UNIT 3   CULTURAL RESOURCES

Contents

Learning Objectives

Once you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

➢   discuss the definition of Cultural Resource vis-à-vis Cultural Heritage/ Heritage Culture;

➢   understand the initial sources of Cultural Resource;

➢   describe the subsequent sources of Cultural Resources;

➢   explain the cultural Resource Management (CRM); and

➢   understand the legislation towards protection of Cultural Resources.

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Cultural resources refer to both tangible and intangible heritage. The present lesson focuses on tangible heritage. In simple words it includes both man-made and natural features associated with human activities. Cultural resources are the heritage of mankind and therefore such evidences require our attention. They are all unique, non-renewable resources and comprise of sites, structures/monuments, features and artifacts significant in human history. As a matter of fact, history of mankind has been reconstructed with the help of varieties of cultural resources, which were left behind by our early ancestors. Tangible variables of human culture in most parts of the Old World and in the New World occur in the form of some objects that draw the attention of modern man, and such archaeological remains help in the reconstruction of history of mankind.

Here in this sub-unit on Cultural Resource Management, we will learn the definition of "Culture", 'Cultural Resources' and "Cultural Resource Management".

With a series of evolution on the positioning of thumb and big toe, enlargement of his cranial capacity, he adopted bipedalism and realised the needs to develop tools for his day-to-day activities. A tool is the smallest unit of cultural resource. As this Cultural Resource is a reflection of his thoughts and actions, it may be viewed as incorporating both tangible and intangible traits of man.

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (CRM)

Today, CRM is understood in terms of taking care of the archaeological remains and in management of the cultural resources. It deals with the application of management skills to conserve cultural heritage for the benefit of the public and future generations. The idea of *Cultural Resource Management (CRM)* came into existence in the mid 1970s and brought an end to the anxieties of archaeologists and folklorists over the destruction of archaeological remains, historical buildings and paved a way to look into the dimensions of intangible variables.

3.3 EXPOSITION OF CULTURAL RESOURCE BY EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION

Modern man got acquainted with antiquities from different parts of the world during his travels which was necessitated by trade and missionary activities. He collected objects which appeared queer to him with an intention to decorate his sitting room or his drawing room, and on certain occasions collected such objects to demonstrate them before scholars. During the renaissance movement in Europe there was a great demand for antiquarian objects from the new world. The widespread interest and demand for these objects led to the looting and smuggling of antiquities in order to cater to this demand. In the initial stages, objects of cultural and antiquarian significance was collected by man merely to satisfy his curiosity which later became important as humans understood that the objects they collected represent activities of their ancestors. This slowly became an organised exercise and came to be known as exploration followed by unearthing the buried past known as excavation. Since ancient times, thieves and thugs had been looting antiquity-rich places for buried or hidden treasures.

Heinrich Schliemann, a German businessman in 1873 discovered around seven cities in Greece including Homer's legendary city of Troy. Being a wealthy merchant at St. Petersburg, Russia, he started the first digging in search of the city of Troy at Hissarlik, with a manpower of 150 workers. Owing to the unsystematic nature of his work, Schliemann destroyed more evidence compared to the discoveries he made and out of his interest towards the great gold treasures, which he allowed his Greek wife to wear on her neck, which was 'unethical' in today's terms and in this process he destroyed the upper layers.

Fox Pitt-Rivers later formulated a formal procedure of scientific excavation with historical tradition. Augustus H. Lane Fox was a military General, later changed

his name to Augustus H. Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, and inherited Rivers Estate in southern England after he retired from military service in 1880. Finally, he became popularly known as Pitt-Rivers who pioneered methods of elaborate and painstaking procedures of excavation that the archaeologists undertake today. Flinders Petrie was one of his contemporaries and contributed a lot to the development of archaeological methods. No doubt excavation is rightly called the destruction but what it retrieves forms the base to reconstruct the cultural history of a locality. The excavation what we see today is a further modified version of the earlier by several people, particularly Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

3.4   LEGISLATION AND SALVAGE ARCHAEOLOGY

In order to prevent merciless and massive destruction of human heritage, certain rules restricting the damage of sites, structures and artifacts relevant to history or archaeology were necessary. In India, under an act called, Antiquity Preservation Act, 1904, which was later amended in 1947 with certain modifications gave powers to the State and Central Government authorities to safeguard, protect and preserve the cultural heritage. Legislation was enforced not only to conserve the remains but also towards conservation of the sites at the Government level. The remains of Indus Valley Civilization was first discovered accidently while constructing a railway line in Northwest India during British rule. The Government immediately went ahead with its excavations followed by the conservation of its ruins.

Cultural Resource Management (CRM), in most cases is an affair of the Government who will take note of different discoveries in its country and take adequate steps towards protection and conservation of the site along with its ruins. Upon urgent demand of an endangered site, action to protect the site will be undertaken under the purviews of Salvage archaeology. There are many examples in this regard and UNESCO's project of re-locating the Abu Simbel temple in Egypt is the first of its kind. When Abu Simbel temple was endangered in the wake of construction of the Aswan High Dam resulting in rise of water level of Lake Nasser, UNESCO undertook the Salvage operation. A similar project of 15 years' duration was undertaken in Andhra Pradesh at the Nagarjuna Sagar or *Nagarjuna Konda*.

All the famous historical remains in India, particularly in the Northern and North-western India such as the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Lal Quila and others are looked after by Archaeological Survey of India. There are many monuments of these kinds in other parts of India. In Assam, all the historical sites belonging to Ahom Kingdom at Sibsagar and its Royal burial grounds at Charaideo, famous Khaspur ruins near Silchar, world renowned *Shaktipith-* the Kamakshya temple at Guwahati, Surya Pahar at Marnai in Goalpara are some of the remains under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. In other parts of the World there are private agencies that work in this direction on contract basis.

3.5   MANAGING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

In India in addition to the Archaeological Survey of India, all the State Governments have Departments of State Archaeology together with Historical and Antiquarian Study Departments responsible for undertaking surveys to trace

the existence of antiquities in the form of sites, monuments and similar structures in their respective States. Upon receiving information, the Registering Officer from the said agency visits the locality and identifies the heritage structures. After it is entered in the National Registry, the concerned authority brings it to the notice of the State/Central Government for taking appropriate steps to protect the heritage. Sites and other remains are brought to the notice of the Government with information from the concerned public and also from the sources of construction agency engaged in developmental works. Ambari, a historical site in Assam at the heart of Guwahati City came to public notice and also to the State Museum of Assam when the Reserve Bank of India selected the site for construction of its building. Huge cultural remains were discovered at the site and later the Government of Assam protected the site. On the other hand, protection of Ambari site led local people of the region, engaged in construction of their residential buildings to hide information regarding the cultural finds and the occurrence of any kind of archaeological materials to the authority with an apprehension of the site being taken over by the Government. This is not the only isolated case, in parts of Assam, there are plenty of information of such kind of attitude on the part of the public to conceal the available information of heritage under their residential buildings.

Under the prevailing situations in our country, the conservationists and the archaeologists have to jointly think of overall strategies, conservation priorities, and field-research designs to ensure close linkage between the latest methodological and theoretical approaches followed by salvage excavation i.e. application of salvage operations in the field. In urban localities, it should be made mandatory for all concerned, who want to undertake new constructions, to carry out a survey at their proposed construction sites. After all, we have to conserve our heritage with utmost priority.

3.6   COMPLIANCE PROCESS

Compliance involves the question of formulating a practical solution for the continuous loss of cultural heritage materials in our country, and therefore there is a growing need to create a general consciousness and awareness among all sections of population. During the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the world famous statues of Buddha at Bamian were blown to dust with a total disrespect, irrespective of appeals from all over the World not to demolish the structures. Can we suspect the attitude of a new authority or a community after their conversion to a different religion to ignore the already existing heritage of that place? In fact, it cannot be a situation at all in a secular country like India. It should be the sentiments of the general people to uphold and respect all sorts of archaeological remains in our country irrespective of religious status and identity. However, we must carefully proceed with the policy of conservation of historical and archaeological ruins.

First, an overall assessment of the cultural resources of our country is necessary, followed by an option to make a public appeal, to make the people aware of their cultural heritage in different regions of our country. Accordingly, sites and archaeological remains should be identified for the benefit of the nation for alerting its population about the past heritage of the country. In this kind of compliance process, it may be accepted as a project of awareness and therefore there will be

a necessity of continuous role on the part of the archaeologists and people concerned to tirelessly work towards the preservation of the heritage resources of the country at the State and Central level. It appears not an easy task because it involves so many hurdles to be crossed in the process of negotiating with the Government agencies.

3.6.1   Conservation

Brian M. Fagan (1991) writes, *Ethics* in archaeology demand conservation of many sites as far as possible. In this respect, sites which are not threatened by modern infrastructure development, are ideally suitable. However, any investigator involved in such endeavour has to develop a research design based purely on scientific considerations. Nevertheless, many other issues like budget, public interest, possible design alternatives in the development project, and mitigation cost come into play when sites are threatened by imminent destruction. Then, there is the problem of "secondary impacts", when unexpected spin-offs of the main project destroy resources outside the main project area.

3.6.2   Management Versus Academic Research

Resource Management and academic research in archaeology enter into apparent conflicting dilemma in any project, which is managed, controlled and carried out by Governmental agencies, unlike in a developed country, which has a procedure of giving an archaeological survey or any authorized agency a contract of preservation. In such situations contracting agencies consider archaeology as an inductive science that comes under normative view. The normative view ascribes a descriptive approach to culture, which can be used to describe culture during one time period or throughout time. Archaeologists view that the surviving artifacts, such as potsherds in regard to their style, its form and its changes are the manifestations of human behaviour over the period of time. Culture-historical reconstruction is a useful organisational tool that has added some descriptive order to world archaeology. Inductive method is useful in general exploratory research that is carried out in case of many large survey areas.

The decade of 1970s saw increase in the utility of deductive research in archaeology when archaeologists began viewing fieldwork and excavation activities (or exploration and excavation) as a problem oriented to testing hypothesis.

3.6.3   Research Design

Formulation of a research design is also a primary requirement in cultural resource management or heritage management. An outline of the proposed research with a nomenclature, together with the nature of the project, its methodology needs to be chalked out. The following part involves collection of data, its analyses and finally writing an analytical report. Conservation and Preservation of the same may follow the report submission. A site under immediate threat or a locality selected for developing a project needs to be attended immediately.

A senior archaeologist along with experts in relevant disciplines is ideally suited to undertake a CRM project. However, a large number of hands may be required in such projects and in such situations new entrants may also be trained.

3.6.4   Safeguarding and Public Participation

Local population around the cultural remains is the best agency to be chosen to entrust with its protection. Owing to their close proximity to the remains, the local population develops a sense of belongingness to the antiquarian site. These people revere the remains. Further, people in the vicinity also report its existence to the Government or equivalent authority for undertaking the conservation of the site and its remains. Once the site is conserved and preserved, its importance can be spread to the surrounding regions through the means of Public Archaeology and tourism.

3.6.5   Public Archaeology

'Public Archaeology' is a branch of archaeology that deals with creating awareness about the cultural wealth and the importance of preserving them. It also encourages archaeologists to understand how a layman views his immediate or distant past. Certain ruins are connected to the people of a locality since time immemorial, and it is closely connected to them in the form of a living practice. The concerned community undertakes certain festivity in close connection with the remains at a particular time of the year. Further, the thoughts and respect for such remains encourage people to initiate social customs. To cite an example, the Megalithic monuments of different shapes and sizes of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong of Assam, since ancient times, are available in plenty. To commemorate this ancient practice of Megalithism, Dilip Medhi (2002) organised three different public functions in the name of 'Megalithic Monument Conservation Day' at Tengralangso and Kamarpha in 1997, at Tika in 1998 and at Nongjrong in 1999 with active cooperation of the local people. Thus, Public Archaeology spread the message of conservation of cultural heritage and resources among the public who become actively involved in safeguarding the archaeological remains and cultural sites. Naga communities hold a stone pulling festival to commemorate the Megalithic practice amongst them.

3.6.6   People Related to Archaeological Resources

Ruthann Knudson, points out 'ownership issue' of archaeological sites (1986) with regards to their owner and finds. It may be noted that even in cases when an archaeological site falls within a private property, the ownership of the remains are with the Government as all the material remains belong to either the nation or the world.

3.7   IMPORTANCE OF INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE SITES

Starting with the initial discoveries of archaeological evidences during the British regime in India, archaeological evidence began to be incorporated by the historians and archaeologists. Bruce Foote's discovery of handaxe at Pallavaram near Madras in 1863 was an eye opener to South Asian Prehistory. Later V.D. Krishnaswami (1938) reported a very rich and varied Lower Palaeolithic assemblage from the Kortalayer valley in the Chingleput District of Tamil Nadu. Further the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization at the time of the Railway construction project in Northwest India was a major eye opener to the first urbanization of the subcontinent.

3.8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS

Archaeological Museums are the places where antiquities are displayed chronologically. There are a number of museums all over the world and the United States of America is famous in this respect because apart from public museums, almost each and every Department of Anthropology and Archaeology has an associated museum.

The British Museum was established in the 18th Century. However, the Danish archaeologists were the pioneers in the establishment of a museums of antiquities.Its first curator C. J. Thomsen put forwarded the concept of 'Three Age System' on the basis of its antiquities. In fact, it was an outstanding endeavour of a few Danish elites interested in antiquities, comprising of Rasmus Nyerup, Vedel-Simonsen, Sven Nilsson, J. J. Worsaae and Christian Jurgensen Thomsen who set up the 'National Museum of Danish Antiquities' in 1806 with the small collection of antiquities from the University of Copenhagen. Initially classification of the antiquities were not possible, however, Thomsen initiated it and came up with the Three Age System which meant that the entire history of manknnd passed through Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age, which was later confirmed by the excavation of Pitt Rivers.

In India, there are a number of museums either at the State or at the National levels, and today the Department of Culture under the Ministry of Human Resources has given many of them the status of 'National Museum', prominent among them being National Museum at New Delhi and Indian Museum at Kolkata. Apart from the National Museums, there are some 'Site Museums' in our Country and the one at Nagarjunakonda is famous in this regard. Japanese Open Air Museum at its former capital in 'Nara' is one of the famous museums in Asia. There are many such museums in the Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam.

3.9 RESEARCHES INTO THE HERITAGE CULTURAL RESOURCES AT MUSEUMS

Museum exhibits are the objects of cultural resources of human past. They are static in nature but are the suitable objects to speak the dynamic cultural evolution of mankind in the past. As mentioned earlier in the case of 'National Museum of Danish Antiquities', researches undertaken at a museum may reveal meaningful and suitable information on certain aspects of cultural history of humankind.

3.10 SUMMARY

Studies into the Cultural Resource vis-à-vis Cultural Heritage make people aware of their past and brings the knowledge regarding what kind of culture the people of a region had in the past. Therefore the Government of a Country on its own and also with the help of education-cum-research Institutes along with suitable learned agencies always works on preservation of the archaeological sites. Government of each and every country, including India, all over the world has different kinds of rules and regulations in this regard and also enact State Legislation for conservation of Cultural Resources of respective State.

Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

1) How will you define Cultural Resource Management and its importance in Indian Archaeology?

2) Write short answers for the following

   i) What is Museum?