

A Study of Erstwhile Samsthan/ Zamindari Palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

VASANTA SOBHA TURAGA*

ABSTRACT

Zamindari/Samsthan Palaces built during the 17th – 20th Centuries across India are buildings of historical and architectural significance but are unprotected and lying in neglect and disrepair. Zamindars and Rajas, who were heads of local areas in pre-Independent India, were divested of their positions, privileges and major land holdings after the Independence and abolition of Zamindari systems and political integration of princely states. Interactions with the present generation of Zamindar families/lineage of erstwhile rulers have revealed situations and dilemmas due to changed/changing political, legal, economic, social and cultural conditions, and the challenges, opportunities they face in maintenance and management of the historic properties that they have inherited. As part of the Doctoral research at School of Planning and Architecture, Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture & Fine Arts University, Hyderabad, 27 Samsthans/Zamindari palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were studied under the research work. This paper presents the findings from the research work, listing out a few of the socio-cultural dilemmas of the owners of the historic properties, affecting the present state of preservation of erstwhile Samsthan/Zamindari Palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as representing the Unprotected Heritage in India.

Keywords: *Unprotected Heritage, Conservation, Management, Inheritance, Social, Culture, Political Integration*

INTRODUCTION

“A majority of architectural heritage properties and sites in India still remain unidentified, unclassified, and unprotected, thereby subject to attrition on account of neglect, vandalism and insensitive development”

*Conservation Architect, PhD Scholar, JNA&FAU, Hyderabad.
Email: vasantasobhaturaga@gmail.com

– INTACH Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India, 2004.

Based on legal status, heritage in India can be categorised into two groups. First category consists of those having a legal/official status and protection viz., the ‘Protected Monuments’ (under the Central Archaeological Survey of India & State Departments of Archaeology/Heritage) and ‘Listed sites’ (under Urban Local Bodies). The other category includes all those heritage sites that have no legal, official heritage status, popularly called as ‘Unprotected/unlisted monuments and historical sites’. While India has a rich history with innumerable historic structures, only a few thousands are under Central/State Protection and Local Listing and many others remain ‘Unprotected/Unlisted’ across India.

Zamindari/Samsthan Palaces built during 17th – 20th Centuries across India are one such category, which, in spite of their historical and architectural significance, are mostly ‘Unprotected/Unlisted’ and lying in neglect and disrepair.

Samsthans/Zamindari palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were studied as part of the Doctoral research at School of Planning and Architecture, Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture & Fine Arts University, Hyderabad, as representing Unprotected Heritage in India. The Study also included interaction with the present owners, lineage of Zamindars/Rajas who face challenges when handling the responsibility of maintenance and management of their inherited historical palaces and foregoing their Constitutional rights of being private property owners. This paper presents the findings from the research work, listing out a few socio-cultural dilemmas of the owners of historic properties, affecting the present state of preservation of erstwhile Samsthan/Zamindari Palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

SAMSTHANS/ZAMINDARS- HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Historical Context

Samsthans/Zamindars, sub-regional authorities in the Princely States and British India, were the ruling/land revenue systems in pre-Independence India that were abolished and merged into the Indian Union. They were the local chieftains, feudal lords between 17th Century and 1947, with varying revenue/judicial powers and had an important role to play in the local, sub-regional, even State-level politics, culture and administration. Zamindars were ‘landlords/officials’ (Britannica.com), land revenue collection intermediaries of the estates created by

the British through the 1802 Permanent Settlement. Samsthans existed from pre-colonial times as royalty (Donappa, 1969/1987). They were ruling 'little kingdoms', sub-regional units reporting to the emperor (Cohen, 2007). Samsthans or local Kingdoms were 'little kings' (Dirks, 1986) who were 'stripped of political power and turned into zamindars or landed proprietors', by the British 'in the larger interest of order and security' (Rajagopal, 2016).

Geographical Context

Samsthans/Zamindars existed across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, called by different names in different regions such as *Taluqdars*, *Nawabs*, *Desais*, *Jagirdars*, *Rajas* and others. This present study situated in the present States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, prior to 1947, were under the rule and administration of the Princely State of Hyderabad, ruled by the Nizams and British territories of Madras Presidency respectively.

Each Samsthan/Zamindari - the geographical region under them, had its Headquarters in a Capital city/town, and the Samsthan/Zamindari was referred to by the Capital city/town. For example, in the States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, Gadwal, Nuzvid, Venkatagiri, Vizianagaram and others are all the names of the historic Samsthans/Zamindaris as well as towns and cities of their Headquarters.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

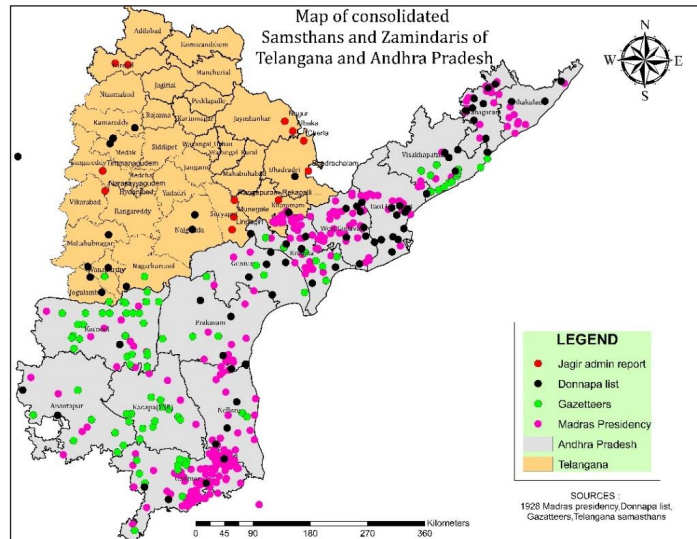
Four Stages of Research Work

The doctoral research work with a focus on state of preservation of historical palaces was conducted in four stages, from listing of land revenue units to identification of buildings/palaces, study of their condition and understanding reasons for the state of preservation, as explained below.

In Stage One, Zamindari/Samsthans towns and villages were listed from various archival records and documents. A total of 603 settlements in Andhra Pradesh and 30 in Telangana were listed and mapped.

In Stage Two, buildings and architecture of the erstwhile Zamindaris/Samsthans were explored and total of 27 case studies were selected based on their historical, architectural significance and distribution. The 27 case studies selected included Forts & Palaces of Samsthans/Zamindaris of Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Kollapur, Domakonda, Narayanpur, Munagala, Rajapeta, Palvancha in Telangana

**Fig. 1: Samsthans and Zamindaris of
Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**



Sources: Author

and Banagapalle, Rayadurg, Srikalahasti, Venkatagiri, Punganur, Chandragiri, Karvetinagar, Gurramkonda, Bobbili, Vizianagaram, Nuzvid, Mylavaram, Amaravati, Challapalli, Pithapuram, Peddapuram, Kasimkota and Muktyala. These consist of big, medium and small Samsthans and Zamindaries, located presently in different development scenarios as part of cities, towns, villages and hinterlands across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

In Stage Three, the present use, condition and management of the selected 27 case studies studied. The case study sites presented a wide range of situations - from sites which are totally lost and restored, in use and vacant, used as tourist sites, hotels, converted to schools, colleges or continued to be used by the Zamindar/Raja families as residences, offices and personal museums, a few of them donated/taken over by the Government, many are retained by the family. Statistical distribution of case study findings is listed in the doctoral work with detailed description of each and overlapping situations of the 27 case studies.

In Stage Four, the dimensions of ownership, management has been studied through informal interviews and interaction with present owners and experts in the field to understand the reasons for state of preservation of the erstwhile Zamindari/Samsthan Palaces.

This article presents the findings from Stage Four, outcomes of

**Fig. 2: Banganapalle Samsthan, Kurnool District,
Andhra Pradesh Photo by author**



Sources: Author

**Fig. 3: Mylavaram Zamindari, Krishna District,
Andhra Pradesh Photo by Author**



Sources: Author

the informal interaction with the present owners in maintenance and management of their inherited historical properties.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF ZAMINDARS/ SAMSTHANS IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms

"The first decade of Independence witnessed the extensive programmes of land reforms carried out in almost every Indian state. In Uttar Pradesh, a Zamindari

Abolition committee was appointed in 1946 and Zamindari Abolition Act was passed as Act I of 1951 and stripped large landlords of the bulk of their estates/land-holdings and allowed to keep only their unlet home-farms” (Metcalf, 1967) Soon after, “Constitution of India amended the right to property under Article 19 and 31” (Sareen and Malik, 2021) in the context of “land reform objectives for fixing of limits to the extent of agricultural land that may be owned or occupied by any person (Constitution of India, 4th Amendment). In 1971, the 26th Amendment to Constitution abolished the privy-purse, stopping all privileges and allowances paid to royal families in India.

PRE- AND POST-INDEPENDENCE CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF ZAMINDARS AND IMPACT ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES’

Prior to Independence, having many properties, rights and power, Zamindars were a powerful social class during the British period. “Zamindars enjoyed enormous resources not only from land revenue but also from trade and commerce, their possession also constituted a Prangana or Mahal located within the imperial territory” (Nadri, 2000).

Zamindars, who “lived for so long in such splendid isolation, were assured of an ample income” after Zamindari abolition were not “anywhere near so wealthy as they once were nor do they tower over rural society to the same extent. Their formerly unchallenged dominance has been undercut and their unquestioned position disappeared” (Metcalf, 1967). Post-Independence, Zamindars “lost properties which they were enjoying for many years. For several Zamindars, Zamindari was their only source of livelihood. Deprived of power and rights, their social status diminished in course of time” (Rath, 1992).

The changes in the political situation and post-Independence Constitutional Acts relating to Zamindari abolition, land ceiling, rights of ownerships and properties have changed the social, cultural and economic position of Zamindars/Samsthans permanently.

Due to abolition of the Zamindari system and political integration of Princely States into Indian Union, the role and position of Zamindars/Samsthans permanently changed in the post-Independent Indian Democratic Republic, turning the families of nobility/aristocracy to common citizens. The Buildings and establishment – the historic properties of the Zamindaris/Samsthans have borne the brunt of the political change and the changed socio-economic status of Zamindars.

The Zamindari families, having a history of more than two hundred years, have seen ups and downs of the changing political scenario of India during 20th Century. From the 1930s, freedom and national

movements were intertwined with peasant movements that pushed rights of the cultivators over those of the landlords.

“The introduction of various Zamindari Abolition Bills had begun even before the Constitution of India was enacted. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and Bombay introduced Zamindari Abolition Bills. The zamindari system was abolished in Independent India and soon after the Constitution of India amended the right to property under Article 19 and 31 through its First Amendment Act. The major objective of agrarian land reforms was to bring a change in the revenue system that would in turn be favorable to the cultivators” (Sareen & Malik, 2021).

In Hyderabad State and Andhra Pradesh, Committees were appointed on whose recommendations Bills were passed in 1950s *“ensuring largest measure of contentment and prosperity among population in general and the agricultural population in particular and equitable distribution of agricultural wealth, incomes and objectives” (Jatkar, 1980)*

“Zamindars were allowed to keep land in certain places for their personal cultivation. And compensation was paid to the Zamindars by the State on acquiring the land ownership title back from them. After the abolition of Zamindari system many peasants and share croppers acquired the land ownership title” (Sareen & Malik, 2021).

Pre-and-Post Independence Economic Conditions of the Zamindars:

The Zamindari systems, basically being land revenue administration mechanisms with flow of revenue from villages under each Zamindar’s control, supported the scale and size of estate and private establishments and properties of the Zamindars. Post-Independence, the land that belonged to Zamindars was seized through various land reforms taken up in the country, leading to reduced revenue flow from villages, land and agriculture. A few of the buildings and establishments remained with the Zamindari families but with reduced size and scale of revenue generating land holdings. The broken link between revenue and expenditure is one of the primary factors affecting the repair and non-maintenance of historic properties.

Pre-and-Post Independence Social Conditions of Zamindars:

During the period around Independence, those Zamindari families that could survive the political turbulence, retained their position in society by adapting themselves into new India, by taking up occupations in politics, industry etc. There were also Zamindars who had lost, sold, given up and abandoned their properties and moved away.

Most of the present generation of owners were born around the time of Independence. On one side, they are holding on to honour,

authority, sentiment and pride of their past, and on the other side, have the next generation move on and adapt to modern, normal life like any other citizens in India. They live with the burden of maintaining and managing their inherited properties located in the old Zamindaris, away from their cities of their present residence, with their wards apparently unable to manage resources even as they do not seem to evince much interest in their old legacy.

Impact on Historic Properties

The Samsthan and Zamindari palaces, which were once built and maintained in glory and grandeur, in pomp and luxury, are now sidelined from the epicentres of today's development. However, located in different development contexts, these historic properties qualify and deserve to be conserved as heritage.

In whatever state of preservation these palace buildings exist, whether in ruins or good condition, in whichever location, in towns or villages, the Zamindari palaces hold social, architectural, aesthetic and antiquity values and constitute a historically significant aspect of local and regional histories across the sub-continent and also as in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the present study area.

Most of these being private properties, the condition of the historic properties is an outcome of decisions taken by the Zamindari families, whether of good care or non-maintenance. The following informal survey was conducted to know and understand whether or not the owners of Zamindari/Samsthan palaces are in a position to repair, restore and maintain these historic properties in the changed political and socio-economic situation after Independence,

INTERACTION WITH ZAMINDARI/ SAMSTHAN PALACES' OWNERS

Unprotected historic buildings without legal heritage preservation regulations keep Constitutional 'Right to property' applicable to private owners. With exceptions of well-preserved, restored palaces, owners of historic properties may feel conservation as a loss-making liability, despite having sentiment and pride about their inherited historic properties.

Informal Interviews

Informal interviews were conducted with a few descendants of erstwhile Zamindars/Samsthans, their close relatives and experts in the field, who were willing to talk on personal, property matters to an extent. The

interactions were informal without seeking proof of documentation. Though it was planned to seek written answers to the queries, the families were not too forthcoming. Therefore data was gathered for getting an overall understanding of various aspects and challenges of having the onerous responsibility of carrying legacies and their perspectives on conservation and future of their historic palaces.

Research Questions

Opinions of descendants of Rajas and Zamindars were sought with regard to ownership, maintenance, management, family details, especially the next generation, revenue and expenditure, skills/capacities/aptitude of family members, future plans on conservation and development, including their views on heritage conservation, role of government, sentiments and pride on inherited properties. Among the questions were:

- What are the issues relating to private ownership and management of historic sites?
- How are owners raising funds to maintain their properties? What are the opportunities and challenges?
- What are the ideas, opinions and plans of owners for the future of their properties?
- What is the willingness to conserve, what are their capacities to manage, what resources do they have to repair, restore, maintain and manage?
- What are the levels of openness to invite partnerships and what kind of support is expected from the government?
- What is the consensus of the family members, are there any legal disputes among the joint holders of the property?
- What are the socio-cultural factors and family/personal issues of the erstwhile rulers? How good or bad is their economic status?
- What are the popular occupations of the present and next generations of the Zamindari descendants?
- What are the plans and levels of participation of the next generation and their willingness to preserve their inherited properties for posterity?

The findings from informal interviews and observations from case studies are listed below.

SOCIO-CULTURAL DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES - OWNERS' PERSPECTIVES

The overall findings from the informal interviews, supported by case studies and literature review, are presented below without mentioning any names, as the queries were answered on the condition of protection of privacy and confidentiality.

Present Owners - Background, age groups, gender and participation in property matters

The present owners of the Samsthan and Zamindari palaces are either direct descendants or adopted from other families. This generation of owners was born during or immediately after Independence and is in the age groups of 50s to 80s.

Though they have inherited movable, immovable properties, lifestyles and traditions of the Zamindari families, most of these present owners have not witnessed the true and high points of Zamindar life and work before Independence. Even during those times from the 1930s to 1947, the Independence movement had picked up momentum, making way for total Independence in 1947 and Zamindaris were in the closing up mode and out of the full-fledged operation.

This generation of owners was educated in free India and grew up as ordinary citizens. Both men and women of Zamindari families take active participation in the social affairs of the estates, but it is only this present generation of owners aged between in 50s and 80s, that participates in property matters.

Domakonda is an exception where the new generation has taken keen interest, and Jatprole is trying to involve and train the next generation.

Occupations

The role and occupation of Zamindars in the 19th - early 20th centuries was that of landlords, managing agricultural lands, villages and collecting revenue. Some of the Zamindars are known to have taken up development of public works and creating landmarks. In most of the cases, the Zamindars have been chief patrons of local temples and religious structures.

Post-Independence, once again, the occupations that children of Zamindars have taken up are of a broad range. It is observed that where the families joined politics, there is greater connect to their own Zamindari palaces, with the descendants becoming public figures,

engaging with people and representing their own constituency in Parliament or Assembly. The Gajapati brothers of Vizianagaram have been long time Union Ministers. Bobbili Zamindar was Chief Minister of Madras State, and the present owner is a Minister in the present AP Government.

Those Zamindars who are into business or continuing in agriculture, are connected better, like Challapalli, Muktyala, owners of KCP cement company.

Then there are Zamindars who donated their properties and moved into modern job sectors. Domakonda Zamindar was a retired civil servant. Wanaparthi Samsthan descendants are educationalists and artists. The next generation has moved on into new jobs of IT and businesses and are less connected to the management.

Sentiment, Pride and Memories

Zamindar families appear to be living in memories, though all of them display a uniform sense of sentiment and pride. A few of the family members who take pride, put tremendous efforts in pooling material and preserving artifacts, creating family trees. Some families who have had a turbulent past, prefer to stay disconnected.

Fig. 4: Interiors of Bobbili Raja's Palace, Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh - Family continues to reside maintaining historic buildings, preserving memories and artifacts



Source: Author

Adoptions

There were adoptions from one Zamindari family to another all through history, mostly within the same caste. Venkatagiri Zamindar had seven sons at a time, who were given in adoption to Zamindaris of Bobbili, Jatprole (Kollapur) and Pithapuram. The present male ward of Wanaparthy Samsthan has been adopted for continuing same caste lineage.

Marriages

Marriages across Zamindaris, not only within Telugu states but from across Zamindaris elsewhere in the country were and are common even today, and caste is secondary sometimes. Maharani Seetadevi, wife of Nuzvid Zamindar, married Maharaja of Baroda. The Wanaparthy Samsthan ruler married a lady, a mother of three girls and later adopted a son from the same community. The present Mysore Wadiyar is married to a Rajasthani princess.

Zamindars were married twice or thrice, either after death of the spouse or when alive. More than one marriage and children from different marriages are among the major causes for disputes over properties, which have affected the condition and fate of properties.

It is said that it matters who is married into the Zamindari families. Spouses who take interest in Zamindari affairs and properties are very supportive for upkeep of properties and traditions. And the new generation spouses have little interest, which is becoming a disadvantage for state of preservation and management.

Migrations

After Independence, some of the families sold or donated properties and shifted from Zamindari towns and villages. The Nizams of Hyderabad moved to London. Palvancha Zamindars moved to the United States. Zamindars of Venkatagiri, Amaravati, Muktyala moved to Chennai, Punganur Zamindars to Bangalore and many others to Hyderabad.

The next generation, children of the present owners, have migrated or are migrating to other foreign countries through marriage or on employment. The non-resident management of historic properties is a big challenge for the owners.

Castes and Communities

All through the historical times, the family lineages were caste and community-based and continue to do so. There are Velama, Reddy,

Kshatriyas, Naidu, Kamma and Brahmin Zamindars. The family links are still maintained across Samsthans and Zamindaris.

Community Networks and Organisations

The present Zamindars are well-connected within their own castes and outside too. Zamindars live and behave as a community, separate from world and network among themselves. Though there is no society or organisation of Zamindars, caste-based associations exist among Kshatriyas, Velamas, Brahmins and others, who stay strong and united, maintaining good relationships.

Inheritance and Divisions of Properties

Samsthans and Zamindaris by law have been properties and positions of inheritance, where the Zamindars were free to pass the mantle to anyone of their choice, be it within the family or somebody from outside.

It is observed that just before Independence, when the process of Zamindari abolition and land acquisition had already begun in 1930s itself and also as seen in the 1928 list of Madras Presidency, bigger and larger Zamindaris were sub-divided into smaller estates, with much lesser *Peshkush*. These estates were registered with the district collectors, to be included in the 1928 List. Where there was clarity in inherited properties and understanding within family members, heritage properties are better preserved. Again quoting the case of Sanivarapupeta in West Godavari, it is said that the Zamindarini two generations back had two sons, who in turn had one and two sons. Brothers in both generations have nominated one single person for managing the affairs of villages and properties they own, which in turn reflects in the state of preservation and maintenance of their properties.

Decisions and Consensus in Joint Properties

Though the details of ownership are not revealed, the buildings and sites are better preserved where there is consensus and unity among joint holders of properties. Bobbili is a case in point. There are examples of hung decisions, when there is disagreement between joint owners, such as Chiran fort in Hyderabad, and the same is said about Challapalli palace, though not from authentic sources.

Donations of Properties to Trusts and Governments

The period during and immediately after post-Independence, was the time when most of the properties were settled by the then Zamindars, including transfer to government and trusts, like with the cases of

Fig. 5: Nuzvid Zamindari Palace, Nuzvidu, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh- Educational Institute, Krishna University



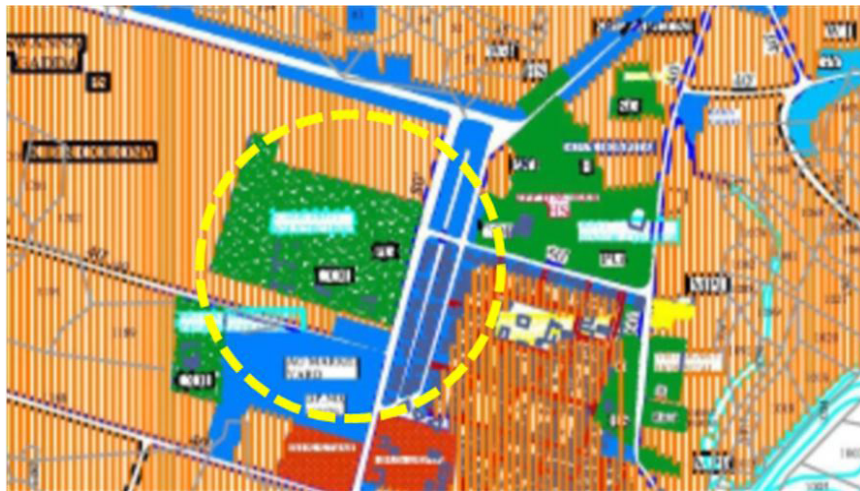
Source: Author

Fig. 6: Wanaparthy Samasthan Palace, Wanaparthy, Telangana- Government Polytechnic College



Source: Google Earth Image

**Fig. 7: Wanaparthy Samasthan Palace, Wanaparthy,
Telangana- Government Polytechnic College on Landuse Map**



Map Source: Department of Town and Country Planning, Government of Telangana.

Vizianagaram, Nuzvid, Wanaparthy, Gadwal. These places cannot be said to be in good state of maintenance and reflect either uninformed, unskilled maintenance or neglect. Domakonda, which was given to the government for protection, but later restored by the present generation of the family, continues to be a State Monument under Department of Archaeology.

Legal Disputes

Legal disputes were common during the British times, over ownership or *Peshkush* or family disputes. The infamous case of Pithapuram regarding adoption with Venkatagiri, is one of the examples. It is heard that the second wife of Ichchapuram Zamindar in Srikakulam district fought a long battle for property share, but had lost to the first wife.

The topic of legal disputes and court cases of Zamindars makes for a separate study, for mentioning specific examples and conversations with Zamindars also did not yield much information.

Repair, Maintenance and Management

Most of the Zamindars have migrated to bigger cities and are doing non-resident management, with a few exceptions.

Bobbili Zamindars fully operate out of Bobbili, have their own staff and constituency workers for maintenance and also agricultural land

(Fig. 4). They understand very well the costs of repairs and maintenance, and say they smartly manage to make the buildings stay and look good, by taking up tasks of whitewashing or minor repairs by only addressing basic minimum and not pulling out the core issues. For example, they say for events, they just white wash the façades that are visible and that itself costs them an elephantine budget because of the scale and size of the buildings.

In Mylavaram Zamindari, which is said to be less than one percent of the original land under their ownership, within which too the palace complex was divided among three brothers of the previous generation, there are 20 members of maintenance staff on payrolls, of which four are members of residential, live-in personnel (Fig. 2). The staff, including electricians, plumbers to maintain their properties and clerks, altogether cost them about Rupees 10 lakhs annually. They spent about two to three lakhs annually for repair of old buildings or on upgradation of services, which is a constant every year.

Vizianagaram has transferred major chunks of their properties to an educational trust and live in smaller, manageable bungalows. Though the buildings under trusts and government institutions are covered under the institutional expenditures, they are not maintained up to the mark. Many other Zamindaris, like Kollapur, Nuzvid, Amaravati have caretaker families and staff staying on site and taking care of their properties.

Restoration as an exercise is only taken up by Domakonda and Muktyala.

Fig. 8: Venkatagiri Raja's Palace, Venkatagiri, Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh- Family continues to live in Palace preserving buildings, furniture and artifacts



Source: Author

**Fig. 9: Muktyala Palace, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh-
Repaired and Restored by the Family (Picture and Project by GSV
Suryanarayana Murthy, Kshetra Consultants)**



Photo Source: GSV Suryanarayana Murthy, Kshetra Consultants.

Skills, Capacities and Aptitude of Family Members

Property management is an occupation in itself requiring high levels of alertness and smartness. Heritage properties can be made into assets, turned into profitable ventures, but only when taken up under full skills and capacities. Skills and capacities of the owners in fixing deals, developing and managing properties are essential for any successful adaptation of historic buildings, for operation by their own as family businesses, if not on partnerships. Converting historic properties into profitable ventures, such as heritage hotels in Rajasthan and elsewhere, needs special inclination and attention.

The interviews reveal that the next generation owners have moved on into modern jobs, and are not interested in returning and managing properties. Neither do they have the required skills, patience or prudence to deal with local situations, which are political and administrative in nature. Reverse migration helps in restoring and sprucing up properties, like the case of Chowmahalla and Domakonda, but these are rare cases.

Finances and Economics

Most of the properties do not generate income sufficient to maintain them. Zamindari systems were fed by revenue from land and villages under them. The Zamindars are now able to upkeep these places only with the revenue from other sources. Rents from commercial properties built over in the vacant lands of Zamindaris over the years, are the most common sources of income. If the next generation moves into the job sector totally, it is not possible to allocate required funds for repair and maintenance of these huge properties.

Partnerships with Investors

The scenario of partnerships with investors has not picked up so much

in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, on the lines of Falaknuma and other heritage hotels. First, the owners have not fully opened up to the idea of sharing of properties. Second, where there is interest, owners are finding difficulty in suitable partners who are ready to invest on a not-so-profitable venture. The state of preservation of these structures also matters for decisions on capital and recurring investment and returns.

Development Options

Extensions and expansions, repairs and upgrade of the old and adding new constructions have been part and parcel of life of Zamindari palaces, a symbol of continuity of residence and use. That way, the present owners of the surviving palaces are aptly aware of conservation and development economics. They very well understand the scope and returns of investment.

Very few Zamindaris have a locational advantage and scenic surroundings having potential for return on investment. Lack of locational potential reduces the development options and is detrimental to long term preservation of these places. Hotels and wedding destinations are the most popular adaptive reuse options across India, these days.

Educational institutions were a safe option at the time of Zamindari abolition. In Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, no palaces are converted into hotels and restaurants in all these years. One of buildings of Bobbili is used as staff quarters. Personal museums exist in Bobbili, Kollapur and Venkatagiri.

Public Access and Tourism

Most of Zamindars allow public to visit certain parts of their palaces, while keeping their own private quarters closed. Tourism and heritage museums are options which generate decent revenue, but not all Zamindars are open to the idea of opening the places for complete public access and crowds.

The present-day Zamindars agree that the situation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana is not the same as the palaces in Rajasthan and Gujarat having exotic locations for tourism development nor the governments here are doing best to incentivize and promote tourism.

Role and Involvement of Government

The present Zamindari owners are skeptical about getting listed by Heritage status and do not want to be Listed. The previous generation owners had already given away their properties to government, like the cases of Wanaparthy, Gadwal. But the Zamindaris who hung on and

are presently holding on to their properties, do not think giving away to the government is an option at all. The owners are strong and particular that their palaces and buildings are their own private properties and it is they who preserved and maintained for ages. They will not allow government to interfere in any matters.

However, the Zamindars believe it is the responsibility of the government to support them in preserving their rich heritage, without compromising on their absolute ownership. Without taking share of profits, they think government should partner in keeping up their properties, supporting them in doing business and giving financial perks and grants too.

Conservation of Properties

The Zamindars who stuck to their properties are aware of heritage significance and value. They do not think demolition is an option and are looking for various development options for managing these properties in a revenue generating manner. Zamindars are educated, well-travelled across the globe and are aware of how heritage can be developed as an asset and revenue generating resource. However, it is about the locational advantages & disadvantages and skills and capacities of Zamindars which are delaying decisions and actions.

Maintenance is an issue for the non-resident owners, whereas Zamindars using their properties in continuity know the tricks and trades. However they are not well-informed on conservation methods and techniques, and continue to repair using modern materials, damaging properties.

Next Generation Interests

The present generation of owners is into their middle and senior ages. The next generation which has moved into modern fields of occupation, is not interested so much in returning and taking up property management. Domakonda and Chowmahalla are rare exceptions, because of their high profile and aristocratic families. If the next generation shifts into job sectors, and not much effort goes into revenue generation from the palace itself or the feeding agricultural lands, the investment on regular maintenance and management of palaces would not be possible.

Future of Palaces

It is important that the present generation Zamindars take quick decisions for future of their heritage properties. The options that the

Zamindars have before them are to either to donate to government or get into business partnerships with investors or seek support from CSRs and funding agencies.

Resolving the issues of next generation and getting their active participation in property matters would help in working on conservation and development options, which generate revenue and make the projects self-sustainable. The coming home of the next generation is worthwhile and fulfilling option in more than one ways, of not only giving new lease of life to heritage properties, but also keeping the family continuity and inheritance.

CONCLUSION

The study of Samsthan/Zamindari palaces of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh was taken up for Doctoral research work to assess the state of preservation of 'Unprotected' Heritage in India. Unprotected Heritage that has no regulations of preservation provides entitlements of 'Right to Property' to the owners of historic buildings. Pride and sentiment apart, it is challenging for owners of historic properties to repair, restore and maintain their inherited buildings seeming as loss-making liabilities. More so in the case of Samsthan/Zamindar families whose social and economic positions have changed permanently after Independence. Informal interaction with the present generation of erstwhile Zamindars/Rajas and their kith & kin revealed the socio-economic dilemmas of historic building owners in maintenance of their historic properties. The surviving Samsthans and Zamindari palaces under private ownership reflect decisions taken by the last generation and priorities of the present generation of owners. The present generation of Zamindars have wide exposure and are opinionated. They understand fully the implications of declaration of their private properties as heritage, role of governments and partnerships with investors and so act in caution. With delayed time, historic properties suffer and heritage is lost to deterioration and development, and so is the urgency for the government and heritage interest groups to intervene and act.

India needs to develop policies for conservation of Unprotected heritage in India. As on date, only the Central and State Protected heritage have systems and departments for regular conservation and maintenance. For Listed buildings at local levels, the role of ULBs is mostly limited to facilitation for conservation leaving restoration responsibility to the historic buildings owners. Findings from interactions with Zamindari/Samsthan palace owners has revealed the dilemmas that they face and challenging situations that constrain them from taking up the tedious processes of restoration, which may be taken

up as framework for formulation of policies and support systems for conservation of Unprotected Heritage in India.

REFERENCES

1. Cohen. Benjamin B., *Kingship and Colonialism in India's Deccan 1850-194*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
2. Constitution of India, The Constitution (Fourth Amendment) ACT, 1955, <https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india>
3. Constitution of India, The Constitution (Twenty-Sixth Amendment) ACT, 1971, <https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india>
4. Dirks, Nicholas B. From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law, and the Gift under the Madras Permanent Settlement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 307-33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178974>.
5. INTACH Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India, *Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage* (2004). <http://www.intach.org/about-charter.php>
6. Jatkar, S.D. article, *Abolition of Intermediaries* in Sharma, B.A.V. (Ed), '*Political Economy of India- A Study of Land Reforms Policy in Andhra Pradesh*', Department of Political Science, Osmania University. Light & Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1980.
8. Metcalf, Thomas R. Landlords without Land: The U. P. Zamindars Today. *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 40, no. 1/2, Pacific Affairs, University of British Columbia, 1967, pp. 5-18, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2754619>.
9. Nadri, G. A. Mughal Administration And The 'Zamindars' of Gujarat during late 16th and 17th Centuries. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 61, Indian History Congress, 2000, pp. 320-29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44148108>.
10. Rajagopal, V. Traditional Intellectuals and Colonial Modernity: Life and Worldview of an Intellectual from the Telugu Region. *Social Scientist*, Vol. 44, no. 11/12, *Social Scientist*, 2016, pp. 77-93, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24890261>.
11. Rath, Srinibas, '*Some Socio-economic Aspects of Abolition of Zamindari System in Orissa*'. *Proceedings. Indian History Congress*, Vol. 53 (1992).
12. Sareen, Ishika and Malik, Abolition of the Zamindari System in India: A Legal Analysis, 4 (3). *International Journal of Law, Management and Humanities, IJLMH*. p. 3434 - 3441 (2021), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.10000/IJLMH.11860>.
13. Toomati, Donappa, *Andhra Samsthanamulu- Sahitya Poshanano* (Telugu), Andhra Viswakala Parishad, Hyderabad, 1969 (Reprint 1987)
14. [www. Britannica.com](http://www.Britannica.com)
15. Images-Maps Credits