

# **Architectural Conservation**

## **Urban Conservation**

### **Lecture 9**

#### **Conservation as a planning tool**

Our historic buildings and districts give us a visual link to the past in our changing urban landscape. Conservation is much more than just preserving a façade or the external shell of a building. It is very important that conservation and planning go hand in hand. It is not sufficient that the planning department of a historic city, historic core cannot leave the conservation architect out and simultaneously when a conservation architect is working in a core, he cannot leave the planner out. It has to be a quassive effort done by both of them to achieve a successful planning tool. It is also important that we retain the inherent spirit and original ambience of these historic buildings as far as possible. This requires an appreciation and understanding of the architectural structure of the buildings, good management and practice in conserving buildings. Our conservation guidelines are applied in varying degrees to the different conservation districts. So when we think of conserving a building then it does not affect a particular historic urban fabric, but when you are thinking about historic district or historic precincts, conservation becomes a very important tool, because it is not just the entire area that is getting new life but the people of the area are getting new life as well. It is not only the refreshment of 1 particular area but it affects the number of families or cities that is core existing. Is it going to be tourist oriented historic core or is it religious oriented, all of that is very important. So good management as well as good conserving in buildings is important but at the same time we need to analyse, where these buildings exist and how these area is going to respond to the

future. we have to take into consideration the historical significance of each conservation district the context of the surrounding developments and the long term plans for the area. The extent of a building to be conserved and the degree of adaptation allowed also varies by districts and in some cases, by the uniqueness of the subject building. so when we are talking about the architectural character of the building it is equally important as much as the historic significance of the building. Because as the lame in and the general people in that area, more than the historical significance, it is the architectural character, what the person can see in the facades of the building that matters to them. So we have to decide, how is that the external facade is going to attract the people or give them a sense of prior belonging in a particular area. So there should be a certain degree of adaptation that is required. The steps to be taken.

1. The strictest form of building conservation is to be practiced in historic districts.
2. These districts enrich our built environment with their diverse facades, rich ornamentation and unique architectural styles
3. To maintain the ambience and physical character of these historic districts, strict conservation guidelines should be put in place

It is not sufficient that strict guidelines are there, the local planning authority should also be involved in making these guidelines and there should be guidelines should go step further and become a policy or legislation. So there is an after thought that if I do not follow this, there shall be serious consequences. What happens in country like India is with just mere guidelines, there is no strict policy, rule or law that makes a person do it. When it is a mere guideline, people take it for granted and it gets completely ignored

4. Buildings with in these historic districts can be used for a diverse range of purposes, including commercial, community and

residential. when you think of commercial, you can think of café's, restaurants, hotels, community it could be community centre for children, senior citizen centre, learning centre, after school hour school and residential as you all know it could be single dwelling unit or a multiple family dwelling unit.

5. This maintains the original character, where different uses evolved side by side. So when we give a building and a current use cannot be done. Let us come up with new use, adaptive reuse is completely acceptable as far as architectural character is not tampered with.
6. We should encourage established trades and uses that are unique to each area that should remain. So when a particular area with in the core is there like for instance we can take mahabalipuram, there the shell craft is very famous and important. So if you are having urban core over there and the shops related to that, you have to make sure that the local craft is 1<sup>st</sup> displayed. It is more important to have such shops, than to have particular shops from an outside area or outside place.
7. Conservation of our built heritage is an important part of urban planning and development

### **Cities in transition:**

What do we actually mean by this? When you actually have a historic urban core and then you have, over the years it is grown, organically or inorganically depending on the place it is in, there are lot of additions that have happened over a period of time and then there will be additions and changes that will continue to happen. So such cities are referred to as cities in transition. You cannot say Chennai has stopped developing now, It was madras, now it is Chennai and it will continue to develop what it is going to be. So it's only among guidelines and registrations

that we can control the future. Managing the ever- burgeoning population of the mega cities continue to be one of the crucial issues in the urban agenda of developing countries. A policy of urban decentralization- limiting or discouraging growth within the core cities while encouraging population concentration in the smaller urban centers in the periphery is an approach that has been commonly adopted. The different growth patterns of peripheral urban centres at the agglomeration level that is there is different ways, a town grows or city grows, sometimes, when we look at Mumbai, it grows in a different way because it is an island against the coast. Chennai has grown in a different way Delhi has grown in a different way. So all of them have different urban centers or agglomeration level. They all have grown, but it is differential ways and different growth patterns that are definitely there. So it is by size as well as the location relative to the core units. This has largely remained unexplored in the context of India. How have the patterns changed over time ? What are the traits of the urban spread? What are the repercussions of such growth in the regional environment? The general expectation is that the real spread of population in the peripheral areas as evidenced in the rise in the number and the growth of places around the city, So what is that actually needed, accompanies a theory that in the main urban core there is slowing of growth rate As the growth rate slows, the urban growth is slowly going to wither away and die. So that is an unwanted result. NOW WE WILL TAKE DELHI AS AN EXAMPLE to decongest the walled city area and to maintain its heritage character, a comprehensive redevelopment plan for jama masjid area has been prepared involving various government/ non-government departments / agencies and professionals for restoring cultural heritage and past glory of jama masjid, chandini chowk and red fort area what basically constitutes the Old delhi. The process of urban planning in Delhi is continuing from 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Shahjahanabad was built

which now is called walled city. Next major change and expansion of urban Delhi started in the second decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century when britishers planned New Delhi the capital of India. The next major expansion started during partition in 1947 when huge number of refugees decided to come and settle in delhi. Delhi has undergone a lot of changes to manage with full throttle of urbanization that it has been forcibly faced. It has grown from a union territory to a fully fledged state with a capital of marking the establishment of New Delhi as well as the existing Old Delhi which is separate. Chandini Chowk in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long before even when New Delhi came into being or it was there in concept. Chandini Chowk or the moon light square as it translates to is actually the city's main bazaar and cultural hub. It was the throbbing main vein of Delhi. Old Delhi's most famous avenue is now layered with haphazard extensions, very thick netting of electric cables all kinds of encroachments and its nothing like it is used to be. But 1 thing it remains very famous commercial hub. If you look at the image over here, it is Chandini Chowk in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It might even look like a painting which is not real any more. But this is how Chandini Chowk looks. You have shops, with kind of veranda like arrangements so you can protect yourself from the sun. The upper storey is where tradesmen used to live and for the shoppers to have very good experience they have lot of trees which provides them shade and on either side you have shop like this. This is kind of shopping experience in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. And look at Chandini Chowk today. You can clearly see what has happened, what is the main difference, look at the difference in street width. It was incredibly wide and now it has become narrow. The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing, which is obvious is the removal of trees, this happened a way earlier when the britishers had bombs, they decided to go ahead and cut trees. The other thing that is changed here is during the Shah Jahan's time, there was actually a canal

in the original design that brought water from Yamuna. That again got destroyed during the britisher's time itself. So what is the major difference between the old delhi then and now. Today many people are actually moving out of Chandini Chowk. There are less and less people living there. Now it is becoming a commercial street and town. So people are preferring to live in the open suburbs. So this is exactly what we were talking about. As the growth of the city happens in the periphery and outskirts the core of the city. people start moving out and it starts dying. Atleast for now, there is some commercial activity happening over here. But now if this city is not maintained or if it is led to go to a worse state, even shops will start moving out from here and go where people are. If people don't live here any more, they have market area people are there, does not make sense. So it is not long before for the entire market as well moves. So the character is definitely changing. It is becoming more and more commercial and less and less residential. And in todays theory -urban planning language, everyone is looking for a 24 hours city. What do we actually mean by a 24 hours city. In todays times, where safety is such an issue, we don't want a place where people work 9-5 and then the place becomes dead till the next morning. What happens then is, you have lot of anti-social activity happening, when a city or part of city shuts down entirely. So it is important to have mixed use cities or 24 hours cities. Yes morning there will be action, commercial, office and trade activities and there should be residence as well incorporated, so there is activity through the night. There is some activity, movement of people or vehicles even after the so-called working hours. So till now, organically this is Chandini Chowk was. Even before the urban planners came up with 24 hours city, chandinni chowk was a 24 hours city. But now because of the haphazard planning regulations and no guidelines, it has become completely commercial

which is a very great pity and because the main cultural appeal of the city and street is completely lost.

## **Financial Incentives & TDR**

It is very important that when you have a historic property you want to preserve it as a government or non-government organization will provide some incentives to the owners so that they come forward and take some step to help their building. So what is market based incentives. They offer a powerful reason for the public at large to retain care and invest in and responsibly rehabilitate historic building. You give them a purpose to do the right thing. Financial incentives offer a positive broad defensible reason for the public to get more involved with responsible preservation activities other than the fact that they are being compelled to do so by the government. Once they are just thrust upon, they are not doing with interest, they will do, it, they will try to find loophole, they will try to find the cheapest contractors, they will just want to get rid of the building and be responsible. So it has to be offered to them on a plot or with some incentives that help them digest and do a better job towards the building. Much more could be said about the finer points of preservation and their incentives all of these which we will be looking at from international perspective, because unfortunately in our country the system has not kicked in a level of laws and legislations. So we will learn the kind of incentives that have been done in United States and they are well documented, widely understood by the American practitioners and also by the American public of historic course and historic precincts. So these are the primary types of financial incentives to be examined :

- Income tax deductions, credits and rebates for property investment
- Tax incentives for donations to heritage organizations
- Tax exemptions for heritage organizations

- Property tax abatements
- Sales tax concessions or rebates
- Grants.

We will just take a look at 2 of them to see how relevant it is to our area of working on things. So let's look at easements. IT is a form of donations, which allow property of owners to donate a part of the building, physically they are property owners, but what they actually do is in exchange for diminished value of property rights, I will donate a façade of my building which means I can give my house or building in question to my children and his children in return. But the façade of the building cannot be tampered with. Either the government / non governmental organization will purchase this façade and in return I will get tax deductions on my income tax or property tax which is quite large. The amount will be quite large. So I will be getting some so that I can give the government an opportunity to protect the façade of my building. So this is the perpetual need. So once if I decide to donate an easement, I will continue keeping the benefits, tax deductions will always happen for ever and to the future owners but the easement always remains permanent. Property tax abatements: This is usually offered on local levels, it permits historic property owners or investors to claim a full or partial reduction, freeze or deferment of property taxes or rates, sometimes to help control the costs of a rehabilitation which has increased a property's value. So this is again a very useful thing that can be done. Both of these can be applied in date contexts as well. What is TDR or transferable development rights? This is very important kind of financial incentive afford in Europe and many other parts of the world. Transfer of development rights or TDR means making available certain amount of additional built up area in return I will give the area relinquished or surrendered, the owner would give that up, so that the extra built up area can either be transferred or sold for an agreed some of



money. So when this happens, all the time in our country between the government and the particular owner, when the road has to be widened, when the highway has to be widened. When a road has to be widened, a particular house might be there, shop might be there, so government will actually take the area of the land that is required and give the equivalent amount in some other area or either in terms of money. Usually the government deals with giving the area in some other particular region. But if we do the same thing to historic building, it will make a huge difference as well. There will be lot of people who come with their own property wanting to repair them and restore them. What are the zones of TDR. Based on the intensity of development, the city is divided into intensively developed otherwise called as A-zone, moderately developed B- zone and sparsely developed C –zone. The transfer of development rights shall be from intensively developed zone to the other zones and not vice versa. These are the financial incentives of physical measures that could happen or should happen between intact and the local government. INTACH advisory committee should engage in dialogue with the government to initiate the formulation of appropriate fiscal policies to promote conservation. INTACH should lobby for the provision for a heritage fund to be included in the annual or quinquennial budgetary allocations of Central and state governments. It should endeavor to ensure that local governing bodies have access to these funds through transparent mechanisms. The policy of adoption of the historic buildings, areas by competent and concerned community groups, trusts or private entrepreneurs of repute that in no way harms the interests or well being of the heritage or the society, in which it exists, must be encouraged. There is no way the harms or heritage of the society in which it should be encouraged. So when we think of adaption as a very good way of preserving the heritage in our country because we have innumerable industrialists, corporate that works here. So they can

actually take up a building or area and make sure it is conserved or preserved well. But it has to be done hand in hand with the government so that the government acts like a watch dog and the private entrepreneur doesn't take any wrong measures or strict measures against them as well if required. THE owners or caretakers of the listed heritage building should be offered incentives by way of favorable tax rebates, grants, loans, transfer of development rights and so forth. So we should encourage them and foster their interest in conservation of their cultural property. We should provide them with strong incentives to take up such a difficult project which consumes not only money, but time and effort as well. Public authorities, private companies, governmental bodies and non- governmental organizations should be encouraged to offer adequate financial assistance to traditional craftspeople and agencies involved in craft promotion and trade. Another important part of conservation, conservation related craft and crafts conservation. So it is very important that financial assistance is rendered to such people, because it's only because of crafts that can conservation be continuing. And only if the conservation is done, craft can continue. So it is very inter relate able symbiotic relationship that has to be nurtured not only by the government but also the private enterprises and even the community at large.

### **Urban Conservation & Heritage Tourism**

Now we will discuss the relationship between Urban Conservation & Heritage Tourism. There is actually a strong affinity between tourism and heritage and that is very important leverage to promote conservation. Because tourism gives the required money that conservation needs to be done well, especially for unprotected architectural heritage and sites. the potential of domestic tourism, particularly pilgrimage tourism need to be developed. At the same time,

there must be adequate safeguards to mitigate problems created by aggressive tourism promotion in areas where traditional communities and unprotected sites exist. Tourism can depend on heritage and heritage does depend on tourism, but it shouldn't come to an extent where the equation is not balanced and tourism is actually affecting the heritage and heritage area and the people living in it. Heritage in recent times has superseded conservation, where marketing of heritage as a product according to the demands of the consumer, mainly tourist has resulted in the commercialization of heritage over conservation values. Today the symbiosis of both tourist and heritage has become a major objective in the management and planning of historic areas. Parallel to the development of urban conservation, has been the steady growth of cultural tourism in historic towns. In case of historic towns, the tourism is not only an added economic benefit but also plays an important role in conservation and economic regeneration. So it not only helps to keep the place alive but also the people in the place and town will keep their jobs, will get better jobs and better standards of living. Urban heritage has been conserved as a result of tourism interest at the same time a considerable amount has been lost due to tourism. The main aim of urban conservation has become to satisfy the tourists. For the tourism industry heritage and history have become commodities that are sold to tourist as an experience. Heritage is reduced to a chosen interpretation of history and its physical remains a marketing tool. Tourism increases the physical pressure on fragile environments and may be seen as a threat to social community. Making tourism work for historic towns and their conservation depends foremost on the objectives of development and the authority to control it. For high quality and desirable environment which is competitive and progressive, locally district yet globally acceptable a delicate balance has to be sought in historic towns between desires of visitors and interest of resident and heritage between

growth and quality of life between economic development and environmental costs - sustainable development is crucial. There should be good balance between the 2, there should be a balance between growth and equality of life between economic development and environment costs. So sustainable development is key costs here that is very crucial. Urban conservation is not about preserving the past as an archaeological ruin it is about enhancing an area which has qualities built upon from past as a contemporary working environment. Tourism has to be made to work for historic towns enhance rather than destroy, support rather than siphon, most of all the value the depth, the heart and the spirit of place. Such that historic towns do not lose their significance.