# OUR DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL MONUMENTS MUST BE FREED FROM THE 'SLAVE' MINDSET

Indian Express

Paper-I
(Art and Culture )

Monuments are memories etched in stone. Post Independence, there was little effort to correct the mindset of those responsible for writing history books, who continued to think about monuments and archaeological sites in the British way and taught the history of our defeats and our enemies' victories.

## National Memorial under the Decolonization Campaign

Recently the decolonisation drive began, bringing out the sagas of King Suheldev, Rani Durgavati and Lachit Barphukan. It has highlighted the story of the founder-king of Delhi, Anangpal Tomar, declaring the neglected Anang Tal as a monument of national importance. It held national and international events at the Sindhu-Saraswati site of Dholavira and unveiled a new Shivaji-era inspired naval insignia.

## Report to give new direction to Indian culture

- This is just the beginning. With the painstakingly produced report by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Monuments of National Importance — authored by chairman Bibek Debroy and member Sanjeev Sanyal —

**National Monuments Authority (NMA)**

- The National Monuments Authority (NMA) under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India has been established as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010, which came into force in March, 2010. The National Monuments Authority is entrusted with a number of functions relating to the protection and preservation of monuments and sites through management of the Prohibited and Regulated Zone adjacent to centrally protected monuments. The National Monuments Authority also considers granting permission to the applicants for construction related activities in the prohibited and regulated area in these responsibilities.
- These provisions were changed in 2010 after amendment in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act–
  - Statutory provisions for 'prohibited' and regulated sectors.
  - Complete ban on construction in the regulated area.
  - Laying down statutory procedure for applications for permission for construction/repair/renovation.
  - The Authority will carry out necessary scrutiny of the heritage bye-laws and grant approval after inviting objections/suggestions from the public.
  - Grading and classification of monuments.

there is hope that the remnants of the British slave mindset in the Archaeological Survey of India will change, giving way to rational thinking that reflects Bharat.

- This report is a big step in the right direction and may become the Bhagavad Gita guiding the direction in which the preservation and designation of monuments of national importance should go.
- All the recommendations made by the report can be implemented without amending the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act and needs only executive orders.

**To recognize and bring forth the personalities of the past and their contribution to Indian history**

- As the chairman of the National Monuments Authority (NMA), I had the opportunity to flag some anomalies and suggest changes in the way we look at the preservation of monuments.
- The way in which we have created a list of 3,695 monuments of national importance has some interesting facets. The samadhi in Satara of Maratha queen Tarabai Bhonsle, who fought the Mughals and ruled for 30 years, is in ruins. No one thought that it deserves the honour of being declared a monument of national importance.
- There is not a single monument connected with the struggles of Dalits and B R Ambedkar's life that has been declared as a national monument. No proposal to the effect has even been accepted. After a detailed site inspection by the NMA, the governor of Kerala recommended that the birthplace of Adi Sankara, Kalady, be declared a monument of national importance. The recommendation was not even responded to.

**Member in NMA**

The Act provides for the constitution of a National Monuments Authority with a full-time Chairperson and not more than 5 full-time and 5 part-time members and a member-secretary. The Director General, Archaeological Survey of India is its ex-officio member.

**What are the boundaries of prohibited and regulated areas?**

In respect of centrally protected monuments and protected areas, the minimum prohibited area is 100 metres, in all directions starting from the boundary of the protected monument or protected area of the site. The minimum boundary of the regulated area of centrally protected monuments and protected areas is 200 meters starting from the boundary of the prohibited area. These boundary areas are expandable as per the classification of centrally protected monuments and protected areas on the recommendation of the National Monuments Authority.

**Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**

- ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation. Its activities include carrying out surveys of antiquarian remains, exploration and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments etc.
- It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".

- The Mangarh hillock in Rajasthan was recommended by the NMA, along with the Minister of State for Culture, to be declared a Monument of National Importance. This was the site of the massacre of more than 1,500 Bhils by the British army on November 17, 1913. We are still waiting for action on it.

### Why was it needed?

- There are more than a hundred monuments, like Tota-Maina ki Qabar and Dadi Poti ka Gumbad, which have absolutely no history. Nobody knows what they represent and whether they should be declared as Monuments of National Importance. Similarly, the designation of some as Monuments of National Importance defies logic, like Muhammad Ghori Ke Senapati Ki Chhatri. Who decided that monuments like this are of national importance and why has there been no review of these decisions till now?
- Not a single monument of national importance from Kashmir, like the Martand Sun Temple, Parihaspora and Harwan Monastery, was ever recommended to be declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and none has been given even a security guard like we see at other sites.

### Way forward

The functioning and mandate of all agencies dealing with monuments should be relooked on the lines of the Planning Commission. They should be freed from the slavery mentality of the British and should be handed over to those who know their subject. We need an Archaeological Foundation to preserve India's civilizational and revolutionary monuments, not to be watchmen of invaders' kabristans (graveyards). These can be given district level archaeological tags. It can be expected that the report of Bibek Debroy-Sanjeev Sanyal will bring new thinking in this direction.

GS World
Committed To Excellence

## Expected Question

**Que. Consider the following statements–**

1. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for archaeological research and conservation of the country's cultural heritage.
2. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the " Father of Indian Archaeology".
3. The Archaeological Survey of India was established in 1861

   Which of the above statements are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer : D**

## Mains Expected Question & Format

**Que.: 'According to the report of the Economic Advisory Council, there is a need to re-think the process of declaring monuments of national importance.' Throw light on its importance and necessity.**

**Answer Format :**

- Give a brief description of the report of the Economic Advisory Council.
- Explain its need and importance according to the report.
- Give a balanced conclusion.

**Note:** - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.