

Post-Tsunami Redevelopment and the Cultural Sites of the Maritime Provinces in Sri Lanka

Introduction

Many a scholar or traveller in the past described Sri Lanka as »the Pearl of the Indian Ocean« for its scenic beauty and nature's gifts, the golden beaches, the cultural riches and the mild weather. On that fateful day of 26 December 2004, within a matter of two hours, this resplendent island was reduced to a »Tear Drop in the Indian Ocean.« The Indian Ocean tsunami waves following the great earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in the Republic of Indonesia swept through most of the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka, causing unprecedented damage to life and property.

There was no Sri Lankan who did not have a friend or relation affected by this catastrophe. It also brought about a new dimension in the hearts of the people of a nation that has seen over two decades of internal conflict based on ethnic issues. A national spirit arose amongst the people so that they shed their differences, whether they be based on cast, creed, religion, race or politics, to help fellow beings. Even though Sri Lankans had not experienced or heard of any disasters of such magnitude, they avoided starvation and epidemics amongst the refugees by getting over the initial shock very quickly and rushing to the rescue of the suffering countrymen. The first load of relief items such as food, drinking water, clothing and dry rations reached the devastated areas within the first twenty-four hours. In some areas, the existence of extended family links, so much a part of the Sri Lankan way of life, was used to house the displaced. This initial public reaction was quickly supported by the government and the international community who felt strongly about what they witnessed in the electronic media. The professional institutes in Sri Lanka rallied round to provide their services in an honorary capacity. Doctors and medical students volunteered to run makeshift health camps. The Institute of Architects and the Institute of Engineers declared that their members would provide the necessary services at no cost to help in the development of social, physical and environmental infrastructure facilities.

Natural disasters before 26 December 2004

Sri Lanka has had its share of natural disasters over the years. Limited to localised areas, they were the result of

floods due to heavy monsoon rains, earth slips and landslides and occasional gale force winds caused by depressions and cyclonic effects in either the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea. Sri Lanka is not located in the accepted seismic region and hence the affects of earthquakes or tsunamis are unknown to the people. The word »tsunami« was not in the vocabulary of the majority of Sri Lankans until disaster struck on that fateful day.

The great historical chronicle »Mahavamsa« describes the history of Sri Lanka from the 5th c. B. C. This chronicle reports an incident in the 2nd c. B. C. when »the sea-gods made the sea overflow the land« in the early kingdom of Kelaniya, north of Colombo. It is to be noted that, by accident or otherwise, after this incident the western coast of Sri Lanka was not popular up to around the 12th c. when Colombo developed as a transshipment port to link the west to the east for trading purposes.

The records show that there have been many tsunamis in the Indian Ocean over the years. But none of them has had any significant effect on Sri Lanka. The 1883 and the 1941 tsunamis affected Sri Lanka but the highest waves were not more than one metre. There appear to have been no casualties in 1883 and only one in 1941, in Arugam Bay on the eastern coast.

The Tsunami on 26 December and its effects in Sri Lanka

The tsunami on 26 December was brought on by a massive undersea earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in the Republic of Indonesia, which was of a magnitude of 9.3 on the Richter scale and was caused by tectonic activity resulting in the sudden faulting of a part of the contact zone between the Indian and Burma Plates. Although the epicentre of the quake was described as just off the northern coast of Sumatra, it was a rupture along a 1200 km fault line, in which a section of the Indian Plate slipped around 15 m below the Burma Plate at a depth of between 1 km and 5 km below the surface of the sea, that caused most of the damage. The origins of the quake are thought to be at a depth of 30 km below the seabed. The tsunami waves that resulted from this seismic activity affected not just the eastern part of the Indian Ocean but several other countries spreading beyond the Arabian Sea. The

countries affected include (in alphabetical order) Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Madagascar, Maldives, Myanmar, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Thailand. Seismic activity and in particular sea waves of this nature are not as frequent in the Indian Ocean as they are in the Pacific. Therefore, the unfortunate aspect of this disaster was that it was not anticipated even though the local experts were not unaware of such possibilities.

The tsunami of 26 December was a series of waves that struck the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka less than two hours after the main earthquake. The first wave struck Kalmunai in the Ampara District on the east coast at around 8:17 a. m. and continued around the coastal belt to reach Negambo on the north-western coast about 45 minutes to one hour later. Eye witness accounts from various locations suggest that there were three (in some areas four) main waves with at least two »troughs« in which the water level receded a considerable distance from the normal coastline. The waves at their maximum appear to have reached a height of eight metres, though in most cases it was much less. As one would expect, the impact of waves differed from place to place, and sometimes within the same locality. The topography of the seabed, the coastal morphology, reefs, sand dunes, lagoons, mangroves, beech vegetation and other aspects of the natural landscape as well as the built environment had a bearing on the behaviour of the waves. It is regretted that no detailed technical study on this aspect has been carried out.

Since the 16th c. and occupation by the maritime powers, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, there has been extensive development in the coastal belt of Sri Lanka. This development was enhanced over the last four decades with increased infrastructure development to accommodate tourism and fishing industries. The tsunami took place on the day after Christmas, which was also a Buddhist holiday, being the full moon day. This was also the middle of the peak tourist season. All these factors contributed to a very crowded coastal zone with many leisure seekers and people visiting their families. Thus, those affected included the locals as well as foreign visitors to the country. On the other hand since it was the holiday season for schools and offices many others had kept away from the area. Probably the school holidays saved a future generation of Sri Lankans since in the aftermath many school buildings in the coastal belt have had to be rebuilt. Thus the affected people did not come from a particular catchment area but perhaps from the whole of Sri Lanka and from many other parts of the world.

The Census and Statistics Department of the Sri Lanka Government with assistance from numerous other agencies carried out surveys of the damage to the urban, rural and other coastal settlements in the affected areas. But it has been revealed that the survey is not complete or comprehensive enough to assess the full impact on the

lives of the communities in the affected areas. This survey included the damage to infrastructure, shops and other commercial enterprises, employment opportunities, the hospitality trade and more important the human lives and the social fabric of the communities. The final report on the casualty list read: 26,807 killed, 4,114 missing and 23,189 injured. 5,785 children lost one or both parents. 579,000 people were displaced and the livelihoods of more than that number were lost. 62,533 houses were fully damaged whilst 43,867 were partially affected. In addition to the loss of many libraries, much archival material, »ola« leaf manuscripts and immovable cultural objects were lost from the affected religious institutions, particularly from ancient Buddhist temples. Over 150,000 vehicles were completely destroyed or seriously damaged. 259 square kilometres of rice fields were destroyed. In addition extensive salination of lands had rendered them useless to an essentially agrarian community. A large number of vehicles and machinery related to agriculture were destroyed. Many canals and drains were blocked with rubbish and debris. Underground water sources such as shallow wells (a common feature in the rural areas) were salinated. Physically this affected many cultural landscapes in the area. Total financial damage to the country has been estimated at US\$1,000 million and the forecasted drop in the GDP is 0.70 (adjusted from 6.0 to 5.35%).

Affects on cultural property

With just over 450 years of rule by the maritime powers, this coastal belt included some of the most densely populated areas of the country with many natural and human affected ecosystems as well as a complex and rich cultural landscape. These included some of the oldest religious buildings still in use, of Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Moslem origin, as well as a range of secular buildings such as civic buildings, commercial structures, private dwellings, markets, port-related buildings, lighthouses, clock towers, school buildings, libraries, etc. They depicted a blend of architectural styles ranging from the local vernacular to the fusion of such vernacular architecture with the influences of the Portuguese, Dutch and British styles. In addition there were examples of the dual heritage where the styles of the maritime powers were duplicated in Sri Lanka, but using local building philosophy, materials and methodology, adapted to suit the local climatic and geographical conditions. There was also a unique urban form intermixed with various defence bastions from the past. This was the heritage that was cherished by the local community and admired by visitors.

To assess the heritage of this area, it must first be acknowledged that cultural heritage is a fundamental human right. It should be recognised irrespective of its



Fig. 1 The roof of the 18th c. market in the Old City of Galle caved in during the tsunami on 26 December 2004



Fig. 2 Remains of the Galle Maritime Archaeology Laboratory after the tsunami



Fig. 3 A historic house that escaped major damage at Hikaduwa on the southern coast



Fig. 4 Damage to rampart wall near Akersloot Bastion in Galle Fort



Fig. 5 Damage to rampart wall near Akersloot Bastion in Galle Fort



Fig. 6 Sea water in Leyden Bastian Road inside Galle Fort on 26 December 2004

ownership because cultural heritage belongs to all people, whether local or foreign. Thus it becomes the bounden duty of those who come to help this traumatised community, whether they are from the state sector or the non-governmental organisations, to respect and help preserve the cultural background of the community and appreciate their cultural values. In this respect, the word »culture« should be looked at as comprehensively as possible. The definition given in the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is very apt under the circumstances. It describes the term »cultural property« as

»a. movable and immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or reproductions of the property defined above;

b. buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property defined in subparagraph (a) such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives, and refuges intended to shelter, in the event of armed conflict, the movable cultural property defined in subparagraph (a);

c. centres containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in subparagraphs (a) and (b), to be known as »centres containing monuments.«¹

These landmark cultural properties gave a sense of identity to the locality and a sense of pride to the local community. In some areas, even though large numbers of the host community perished in the tsunami the monuments survived, whereas in other places the monuments, too, succumbed to the inevitable. In cases where the monuments survived, the damage could be classified as ranging from »slightly damaged« to »damaged beyond repair.« Ownership of these properties varied and included different religious institutions, the government, commercial establishments and private individuals. Thus there were many hurdles to clear before access could be obtained to assess damage to such properties. In addition, the ongoing conflict in the north and east of the country did not provide a climate for any party to gain access to such sites.

Another issue is the legal protection that can be given to these properties. The country boasts several planning

tools for such purposes and different state agencies that can implement different pieces of legislation. However, not all buildings, sites and monuments are listed by these agencies. The Department of Archaeology, which implements the Antiquities Ordinance, will only list those sites and monuments that are over 100 years old. Most of the structures that are listed under this ordinance are either state-owned buildings, religious monuments or archaeological sites. Thus the list can never be complete; however, once a building gets on the register, the protection granted it is noteworthy. The ordinance covers not only the monument but a buffer zone of 400 yards (365 m) around it.

In addition, other legislation such as the Urban Development Act (administered by the Urban Development Authority, with delegated powers to local authorities) and the Housing and Town Improvement Ordinance (administered by the National Physical Planning Department) covers historic buildings and natural sites. Since there is no system of granting financial benefits or tax incentives for the maintenance or sustenance of listed buildings in Sri Lanka there is a general reluctance on the part of private owners to get their properties listed under such regulations. In addition, heavy politicising of the state machinery has caused the stringent laws to be bent for the politically powerful. A good example of this political interference in heritage sites is the Galle International Cricket Stadium which lies within the buffer zone of the Dutch Fort in Galle in the south (a World Heritage Site) and was destroyed by the tsunami (fig. 1-6). Even before the tsunami in 2004, cricket officials were planning to develop massive pavilions covering two-thirds of the ground, an alien structure, thereby covering the view of the majestic ramparts of the fort. These pavilions have now been built and were opened by the highest in the land, making a mockery of the entire conservation policy for the historic buildings. This development was quite contrary to the post-tsunami redevelopment plans that were prepared.

Role of state agencies

After the tsunami, there was an unprecedented offer of aid and grants from other countries to develop the devastated areas. This meant that development plans had to be prepared and projects identified for the foreign donors in order to accept their funding. Even though the professional institutes representing architects and engineers had volunteered the services of their members towards this effort, the state sector bureaucrats and technocrats were confident that they could handle this mammoth task on their own. Some politicians used the offer of the others and handpicked individuals to work with government professionals in the preparation of development plans. In the meantime, there were many non-governmental agencies,

1 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, Hague, 14 May 1954, Article 1, Definition of cultural property.

both foreign and local, that pledged their willingness to construct houses, schools, hospitals and other social infrastructure facilities. By this time, the authorities had made a decision to have a buffer zone of 100 m from the coast before any development work could be permitted. This brought about undue pressure on the authorities to find suitable land for redevelopment work.

With the government priority being to provide satisfactory housing, infrastructure facilities and employment opportunities to displaced people, preserving and conserving cultural property was not a priority. The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, under whose purview was the Department of Archaeology, and the Central Cultural Fund were looking towards the conservation of the properties that were listed under the Antiquities Ordinance. The planners in the government could not treat any cultural property as a priority. Even the foreign donors and organisations were clamouring to conserve the World Heritage site in Galle but not any other affected site in the coastal belt. It was a significant eye-opener that no authority or donor realised the importance of the less popular cultural properties affected by the tsunami. They did not even realise the importance of these sites as landmarks for the affected local communities when they eventually returned to their neighbourhoods. It is a well-known human instinct that when traumatised, people look to traditional landmarks to identify themselves with their surroundings and find solace in them. It was important that facilities had to be provided for their physical as well as mental well-being. The cultural properties in the neighbourhood had an important role to play in this endeavour.

Those in the planning fraternity were open-minded in their appreciation of the role cultural properties could play in the minds of the returning victims of the tsunami. They showed willingness to list, accept and promote conservation of any site or building of architectural quality and of cultural importance. Moreover, urban conservation became an integral part of the designs for reconstruction of tsunami-affected townships as a result of much canvassing by ICOMOS Sri Lanka. This was an important decision made from a socio-cultural point of view and augurs well in the preparation of development plans for the future.

Role of ICOMOS Sri Lanka

The limitations of the state sector in funding and other logistics were obvious. Hence, ICOMOS Sri Lanka, though a small group, got activated soon after the tsunami disaster. Most members had seen the devastation within twenty-four hours after the event. There were a few others who had firsthand experience since they were in the area when the tsunami waves came inland. Thus the Sri Lanka National

Committee decided to at least carry out a survey of the cultural properties, knowing that no other party would be able to undertake such a study.

Since it was imperative that planners be involved in preparing development proposals for the affected areas, ICOMOS Sri Lanka issued a public statement within one week of the incident appealing to officials to recognise cultural properties and save them from destruction (see the end of this article for the full statement). This had the desired effect when the Sri Lanka government agreed to allow cultural sites and monuments, along with hotels and structures related to the fishing industry, to be permitted within the newly declared buffer zone from the coast line. ICOMOS Sri Lanka had to seek government intervention again because cultural sites also required the proper setting for their survival.

ICOMOS Sri Lanka next undertook the arduous task of carrying out a survey of the cultural properties affected by the tsunami. To be meaningful the survey had to be carried out as fast as possible and passed on to the planners to incorporate in the development proposals. The challenging tasks were to carry out this survey with the numbers available within the National Committee of ICOMOS Sri Lanka and to gain access to the conflict areas in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

It was decided to muster the support of the local universities in the survey under the supervision of ICOMOS members and appointed university staff members so that all the affected maritime provinces could be covered in the shortest time possible. In addition, there was the advantage of capacity-building amongst the students in regard to appreciation of the local cultural heritage. They had to work according to pre-determined guidelines set by ICOMOS Sri Lanka.

Because of the prospect of capacity-building on the part of the university students, the University Grants Commission provided the funding for the input from the various universities. This was obviously not a comprehensive survey but gave enough details to wet the appetite of the planners and others to consider the long-term effects of allowing these sites to be demolished. The survey was completed in six weeks and the results were edited and submitted to the printers within the next four weeks. Proof copies were submitted to the planners to use in their development plans. Using a grant given by the National Committee of ICOMOS USA, soft copies of the study reports were prepared in the form of a CD. The publication was to be funded by the National Physical Planning Department using the state-owned printing corporation, but it is regretted that to date this has not materialised. However, it was encouraging to note that the National Physical Planning Department agreed to incorporate these sites as listed monuments in the preparation of regional structure plans. There were many other positives that were derived from this survey.

Many ICOMOS members were co-opted to serve in planning teams preparing post-tsunami redevelopment plans. Some of the areas that benefited from this were the Eastern Province and Galle and Matara in the south.

Both Jaffna University (in the Northern Province) and Eastern University requested that workshops be conducted to expose their students to care for the cultural property in their midst. This was quite satisfying since these universities are located in the conflict areas and their students had not been exposed to the awareness campaigns conducted elsewhere.

Having heard of the tsunami disaster and the activities of ICOMOS Sri Lanka, Tsukuba University of Japan extended a hand of friendship to join with the Sri Lankans in a detailed study of tsunami effects on historic buildings in a selected area. The universities of Moratuwa and Ruhuna participated in this exercise from Sri Lanka. In addition to the students and university lecturers from both countries, other professionals also took part in this project. At the conclusion of this study, the detailed findings were discussed at a workshop titled »Disaster Mitigation of Cultural Property« in Colombo attended by architects, engineers, planners, scientists and others interested in the subject. It was an interesting study because the Japanese delegation included experts who had been involved not only in the tsunami activities in Japan in 1993 but also the Kobe earthquake disaster in 1994.

In 2005 ICOMOS Sri Lanka was awarded funding from the US President's Fund for Culture. These funds were used to carry out a detailed study of 40 buildings in the historic Dutch Fort in Matara, south of Galle, which was affected by the tsunami. Again, university students were employed to carry out the work under the guidance of lecturers as well as ICOMOS members. At the end of the project, copies of the measured drawings of the houses were presented to the owners with the promise that ICOMOS will assist them in conservation when the funds are made available. The guidelines to urban development in these historic areas were incorporated in the Matara redevelopment plan. The Urban Development Authority was handed a set of »Special Regulations Applicable to New Developments, Alterations, Refurbishment of Buildings and Conservation of Monuments and Sites in the Conservation Areas in Matara.« These regulations were included in the Post-Tsunami Greater Matara Redevelopment Plan.

There were many negative affects, too, in the post-tsunami development process. In some areas, the development process tended to be heavily politicised. For some, the priorities seemed to be anything but helping the affected. Some international non-governmental organisations had a different agenda in helping the tsunami victims. The surveys have revealed that in some cases only about 40% of the promised funding was spent for the actual cause.

Some cultural properties suffered extensively because

of hasty decisions made by politicians, bureaucrats and even the non-governmental organisations. In some cases, because the bureaucrats and technocrats of the state sector could not prepare the project reports in time, the funding that had been pledged did not come to Sri Lanka. The initial decision on the extension of the buffer zone from the coast line had adverse affects on the development process there by causing haphazard renovation of some of the cultural properties.

ICOMOS Sri Lanka continued its efforts to raise funds to conserve some of the identified buildings. The Matara Redevelopment Committee invited ICOMOS Sri Lanka to set up a regular advisory/counselling service within its own working committee. Since most of the damaged buildings are in private ownership, there is a difficulty in raising funds for conservation. Within a year of the tsunami, ICOMOS members initiated the founding of a National Trust along the lines of the British, Australian and Indian Trusts to help raise funds towards the protection of cultural and natural heritage in Sri Lanka. At the moment it is awaiting government recognition to function as a non-governmental institution. It is intended that the Sri Lanka National Trust will seek to gain membership to the newly formed International National Trust Organisation.

Of the seven World Heritage sites in Sri Lanka only the seventeenth century Dutch Fort was affected by the tsunami. From the messages that ICOMOS Sri Lanka and others received, there was much concern for the well-being of the site from both local and foreign interest groups, including many ICOMOS National Committees, members and the Secretariat. Even though at a first glance there was not much damage to the fortifications except for the breach of a short length of the rampart, a closer inspection revealed serious concerns regarding the stability of the foundation. In addition, the Marine Archaeology Laboratory located in one of the piers of the ancient harbour just south of the fort was totally destroyed and the important artefacts in the laboratory were reclaimed by the sea. ICOMOS Sri Lanka had prepared a project report for the conservation and pointing of the rampart walls in 2000. This was postponed by the government because of a lack of funds. After the tsunami the government started work on this project with funding from the Netherlands Government. It is hoped that the work will be suitably monitored in order to avoid »reconstruction« that is dubbed conservation, as has been done in the past collectively by both the host and donor country.

In 2001 ICOMOS Sri Lanka had prepared a conservation and development plan for Galle Fort and its buffer zone, which was accepted and approved by both the Urban Development Authority and the Department of Archaeology. But they were both slow in the implementation. As a result, there was much acceleration in the gentrification of the properties in the fort before the tsunami. This plan was adopted in the post-tsunami redevelopment plan for Galle.

The need to conserve the historic buildings and groups of buildings was identified, and the proposals that were submitted included urban designs for such historic areas. It is hoped that at least this time the proposals, including the special regulations, will be implemented.

A delegation from the World Heritage Centre visited Sri Lanka in March 2005 to assess the damage to cultural property due to the tsunami. Even though they were aware that ICOMOS Sri Lanka was carrying out a survey, because the National Committee had informed them through government sources of its willingness to make a presentation of the preliminary findings, the visiting mission made no attempt to find out the status of the survey. This was an opportunity lost to both Sri Lanka and UNESCO through the World Heritage Centre. This action also made a mockery of the understanding that UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre have identified ICOMOS and its National Committees as important sources for technical advice.

Non-recognition of ICOMOS Sri Lanka activities by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre was amply compensated by the ICOMOS world family, which rallied round Sri Lanka in its hour of need with help, advice and words of encouragement for the post-tsunami activities. ICOMOS Sri Lanka is grateful to its colleagues for the encouragement given.

Conclusion

It is always difficult for a developing country like Sri Lanka, which is immensely rich in its cultural property but poor in funding resources, to obtain that happy compromise to save its dying heritage. Moreover, when there is a shortage of funding, prioritising sites for conservation is extremely difficult. Some would describe the cry for conservation as an act of extreme romanticism whilst others would try to provide the bare minimum to sell in the tourism market. There are also others who would redevelop sites with pseudo-architectural replicas to sell as »boutique hotels.« The role of the conservator in Sri Lanka is challenging, but we are fortunate in the dedicated membership of ICOMOS Sri Lanka. It was also gratifying to note that the members readily agreed to venture into capacity-building during the post-tsunami activities with an eye toward future conservators. We are also looking at ways and means of finding resources and new management skills for the maintenance of our cultural property. In this sphere, we stand to be educated and helped.

The settlements that were affected by the tsunami, whether cities, towns, or villages, depict human forms of progress from a very critical era. Their continuity is a healthy dynamic tradition. In this respect, the retention of the architecture of the past was an important and

Reconstruction, Conservation and the Preservation of Memory

(Appeal by ICOMOS Sri Lanka to planning officials shortly after the tsunami)

Three days after the great tsunami disaster of 26 December the Sri Lanka National Committee of ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) met and issued a statement which mourned the death of thousands of fellow Sri Lankans and peoples of neighbouring countries as well as visitors from far off lands. ICOMOS SL commiserated with the hundreds of thousands who were bereaved, displaced, whose lives have been disrupted and homes and work places destroyed. Although in various ways ICOMOS SL members in their individual capacities were involved in assisting the bereaved and the dislocated, and discussed how to systematize or concentrate efforts, the meeting mainly focussed on the little discussed socio-psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of the situation.

The human scale of this disaster was one of unprecedented magnitude. Within minutes, hundreds of thousands were killed, injured or displaced, lives disrupted, homes and work places destroyed. Clearly the pressing need of the hour was the burial of the dead, the search for the missing, the consolation of the bereaved and continuing and intensified assistance to all those who have been made homeless or otherwise adversely affected by the tragedy. But it was also necessary to look to the future—to the aftermath of the tragedy, the continuing effects of it on the lives of millions, where people and local communities have to rebuild their lives, restore their living and working environments and undertake the million tasks of reconstruction.

invaluable source of knowledge for the affected communities. It was not merely admiring the »beautiful« but rather a recognition and appreciation of the way of life and values of the previous generations as reflected in the built environment of the communities of the area. This was the architecture developed over centuries in response to the local economic, environmental, social, political and climatic conditions. This was the cry ICOMOS Sri Lanka took up to save this heritage in the aftermath of the tsunami. Only time will tell how successful we have been.

Our optimism at this juncture was based on the words of an unknown poet,

“... There is a new start to every doom
After every summer comes the monsoon
For every hard work, there is a benediction
There is comfort after every affliction
There is laughter after every sob

Yes, hope is still to be found
It's lurking out there, just look around

Every imagination spells optimism
For every fantasy, there is realism
For every banal, there is escapism
Every dark cloud has a silver lining
After winter comes the spring
Every dream has a meaning
Yes, hope is still to be found
It's lurking out there, just look around...«

Human tragedy and physical environment

There are, first of all, the human costs of the tragedy which need to be confronted: death and bereavement, the nightmare of the missing, trauma, injury, the possibility of disease, the longer term effects on individual health, the emerging economic consequences on occupations, employment, loss of property, living conditions ...the list is long and endless. And there is not only the rebuilding of lives but also the reconstruction of the physical environment.

It is this latter task which the planning sector of government has already begun to think about. ICOMOS SL draws attention to the deepest implications of this work. As the forward planning for reconstruction begins, it is also vital that the preservationist dimension is built into the national vision that is being formulated and the national tasks that are envisaged.

- It is important therefore that the preservation or restoration of heritage buildings and other cultural monuments, environments and landscapes are incorporated as an important aspect of the rebuilding plans.
- From an economic point of view, conserving and restoring an old building or buildings is often more cost effective than tearing it down and building anew, however much clearing and new construction may seem to be the easier option—although exercising that option would need a conservationist perspective, skills and experience.
- In catastrophes of this nature, there is an important socio-psychological and socio-cultural need for local communities and individuals to see and feel that the familiar environments with which they identify are not totally wiped out.
- Conservation and restoration is a very special contribution towards preserving and carrying the memory of the past into the rebuilding of the future.
- »Maintaining the familiar« is one of the most valuable components of the entire restorative process,

helping to »keep one's moorings,« to retain identity, to engender and strengthen a psychology of survival and recovery in the face of great destruction.

- In another sense, a country's coastline is part of its fundamental memory—the palaeoclimatic and archaeological remains found here are a vital and subtle source of information about its relations with the world beyond its shores in geological and historical time.
- Preserving, conserving and restoring the remains that have survived this disaster is a fitting monument to those affected by the tragedy.

Coast conservation and damage assessment

No doubt in some instances entire urban centres and rural and suburban settlements have been entirely wiped out, but in others enough is left for conservation or restoration. It is precisely for this reason that it is important that a program should begin at once to assess the damage and plan the protection and preservation of heritage buildings and environments as an integral part of the reconstruction master plan. In order to do this the University Departments of Archaeology, Architecture, and Historical and Cultural Studies are being invited by ICOMOS SL to establish small teams to undertake a rapid survey program of the coastal region. The survey will be based on the Protected Sites and Monuments scheduled under the Antiquities Ordinance and also the Report on the Inventory of Places of Religious and Cultural Significance and Areas of Scenic and Recreational Value within the Coastal Zone of Sri Lanka (P. L. Prematilleke, 1989) published by the Coast Conservation Department (1989). The preliminary situation survey is positioned to commence in the second week of January and will be completed before the end of the month.

ICOMOS, Sri Lanka