is the best way. “If you give a man a fish, he can eat it once; but if you teach him how to fish, he can eat fish for the rest of his life”.

Any sort of foreign assistance must be limited to technical know-how or knowledge sharing. The conservation technology in India may still lag far behind when compared with many developed countries. Assistance in the form of gifts should be accepted in the case of very important monuments in urgent need of repair.

Many of the development programmes financed by international agencies have not been very successful. This is because the aim of the implementing agencies had been to get as much money as possible from the financiers. Moreover, all this money has to be repaid at a later period with interest. So unless the schemes are realistic, conservation will add to the international debt to be repaid. Also, many of the international agencies like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) themselves are facing financial cuts.

The self-reliance should be not only in financial resources but also in technical know-how. There should be no restoration except in very special cases. It may be nice, but if it is not necessary, then don't do it. India does not have an excess of resources and it will be the same for many years to come. What should be done is to keep the buildings in good condition by doing minimum work. The money spent on one restoration project can better be spent on keeping five buildings in good condition. Restoration is not a priority in India.

India is such a diverse country and the problems in its different parts are unique from those in other countries, and so the solutions differ. It is very important for conservation professionals to understand their own country, its history, culture, people, economy, climate etc. The costs of the projects will have to be brought down. Cheap does not mean that it is inappropriate. Many of the costly solutions will have to be set aside at present.

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN CONSERVATION



Craftsmanship in Conservation

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

Modern engineers and architects do not generally know about the traditional methods of construction – that is the biggest problem. The hopeful sign is that there are craftspeople who can still build in a well-tried way. In the old days, all the processes of building construction were under the control of the head craftsman. The owner arranged for the materials to be on the site and there was no contractor at all. The head craftsman took direct control of each stage of the construction process. The modern architect has no control over actual construction. Due to lack of practical experience of the process of building, he has to rely on contractors.

The difference between craftspeople and masons should be understood. A craftsman makes aesthetic decisions while a mason primarily deals only with technology. What craftspeople need is not training, but sufficient work. Good craftsmanship is still alive in India. The status of the craftspeople has been very much lowered during the last three or four decades, as a result of the changes that have been taking place; society no longer respects manual labour. The craftspeople need respectability, which they enjoyed before.

The younger generations do not want to become craftspeople because they see a bleak future. If there is enough work, then the crafts will not die. According to Sir Bernard Feilden,^[62] status and continuity of work are very important. “One must emphasise that without craftsmen the historic buildings architect is nothing. But craftsmen will not survive unless properly paid, given due status and continuity of work. Without them, we will have eaten the seed-corn of the future, a course of action resulting in cultural famine”.

Feilden argues that good craftsmanship depends upon proper pay for a day's work. Overtime and the bonussing of production have led to bad workmanship and should not be used to obtain increased output on historic buildings. “Good workmanship comes from proper training, continuity of work and public appreciation and respect for the status of the craftsman. ... The industry pays for quantity, not quality, for muscle, not skill”.^[63]

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Central and State Governments, departments and civic authorities have ownership of a substantial part of the built heritage in India. They could be major catalysts for safeguarding it and not allowing its destruction.

ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE TOWARDS CONSERVATION

Old buildings are not given enough care. Most owners of historic buildings regard them as a burden and no maintenance is carried out. Somehow they do not understand that the old English proverb “a stitch in time saves nine” is equally valid in the case of old buildings. Historic buildings are demolished without giving any serious thought about their possible importance. The monuments such as Taj Mahal, Sun Temple and Padmanabhapuram Palace, which are in the care of either the Central or State Archaeology departments are not under any threat of demolition.

62. Bernard Feilden, 'Architectural and Urban Conservation: A Review of the State of the Art', *Town Planning Review*, Vol. 56, No. 2, (April 1985), pp 197-227

63. Bernard Feilden, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, 1982

Even important historic buildings, which are under the ownership of other government bodies, can be demolished because of a wrong decision taken by a single official. The reason is that they are not protected monuments. If this is the case with State-owned buildings, it is easy to imagine the vulnerability of those buildings owned by private bodies or individuals. Such buildings of historical and architectural interest are demolished without any questioning, even if they are a thousand years old.

Besides those buildings, which can be put in the monument category, there are thousands of ordinary buildings, which form an integral part of the culture of the people, forming part of their traditional way of life. They are disappearing very fast and what replaces them is even more dangerous in many cases. We have already lost quite a bit of our built heritage during the last two or three decades.

People do not properly care for old buildings and the only solution to this is to increase public awareness. People should feel proud of their heritage. Making people aware of conservation issues is a much-repeated cliché. There are many people including architects, planners, and politicians, who say in seminars and meetings that public awareness should be created. But, if any major fundamental change is to take place in the conservation of the built environment, it has to be with the participation of the people.

Unless the people know, what is to be conserved and why it should be conserved, they will not help in conserving our heritage.

Today, people stand as silent spectators of demolitions of old buildings. But if they can be convinced that modern facilities can be incorporated in the old buildings and there is no need to demolish them, then they might try to save our built heritage.

It is very difficult to convince people about historic, archaeological and aesthetic values. Aesthetics is very relative and subjective. But when it comes to the conservation of a historic building, everything will boil down to economic terms.

People must be convinced that conservation and development can go together. Although economic factors will assume prime importance in India, because of limited financial resources, the importance of historical, archaeological, and aesthetic values must not be underplayed.

ITS NOT CONSERVATION VERSUS DEVELOPMENT

The issue, as everywhere else, must not be seen as *Conservation versus Development*; both should go together. The motto of the Sierra Club, “Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress”, is very apt. The view that we should preserve everything is a romantic one, but at the same time, we cannot allow a process of natural selection or survival of the fittest. The argument is not against development, but against the manner in which it is undertaken. It is not against all demolitions but against unnecessary and avoidable demolitions. The new buildings are not always necessary or desirable.

The destruction of ‘our’ heritage is not a price that must be paid for development. There should be no compromise on environmental degradation. Conservation should be seen in the larger perspective of the development of the people.

CONSERVATION AND CULTURAL TOURISM

There is a dichotomy between satisfying the pressure for economic growth through tourism and protecting the cultural heritage sites and monuments that lie at its heart. Tourism and heritage management must be integrated to have an outstanding product having mutual benefits. Quality standards and authenticity should be maintained to sustain tourism as well as cultural heritage.

Local community should benefit from heritage tourism and it should not cause any disruption of the local life, customs and the development of the area as a whole. The best long-term interests of the people working in any local community should be the primary determining factor in selecting options for tourist development. This should be integrated with local level plans. The very assets, on which heritage tourism depends, the cultural and natural heritage, are part of the daily life of the people and can be threatened by over-exploitation and abuse.

A heritage tourism project should not be driven by tourism considerations, but managed by the principles and conventions of the international guidelines on cultural heritage management. The success of a project depends on how heritage assets are converted into heritage tourism products.

Some tour operators exploit the local culture and heritage assets, while providing little in return for the community or the continuing care of the assets. This can lead to cultural damage and the degradation of local economies and social structures. If the same places and things, which attracted the tourists are destroyed, then the development which takes place in association with heritage tourism will die a natural death.

APPROACH TO CONSERVATION

Conservation of the built environment at large is not a technical problem alone. It cannot be seen in isolation from other problems and has many political, social, cultural and economic dimensions. In other words, all the issues are linked together. The issues of conservation cannot be solved unless those concerning food, clothing, health, housing etc. are solved.

Conservation can be addressed only by linking it with other challenges. The fact that at times it cannot be done inexpensively does not mean that nothing need be done under the present circumstances. If conservation is to be successful, then the socio-economic environment of the problem in question must be studied.

Both the socio-economic and the cultural environment indicate how the destruction of the physical environment (including the built environment) takes place. This understanding may suggest appropriate solutions against destruction as well as alternative models of development.

Conservation of the built environment can help people in shaping their lives for a better future. The majority of the people in India are poor and they are constantly struggling to improve their lot. Conservation is very positive; it means finding new uses for old buildings and passing them on to the next generation. It is not opposed to new buildings, which are sympathetic in character, texture of materials, colour, scale and other visual elements.

Conservation may not be a priority when compared with other basic needs, but if it can solve the housing problem, unemployment etc. then it is one of the first priorities.

Conservation can also become a priority if it can generate income. Revenue from sensitive, balanced tourism is one of the visible benefits of conservation.

Over the years, both professionals and people have realized that concrete buildings will not last as much as historic buildings.

Traditional buildings, built using earth, lime, laterite and timber will last much longer than concrete buildings.

There are two reasons why wrong decisions are taken – ignorance and vested interests. Wrong decisions taken due to ignorance can be corrected by academic knowledge, and it is one of the major threats to the conservation of our historic buildings.

The profession has not been able to penetrate deep enough. It is difficult to fight vested interests and the anti-conservation lobby. Even in developed countries, where conservation has become a part of the mainstream, conservation of some historic buildings is still being fought. We have already lost many buildings and will continue to lose some more. There is no point in taking a romantic view of the historic buildings that everything should be conserved. But at the same time, we cannot allow the survival of the fittest policy. After a few years, there will be hardly any heritage to be conserved and this will be irreparable damage that we will be doing to future generations.

MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT | 2009-ONGOING

The Government of Kerala with the support of the Central Government embarked on the Muziris Heritage Project (MHP), which encompasses a vast area around the ancient port of Muziris, including various historically and culturally important monuments like India's first mosque, one of the first synagogues and the oldest surviving European monument in India. The MHP focusses on retrieving the heritage of this cultural region through various initiatives including historical research, archaeological excavations, integrated heritage conservation and tourism development, providing public access to historic buildings and sites within the framework of

a public-private partnership model. This project has set a precedent in India for adopting an integrated approach to heritage conservation and regional development.

Approach to the project

Heritage management and tourism are integrated to produce an outstanding product having mutual benefits. Kerala has so far marketed only its beaches, backwaters and forests and to some extent its monsoon and Ayurveda. This project can help the tourism industry similar to what Angkor Vat has done for Cambodia and Athens has done for Greece.

- The entire project is seen primarily as a heritage conservation project, and not a tourism project.
- This is one of the biggest non-formal education projects launched by the Government of Kerala. The different layers of history ranging from the Romans, Greeks, Chinese, Jews, Arabs, Portuguese, Dutch and the British can be seen in this small area.
- The project is integrated with the rest of the development plans. The focus of the project will be on local economic rejuvenation including generation of local employment, rejuvenation of traditional industries and artisan activities and providing a boost to local culture and traditions.
- Activities of the various departments are being converged for the project. Nineteen Government agencies are working on the project.
- Great thrust is being given to the development of infrastructure of the region. The facilities that are being planned as part of the project are relevant to the community, rather than tourists.
- This is a project with strong academic and research content. An international research Centre for Muziris Studies is being set up, as part of the project and its construction work is underway.
- The entire program is carried out with the participation of the community in the project. Around 80 volunteers were recruited as resource persons of the project who acted as the link between the community and the project.
- The Muziris Heritage Project has been declared as the first green tourism project of the Government of Kerala.

The Government of Kerala is projecting the Muziris Heritage Project as a sustainable model for tourism, where the local community is benefitted. The driving forces behind the project are history and conservation. Tourism is only a byproduct.

PALIAM PALACE AND PALIAM NALUKETTU - PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MODEL | 2010-2012

As part of the Muziris Heritage Project, the Government of Kerala announced that it is willing to conserve buildings under private ownership, provided the owners are willing to allow the building to be open to the public.



Paliam Palace exterior before conservation

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose



Paliam Palace entrance before conservation

Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

The Palace is being converted into a museum, which will showcase the history of the Cochin Dynasty and its relationship with many others countries. The *nalukettu* (house with one internal courtyard) is being turned into a lifestyle museum. Both the above buildings are owned by a private trust, but the Government of Kerala came forward to conserve these buildings on the condition that the buildings are opened to the public.



Paliam Palace exterior after conservation
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose



Paliam Palace entrance after conservation
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

Although this policy of public-private partnership was announced in public, many of the owners of the historic buildings were reluctant to be associated with the project in the beginning. Subsequently, many religious and non-religious organizations became part of the project, by entering into a partnership with the Government. No forced land acquisition is being planned and the thrust was to encourage participation of the local community, to be part of the project. One of the greatest demands from different sections of the people in the project site is to include their temple, church or a historic building.



Paliam Nalukettu after conservation
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

REVITALIZATION OF KOTTAPPURAM MARKET | 2010-2014

The Kottappuram market has been thriving with commercial activities whose fabric has had a variety of Portuguese, Dutch and traditional Kerala influences. The market streets portray the pressure and problems that it has faced earlier. The development that had taken place, in terms of scale, design and typology had been unsympathetic to the original character of the market, as a result, the identity of the place has been fading away.



Kottappuram Market before conservation
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose



Kottappuram Market after conservation
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

With the construction of new bridges and roads, the waterways have lost their importance. As part of the revitalization project, toilets, drainage, pathways, street lighting and the improvement of the traditional markets were carried out.

CHERAMAN MASJID AND KOTTAPPURAM MARKET CHAPEL | 2014

In the case of Cheraman Masjid, the oldest mosque in India, some additions were made in the 1960s and 1990s to increase its size. The extensions that had minarets and domes that were never part of the Kerala mosque architecture are very unsympathetic to the original core of the historic building. Now the mosque authorities themselves have come forward to restore the mosque to its original state, by demolishing the ugly extensions and without seeking any government assistance.

In a similar case, the chapel that was built in the 1990s in Kottappuram Market was demolished to build a new one, which is a replica of the old chapel, in tune with the historic surroundings. Both the above changes in Muziris Heritage Site were not brought about by legislation, but the community decided to make these changes.



Front view of the Cheraman Masjid
Source: Dr. Benny Kuriakose

RELEVANCE OF THE MUZIRIS HERITAGE PROJECT

One of the policy decisions for the project was to add only those facilities which are relevant to the local community. Land acquisition which was part of many of the earlier tourism projects in Kerala was avoided.

The aim was not to promote five-star hotels under the pretext of tourism. Although there was a strong political will towards the project, no legislations were brought in, unlike many other conservation projects in India. The reason cited was that the participating community should strongly feel the need for a legislation.

The Muziris Heritage Project is quite relevant for the future of Kerala due to the following reasons:

1. History, conservation and heritage can be linked to development and they can form potential resources and assets. Economic value of heritage, which is sustainable, is important for the state of Kerala.
2. Convergence of funds from different departments is something which is important for a developing economy, where the bureaucratic delays and inter-departmental procedures delay the implementation of many projects. The Government of Kerala is seeing the project as a model, not only for its concepts, but also for its implementation. There is a coordination committee consisting of ministers and the decisions are speeded up, rather than moving as files from one department to the other.
3. It is an integrated approach to tourism and this model is sustainable for the future of Kerala. Tourism and heritage management are integrated in this approach. One of the mistakes made in the case of some of the cultural tourism projects is the lack of coordination between the tourism administrators and the custodians of our monuments. In the case of Muziris Heritage Project, the different departments of the Government are working together, based on the broad objectives mentioned in the Conservation Development Plan.

Muziris is a great symbol of communal harmony and this is the place where the Jews, Christians, Muslims and Hindus have lived peacefully for centuries. This is a project where conservation of heritage is the primary objective and it is an experiment to see how heritage can be linked with development, which will benefit the local community. The community expects that their lives will change in a positive way with the Muziris Project.

The intention is that the monuments are not to be seen in isolation, but the plans are to be designed in a manner that involves the local communities and integrates the various proposals with the rest of the

developmental activities. The Muziris Heritage Project naturally lends itself to bringing back memories of the past and the project is not about tourism or recreation alone. It is about making a difference - a big difference to conservation, restoration, the study of history, environmental projects, research, development of craft and art forms, occupations and other community activities.

There might have been experiments in different parts of the country such as the Muziris Heritage Project or the Hazrat Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. But they did not become a part of the mainstream in India and stood as isolated experiments.

CONCLUSION

Public awareness should be raised if conservation is to become widespread. The initiative must come from INTACH and other similar organizations, of which conservation professionals also form a part. But it will be mainly composed of non-professionals, who would put the pressure on the government and others, as and when necessary.

This has been true in the case of the UK where conservation is rooted among the middle and upper classes. The Conservation Movement in its early stages acted as a pressure group and the majority of its members were non-professionals. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is one of the oldest conservation organizations in England. In the initial stages, they were writing reports on historic buildings, trying to save them. There were successes and failures, but the influence of SPAB has gradually increased over the years. The National Trust of England was registered in 1895 and it played an advocacy role for conservation in its initial years. Later, it became the custodian and owner of many historic buildings as the propaganda role was taken over by many other organizations.

The works done by INTACH over all these years are surely discerning. Now heritage and conservation have become important topics of discussions in classrooms, trains, and newspapers and in many public forums. Making people aware of conservation issues is a very slow and difficult process. Many difficulties will have to be encountered, but India cannot wait. It should take less time to go through the process, which the UK went through in the last 125 years. The mistakes made can be rectified only at exorbitant costs, while the environmental damage will be irreparable.