CONSERVATION OF WORLD HERITAGE MONUMENTS
AND MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

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The history of the conservation of monuments in India goes back to early centuries of Christian era. Inscriptional records and the literary reference available have provided that the monuments were cared and looked after time to time by the Kings, their subordinates, monks and merchants. The systematic conservation and the study of the antiquarian remains started in the 18th century and regular legislations about the monuments and sites were framed in the beginning of the 20th century. In the beginning there was no concept of the management of the movements and the sites need to be maintained and preserved on a concept based management. The Archaeological Survey of India is the nodal agency for the upkeep of the monuments and the maintenance. The various legislations have strengthen the working of the Government organizations and now the monuments are being looked after and controlled on the concept of the public involvement.

Keywords
Conservation of the monuments, Archaeological legislation, Management process, Qualification and training, Tourism and Development of the monuments.

“It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture” Constitution of India.

This moral and Constitutional responsibility of the Indian citizen enumerated in the Constitution of India is the total philosophy of our heritage management. It is very well-known that India is a great repository of ancient cultural and natural treasures of exceptional value. 17 Heritage, 5 Natural and 1 Industrial Sites have been declared as the World Heritage Monuments and Sites which are being maintained and preserved on a new concept of maintenance and management.

The history of the conservation of the monuments of India goes back to early centuries of Christian era. King Rudradaman (AD 130-150) repaired the Sudarshan lake which had developed huge breach. He made it stronger without changing the original character. A recent find of a copper plate inscription from Bagh caves (Central India) has revealed that for repairing the broken and dilapidated portions of the monastery, the king Subandhu granted lands. Similarly, during the medieval period, Vijayanagar rulers of South India also carried out extensive repairs to Channakessava temple, Belur, Brihadeshwar temple, Tanjor and several other monuments in the capital city of Hampi, a World Heritage Site.

The Sultans of Delhi and the Mughal emperors also carried out extensive repairs to Quwwatal Islam Masjid, Qutab Minar and the Jama Masjid of Badaun in Uttar Pradesh. The Jama Masjid of Bagi Khattu in Nagore district of Rajasthan was repaired and restored by emperor Akbar. The benevolent ruler of Kashmir Zain-ul-Abadin (1421-1472) also carried out repairs to Martand temple built by Lalitaditya Muktapida.

Further during the year 1664 the visit of Dr. Bernier to Kashmir valley and the monuments in Mughal India opened a new chapter of antiquarian interest which gave birth to systematic collection of antiquities and then their preservation. In these activities pioneering work was done by Sir Willam John, the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court, who formed, on 15th January, 1784, the Asiatic Society, an institution for enquiring, among other things into history, antiquities, arts, sciences of the sub-continent. The formation of the Society organised the efforts of its members and contributions started pouring in from all quarters announcing new finds. The start made in Calcutta was soon followed in other parts of India.

The initial activities of the society were mainly oriented towards the study of the antiquities and the monuments, and, the concept of preservation was confined only to collection of antiquities. But with the arrival of Sir Alexander Cunningham, lauded by India’s First Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, who observed that the preservation of historic monuments is the well deserving responsibility of the Government, and thus the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India was laid. Alexander Cunningham as the first Director General of Archaeological Survey of India surveyed Rajputana, Bundelkhand and certain areas of Punjab. He collected Indo-Greek coins in Kaushambi, all intimately connected with the life of Buddha. In Cole was appointed by the Government and he carried out the repairs of the monuments of Delhi, Agra and examined the conditions of the monuments if Kashmir, Rajputana, Bombay and