

Proposed Project

‘Virasat’

The Heritage Village, Kurukshetra, India

Mechanization and urbanism has changed the village culture of India in the light of which it was considered necessary to preserve objects and artifacts of utility and aesthetic value that significantly represented as relic to older practices, ways and manners of doing things and life-styles. With the rate of extinction becoming faster of these practices and perishable objects it becomes pertinent for resourceful organizations and individuals to consider investing intellectual and financial resources and utilizing specialized, trained manpower towards creation of space and institutions that would fulfil the objective of preservation of the objects and articles in an appealing and aesthetic manner. The objective is to collect and preserve the tangible and intangible heritage objects of the village communities in Haryana and surrounding States of the Union of India and reorganize the material in a visually appealing and pleasant orderly sequence to convey the importance of continuation of the culture of the people of the agrarian and pastoral communities. A worldwide interest in Indian agricultural heritage has come to be recently noticed whereby both Indian and foreign connoisseurs have launched systematic efforts to collect and display them in museums of civilization as exercise of understanding the past that is most relevant to growth and upon which the foundation of the village communities rested. The importance of this monumental effort could be realized through noticeable literature generated about preservation and conservation of vernacular heritage objects of our people in both India and abroad. In north India individual and institutional efforts have been made at a moderate scale to enlist and preserve the objects of disuse or those that had gone out of vogue among the principally agrarian society in both the tribal heartland and river valley civilizations inhabited by various Aryan tribes.

This proposal envisages setting up of **‘Virasat’ –The Heritage Village**, on the Grand Trunk Road (NH 44) in Haryana, in close proximity to the religious city of Kurukshetra –already in the Sri Krishna Circuit for religious tourism as per the projections of the Ministry of Tourism up to the year 2030. The necessity of creation of this ethnic heritage ‘Village’ has been brought about due to the changes occurring in both life-style and agricultural operations in the rural communities that have stopped practicing traditional methods and manners of doing things and discarded a large number of objects and tools that were considered ‘obsolete’. Unless these objects are collected, documented, preserved in a scientific manner they would perish and the loss to the anthropological heritage would be irrevocable. It would also help scholars and researchers to study and analyze value of forgone practices to our life and environment, art and

aesthetics and design sense and promote continuation of environment friendly practices to, continue for more time that were time tested on account of sustaining health of living beings as well as natural environment.

The village is positioned at the crossroad of academic and entertainment platforms, it is visualized to be developed as an interactive platform which gives a space for educating the school children and public to organic and sustainable ways of life of the villages of India; it is also visualized a tourist spot. Its location on GT Road is ideal and connectivity to all parts of the country would be available the year round. A score of universities and affiliated colleges and professional institutions have recently also come up along the GT Road and regions connected to this grand trunk route. It could be a stopover for tourist traffic heading towards the Western Himalayan destinations offering a preview into authentic crafts practices and an area for learning and imparting of knowledge. It is also planned that the 'Virasat' – a Heritage Village, becomes a hub of cultural activities and resource center for academics and scholars that wished to pursue research into design, anthropology, ethnography, sociology, history art and crafts and social history of the communities. It would also serve to inform and reassure the village communities that the traditions in life-style and agricultural practices that evolved in their homes and have a history of thousands of years were considered valuable and relevant for the future, too.

Initial focus of the Centre would be on presentation of symbiotic relationship of the village to the 'other' people of India and foreign visitors living away from the countryside for many generations in high urban centers and become used to metropolitan culture forgetting the 'Idea of India' in a convenient way under the influence of modern product-oriented marketing strategies. By way of the promotion of folk culture in this Village 'as model set up' displaying living practices, views of the traditional objects and forgotten cultural values of life would be 're-lived' to convey significance in maintaining and continuing relationship with an impact of thinking of the people adopting high urban life under various pressing circumstances.

The external environment or the architectural details of the heritage 'Village' will be developed in way as to organically blend not only with the immediate surroundings but also the interiors and objects of display that naturally belonged to the vernacular society of the village folks.

Proposed Activities planned in Heritage Village:

Virasat Heritage Village 1st Phase Sections of Museum in Heritage Village

1. Pagdi
2. Weaving
3. Measurements
4. Transportation
5. Agriculture
6. Music
7. Block Printing
8. Art Gallery
9. Pottery Making
10. Miscellaneous Gallery (Big Hall)

Another Facility

1. Conference Hall
2. Food Centre
3. Wash Room
4. Yagshala
5. Front and Back Office
6. Parking
7. Landscaping
8. Traditional Food Huts
9. Traditional Well
10. Craft counter

National Agriculture Museum:

We propose to set up a National Agriculture Museum. This museum will be the cluster of traditional agricultural of all states of India.

Organic Farming Centre:

We propose to set up a organic farmers productivity collection and sale counter.

Skill Development and Training Centre:

Skill development and training Centre in ethnic and folk arts would be set up. The instructors would be hired for the duration of the Workshop. The wares would be displayed for sale by visitors at the end of the workshop or bought by the Heritage Village Crafts Shop for sale on its counter. Synthetic material would not be allowed in manufacturing or crafting the products. Documentation of crafting in several objects, textile manufacturing and dying, old methods of food processing and production and preservation practices would be done and published. Collaboration with other similar NGOs would be established for exchange of skills and information. Some sort of syllabus or course work would be devised/created for the participants. Workshop floor inclusive of restoration-cum-conservation of artifacts labs area for crafts activity,

Food court and Residential areas:

It would include a central vista or Citadel the design of which would be like a mansion in traditional architecture or Haveli housing the main office and administrative and academic wing, a food court, residential quarters, parking, storage, display galleries, wooded and open-to-space grass courts, kitchen garden for growing organic food crops, vegetables and fruits – mainly native species, curio shop and utility sale counters such as cotton and silk fabric textiles, leather works, lac and glass works etc.