

INDIA – HERITAGE @ RISK!

The Archaeological Survey of India under the Archaeological Monuments, Sites and Remains Act 1958 is entrusted with the protection and conservation of cultural heritage places of national importance. At present, the Archaeological Survey of India looks after more than 5,000 monuments ranging in date from prehistoric times to the 19th century which also include 16 World Heritage Properties. The Group of Monuments at Hampi are also included in the World Heritage List.

Hampi, the imperial city of Vijayanagar was established on the southern bank of Tungabhadra by Harihar and Bukka, two brothers in 1336 AD. The city achieved its most brilliant phase during the reign of Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29). The remains of the city are spread over a vast area of about 25 km² covering several modern villages, while the outer lines of its fortification include a still larger area. There are fifty-six protected monuments at Hampi comprising palaces, temples, pavilions, bazaars etc.

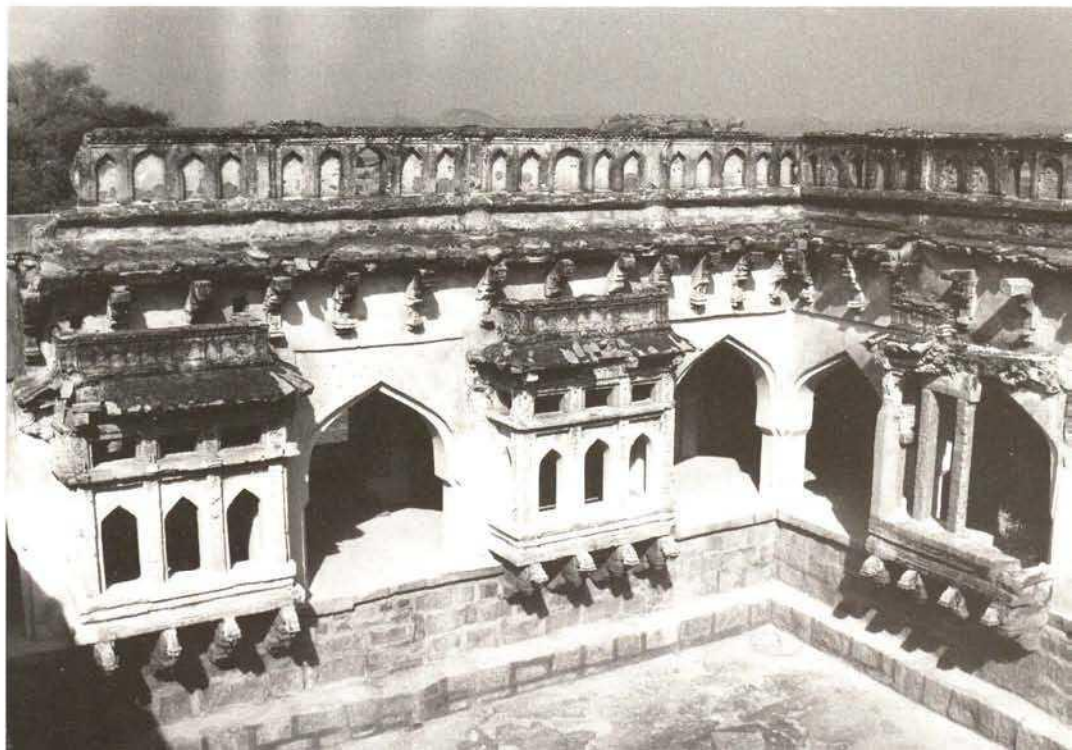
The Group of Monuments at Hampi were declared a World Heritage site by the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in 1986 (28.11.1986). The Archaeological Survey of India has been maintaining these monuments since the day these were declared as protected in the year 1921. The World Heritage Committee, at its 23rd session (29 November – 4 December 1999) held in Morocco, examined the report of the Group of Monuments at Hampi submitted by the UNESCO mission undertaken that October, and observed that two large-scale two-way bridges for vehicular traffic and the second footbridge within the protected areas, dominate the extraordinary natural environment and rural setting, threatening the integrity of the World Heritage site and seeing potential dangers, declared the site of the Group of Monuments at Hampi as World Heritage in Danger. The Committee was informed that the construction of two bridges has been halted, but that corrective measures have to be undertaken to remove the threats facing the site. The matter was



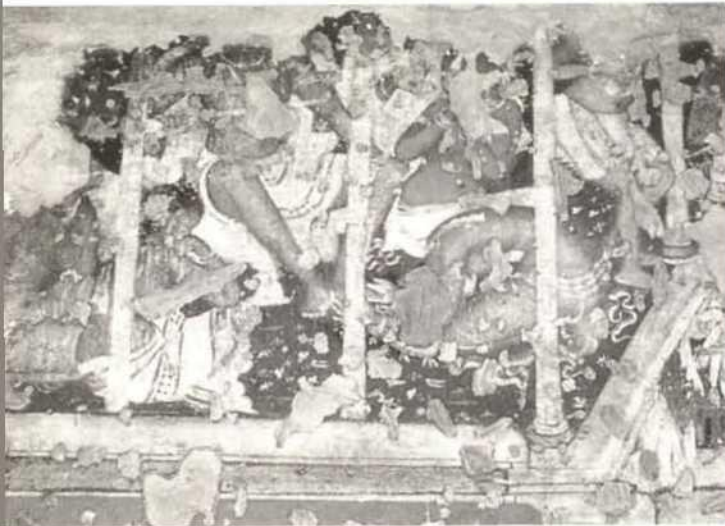
Hampi, elephant stable

taken up by the Federal Union Minister for Culture with the Chief Minister of Karnataka State with a request to seriously consider whether the bridges should be relocated or dismantled altogether. It was also advised that at any rate no further unplanned development should be allowed in the Hampi area and a taskforce be constituted to devise long-term measures to save the site. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, at the request of the central government, constituted such a taskforce to suggest corrective measures.

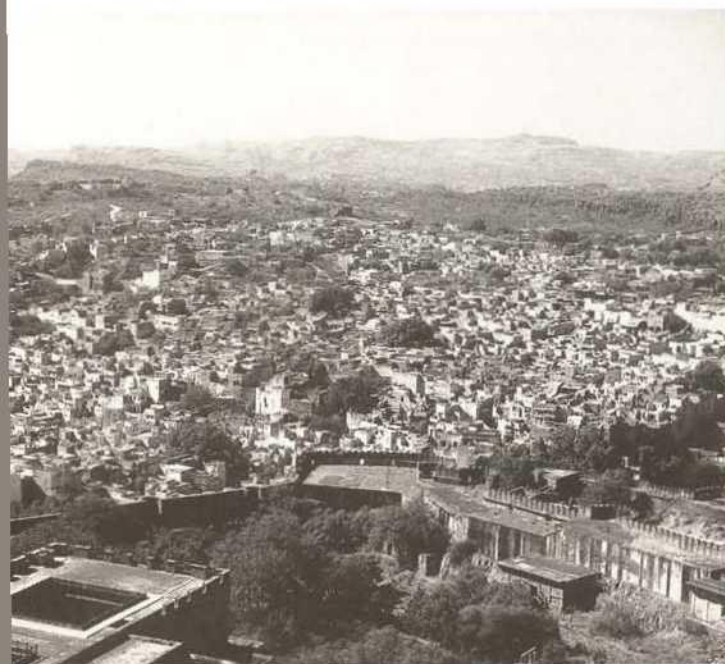
A UNESCO expert team visited Hampi in the fourth week of February 2000 and observed that the construction of bridges has not been stopped and is going on in full swing. The UNESCO expert group met State authorities and apprised them of the imminent danger to the site. The taskforce constituted by the Government of Karnataka held two meetings and submitted a report to the Chief Minister of Karnataka for the relocation of the two bridges. Since then, the construction has stopped on the two



Hampi, Queen's Bath, interior view



Ajanta, wall Paintings (cave II)



Jodhpur, view onto the "blue city" from Mehtangarh Fort

Jodhpur, houses in the old part of the town



Arunahalesvar Temple in Tiruvanmalei (Southern India), entrance to the Hall of the Thousand Columns

bridges. Further, a large number of unauthorised encroachments onto the site have been removed in Hampi, numbering 150 near Krishna Temple, Uddanavaraha, Bhadra, Chandikes-wara and Pattabhirama Temples.

The Archaeological Survey of India has prepared a five year programme for the comprehensive conservation of the monuments at Hampi. It is proposed to discuss this prospective plan at the forthcoming UNESCO conference on 23 October 2000 at Hampi along with the plan for management of the site.

ICOMOS India

Some Case Studies

Ajanta

Craftsman's skills and traditions, which are so important for the maintenance of cultural monuments, have mostly been preserved, however, in the field of conservation there are considerable deficits. This deficit can be seen, for instance, in the case of the wall paintings in the Buddhist cave monasteries of Ajanta, which have been in World Heritage List since 1983. The state of the wall paintings is continuously getting worse, which can be attributed to humidity as well as to a lack of care.

Tiruwanamalai, Aronahalesvar Temple

The Hall of the Thousand Columns of the Aronahalesvar Temple in Tiruwanamalai (Southern India), spoiled by more recent structural additions at the front and generally in a state of decay, is today used as a stable for elephants.

Jodhpur historic town centre

Jodhpur, the so-called "blue city" in Rajasthan, has an important and partly very dense historic building fabric, which is highly endangered by overpopulation, a lack of infrastructure,

namely a waste-water-system and waste disposal. Here, expert planning for a redevelopment measure to preserve the historical substance would be advisable, however for which until now funding and experts are lacking.

Old Goa

It was in 1498 when the Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama finally crossed the African Cape of Good Hope and discovered the sea route to India. Soon the Portuguese settled in Goa, at the west coast of India to found a city as the seat of the viceroy and as an interregional centre for the South Asian and Southeast Asian trade and control. Goa also became the seat of a bishop and as a consequence, different orders such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, and Theatins settled in Goa and churches full of grandeur were built. Some of these churches have survived till today like the Jesuit Church of Bom Jesus (1594-1605) or the Franciscan church of St Francis (1661) and the Theatins church of St Cajetan (1656-61), while the oldest standing is that of St Rosary (1543). Because of their importance, they have been put on the World Heritage List. Unfortunately the conservation of these very important monuments has not been carried out satisfactorily. They are still endangered, especially during the monsoon season. The heavy rains penetrate the roofs and destroy much of the interior, in addition, rising damp endangers the walls.

Not only the buildings themselves are highly at risk but also the paintings and woodcarvings inside the buildings. For example, Bom Jesus houses the shrine of Francis Xavier, a masterpiece of 17th century Tuscan art. Further documentation is needed, both for the buildings and for the interior.



Old Goa, Church of the Rosary (16th century)

Dams on the Narmada River

The fiercely contested project for a whole range of fill dams on the Narmada River in the Indian State of Madhya Pradesh is a very particular threat. This project is connected with the resettlement of 20,000 to 40,000 inhabitants, and numerous cultural properties will be flooded.



Old Goa, Church of St Francis (17th century)