



INTEGRATING OF DIVINE INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPE

Rockfort at Tiruchirapalli

S.Mani Sasidharan

Assistant Professor

Department of Architecture

Sigma College of Architecture, Kanyakumari, India

Abstract: Globalization is putting constant pressure on the growth of India's hallowed websites. Historical and cultural landscapes have not benefited from the same institutional safeguarding and maintenance as background monuments.

An integrated conservation technique based on the restoration of the natural and spatial archetypes comprising the panoramic lexicon has been proposed, with the Rockfort Temple complex in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, being used as a case study.

Perched on a hill near the banks of the Kaveri river a medieval fort surrounded a collection of structurally intact and excavated temples eventually functioned as the centre of urban growth business has grown at an exponential rate over the last 50 years leading to a variety of issues like traffic bottlenecks perplexing visitor behaviour and vision impairments that have all diminished sanctity little design interventions such as restoring historic homes resurrecting holy tanks planting sacred trees and building rest areas next to pilgrim paths may contribute to clarifying and forming the pilgrim panorama which is composed of shrines temples tanks and groves and circumlocutory paths.

Keywords: *Sacred Landscape; Natural Archetype; Spatial Archetype; Cultural Heritage District; Integrated Conservation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural landscapes are no longer given much consideration for development or maintenance. Organizations like the Archaeological Survey of India and the Indian national trust for artwork and Cultural heritage have worked to preserve the rich architectural and cultural legacy of India's multilayered past; however, these businesses have up until now paid more attention to the devices than to their surroundings. They could be guided in this by applying the colonial maintenance strategy.

Monument being the emphasis made the historic landscapes neglected preferring to surroundings the heritage buildings with the ubiquitous grassy lawn and green shrubbery rooted in the romantic vision and response to the industrial metropolis of the 19th century the Anglo-Indian paradigm directed the archaeological survey of India both historically and currently it rediscovered historical architectural wonders and worked to save them from further deteriorating and disappearing by keeping them in their original locations within beautiful environments.

II. CONSERVATION OF SACRED LANDSCAPES

Sacred sites revered by way of mythology and living traditions embody India's cultural and environmental background due to the historic conviction that they could uphold moral order those places have frequently additionally served as royal residences these locations consequently have wealthy histories of both natural and architectural history but unluckily handiest the latter is given official protection.

In order to restore the historical connections both physically and aesthetically between the buildings and the surrounding landscape the historical systems at south Indian global heritage sites like Mahabalipuram Pattadakal Hampi and the Brihadeshvara temple at Thanjavur need to be developed as cultural history districts other pilgrimage sites like temple cities burgeoning vibrant centres of devotion should also be given careful consideration on

The vast number of tourists is not drawn in by the physical landscape's due to lack of proper maintenance and development. Their sceneries provide as both the backdrop for the temples and shrines that have been built there throughout the years and the inspiration behind their continuous construction. They have first and knowledge of the pilgrims' trip to the temple or temples, and occasionally the destination itself may be a natural element in them. Temple towns have long been the hub of a vibrant local economy centered on pilgrimages and temple activities, but in recent years, commercial development has grown to such a degree that it is destroying the area's natural beauty.

III. HISTORICAL ARCHETYPES

Throughout human history, universal forms seen in nature have inspired human creativity and have come to represent the meanings that humans have imprinted on their environment. Natural elements such as mountains, caves, water, flowers, and their combinations have the power to become the axis mundi, the centre of the perceived universe, and the channel for communication between the worlds of the divine and non-human. The Ganga River, Mount Kailash, and the Bodhi Tree are the several axes that can be discerned between the earth, heavens, and underworld. They feature prominently in mythological culture tales and are depicted as cultural icons in literature and art. They have mountains, rivers, and shrubs found in specific regions of the subcontinent.

3.1 Natural And Spatial Archetypes

A hill, river, forest grove, or a mix of all three, is a common natural feature found at all sacred sites. Spatial archetypes, which constitute the foundation of the spatial organization of structures and towns, are human creations as opposed to pre-existing natural archetypes. They originated from the belief that holy places are bhu-mandalas, which is furthered by pilgrims' ceremonial circling of these natural wonders. This act of inscription in the landscape creates space, both mentally and literally.

Efforts to conserve holy locations should concentrate on their landscape history, where natural and spatial archetypal forms are essential elements that are intricately linked together. These locations, which were all first chosen or "discovered" due to their amazing natural characteristics, have all been constructed and reconstructed throughout time using a unified language of spatial forms. There are several different temples, both big and tiny, scattered around or surrounded by stepped tanks, circumambulatory paths, and threshold doorways.

Natural elements are incorporated into man-made structures, taking the place of the natural surroundings to accommodate expanding human needs. The natural setting, which is typically hilly terrain near river confluences, provides the only indication as to the initial significance of nature in the establishment of the hallowed place.

The Chola dynasty provided royal guidance for the progressive transformation of the natural setting of sacred sites into a vast urban landscape of temple towns and cities throughout the tenth and twelfth centuries. Spatial archetypes, particularly the mandala, played a crucial role in this evolutionary interchange within the environment. The four-sided mandala, a concentric square or rectangle, used as a guide for the construction of temple complexes, with gopurams (gateways) and walls built at ever-increasing distances from the central shrine. This structure, with Mount Meru at its centre and jewels composed of six oceans and seven continents, depicts the universe as the Puranas (mythological writings) observed it. Consequently, the architectural form of the temple complex metonymically represents the entire universe while concentrating its superior strength in a specific place. The main shrine's garbha griha, or womb abode, is located in the mountain cave; the oceans are symbolized by the tall gopurams; the pillared halls of the mandapas reflect forest grove's; and the mountains are represented by the tiered water tanks.

3.2 Evidences Of Archetypes

Consequently, the entire cultural environment of temple complexes—as well as their larger surrounding context—ought to be taken into consideration while developing making plans and control recommendations for conservation. The natural and spatial motifs that make up this cultural milieu are intricately intertwined together.

It is simpler to restore and conserve what at first looks to be an eclectic and perplexing environment after this formal vocabulary has been interpreted and comprehended. Here, we provide a conceptual approach to the protection of the constructed landscape legacy of South Indian temple sites, with a focus on the Rockfort Temple at Tiruchirapalli.

Its size is attributed to its historical associations with the veneration of snakes and native mother goddesses, which are evident in the numerous Amman (mother goddess) shrines and Nagakals (stone slabs featuring an image of intertwined snakes) that may be found nearby and are primarily visited by non-Brahmins. According to Brahmanical Hinduism, Kaveri is the Southern Ganga, and the hilltop is the Dakshin (south) Kailash Mountain. Given that the Kailash-Ganga holy mountain-river combination being the most sacred combination in Hinduism, it is not unexpected that the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman excavated the Lalitankura Pallaveshvaram cave temple dedicated to Shiva during the 7th century.



Kaveri River, Tiruchirapalli

IV. ROCKFORT TEMPLE IN TIRUCHIRAPALLI

Many temples may be found in Tiruchirapalli, but the most famous is the Rockfort Temple complex, which rises to an enormous mound on the banks of the River Kaveri that is eighty three metres over the city's population below. Though not as many as the encircling island putting of Jambukeshvara Temple or the magnificent Shrirangam Temple with its seven enclosures and enormous gopurams, around forty thousand pilgrims visit it each year.

4.1 Temple Town Landscapes

At the moment, the top four most popular temples are the Ucchipillayar (Ganesh) Temple on the eastern side of the hill, the Thayumanavar Koyil Shivasthalam (Shiva) and Matturvarkuzhal Ammai (Parvati) Temples to the west, and the Manikka Vinayakar (Ganesh) Temple at the base of the hill. The excavated and built temples belonged to a broader cultural environment whose fundamental shapes were archetypes. These comprised gopurams, pilgrim roads that curved around and up the hill, a holy grove with a temple to Shiva's chariot, Nandi (Nandi Kovil), sacred ponds (Teppakulam and Umayankulam), and mandapams that lined the sides of the tanks and pilgrim trails. Because the goddess Parvati is on his face, the sculpture's most panel depicts Shiva embracing the Ganga on his head. By the eighth century, all other cave shrines had been similarly excavated by the Pandyan monarchs.

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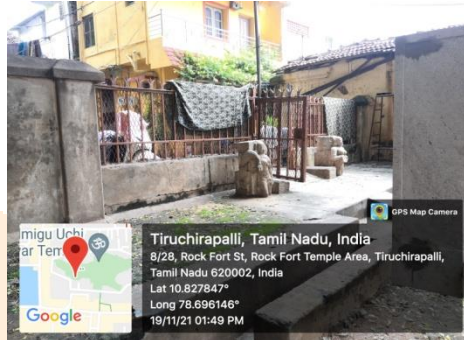
The typical Brahmin hamlet, known as an agraharam, is arranged around the hill in a linear layout of courtyard homes. Fort construction was also encouraged by the aesthetically pleasing hilltop on the riverbanks, fulfilling the defensive function of the fort. The Cholas had constructed their fortress nearby at Uraiyur, but the temples on the hill were enclosed in a fort complex by the Nayaks since the location had been the scene of fighting and destruction by Islamic armies in the fourteenth century. An analogous arrangement of inner and outer fort walls surrounded the hilltop temple sites, despite the mountainous geography preventing the large-scale construction of circular enclosures as at the adjacent Shrirangam and Jambukeshvara Temple complexes.

V URBAN LANDSCAPE

The religious systems that had been added during the Vijayanagara period had been repaired and were once again available for worship. The Nayaks of Madurai, the Arcot Nawabs, the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Carnatic rulers, and eventually the British, who built a cantonment and built railroads at Tiruchirapalli, came to power after the Vijayanagar Empire fell.

5.1 Transition Of Tiruchirapalli Landscape

Over the past 200 years, the city has grown significantly, and it is now well-known for its handloom fabrics, glass bangles, wooden and clay toys, and jewelry. The 19th century saw the leveling of the fort walls and the filling in and paving of the moat as part of the British Municipal Works initiative to enhance public cleanliness. As the town's most noticeable feature, the temples atop the hill, remained the site of local and regional pilgrimages, the skyline was broken up by the domes of mosques, churches, and bell towers. Rockfort Temple is seen.



Street near Rockfort temple

The city's fort district serves as both the holy center and the historic center. But its more noble position as a preserver of cultural legacy appears to be giving way to its economic one. Its main thoroughfares, the boulevards that took the place of the moat and the avenues that lead to them, are lined with bazaars offering a wide range of commodities, from smuggled goods to handicrafts made locally. As a result, there is a lot of traffic on the roadways, including parked cars, street vendors, and hawkers.

The visual cacophony created by billboards and flashing neon signs above the stores is inconsistent with the gopuram architecture on the street, which marks the starting point of the pilgrims' upward ascent. The four-story structures on the street have caused the most extreme obscuring of the sacred hill and its shrines. Roughly 70% of visitors to the fort area come just to shop. Temple towns have long been centers of trade, but the sacred center and its related activities are in danger of being overtaken and dominated by the masses that the fort area's bazaar streets attract. There are hardly many open places in this congested, often hectic metropolitan setting, especially green spaces. The remnants of the temple garden include the little sacred tank at Nandavanam, the nearby coconut grove at Umayankulam, the historic tanks Teppakulam and Umayankulam, and another tank and grove around Nandi Kovil Temple. During the float festival, when oil lamps are ignited to cover the tank, the statue of Ganesha is transported to Teppakulam, an important religious meeting site. Now, a metal barrier with restricted boat access surrounds it, significantly lessening the impact that the body of water surrounded by holy trees and mandapams would have made. The pilgrim path has suffered the greatest loss to its sacred ambience.



Teppakulam in Rockfort temple

5.2 Pilgrim Path – Landscape Containment

In the past, the devotees' journey to the temples would have been through a calm and quiet natural landscape. Today, if they wish to meditate, reflect, and chant their mantras as they walk from the fort gate to the *gopuram* entry, their concentration would be broken by the screaming vendors, hassling by hawkers, and honking of cars, auto-rickshaws, and motorcycles, as they push their way through the crowd. This reduction and containment of nature as a relic of the past with increasing urbanisation has been detrimental to the pilgrim experience, and in a larger sense has also meant the loss of environmental and cultural heritage.

VI ROCKFORT CULTURAL HERITAGE DISTRICT — A LANDSCAPE HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) guards and preserves the cave temples; the Temple Trust occasionally renovates them due to their popularity and growing number of visitors. However, there is little knowledge of the wider cultural environment, of which the temples are the most important component, let alone safeguarding of it. The reason for this is not unexpected. Since development meets the urgent demands of commerce and housing, it is sometimes impossible to resist its forces. The intended course of action has not been legally enforced due to the lack of preservation legislation. In the public domain, ownership is divided among many organizations that need to coordinate and come to an agreement over the conservation plan. Therefore, protecting sacred places' landscape heritage is urgently needed. To do this, an administrative and legislative framework is needed, which is now missing but is easily buildable. The monument-centered conservation strategy adopted by ASI restricts attempts to save and preserve structures while ignoring the vital connections that anchor them in their surroundings.

6.1 Integrated Conservation Approach

In contrast, an integrated conservation strategy would consider the inevitable urban expansion and change throughout time, in addition to being aware of the greater context. Immediate care is required for the Rockfort complex's lack of open spaces, convoluted circulation, traffic congestion, and lack of readability. Primarily, it is imperative to undo the destruction of hallowed terrain that provided the temples with their original significance and influenced the historical pilgrimage experience.

In keeping with the principles of urban conservation, the temples atop the hill and several historically significant structures at its foot must be conserved, although no longer as isolated residences but rather as a component of a larger cultural backdrop district that encompasses the former Rockfort neighbourhood. The boundaries of the district are the roads that round the hill and were built over the moat under colonial technology. This will designate the area as a protected sector, and it would be feasible to develop an improved boundary-based master plan for conservation.

An increase in the area devoted to open spaces might be achieved by controlling land usage, safeguarding the agharams, and limiting commercial use. Restricting the height of future development might safeguard the hillside view shelters. Declaring the area a pedestrian zone with restricted vehicle access, particularly during festivals, might help control traffic. There could be designated parking spaces at the district's entrances. Big billboards and other conspicuous signage might be taken down, especially those close to the temple complex's entrance.

VII DESIGNING FOR MOVEMENT

As the urban setting of Rockfort is made readable, traffic is managed, and the sacred hill's "imageability" is returned to its due supremacy, the aforementioned regulatory actions would address the deterioration in the quality of the environment. However, modest urban design changes that would revitalize the natural and spatial archetypal forms of the old cultural landscape lexicon are required to enhance the quality of the pilgrim experience. Here, pilgrimages are a unique type of travel made for the purpose of reviving one's soul. They receive their energy not only from walking and climbing the hill, but also from darshan, or the act of beholding the temple deities. An experience with nature would be quite therapeutic, even if the excursion is not need to be pleasant. As previously, the pilgrim road should meander through woodlands that include sources of water, providing opportunities to pause the trip for bathing, resting, and performing ablutions. The planned trip would be a suitable warm-up for the objective, which would be to ultimately meet the gods.



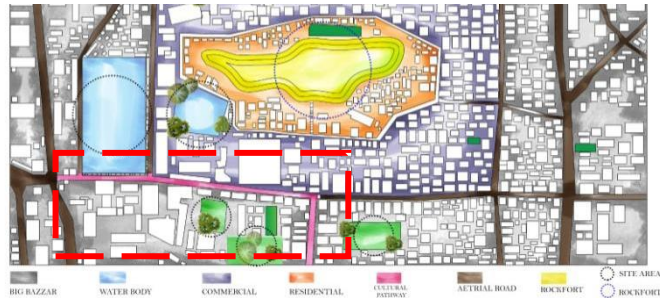
Proposed pilgrim road

7.1 Redesign – Rockfort Pilgrim Path

The four streets that lead to the Rockfort Temple and the far-off vistas of the hill should be framed by large pillars that indicate the entrances to the cultural heritage zone. For the pilgrim who must climb a total of 417 rock-cut stairs to reach the Uchchipillayar Temple at the very top, an alternate pilgrim path is suggested that passes through natural settings, avoids the commercial areas, and allows panoramic views of the hill. This walkway would have rest spots in tiny mandapams, water-filled tanks surrounded by ghats (steps), and shaded groves of coconut and pipal trees. The pilgrim would follow this road starting at Nandi Kovil Street and start the trek at the Teppakulam, which has been redesigned with little shrines strewn across the ghats that slope down to the water and colonnades running on all four sides of the tank. From there, the pilgrim would follow the stone road to the upper Umayan Kulam and Nandavanam, which has beautiful jasmine and champa trees. The pilgrim would use Rockfort South Street and continue climbing to the Thayumanavar and Uchippillayar temples with their mandapams after taking a bath and resting here.



Redesigned pilgrim path



Redesigned pilgrim path proposal

plan

VIII CONCLUSION

As a result, the bustle of the city would seem a long way off as the pilgrim entered the hallowed space of devotional chanting and prayer. They would also be rewarded with the deities' darshan, sweeping vistas of the city below, and the city of Kaveri on the horizon.

However, they need assistance through alternate control and planning, as well as subtle growth. Their natural history is being jeopardized by reckless city growth, vulnerable municipal administration, and a lack of protective regulations, among other common problems. It is our recommendation that the area immediately around them be designated as a cultural historical past district in order to preserve open spaces and historic buildings, control expansion, and adorn public infrastructure. Then, broad-scale conservation projects may be carried out, enhancing both locals' and visitors' quality of life.

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