Management

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Public spaces, sceneries, historical monuments… Kerala is a state blessed with lands which bear the legacy of history and nature together. The Hill Palace Museum, Tripunithura is such a site where history of a kingdom exists, where tradition and modernity come into harmony especially in terms of its structure. This imperial administrative office and official residence of the Cochin Maharaja, with a magnificent garden, which gives us political, cultural, economic history was constructed in the year 1865, and it is accessible to the public from 1986 onwards.

(Image 1)

The compound has an archaeological museum, a heritage museum, a deer park, a prehistoric park and a children's park. Everything is available around. The comparatively low-ticket prices and the presence of a children's park make it more public in nature. Because of this the place acts as a spot where we can enjoy our free time. While visiting the Hill Palace Museum under the Department of Archaeology, Kerala on 2 July 2022, I came across almost all views available in the site. There we can see the striking changes that have happened in the area throughout the journey as the place is more like an urban center now.

This narration tries to elaborate on some disappointing views from the site which are associated with inappropriate management of the area and facilities.

Issues

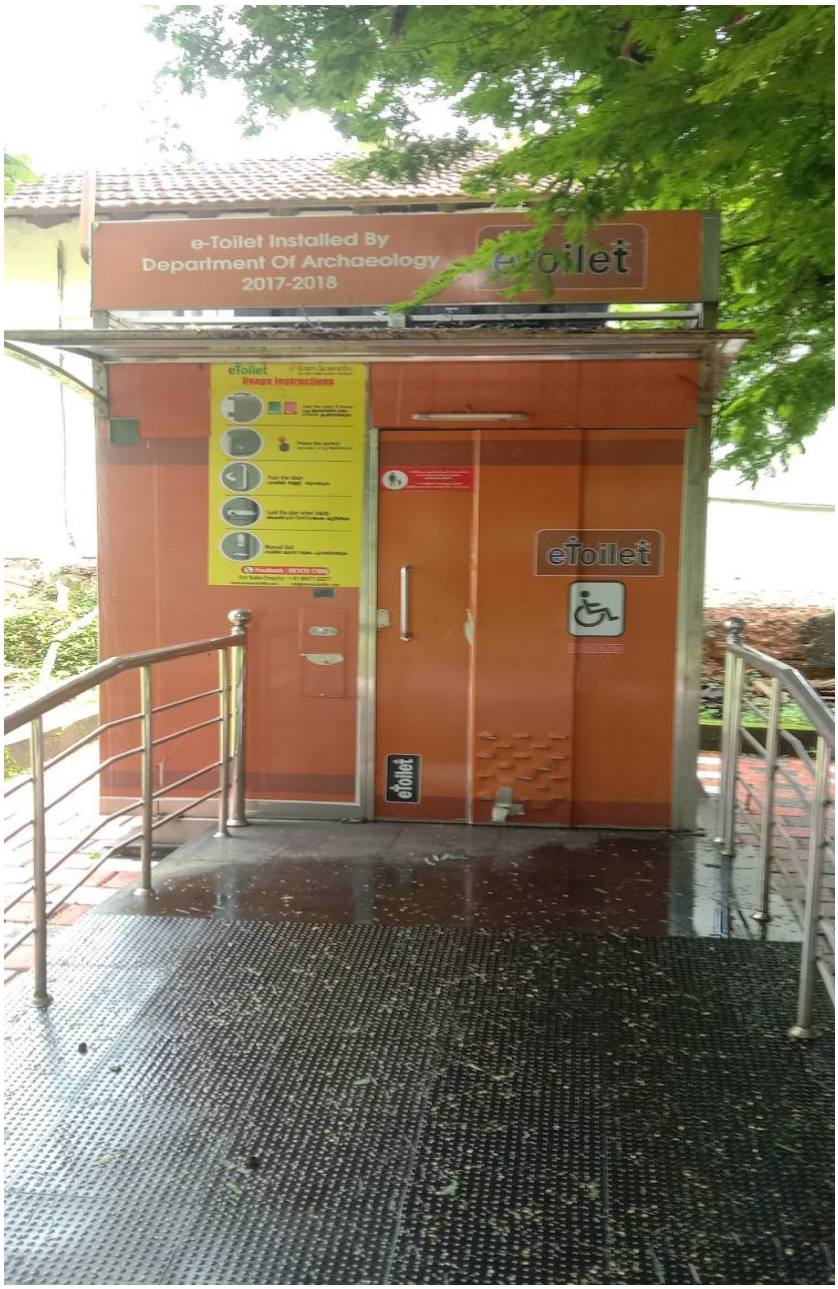
(Image 2)

This is a place where infrastructure is efficient which might give us high hopes but in reality, these are just some expensive structures which are unable to fulfill the needs of the visitors.

(Image 3)

This system could have made the place more accessible and inclusive for Persons with Disabilities if it had worked properly. There are three electronic toilets which have been

installed at the museum premises including separate ones for male, female and Persons with Disabilities.



(Image 4)

These toilets were installed by the Department of Archaeology in 2017-18 and I am visiting the palace on 2 July ,2022. It has been just four years since its inception. It is sure that lack of effective management is the reason behind this not working, because during these years, the usage was limited owing to the limitations/restrictions in place because of COVID-19. This can be said to be an example of wastage of money when providing services.

Also, this view makes me think about the inclusiveness of our public sphere towards the differently abled (especially towards physically challenged)

I have memories of seeing this palace years ago. Many areas in the palace and compound that were accessible back then are closed today. Also interesting, some items that were displayed are no longer displayed. The most important of them are the *arsenals*. When I enquired about this to one of the museum guides, I realized that access to those exhibits was barred even before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak owing to the renovation processes. He also said that some places that could be seen in the past are not accessible now. Another example of this is a pond that can be reached after passing through the palace. The disappointment of many of the tourists at not being able to see the pond was evident. All that can be done is to walk the path to the pond.

All of these can be said to be reasons behind people's disappointment after visiting the place. While walking inside the palace, I heard a few people walking in front of me talk about better preserved palaces in other places in India, offering more to see. If the situation continues like this, it will reduce the number of visitors.

When speaking about the maintenance and arrangements in the palace from my experience, I could see the lack of guides or guiding signals inside the palace which led us astray within the palace area.

After leaving the palace, I and a few travelers who had gone ahead of me had to return because there was something more to see. We reached a room where the figures of various palaces, temples etc. were displayed. After talking to the instructor who was in that room, we realized that we would not have been able to see two places in the museum if we had not arrived immediately. Such carelessness may cause visitors to lose interest in this tourist and historical site which is blessed with beautiful geographical qualities.

Another remarkable fact is that the museum is now turning into a park. It is that most of the people who visit spend more time in the garden in the front area, the children's park and the rest areas instead of spending time in the palace. One can see

that these places act as spots to enjoy the leisure time. There is a nice seating area in front of the hill palace near the park for children but the present condition of the place is very poor, though it is well-structured and arranged in a way that there is a fountain in the middle and seats around. It is difficult to go down or sit there because of the lack of maintenance. The place is littered with rotten leaves and moss.

Reflecting on the aspect of museum management, there is a high chance of misunderstanding it being limited to cleanliness. However, it is not only about that but also about how a historically, culturally and geographically important area is presented to the people. Preserving history and culture and disseminating those to the public is a hard task indeed which needs effective management of available arrangements. In this case, it is clear that infrastructure and other arrangements are available and the question is about the management of these available facilities.

It is clear that tourism is one of Kerala’s strengths and is a hope for its future development and revenue as it is because of tourism that Kerala got the sobriquet of being 'God's Own Country’. So, it is necessary to ensure that adequate facilities are available for the betterment of the site and society.