

AN ADDITION TO VERNACULAR CONSTRUCTIONS.

INFLUENCE OF COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE ON SOUTH INDIAN VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: A CASE OF VENKATAGIRI IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA.

Jahnvi Priya Alluri¹, Khushboo Sahu²

¹Student, Bachelor of Architecture, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Chhattisgarh, India.

²Faculty, Amity University Chhattisgarh, India.

Abstract - With over 6000 years of a sustained civilization, India has been a home to diverse social customs and various communities. It has been a stage for transformations in both culture and architecture. The variations in systems, climate, involvement, and collaborations with foreign nations resulted in adaptations in every sector. India had been under rule of several kingdoms and British. The drastic changes in terms of culture and architecture took place in this period. This showed an impact on every village and town based on their architectural development. The place Venkatagiri in Andhra Pradesh experienced major changes in vernacular settlements during this period of time. The considerable changes in vernacular constructions due to the colonization are to be discussed in this paper. The study shows the variations in construction style and fusion of colonial traits in vernacular settlement in public buildings of Venkatagiri during the colonization period.

Key Words: Vernacular Architecture; Colonial; Venkatagiri.

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultures and socio- economical changes in a place influence both livelihood and habitat. Design and constructions have always had an impact by these which led to new eras. Many such structures have been conserved or documented in order to preserve the knowledge, learn the conditions of people and society. But some structures though they are a hundred years old are remained as private properties, that have the significance and holds history. An attempt to keep the uplift the heritage and store the history of such constructions is documentation and research showing their uniqueness and transformation through ages. The paper shows the Vernacular Architecture in the town before colonization, followed by the transformation of vernacular style of Architecture and colonial extravagant influence on it post colonization.

In the colonial period in India, Venkatagiri had encountered development of advancement of all rich fields of activity in literature, art, and religion, also in the construction of huge palaces and towering temple. The considerable change and emphasize of colonial and Mughal architecture on

Vernacular constructions was an addition to the impact on lifestyle. Influence of colonial architecture was clearly shown in major public buildings rather than on regular residential houses. Many buildings from this place have colonial influence starting with the rajah's palace some part of which shows the basic vernacular construction of the place while the outer palace, façade shows various types of architecture styles, and some areas even represent fusion of styles too.

1.1 About Venkatagiri

Venkatagiri is a municipality situated in a South Indian state, Andhra Pradesh. It is a town rich in tradition, history, and handlooms. The town spreads over twenty-five square kilometers and stands as administrative center for Venkatagiri mandal, with more than fifty-one thousand residents.

According to sources Venkatagiri was originally under the Vijayanagara Empire and was called as 'Kali Mili' which was later changed to Venkatagiri as they were defeated by Recherla Venkatadri Naidu, who fought on the side of Aravindu Dynasty of Vijayanagar in seventeenth century. Later, Venkatagiri became capital of the kingdom under Velugoti rulers. Venkatagiri remained as Zamindari till Independence of India in 1947. It is located between two rivers, the Kaivalya River, and the Godderu River. The town is run by civic administration. Venkatagiri municipality was established as a Grade III municipality in 2005 and covers an area of 25.43 square kilometers (9.82 square miles).

1.2 Venkatagiri as an Estate

According to news articles and information from national sources, the kingdom was founded around AD 1208. by warrior king Velugoti Recherla Bhetala Naidu and existed from the time of Kakatiyas during the reign of Kakati Ganapathi Deva Rai. Later the kingdom was a feudal state under the Vijayanagara Empire.

The kingdom was restored by Velugoti Rayudappa Nayani and took over by the state on September 7, 1949, under the Madras Estates Act of 1948 (Law 26 of 1948) under Velugoti dynasty. Notable rulers are Rajagopala Krishna Yachendra

(1857-1916). In the second half of the 20th century, Raja of Venkatagiri bought some of the villages.

In the 17th century, the kingdom became an almost independent overlord from Arcot Nawab. Due to their Mughal army, a sannad of the Mughal Emperor in 1695 granted free jahirs of fourteen taluks from their existing estates which included four taluks from Sarwapalli, Nellore, Rapur and Venkatagiri to Sarwapalli Sarcar. Thus, the property became part of the British India is part of the former Madras Presidency with the Venkatagiri property, a tax administration area under the Venkatagiri Rajas.

Venkatagiri Estate was an estate of the former Madras Presidency. The town of Venkatagiri was the administrative seat. The estate consisted of two administrative divisions, one in the north and one in the south, each divided by five taluks. The southern division taluks were Venkatagiri, Sagatur, Mallam, Polur, and Manubolu, and the northern division taluks were Pellur, Podili, Darci, Kocherlakota, and Merala.

The extent of the domain in British times was about 2,117 square miles, which included about 800 villages, belonging to the other 625 villages of hereditary enjoyment, 215 Agraharam or Shrotriem, 10 personal Amaram or Inam and 12 Agraharam temples. It was founded in 1600 and the property was abolished on September 7, 1949. The property became part of British India, part of the former Madras Presidency with the Venkatagiri property of a tax administration area under the Venkatagiri Rajas. Since then, the property consisted of 736 villages and 617 majara villages. In the mid-17th century, the rulers of Velugoti moved their capital to Venkatagiri, which lasted under the name Zamindari until independence.

1.3. Building Constructions under rule of Venkatagiri Kings

- The Town hall, on 22nd July 1883 under the rule of Rajah Sree V. Kumara Yachama Naidu Bahadur Varu.
- European Guest House, built in 1870 A.D. under the rule of Rajah Sree V. Kumara Yachama Naidu Bahadur Varu.
- Indra Mahal, on 22nd July 1883 under the rule of Maharaja Sir Raja V. Rajagopala Krishna Yachendra Bahadur, G.C.I.E., Panchahazar Munsabdar.
- Victoria Jubilee Rest House, on 10th November 1886 under the rule of Maharaja Sir Raja V. Rajagopala Krishna Yachendra Bahadur, G.C.I.E., Panchahazar Munsabdar.
- Gymkhana Club, established in 1891 under the rule of Maharaja Sir Raja V. Rajagopala Krishna

Yachendra Bahadur, G.C.I.E., Panchahazar Munsabdar.

- Queen Empress Mary Gosha Hospital. under the rule of Lieut. Sir Raja V. Govinda Krishna Yachendra Bahadur, K.C.I.E., A.-d.-c., Panchahazar and Munsabdar. All these public buildings show colonial influence on them standing them out from the other vernacular structures constructed during the colonial period.

2. The Vernacular style of Venkatagiri

The structure with terracotta tile roof situated at the centre of the palace (according to the stretch of palace during colonial times, which is now situated to the North- west corner of the palace). This was first structure laid in palace which depicts the original vernacular style of the place before the colonization. This place was used as a kitchen during the time of the rule of Venkatagiri Rajahs.

It was first structure to be constructed, around which the rest of the palace was later raised. The structure is enclosed on four sides leaving space at the centre. An elevated platform with timber roof is situated at the centre. The structure is made of timber roof trusses and covered with terracotta tiles. Timber columns are placed as support on the inner side and the outer side was made of mud wall. The mud walls are raised to the height of 3.0 meters at the pitch and 1.7 meters at the centre. And the platform at the centre is elevated to 0.8 Metres, 4 steps to reach, with each step of 0.2 Metres high. The roof over the platform is supported by timber columns raised to 2.5 Metres height, covered with timber trusses and terracotta tiles.

The outer enclosure of the structure is of mud walls. Coated with lime both on the outer and inner surfaces of the wall. There are five entrances leading to the place and are covered with timber doors. The stone flooring balance the temperature of the place despite of the warm temperature outside. Most of the flooring is covered with low roofing to reduce the heat intake. Small chambers were carved into the mud walls with a channel leading to a series of tiny circular openings, which was used to place the scented incense sticks.



Fig-1: The roof lowered at the center providing shade.

Fig-2: Showing pitch and roof detailing.



Fig -3: Zoning of palace based on impact of colonial architecture

- Colonial Architecture
- Traditional Hindu Temple Architecture
- Vernacular Architecture
- Mixed

3. The Venkatagiri Palace: Indra Mahal

Façade

The entrance gate is raised to Nine meters with timber railings, windows and colonial pillars covering the façade. The outermost block of the palace covers most public spaces and official gathering areas. The exterior of this block shows the extravagant colonial aesthetics. This outer part is mainly filled with corridors, meeting halls, King's court room and queen's secret corridor facing East; bedrooms and guest bedrooms to the north and west; service entrances and queen's path to the south. The third floor is used by the Queens to watch the processions held outside during festivals which is completely covered with small timber windows. At present, the whole ground floor of the outer portion is occupied by small shops facing the road. These were constructed with mud bricks, white cement and coated with a mixture of lime, eggs, and water to gain smooth finish of the walls.



Fig -4: The main entrance; **Fig -5:** Indra Mahal gate.

South- East wing

The south- eastern wing covers public spaces, which is of Fourteen metres high from ground level. The corridors are placed towards the exterior part. The second floor is covered with series of Rounded Horseshoe arches supported on a plain round Tuscan with a railing passing in between them, a strip of Corinthian cornice passes above these arches. The corridor of third floor is covered with a series of a pair of rounded horseshoe arches supported on a pair of plain round Tuscan with a Corinthian pillar at the centre. The inner part of the left wing follows the same sequence as the outer part with a four meters portico attached to the King's court room, which is of 7.0 meters high.



Fig -6: Entrance to the King's court

North- East Wing

The north- eastern wing has corridors facing main road with timber Corinthian pillars. These were public rooms or servant quarters. This wing was extended through the whole place covering the lead floored Elephant's staple, which of most is now demolished and converted into residences and retail shops. Opposite to Indra Mahal palace there was a building with 'Addala Meda', the hall of mirrors which was dedicated to the Queen.



Fig -7: Timber work on North- Eastern wing

The Entrance: Indra Mahal Gate

The Palace had five entrances one is the main entrance opposite to the statue of Late Maharaja Sir Velugoti Rajagopala Krishna Yachendra Bahadur. The entrance is Six Meters high and Four Meters wide with a platform with chambers on both sides. The Entrance door, Indra Mahal Gate, is a Six Meters tall traditional Hindu door with noobs.

The Pillared Platform at the Entrance

The Entrance directly opens to a raised platform with spiral pillars and brick arches on the outside and timber pillars with timber truss trusses on the inside. The timber pillars show Hindu architecture while spiral pillars in the front represent colonial architecture. This platform is of 3.5 Meters height with 0.75 Meter plinth. This pillared hall was

mainly used for the wedding ceremony called 'Boddu Sika', in which only the bridegroom participates in the rituals while the bride stays in queens' chambers. The rooms next to this hall has a secret corridor with timber windows and peek holes for the Queens to attend. This platform is at the centre with open area surrounding it.



Fig -8: The front view of pillared platform

The Queen's Path

The left corner of the open area opposite to the Kings court is a pooja room facing East, with an extended timber roof and beautifully carved Torana (the carved part of a padi attached to the slab), which was used to perform homa or any holy rituals. An entrance for the Queen is situated beside the hall for homa facing North. The queen's path has two doors straight to each other one leading to the outside of the palace and the other leading to the secret corridor and the queen's garden.



Fig -9: Timber Roof in front of pooja room

The Pot Roof

The private rooms are constructed away from all the public areas by creating open corridors dividing the private and public areas. These open corridors lead to private rooms of King, Queen and Guest rooms. The newlywed couple would be offered the room, separated from the rest of the structure. It is situated on a separate terrace. This room is constructed in the shape of a twelve cornered star. It is made of both timber and mud brick walls. The cornice is made of sandal

wood with astonishing traditional timber carvings representing 'Uttara' (Entablature in traditional Hindu architecture). The Entablature in this structure is of four strips, with 'Yalis' placed at corners of the entablature. The roof is extended from supporting the wall and is supported with timber buttresses with 'yali' on each corner. The roof is made of great workmanship. It is covered with mud tiles on timber trussed roof. Pot- mouth shaped tiles were placed at the end of the roof instead of gutter considering the flow of rainwater, to create an aesthetic appeal with the flow of water.



Fig -13: The white hall; Fig -14: Details of Pillar on Mandapa.

Current Status of The Building

Post- colonial period many changes took place in Venkatagiri in both business as well as development. The elephant's staple and major part of the palace was sold out and demolished. The ground floor of the palace abutting main road is now occupied by retail stores. The Queens's palace was used as a college for intermediate students but later was demolished, to construct residences and public gathering spaces. The rest of the palace is still under Rajahs of Venkatagiri as a private property.



Fig -10: The pots used as gutter; Fig -11: view of the room.



Fig -12: Detailing on Entablature

The White Hall

There are two gardens in the whole palace, a queen's garden and a garden for the prince which is near the old kitchen with tile roof. The rooms for royal descendants are situated at the end facing East. Next to kitchen is the white pillared hall, which is used for personal rituals. This hall consists of 20 pillars 4 on the outside, 16 inside and 4 pillars on the raised platform called mandapa. The outer pillar is a square composite pillar. On the mandapa there are circular composite pillars, the capital has been carved in a Corinthian with Gandharvas on the four sides of the capital, showing the fusion of colonial architecture and Hindu architecture. The roof consists of wooden beams covered with bricks and white concrete slab. This part is connected to the northeast wing with the guest rooms. And the secret rooms of Queens are separated by a single entrance into the required areas.



Fig -15: Images showing the ground of the palace occupied by retail stores.

4. CONCLUSION

The depletion in Vernacular settlements has always been an area of concern leading to the loss of information and ancient techniques. The transformations of these constructions through decades with different conditions have left major impacts on native style of construction evolving new methods. Worries of reestablishing and demolishing the vernacular settlements, raises the need to concentrate on this topic. The study on different structures that should be recorded and broke down to concentrate on changes like utilization of materials, utilization of development procedures, the socio- cultural impact, the monetary status of the people inside the local area, and the effect of environmental changes. These progressions of these

constructions must be recorded and regulated to not neglect the indigenous data and techniques. The changes and advancement of the Venkatagiri Palace, its development and construction techniques were very momentous and in the current day it remains as one of the fascinating constructions in the entire town.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alladi Jagannatha Sastri, B.A. & L.T., (1922) "A family History of Venkatagiri Rajas". Under Patronage of Lieutenant Sir Rajah Velugoti Govinda Krishna Yachendra Bahadur, K.C.I. E. A.D.C. Panchahazar and Mansabdar Raja of Venkatagiri (29th Generation), Addison Press.
- [2] Chadalavada, K. (2017) "Analyzing Vernacular Sustainable Design Principles- A Case Study of a Vernacular Dwelling in Godavari Region of Andhra Pradesh, India".
- [3] Ho Kha Chun, (January 2005) "An Influence of Colonial Architecture to Building Styles and Motifs in Colonial Cities in Malaysia".
- [4] Rohith Surekh, (July 2014) "Development of Colonial Architecture in India- Dutch, Portuguese, French and British Architectural Influences in India: Merging of Local Architecture with Various Colonial Styles"
- [5] Richa Jagatramka, Ashwini Kumar, Satish Pipralia, (January 2021) "Transformation of Vernacular Architecture of India: Problems and Prospects". Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur, India; ISVS e- journal, Vol. 8, no. 1.
- [6] Bernard Rudofsky, (1964) "Architecture Without Architects, A Short Introduction to Non- Pedigreed Architecture". Exhibition Conducted at museum of Modern Art in 1964.