

COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PROPOSAL FOR Shri. Mauli Devasthan Temple Complex, Zolambe, Dodamarg, Sindhudurg, Maharashtra

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Abstract—The term ‘Vernacular’ means originally belongs to the place or a region. In this context the distinct style of Konkan Region was fallout of availability of local materials, climatic conditions and cultural practices which helped to shape its built forms. The built vernacular heritage occupies a central place in the affection and pride of people. Today the threat is that individual buildings are demolished or renovated using modern materials to meet the images of modern comfort. Konkan Region Reflects very distinct style of Cultural Landscape which is fallout of Socio-culture and climate but due to advent of modernity and latest Technology & loss of traditional knowledge system this segment is facing threat.

The aim therefore is to safeguard the vernacular heritage of Konkan region and in this context to propose a Comprehensive Conservation for Shri. Mauli Devasthan, Zolambe, Dodamarg, Sindhudurg, Maharashtra -A Case for Conservation of Vernacular style of Temple Architecture of Konkan Region. The Temple is 300 years old, dedicated to Goddess Maishasura Mardini incarnation of Durga, worshipped as Mauli Devi belonging to Tribal Community. The temple has indigenous Kaavi paintings, depicting the regional mural art of Konkan, which is at present in a state of decline and extinct. Another objective is to study the Architectural elements, Building Materials and Technology adopted and possibility of revival of the Building art.

At building level this study explores the temple and community relationship which forms part of the cultural practices intact till today and identifies the Problems /Issues in proposing a Conservation Plan. The Temple reflects an Art that is on the verge of extinction thus it requires a sincere and urgent attempt of Revive/Restore.

Vernacular heritage has to be streamlined with the help of appropriate legislation byelaws and should be made effective to save our heritage before it's too late.

1. INTRODUCTION

The built vernacular heritage is a unique expression of the culture of a community and its relationship with its land showcasing the cultural diversity. Vernacular built form is the traditional and natural way by which communities adopt

themselves to the environment which is a continuous process. This includes necessary changes and continuous adaptation as a response to social and environmental limitations.

The survival of this tradition is affected by social, cultural, financial and architectural homogenisation throughout the world. Due to this transformation at the global level of the culture and socio-economic factors, the vernacular structures are extremely vulnerable, facing serious problems of becoming obsolete. This problem is to be seriously handled at the grass root level by the respective communities. The architectural fraternity and allied professionals including government officials as multidisciplinary group of specialists have to take responsibility for these changes.

In addition to the guidelines in Venice Charter it is required to establish the principles for maintenance and protection of our built vernacular heritage.

The Konkan region is an extent of 720kms i.e. from Palghar District of Maharashtra to Dakshina Kannada of Karnataka state. The distinct style of Konkan region was fallout of available local materials, climatic conditions and cultural practices shaping their built forms.



Figure 1. Temple of Devi Mauli at Sonurli, Konkan Maharashtra, after transformation into new medium

The built vernacular heritage occupies a main place in the peoples mind and pride. It varies from region to region and appears informal, but nevertheless orderly. It is mostly utilitarian based design and captures interest and beauty. Man is known by his creations of time and this needs to be conserved as the traditional harmonies of man and nature. Today there is major threat to this segment of man's creation as individual buildings are demolished or renovated using modern materials to meet the images of modern comfort like as shown in Figure 1 of renovation of Devi Mauli temple at Sonurli, Maharashtra. A lot of heritage is still not sufficiently documented for protection. Also some of the building techniques found in vernacular architecture earthen construction techniques for instance are particularly vulnerable and require special attention and the most important major threat is the gentrification of vernacular areas in the name of development.

2. SCOPE OF STUDY

This research aims to safeguard the vernacular heritage of Konkan region which was reflect of the long standing traditional cultural practices which includes building art and craft in making their built form which is in a state of extinct.

To study and revive the art, the artisan communities and the traditional knowledge systems in making the built form which also included community participation

To propose a Comprehensive Conservation for Shri. Mauli Devasthan, Zolambe, Dodamarg, Sindhudurg, Maharashtra as a case for Conservation of Vernacular style of Temple Architecture of Konkan Region.

To study the characteristic features of Vernacular Temple Style of Konkan

To document the existing Temple details as a record for reference of the existing building art and craft

To Study the Architectural elements, Building Materials and Technology adopted

To study the possibility of revival of the Building art which is the unique feature of Konkani Vernacular Temples

To study the temple and community relationship which forms part of the cultural practices intact till today.

To identify the Problem /Issues

3. ABOUT DODAMARG AND ZOLAMBE VILLAGE

Dodamarg is one of the seven Talukas and smallest of them all, located on the southern side of the Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra. The total Geographical area of Dodamarg is 45053 hectares. It is at the boundary of Maharashtra and Goa state as indicated in the maps at Figure 2. It mainly constitutes forest and hilly areas called as 'Valati' belonging to the

Sayadri hill range. Most of the soils are derived from lateritic rocks. Basic classification can be into three categories i.e. alluvial soil, saline soil, and lateritic soils. The state highway passes through Banda, Dodamarg. Villages of Zolambe, Fukeri have district highway networks

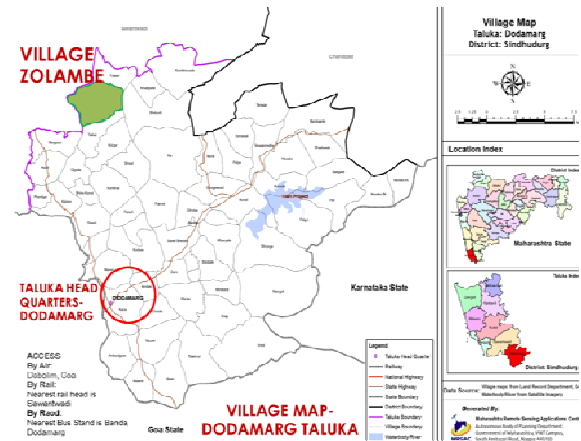


Figure 2. Taluka Map of Dodamarg

Village Zolambe is 25 Kms away from Banda. Banda is a town in Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra, India, near to the Goa-Maharashtra border and 12km from Sawantwadi, satellite image reworked in Figure 3.

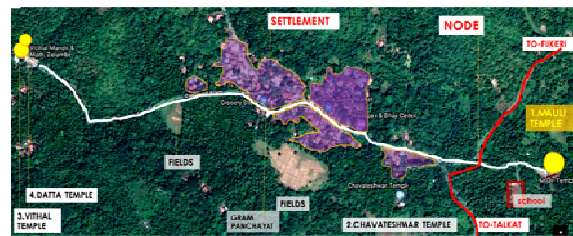


Figure 3. Village Map of Zolambe

4. ABOUT THE MAULI DEVI TEMPLE COMPLEX

This Temple is 300 years old, dedicated to Goddess Maishasura Mardini incarnation of Durga, worshipped as Mauli Devi. The local Tribal community are the original settlers of the village with the name Gawas. The Kokanashta Brahmin communities (Chitpavan Brahmin) are the settlements who migrated from the Western Ghats. The temple belongs to this tribal community. Zolambe had lots of indigenous occupations as farming and betel nuts. Historical evidence show the place was inhabited by lots of painters, sculptors who contributed to these places, traces of which are seen in this Kaavi art evident till today.

The Temple is situated in close proximity to Nature and its sacredness. The concept of Devarayee ambience is strikingly noted in its location. Mauli Devi Temple is the temple of the

tribal community which follows the Devarayee concept mostly seen along the Konkan belt (Protection of Forests, farms) which is an intangible heritage depicting the particular typology of cultural landscape of the region basically designed to suffice the utilitarian and ritualistic needs of the community as a whole. The natural resources around like birds, animals, water resource (stream) are the part of the temple set up. Temple is situated along the river Kadanne, which is the tributary from the Sahyadri mountain range.

Krishna and Ganpati which are all Vaishnavite forms. Additionally there are paintings of trees, birds, peacocks, parrots, Garrud (Vulture), leaves, flowers and lotus. North wall has a mural of Vishnu followed by Rama. South wall has Jatayu and Rama, which displays the mythological depiction of Ramayana in a graphical pictorial form. In between the wall spaces are filled up with geometrical pattern representing trees and flowers, which are nature based pictorial graphics.

This temple as seen in Figure 6 is a vintage point showing the reflect of vernacular temple set up of Konkan belt which is on the verge of extinction due to modern technological intervention and if not conserved at this crucial time it might be lost forever.

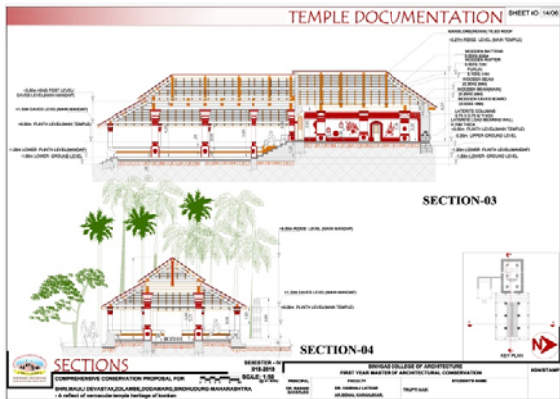


Figure 4. Documentation of Mauli Temple, Zolambe



Figure 6. Occupational based Temple set up

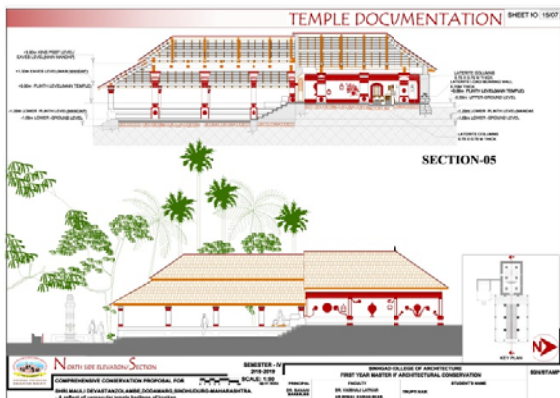


Figure 5. North side Elevation of the Mauli Temple

5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The temple reflects a distinct traditional vernacular architectural style of Konkan region, inclusive of intangible and tangible built environment and cultural practices, which is an amalgamation of nature, forest, plantation, community and the settlement strongly interwoven, showcasing the temple as their religious identity and landmark. Revitalisation of traditional and indigenous building skills and knowledge as an art and craft ensures existence of traditional architecture.

This Temple architecture is in vernacular form, which is still in existence, documented as in Figure 4 and 5. Main festival of the Devi celebration is on the Dussehra in the month of October. The walls, columns are extensively carved with mural paintings with pictorial representations of gods and goddesses in Kaavi art. This was a local art technique in use in the region of Goa, Kudal, Sawantwadi, and all of Konkan belt. This art is on every part of the temple, external walls, internal spaces, Garbhagriha, Mukhamandapa, Sabhamandapa, depicting paintings of Rama, Sita and Lakshama, Hanuman-Ramayana characters(Vaishnavites cult). Also there are symbolic pictorial forms of Shanka chakra (Conch shell), Gadha (Mallet), Yahoda with Krishna, gopi's dancing with

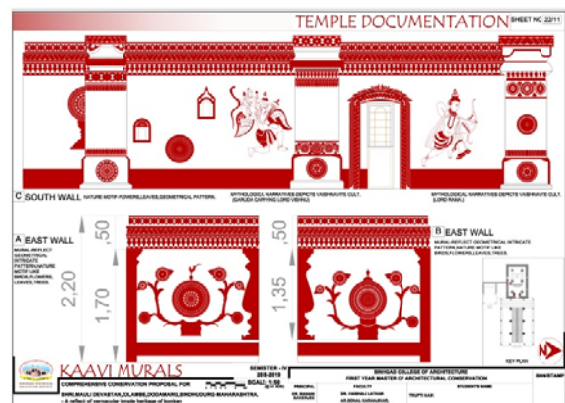


Figure 7. Kaavi Mural Art at the Mauli Temple

Kaavi art in buildings is a recognisable regional character as seen in Figure 7 distinct to the Konkan region. The indigenous

materials, tools, techniques, skills, iconography used in Kaavi art are all traditional expertise and are facing a disastrous decline to a point of extinction due to onslaught of modern imported materials and loss of skilled Kaavi craftsmen. Kaavi as tangible and intangible vernacular heritage can contribute to the strengthening of our culture in the regional context and can engage the past generations with the present and towards a sustainable future. It is hoped that conservation and restoration of Kaavi art will encourage and trigger to keep alive this vernacular traditional heritage.

6. VALUE ASSESSMENT



Figure 8. Communities and the Temple

Contextual Value: Temple setup and surrounding is a reflect of the cultural system which is region specific making a unique identity of Konkan Maharashtra. The location chosen for the temple setup in the nature’s proximity along with the water source wherein the natural forest farming (plantation-horticulture), settlement and the people (community) are closely interwoven showcasing the temple as their religious identity in turn reflecting a unique character of built environment. The temple is a landmark and the identity of the village and its community, seen in Figure 8.

Environmental Value: The Temple structure is associated with the intangible practices which are designed to protect the nature. Devarayees and Vanarayees (Forest and Plantation area) are well protected in the name of religious significance. It is a productive (occupational) based temple set up which is a unique characteristic of Konkan region

Architectural Value: This temple reflects distinct and characteristic architectural features of Vernacular style of Konkan. The temple setting with respect to the built and un-built, scale, building art and building craft reflects the sustainable design approach in the making of the built structure. Spatial organization is typical vernacular style of Konkan Maharashtra that reflects minimum built space (Enclosed Garbhagriha)/ Sabhamandapa (community get together space)/ only two components defining the spatial organization of the built temple. Locally available resources which are nature friendly, indigenous of the place and long

lasting were used. It is a distinct Utilitarian and functionally adopted design approach

Art Value: It has unique art and built craftsmanship and the only surviving temple with this intangible cultural layer of craftsmanship reflecting the mural art- The Kaavi, the art of Konkan region which is still intact in its indigenous medium and not changed over the time ever since it was built 300 years ago.

Socio-cultural Value: The temple is reflect of tribal culture and the lifestyle of the community. Shigmoutsav- the intangible cultural layer of cultural festival (Nhavan) reflects the distinct identity of the community associated strongly with the temple which is famous in the Sindhudurg district. The place has got a unique cultural significance of identity of the place and its people.

Archaeological Value: The idols in the temple are 400 years old reflecting the sculpture and Iconography of that time.

7. LEGISLATION REVIEW

Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites is a set of guidelines drawn up in 1964 by a group of conservation professionals in Venice that provides an international framework for the conservation and restoration of historic buildings. The Principles of conservation recognises the need of multi-disciplinary experts to deal with the vernacular heritage in built form, spaces, the intangible traditions and communities to plan out the conservation strategies.

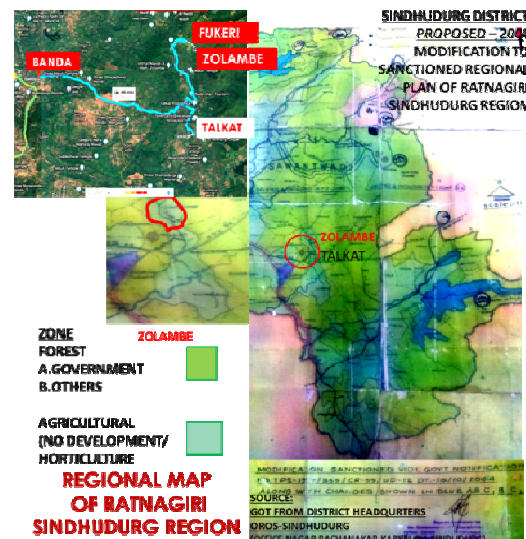


Figure 9. Development Zoning of Zolambe village

The Indian Forest Act 1927, Reserved Forest is notified under section 20 [Act 16 of 1927] or under the reservation provisions of the Forest acts of the State Governments. It is

within power of a State Government to issue notification under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 declaring a piece of land to be a Reserved Forest.

Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act 1966, has declared Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg district as Tourism district, hence Special Heritage Bye Laws are applicable. No Development is permitted within 100 meters of Forts, Archaeological, Historical, Temples, Highest Waterfall, Scenic spots and 500 meters for Forest/Agricultural Zone

The sanctioned Regional plan as shown in Figure 9, for Ratnagiri -Sindhudurg district has identified Zolambe village as protected forest. Zolambe village comes under gram Panchayat, hence development plans are not worked out for such areas and therefore the temple structures are not yet mapped. As such there is no protection to the vernacular heritage, other than those identified in heritage list which is focusing only in tourism interest. As Sindhudurg is already identified as tourist district, there is full scope to map the vernacular temple structures, at least those which are more than 300 years old and above and having distinct vernacular characteristic features. Mapping can be done at Taluka Level as Vernacular Heritage Structures of Sindhudurg district and apply respective heritage byelaws.

Under the Conservation of Heritage Sites including Heritage Buildings, Heritage precincts and Natural feature areas, Town and Country Planning Organisation, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, there is a provision for grading of buildings and sites classified as Grade I (National importance), II (Regional importance) and III (Others) in descending order of importance.

Lastly the Vernacular Charter is never given due importance, which states that the built vernacular heritage is important and fundamental expression of culture of a community.

8. PROBLEMS AND ISSUES



Figure 10. Existing View of the Mauli Temple

As seen in the Figure 10, issues at the Temple complex which need to be attended on priority basis are, basic infrastructure amenities are missing, new additions done does not blend with

the Architectural style, no planning in the way the new structures have come up in the temple complex, organized planning is lagging behind, new temporary structures are in the form of shades within the temple complex which are not in harmony with the traditional architectural characteristic features, no drainage worked out for the temple complex, road level is higher to that of the temple and during the rainy season the entire soil gets deposited around the main temple causing major damage to the temple every year, lack of awareness towards the heritage, no parking facilities, no maintenance strategies at present, structural deterioration due to lack of maintenance is the major issue, cracks in the lime plaster walls are seen in many places especially in the Garbhagriha of the main temple. Dampness patches are seen all along the skirting level in the main chamber of the Garbhagriha due to the lack of plinth protection and no management of water drainage system. The woodwork under the roof is still intact except the termite attack on one or two King post members, which can be repaired. Flooring used is of mosaic tiles, which is visually in a bad state since there is no maintenance. The dampness in the Garbhagriha chamber is being more accelerated due to the use of inappropriate and incompatible material in repair work which included cement plaster and concreting of the floors. Such intervention not only caused physical deterioration but also the loss of authenticity of the historic structure.

9. CONSERVATION PROPOSAL

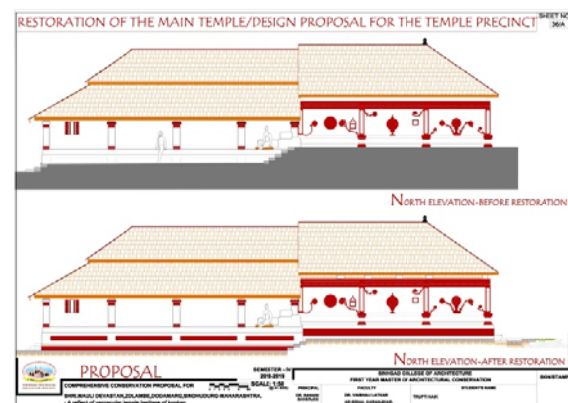


Figure 11. Restoration proposal of the Mauli Temple

The conservation proposal is to do structural conservation of the main temple and Futuristic design proposal for Temple Precinct as proposed in Figure 11 and documented in Figure 12. This will include revival of its art and craft which was reflect of traditional building knowledge system and native practices which were used in building the temples of Konkan.

The main aim is to restore back the temple to its original glory. This is to be done through degree of intervention at building level as applicable by doing Preservation and Restoration as proposed in Figure 13. Some structures needs

to be relocated in the temple precinct. The new interventions should be in harmonious blend of the exiting built environment using indigenous materials and vernacular architectural style. The complex design should be such that the community participation approach would increase to a greater extent. This will include environmental sensitive approach such as introducing landscape which is more productive which can be managed by the local community, blend with the settings. The components introduced are horticulture plantations and the water harvesting tank for the community. Rangmandap structure is to be designed on a vernacular theme, with local materials, native building art and craftsmanship, for multi-purpose cultural activities of the village that would include wedding celebrations, Pujas, meetings, training programs, workshops, etc

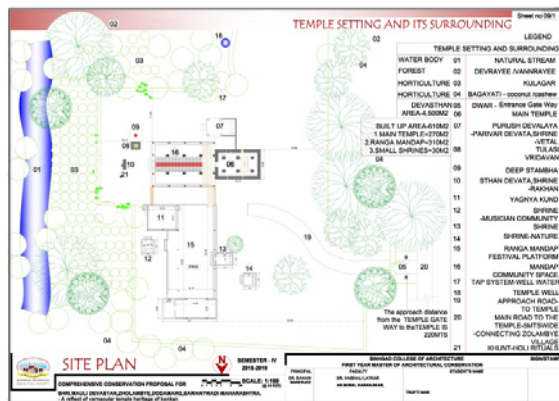


Figure 12. Existing Site Plan of the Temple and Precinct

Revival of art (Kaavi art and woodcraft) and construction craftsmanship by providing training programs, training the local artists (region specific) of area identified is Sawantwadi. Community should be trained for maintenance of the temple complex.

It is important to monitor the site post intervention in order to examine the impact of the modern intervention of the historic materials. Also administrative, visitors, garbage and sanitation management if planned in advance will go a long way in sustaining the complex in a healthy environment. Public awareness and participation can be created by publication of this documentation and conducting awareness programs and workshops for school children and general public about the importance of Vernacular Heritage.

Like Zolambe the entire Konkan region has varied Heritage potential which needs to be safeguarded in order to protect both the intangible and tangible layers of the its rich cultural resource before it's too late.

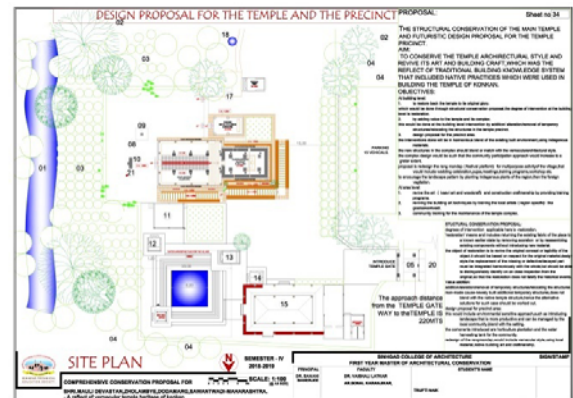


Figure 13. Conservation proposal for Temple and Precinct

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- [13] Maps are downloads from the Internet source and other department sources and have been reworked by this Researcher
- [14] This Research has been presented as a project study for the Final year Masters in Architectural Conservation program at the Sinhgad college in Pune, SCOA under the able guidance Dr.Vaishali Latkar, HOD, Dept of M.Arch (Cons) and Ar.Sonal Karanjikar, Faculty, M.Arch (Cons)