INTEGRATION OF RETROFIT IN NOSTALGIA AN APPROACH TO URBAN CONSERVATION – A CASE STUDY OF MYLAPORE, CHENNAI

A.Karthick M.Arch(UD[1]) and 2010 -14 batch students of Architecture[2]

Abstract: The word "change" does not bring changes itself and it is unavoidable in present day context. The factors like urbanization leads to transformation of physical fabric which deteriorating the socio-cultural value of the precinct and change the mental perception of people in terms of economy. The main purpose of the study is to integrate the retrofit and nostalgia by addressing the issues due to developments and possible solution for the future in heritage zones. Nostalgia is a sentimentality for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.

Key Words: Nostalgia, Heritage zone, Cultural, Social and Economic value

I. INTRODUCTION

India has a very old civilization and the rich variety of social ways of life entwined with the past are still very much our living tradition. In the Indian context, development, urbanization and urban regeneration need to be related to this 'living tradition' (Menon, 1989) to ensure better sustainable development and the maintenance of our national identity in the 21st century. Mylapore one of the traditional settlements have become the nuclei of development activity generating the growth impulses which have consolidated in to extension forming major urban centers contains socio-cultural and economic values which are facing suffocation crisis resulted by the commercialization in abrupt way. In recent times this threat has been compounded by the presences of urbanization which has hastened the erosion and brutal fragmentation of a considerable part of this community heritage.

II.WHY MYLAPORE

The area delineated for study is that of the contiguous localities of Mylapore within the metropolitan area of Chennai (see Figures 1). It is bounded on the east by the Bay of Bengal, and on the west by the Buckingham Canal; the neighborhoods of Foreshore Estate and Mandavelli are on the south and Triplicane and further parts of the Buckingham Canal on the north. The focus of Mylapore today is the Kapaleeshwar Temple and its temple tank, built in mid-seventeenth century on the site of a former temple. The temple along with its tank spreads over area of one sq. km. Around it are various religious, cultural, educational and philanthropic institutions within a radius of 11/2 km. Mylapore is one of the busy centers of the life of Chennai and has grown to be a focus of religion, education and culture, and so is already an important tourist spot because of the traditional and social structures that have emerged and the study area is well connected with three types of transport systems. Mylapore has a wide variety of housing, streetscapes, occupational environments and infrastructures, which together with the temple provide a unique cultural environment which more than justifies the study and its conservation as a Heritage Zone.

[1] *School of Architecture and Interior Design SRM University, Kattankulathur, Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu*

[2] *School of Architecture and Interior DesignSRM University, Kattankulathur, Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu*
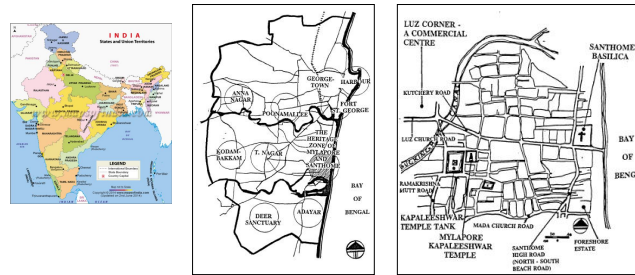
Figure1 Showing the Location of Study Area

III.HISTORY

Mylapore predates British rule by several centuries. It was historically known as Vedapuri. As the available historical and archaeological evidence show, it could well be the oldest part of Chennai, with written records of early settlements going back to the first century BC. It was known for its ancient port with a flourishing trade with the Roman Empire, receiving gold in exchange for its products like pepper and fine cloth. St. Thomas the Apostle allegedly died at Mylapore in 72 AD. Ptolemy had recorded in the 2nd century AD that the port of Mylapore was known to the Greeks and the Romans. The Saivite Saints of the 7th Century, Saint Sambandar and Saint Appar, have sung about the Shrine in their hymns. Mention has been made of the early settlement of Santhome (currently known) by Arab travelers and merchants of the 9th and 10th centuries AD. Marco Polo visited the place in the late 13th century and left a detailed description of the land, the people along with their customs and religion. It was considerable maritime time and the ancient German and Greek maps refers to the town as Maliarpha. The later Scottish researchers like James Playfair referred it "Meliapour" .Mylapore was occupied by the Portuguese in 1523, who established the viceroyalty of "São Tomé de Meliapor" or "Saint Thomas of Mylapore." Portuguese rule lasted until 1749, except for a brief interregnum between 1662 and 1687, when the town was occupied by the French. After 1749, the British East India Company took possession of the settlement in the name of Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah, the Nawab of Arcot. In that same year, Mylapore was incorporated into the administration of the Presidency of Madras. The settlement known as "Luz" developed during this period. The name finds its origins from the 'Nossa Senhora Da Luz' (Our Lady of Light) church built by the Portuguese in 1516 AD. This church is one of the oldest standing Christian structures in all of Tamil Nadu.

IV.HISTORY OF KAPALEESHWARAR TEMPLE

The commonly held view is that the temple was built in the 7th century CE by the ruling Pallavas. This view is based on references to the temple in the hymns of the Nayanmars (which, however, place it by a sea shore). Thirugnanasambandar's 6th song in Poompavaipathikam and Arunagirinathar's 697th song in Thirumylai Thirupugazh, make clear reference to the Kapaleeswarar temple being located on the seashore in Mylapore. The scholarly view that accounts for the discrepancies is that the original temple was built on the shore but was destroyed by the Portuguese (present day santhome church) and the current temple (which is 1-1.5 km from the shore) was built by the Vijayanagar kings during the 16th century, using some remains of the old temple. There are inscriptions dating back to 12th century inside the temple. The temple's 120 ft gopuram, (gateway tower) was built during 1906 with stucco figures adorning it. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

V.CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The cultural reputation arises from the presence of many varied institutions. The presence of the Temple ensures the continuance of religious traditions through festivals, processions and such utsavams (festivities) as weddings and cultural activities such as kolattam, theru koothu, braratanatyam, pongal vizha, and classes for spiritual teaching, katha kalekshepam, all of which take place in and around the temple complex. In addition there are a number of educational and philanthropic institutions deserve more recognition and to be included in the tourist itinerary. Such activities, centres, institutions and places with historical associations at present have a very low profile. Another traditional feature the area has retained is the kolams . These are geometric or floral patterns drawn both inside and outside the house and also on the streets. The ground on the street fronts of the narrow built-up plots is sprinkled with water and the designs are drawn with white or coloured powder.

Traditional culture represented by activities such as described above is now being lost as new houses and apartment blocks come up and vernacular areas are losing the people who have such skills. The changing housing densities, the land use and socio-economic profile are evidenced in the findings of the Times Research Foundation for the MMDA (vols. I-VIII, 1991) and this breakdown of tradition and values is resulting in much folk art ceasing to have symbolic value and no longer communicating to the new generation.

Figure 2 Showing the Kolam Event, Car and Nayanmars Festival in Mylapore

VI.LANDUSE PATTERN

Origin of the traditional settlement in mylapore was not laid out on the basis of any pre-determined plan and evolved through an instinctive process of addition. The form of the mylapore settlements represents a synthesis of the geometric frame work. Mylapore reflect a rich mixture of indigenous and vernacular styles with or without signs of such colonial influence. Older houses in Mylapore with their introverted spatial planning around courtyards still reflect the distinctive social structure, customs and manners of the people. The spatial lay-out of the houses and the concentric street pattern of the built-up areas around the Kapaleeshwar temple had developed with the purpose of locating people involved in the daily life of the temple in close proximity to it. The study area is predominantly residential zone with mid-rise apartment houses dispersed in cluster accessible from the artery road. Mixed use activities along the north and south mada streets mostly depicting old traditional architecture. The community centers, cultural centers and commercial retail outlets are located along the main loop road near about the center of the temple complex.
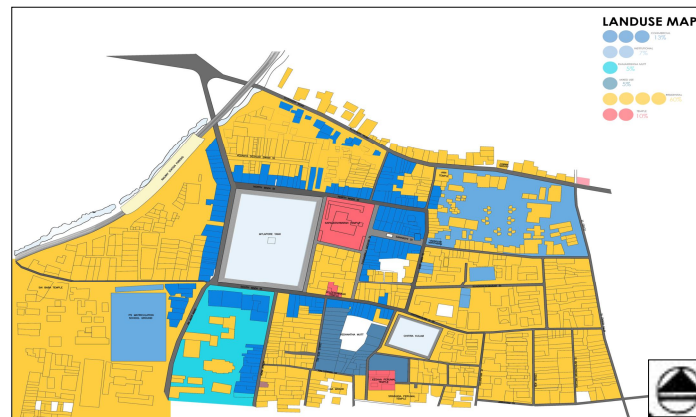

Map 1 Showing the Land Use Pattern of Study Area

VII.AGE OF THE BUILDING

The agraharam small house with small plots has fine grain and uniform texture. The countable number of buildings of colonial style along the north and south mada streets with the mixture of commercial modern buildings describes having a coarse and uneven texture. The age of the buildings demarcating the fine scale and unifying design elements. The streets refinement proposal is recommended as a solution with proper façade designing and shop fronts that would still hold the essences of culture mans.

Replacements of vinyl boards with local craftsman's sign boards on the fascia of the shop fronts etc.,
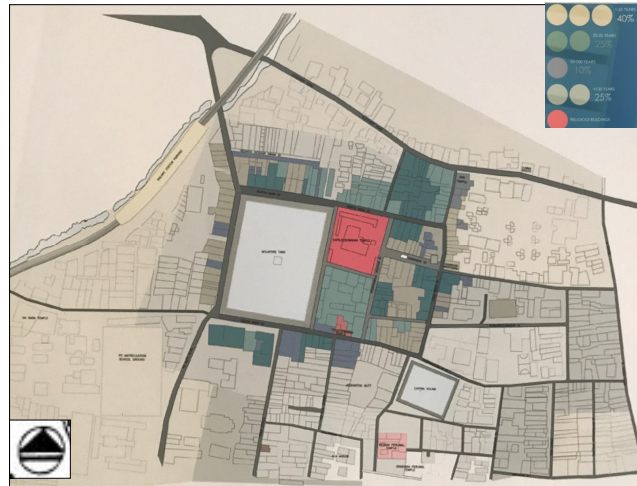
Map 2 Showing the Age of Building of the Study Area

VIII. BUILDING HEIGHT

Indian architecture is characterized by its spiritual content and the area of Mylapore is outstanding for their spiritual and cultural architectural character. The towering heights of the Kapaleeshwar Temple to be part of a grand scheme of architecture, sculpture and religion, dominating the visual spaces of the area. The existing buildings around the temple complex are generally G or G+1 but the new developments are of G+2 or G+3. The height of the building defines the density of the study area not only horizontal, the new developments of G+3, G+3 defines the area becoming denser vertically.


Map 3 Showing the Building Height of the Study Area

IX. ROAD NETWORK

Two important arterial roads, Santhome High Road and Ramakrishna Mutt Road cut it in a north-south direction; the main road running east-west is Kutchery Road which connects the two historic areas under consideration. One of the edges of the Kapaleeshwar Temple tank abutting the Ramakrishna Mutt Road acts as a bus terminus which carries the heavy traffic volume during peak hours. The phased development of the Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) station to be located at Luz, in Mylapore, just off the Ramakrishna Mutt Road, along the Buckingham Canal. So it is fairly well provided with access facilities.

There is lack of lane segregation for activities, vehicular and pedestrian movement in north and south mada streets leads to congestion in peak hours.
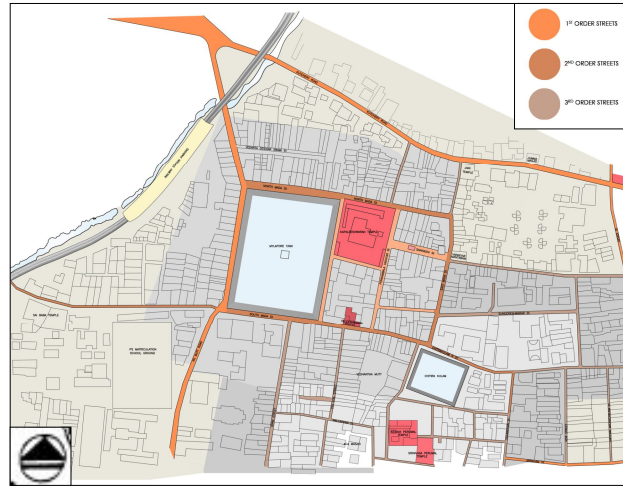
Map 4 Showing the Road Network of the Study Area

X.ACTIVITY MAPPING AND TEMPORAL URBANISM

The main attractions of the area for shopping are the presence of a major vegetable market and various kinds of commerce, many of them distinctive of South Indian customs not found in other parts of the city, except perhaps in Triplicane, a *Vaishnavite* settlement, in another old and nearby part. There are numerous shops selling stainless steel vessels, coffee (roasting and grinding), jewellery, silk saris and home-made *appalams or pappadums* (traditional South Indian crispies). Many petty shops have become established near the temple for the convenience of worshippers needing coconuts, fruits, flowers, camphor and incense for their offering so that today the four *mada* streets are lined on both sides with such outlets, small stores, sweetmeat stalls and street hawkers in the core area). South *Mada* Street has the vegetable market on one side of the road and this has a huge catchment area of buyers.

On the other side are shops dealing in stainless steel vessels, utensils and other kitchen ware. The presence of the nearby bus terminus facilitates the shoppers. Commercial activity has developed extensively along Kutchery Road, Ramakrishna Mutt Road and the Mylapore Bazaar Road with informal vending on the pavements adjoining the temple tank. North *Mada* Street is lined with jewelleiy shops trading in gold and silverware.The commercial development on the East and West *Mada* Streets mainly caters to the temple devotees and there are a large number of shops selling silk saris.The above customs have been largely responsible for the commercial growth of these traditional trades so unique to the area.

Temporal urbanism is nothing but the temporary which happens throughout the day, it can be either daily activities or the weekly activities like weekly markets or even the seasonal activities which goes on some particular days such as on festival days. The type of activities can be either street vending, ritualistic activities which happens at the confluence and so on.

Map 5 Showing the   Activity Mapping of the Study Area

Map 6 Showing the Temporal Urbanism of the Study Area

XI. ISSUES

Traditional and historic urban cores, especially in developing countries are subject to threats from a number of sources. The process of modernization has in a number of cases led to serious consequences for the integrity of the old city. Some of the causes already identified by Correa (Correa, 1985) are population explosion and rural-urban migration. Feilden (1989) adds other factors such as the increasing use of motor transport in areas not designed for it, land speculation, lack of adequate infrastructure to meet the growing needs and changing industrial methods. We can add also, the lack of appropriate policies for Conservation Areas, or Heritage Zones as they are known in India.

The identified issues found in the study area are listed below

1. Major through fare cutting through heritage zone.

2. Buckingham canal – Environmental problem.

3. Transformation of physical fabric- leads to deteriorating the architectural character

4. Bus stop location

5. Major traffic bottle neck

6. Building hiding the agraharam

7. Proposed MRTS Station

8. Disposal of waste in streets

9. Activities along the tank edge affect the physical and visual barrier.

10. Mylapore and chitrakulm tank – Lack of porous due the activities around the tank and lack of water in the tank.

11. Ruined old mosque

12. Unorganized vegetable market activities

13. Cattle dung menace

14. Conflict between activities.

1.Temple Tank

2. Kapaleeshwarar Temple

3.Valleshwarar Temple

4.Chitrakulum tank

5.Keshava perumal Temple

6. Srinivasa permual Temple

7. Jain Temple

8. Santhome Chruch

9. Proposed Parking

Map 7 showing the temporal issues of the study area

XII. PROPOSED DESIGN STRATEGIES

- The considerable overlap between the community well-being, economic development and biophysical elements of sustainability.

- The purpose of the guideline is to focus on ecological sustainability from the perspective of community well-being; it is emphasized that in practice, community wellbeing issues cannot be dealt with in isolation from other elements of sustainability.

- Promoting sense of community, social links and cultural values by redesigning the areas around the temple complex welcoming the interaction between different strata of people.

- Organized the space for fruits and flower shops around the kapaleeshwarar tank.

- The roads have been laid above the inlet of the tank; access to rain water to get in to the tank has been blocked. Required proper planning and water recharge channels around the tank.

- Polices to be introduced to restrict the height of the development around the heritage site.

- Providing Recreation space around the tank thus the infrastructure maximizes resource use efficiency.

- Biodiversity – Recognize importance of healthy eco systems to the economy and quality of life.(Plantation of trees, plants and shrubs are one of the element to invite the birds and maintain the tank eco systems with balance of fish , swans and fountains on the periphery provides aeration to stored water.

- Sustainable communications and transport policy – Promote alternative transport options like battery cars, bicycle and non-polluted vehicles usage. Provide the supportive facilities like multilevel parking in MRTS Zone in order to avoid the traffic and parking chaos in the study area.

- Time schedule for mobility of conventional vehicles so that the service loading and unloading to shops, and residing people to commute to other areas is facilitated.

- Sustained high quality of life – Protect natural environment bringing back the life to kizhikonjum in north mada. Respect the values, aspirations, and benefits of the community thus by accommodating the festival, events to a new level.

- Recognize the recreational importance of the tank and areas around it. Proper networking of tank for inlet and out let.

- Promoting the people partitions programme and heritage walk through local residents, street vendors, institutions around the heritage precinct and create awareness about the heritage site.The proposed heritage walk generates economy to the residents, street vendors and   Government.
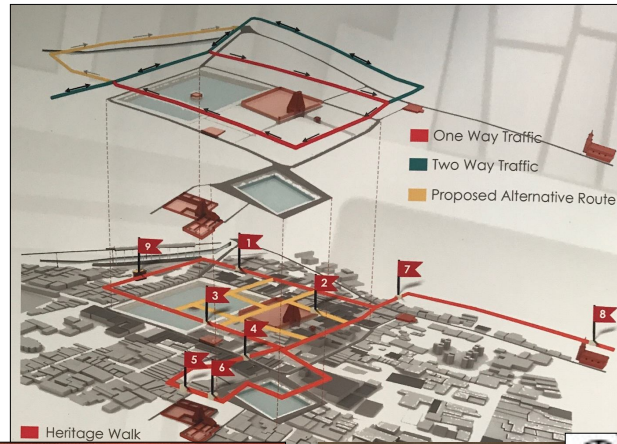
Map 8

showing the proposed heritage walk of the study area

Figure 3 Showing the Reorganized the Activity along the Tank Edge and Interaction Space in the Mada Streets

Figure 4 Showing the Proposed Redevelopment of Tank Edge

XIII. CONCLUSION

From the study we conclude that A city cannot live only on its past, the factors like developments and commercialization leads to change the physical fabric of the city which resulted in change in culture, life style etc., Retrofit is one of the strategy in urban conservation to retain or integrate the new elements with the existing which indicates the past, because the old elements are not stand alone structure which tell us the what we are in the past.

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