

CHAPTER – X

Awareness, Interpretation and Amenities

The primary objective of managing heritage is to communicate its significance and need for its conservation to the host community and to the visitors. Reasonable and well managed physical, intellectual and emotive access to heritage and cultural development was both a right and a privilege. It would bring with it a duty of respect for the heritage values, interests and equity of the present-day host community, indigenous custodians or owners of historic property and for the landscapes and cultures from which that heritage evolved⁶².

A protected monument or site would carry little meaning to common people, if there were not enough resources to interpret and explain the cultural and historical significance. Thus, as custodian of centrally protected monuments and sites, it was also important for the ASI to provide adequate interpretation, public amenities and awareness to the visitors.

10.1 Funds Arrangements for Awareness, Interpretation and Amenities

There was no specific budgetary provision for activities related to awareness, interpretation and creating public amenities in the ASI. As a result, expenditure on this account was incurred from the funds allotted for conservation activities. The ASI did not prepare comprehensive plans for providing basic amenities at the monuments. As a result, most of the monuments were found lacking in these facilities, as highlighted in **Para 10.5**.

Recommendation 10.1: *The ASI should have funds earmarked specifically for awareness, interpretation and related activities.*

There should be laid down standards for amenities and interpretation services applicable uniformly for all protected monuments.

⁶² International Cultural Tourism Charter Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance Adopted by ICOMOS in 1999

10.2 Interpretation of the Sites

Heritage conservation required that conservation, interpretation and tourism development programmes were based on a comprehensive understanding of the specific but often complex or conflicting aspects of heritage significance of the particular place.

For interpreting the site, the ASI's efforts were mostly limited to providing signages and notice boards. The ASI provided three types of signage and notice boards on its monuments:

- i. **Name of the Monument**
- ii. **Protection Notice Board:** Declaring the site as "Protected Monument" and the rules regarding the prohibited and regulated area and the fines for carrying unauthorized activities in and around the monument; and
- iii. **Cultural Notice Board:** Describing the history of the Monument in Hindi and English. In some places these cultural notice boards also mentioned folklore and traditions associated with the sites.

Though only third type of signage provided interpretation of the site, the first two categories were equally important to make visitors familiar with the site. We noticed glaring deficiencies in all these three types of signage.

- a) At many monuments, the name of the monument was not mentioned. Some examples in the Delhi Circle included the Nicholson cemetery, D'Mero cemetery, Nai-ka-kot, Unknown tomb at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, ancient mosque at Palam. In the absence of the name of the monument, most visitors would find it difficult to recognise it.
- b) Similarly it was noticed that the protection sign boards, were not drafted properly at many places. At some places these was not even available. Thus, absence of the signboard increased the risk of encroachment and damage, as most of these protected sites were unguarded.

Our scrutiny of 2461⁶³ monuments revealed that sign boards of only 1198 monuments were found to be in order as detailed in **Annex 10.1**.

Our observation on cultural notice boards is given in **Para 10.3.1**.

⁶³ It included total number of monuments in the 12 Circles and the number of physically inspected monuments at the remaining circles as mentioned in **Annex 10.1**

10.3 Signage Not Installed

We found that most of the Circles were incurring expenditure on the purchase of signage for installing at the monuments under their control. However in many places these were not being put to use. Some illustrative examples are given below:

Table 10.1 Signage not installed

Name of the Circle	Expenditure incurred (₹ in lakhs)	Remarks
Agra	8.11	Signage were found lying in the residence of the chowkidar at Kannauj, Sub Circle
Agra	12.68	Signage were lying in the store room of the monument at Mathura, Sub Circle
Shimla	19.67	Signage were not installed and were lying with the Circle office
Chennai	73.12	411 protection notice boards had not been installed and were lying with the Circle office



Notice boards lying at Kankalitila, Mathura & Notice boards lying at Old Fort, Kannauj

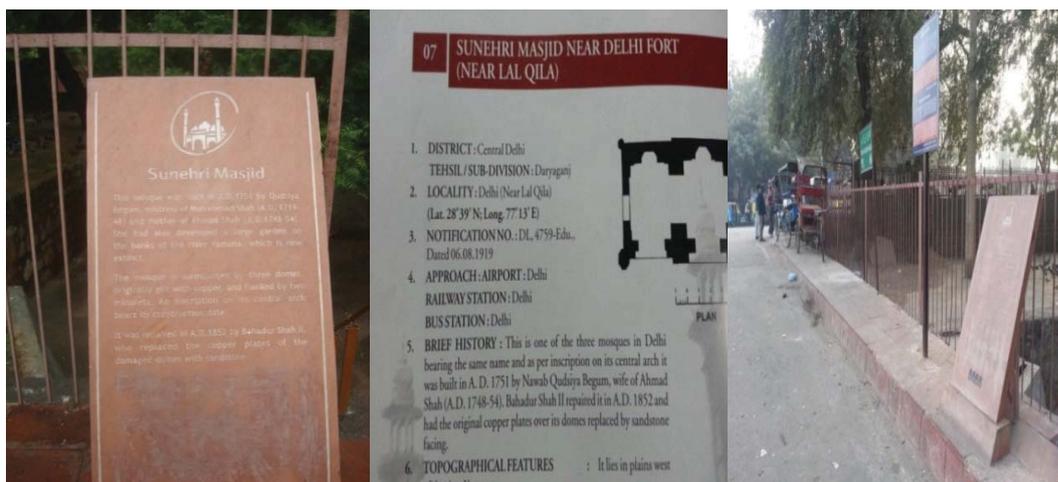
Joint physical inspection of the monuments also revealed that in Delhi Circle, due care was not exercised while installing the signage at the monuments. It was noticed that the signage of the 'Chhoti Gumti' was placed at another monument named 'Sakri Gumti' and the signage of 'Sakri Gumti' was placed at 'Chhoti Gumti'. Even after the discrepancy was pointed out by our team, it was not corrected.

10.3.1 Interpretation of the Monument through Cultural Notice Boards

The interpretation of the monuments through the cultural notice boards was very important for the visitors as in most sites; no other source of information about the site was available. Joint physical inspection of the monuments revealed that the cultural notice boards were found installed by the ASI in only 1153 protected monuments out of 2461 monuments inspected by us. (Details are given in Annex 10.1).

We observed spelling and other factual mistakes in the cultural notice boards at Safdarjung Tomb at Delhi Circle. On being pointed out by us in June 2012, the Circle removed it for replacement. The notice board had not been re-installed as of November 2012.

Similar discrepancy was noticed in the case of Sunehri Masjid near Red fort in Delhi Circle where Hindi and English signboards gave conflicting information about builder of the Mosque.



Signage showing that the mosque was built by Nawab Qudasia Begum, mother of Ahmed Shah

Inventory showing that the mosque was built by Nawab Qudasia Begum, wife of Ahmed Shah

The Hindi sign board was removed after the discrepancy was pointed out

Recommendation 10.2: It is recommended that signage installation should be thoroughly reviewed. In our opinion, there should also be cultural notice boards in the local languages. At important sites, including World Heritage Sites, notice boards should be placed in major world languages. Similarly for Buddhist sites, notice boards should be displayed in relevant languages depending upon the visitors of the sites.

10.3.2 Site Interpreter (Guide) Facilities at the Monuments

The sign boards at the monuments provided brief description of the monument. However, to understand the significant features and importance of the site, services of site interpreter (Guide) were required. It was even more important to have adequate guide facilities at complex sites that were spread out viz. Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Hampi, Ajanta Ellora caves. We noted that the ASI had no role in providing or monitoring guide facilities on these sites. The tourism departments of Centre and State Governments were providing guide licenses to the persons after analysing their knowledge of history and monuments. The AMASR Rules 1959 had provision for providing licence to guides by the ASI, however, no such licences were issued by the ASI. No documented reasons for this inaction were available.

The ASI decided (2006) to provide audio guide facility at the world heritage sites in different languages viz. Hindi, English, French, Spanish, German, etc. However, during the last six years, the ASI provided audio guide facility only in five world heritage sites viz. Agra Fort, Khajuraho, Sanchi, Qutb Minar and Red Fort that too in limited languages.

Recommendation 10.3: *The ASI in collaboration with the Tourism Ministry should devise a special program for training people from the local community as guides. Circle offices should provide an authentic version of narration of the sites which can be adapted and translated in various languages.*

Recommendation 10.4: *The ASI should assess the feasibility of designing specialised guided tour for specific/ group of monuments to cater to special needs of visitors.*

10.3.3 Availability of Publications on Sites

Authoritative maps, guidebooks and other publications provide a useful resource for enhancing understanding and interpretation of the monuments. To be useful for visitors, these should be available near the site. The publication Division of the ASI has been publishing various types of brochures, pamphlets, guide books on the various monuments and these were distributed to Circle offices for sale at the publication counters available at the monuments. The ASI earned ₹ 2.24 crore during the period 2007-08 to 2011-12 from sales at the publication counters.

We noted that there was no publication counter in any of the 12 ticketed monuments at the Bengaluru Circle. Even in the Delhi Circle, five ticketed monuments did not have any publication counter. The ASI HQ did not have complete information in respect of the total number of publication counters available. However, as per the information provided for eight Circles, there were only 37 publication counters. Absence of publication counters at each site led not only to loss of revenue but more importantly deprived the visitors of useful references about the monuments.

10.3.3.1 Inadequate Distribution of Publication Material

The ASI HQ did not have any mechanism for proper distribution of Publication material to the Circle offices. Record management was also poor.

We noticed that some publications were being sent to unrelated Circles without any justification. For instance at Agra Circle, instead of providing the literature material on the World Heritage sites in and around Agra Circle, the ASI HQ supplied the material on Mahabalipuram. As a result the material could not be used and was relegated to the store room. Similarly, in the Kolkata Circle, some publications were sent by ASI-HQ without any requisition from the circle. The excess books issued to Guwahati Circle were also found lying unutilised and damaged.

The ASI HQ did not ascertain the specific requirement of the Circle offices for distribution of the material. As a result, sale of the ASI publication remained low and in the absence of need assessment 308128 books were lying unused at the various publication counters. Details are given in **Annex 10.2**.

The ASI attributed the reasons for ad-hoc practices of distribution of publications to the shortage of staff. We find this reason unconvincing as there were no laid down procedures and instructions for distribution of publications.

10.3.3.2 Availability of Maps of the Sites

The ASI had sites which were spread over many acres. These included groups of monuments, forts and caves. At most of such sites including some World Heritage Sites, the ASI did not provide for any site maps to the visitors.

10.4 Involvement of Local Community

Heritage interpretation and education programmes among the people of the host community should encourage the involvement of local site interpreters. The programmes should promote a knowledge and respect for their heritage, encouraging the local people to take a direct interest in its care and conservation. Tourism and conservation activities should benefit the host community.⁶⁴

We found that there were negligible efforts from the Ministry and the ASI to devise any special programmes to create public awareness and support. We found that due to the failure of the ASI to involve the local community in protection and conservation of these sites, in many places, the local community opposed the efforts of the ASI to maintain these sites. There was no formal forum of interaction with the local community and the Circle offices.

⁶⁴ International Cultural Tourism Charter of ICOMOS

10.5 Visitors Facilities at the Monuments

ICOMOS charter provided that conservation and tourism planning for Heritage Places need to ensure that the Visitor's experience would be worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable.

To make the monuments visitor friendly, the ASI was expected to provide basic amenities viz. drinking water, toilets, ramps for physically challenged, notice boards in Braille language, etc. at the monuments. Further, the Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 provided for the provision of ramps in public buildings and adaptation of toilets for wheel chair users.

10.5.1 Status of Public Amenities

Joint physical inspection and available information at the Circles for 2461 monuments revealed that the ASI failed to provide the basic public amenities at its protected monuments as can be seen from the following table:

Table 10.2 Public Amenities at the monuments

Amenities	No of monuments in which facilities were not available	Percentage of non availability
Drinking water	1781	72
Toilets	2030	82
Wheel chairs	2247	91
Ramps	2293	93
Braille Sign Boards	2448	96
Complaint register	2268	92

Lack of these basic amenities, adversely affected the footfall at these sites and also reduced the quality of experience of the visitors. In addition, lack of facilities for differently able visitors constitutes a violation of the Persons with Disability Act 1995. Lack of ramps and wheel chairs at these monuments would also restrict access of these sites to such visitors. During our inspections we found very few sites which were "barrier free" for such special category of visitors.

10.5.2 Efforts of the ASI for Public Amenities

The ASI entered (January 2009) into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a non profit organisation 'Svayam' and appointed them as their Access Consultant initially for three years. The NGO was to provide consultancy to the ASI (free of cost) for making all the monuments/sites accessible to people with reduced mobility in accordance with law and international standards and guidelines and specific indigenous factors.

In the first phase, the NGO was to carry out access audit in the heritage sites of New Delhi, Agra (Uttar Pradesh) and Goa and identify barriers to accessibility and recommend appropriate suggestions and strategies. Subsequently, the ASI was to draw a Joint Action Plan for each site to execute the recommendations of the NGO.

The NGO submitted the access audit reports of five monuments⁶⁵ in July/August 2010 to the ASI along with various suggestions.

We found that till December 2012, the ASI had not initiated any action on the recommendations of the NGO.

10.5.3 Lack of Approach Road to the Monuments

Joint physical inspection revealed that there were many protected monuments which were not easily accessible due to the lack of an approach road. The ASI did not initiate any remedial measures in co-ordination with the municipal authorities concerned to address this important issue.

In fact, in some monuments due to absence of regular physical inspection of the monument by the officials of the ASI information was unavailable at the Circle/ Sub Circle level. Some instances of the absence of approach roads are mentioned below:

Table 10.3 Monuments without approach roads

Sl. No.	Circle	Name of the monument
1.	Agra	Mound of Kachhwa, Mamirpur
2.		Baniyaki Barat, Lalitpur
3.		Temple Flat roofed, Urwara, Mahoba
4.		Ghuguwa Ka Math, Barua Sagar, Jhansi
5.		Kos Minar, Mathura
6.		Buddhist Vihar, Pakhnabihar, Farrukhabad
7.		Ancient site, Katarikhera, Farrukhabad
8.		Mound Sahegarh Khera, Aligarh
9.	Delhi	Nai Ka Kot
10.	Srinagar	Monolithic Shrine Khrew
11.		StupaTisseru (Leh)
12.	Ranchi	Jami Mosque, Hadaf
13.		Benisagar tank

⁶⁵ Etmad-ud-daulah, Agra, Mariam's Tomb, Agra, Agra Fort, Deeg Palace, Rajasthan and Purana Qila, Delhi

14.	Patna	Rock Temple at Kahalgaon
15.		Rohtas Garh Fort in Sasaram
16.		Pakka Masonary Fort in Bijaigarh, Sonbhadra
17.	Kolkata	Barkona Deul site at Malda
18.		Residency Cemetery, Babul Bona
19.	Guwahati	Grave of Mr BJ Stow
20.		Tomb of Lt. Cresswell

The Mirdha Committee in 1984 had stated that it is a sad fact that many important monuments remained inaccessible during the rainy season for lack of all weather roads. The ASI should make all its efforts to persuade the State Government to lay pucca road to monuments to facilitate their regular inspection all the year round.

However, even after a lapse of 28 years of this recommendation the position remained the same. There was no initiative from the Ministry to assess the need for a approach road and to take necessary measures with the State Governments at appropriate levels.

10.5.4 Facility of Online and Advance Tickets

Worldwide, the facility of advance online booking of tickets for sites frequented by international tourists is adopted as a best practice. Many countries have also introduced joint tickets at reduced price for a group of sites in a city/ across a region, to facilitate visitors.

The ASI earned revenue of about ₹ 400 crores during the last five years from the sale of tickets. A total number of about 1.65 crore foreign tourist visited the monuments during the period 2007-08 to 2011-12. However, the ASI did not explore the possibility of introducing the facility of online booking of tickets to encourage more visitors to the sites. This would also help in timely remittance of revenue in the government account. Even on the ticket counters, there was no facility of purchasing the tickets through the credit/debit cards.

Recommendation 10.5: *The Ministry and the ASI should introduce the online ticket facility for all ticketed sites across the country with necessary security controls at the earliest.*

10.6 Interpretation Facilities in the Museums

We noticed that the interpretation facilities in the museums were also inadequate as given below:

10.6.1 Non-installation of Kiosks

The Indian Museum entered (March 2010) into an agreement with National Council of Science Museum (NCSM) for the supply of display equipment including 18 kiosks at a cost of ₹ 1.81 crore. This amount included ₹ 30.32 lakh as consultancy fee charged by NCSM for developing multi media kiosks. As per the terms and conditions the entire contract amount of ₹ 1.81 crore was paid by the museum in advance in favour of Science City on 31 March 2010. The scheduled date of completion of the project was December 2010, including timely submission of content and photographs to be displayed in the kiosks by the museum.

We noticed that equipment worth ₹ 22.18 lakh (excluding the software purchased) was lying in custody of the Science City, NCSM and Birla Institute of Technology Mission (BITM). The warranty period of some of the equipment *had* expired. NCSM stated that despite several reminders and meetings with the Indian Museum officials they had not furnished any data and photographs required for developing the Kiosks. Moreover, Director Science City stated that due to absence of data from the Indian Museum it would not be possible for them to complete the project since the vendors engaged by the NCSM had already been served termination letters.



Equipment lying in Indian Museum

Thus, failure on the part of the Indian Museum to provide the requisite data and photographs resulted in non installation of the Kiosks leading to non enhancement of public awareness.