Cultural Landscapes: An approach to Heritage Management in India

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Through this paper I intend to study the emergence of Cultural Landscapes as a designation of World Heritage and its application to the historic environment in India. It is important to explore the relevance of this category to the Indian context as traditionally nature and culture have always been considered inseparable aspects of the environment in our context as against the Colonial/ Western preoccupation with architectural heritage.

I further wish to study the challenges or solutions offered as a result of adopting this concept in the management of our historic environment citing the example of the World Heritage Site of Hampi.

The World Heritage Site of Hampi seems to offer an appropriate arena for studying these observations for a range of reasons. Firstly, the core area of Hampi extends over an area of 25 sq. km., and comprises of several complexes of highly significant historic structures and ruins thus making it a very complex site to manage using existing conservation practices that focus primarily on architecture and archaeology.

Secondly, the natural setting of the valley of the Tungabhadra river flowing through this region looks out to a landscape formed of huge boulders seemingly precariously balanced one upon another offering a unique visual experience. Besides this natural landscape, the profusion of banana and coconut plantations in this region add yet another dimension to the scenery. The significance of this multifaceted setting to the ambience of the entire site makes it imperative to treat it as inseparable with the architectural buildings and ruins.

The structures and ruins, which form part of this site, are highly significant for their architectural, artistic and historic value. Many of these belong to different periods in the long history of the site. However, the most significant period is associated with the 'golden era' of Hindu civilization extending from fourteenth to sixteenth century under Vijayanagara rule. However, the Deccan Sultans who formed a unique alliance of Islamic

forces to take over this prosperous Hindu kingdom brought this to a sudden end in the battle of Talikote in 1565.

While Hampi represents the capital of the Vijayanagara (literally meaning 'city of victory') Empire, its significance as a landscape with sacred associations extends into our pre- historic past. This mythological journey continues to imbue the site with religious and cultural value special to the many pilgrims visiting this area.

Hampi also exhibits a typical case of conflict between exceptional cultural value versus development pressures of expanding urban and rural settlements in its vicinity. Though Hampi was nominated as a World Heritage Site in 1986 it was promptly placed on the World Heritage site in danger in 1999 due to development activities for the convenience of the local populace. Thus this site truly represents the dilemma of conservation needs versus current demands experienced in most of our eminent sites today.

Though Hampi was nominated initially as a group of fourteen monuments, this list was eventually extended to all of the fifty-six monuments under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey of India. However, the need has been felt of late to extend this narrow interpretation to ensure adequate protection of the significance of the entire area. Re nomination of this site as a Cultural Landscape is under consideration. This effort is aimed towards the protection of the landscape with its multiple associations against concentrating only on the architectural components.

All these above mentioned factors make Hampi a unique as well as complex site to manage thereby presenting a suitable case study for this paper.

Introduction to Cultural Landscapes as a designation in World Heritage Sites

This section concentrates on the classification of Cultural Landscapes in the context of World Heritage in order to be able to discern which category could adequately represent the values associated with Hampi for its re-nomination.

Carl Saur, the American geographer, who is considered to have first formulated the concept of Cultural Landscapes in 1925, defined the role of nature and culture in a Cultural Landscape. He stated that

> The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape the result (**Anschuetz K F et al 2001**).

The inclusion of Cultural Landscapes on the World Heritage List was the result of the new anthropological dimension acknowledged in the definition of cultural heritage of 'outstanding universal value' (Titchen and Rossler 1995, 425). Based upon these concepts, the World Heritage Convention in the year 1995 included Cultural Landscapes on the World Heritage List under the following categories, as discussed in the Operational Guidelines for the Convention:

The first category of Cultural Landscapes is the 'clearly defined landscape', which is designed and created intentionally by humans. The gardens and parkland landscapes, in this section, are often associated with religious or other monumental structures or ensembles. Representative of this category are the Garden Tomb of Humayun (India), the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore (Pakistan) and Studley Royal (UK).

The second category includes 'organically evolved landscape' that may have developed as a result of a 'social, economic, administrative and/ or religious imperative'. However, it is expressed, in the present, as a consequence of its association and response to the landform, vegetation and other aspects of the natural environment (Cleere 1995, 65). Within this category of 'organically evolved landscapes', are those landscapes in which the evolutionary process has ended at some time in the past, but where material evidence of that process still remains. These are called 'relict or fossil landscapes'.

'Continuing landscapes' is a sub-category of 'organically evolved' landscapes. This specific landscape type continues to represent the on-going evolutionary process of a social or economic function in contemporary society, closely associated with a traditional way of life. Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras are an appropriate example of 'continuing landscapes'.

The third category of 'associative' Cultural Landscapes is included on the World Heritage List for its powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element instead of evidence of material culture, which, in this case, may be insignificant or absent (Cleere 1995, 66). This category could include sacred mountains or religious settlements on outstanding landscapes, among others. Feliu (1995, 447) recognises the particular relevance of 'associative landscapes' to the Asia-Pacific region due to the connection between the physical and spiritual aspects of landscapes in these societies. This is as a result of the continuity of living traditions in relation to land and water within this region. The Tongariro National Park, New Zealand, is the first cultural landscape to be inscribed on the World Heritage List. It is an 'associative cultural landscape' for the Maori community that have sacred associations with the mountains.

Within this context of World Heritage Classification, it seems impossible to nominate Hampi under any single category without undermining the other linked values. The complex nature of this site due to a range of uses and associations of different time periods in its history offer a dilemma in terms of its designation under only one of the above-mentioned categories of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes. Certain parts of this site are imbued with ancient or mythological meaning which my appropriately be referred to as an 'associative landscape'. Other areas pertaining to architectural and artistic importance of the structures and their response to the natural setting would earn it the nomenclature of an 'organically evolved landscape'. The continuing practice of worship at some of the temple complexes along with the age-old agricultural activities and irrigation systems that are essential in maintaining the integrity and experience of the site as a whole would make it suitable as a 'continuing' landscape within the category of 'organically evolved' landscapes.

In re-nominating Hampi as a Cultural Landscape there needs to be a clear understanding of the range of values this site represents. Some of these are introduced and discussed in the following section.

Introduction to Hampi as a Cultural Landscape

Natural Landscape

The natural landscape at Hampi is on one hand universally recognised for its beauty and on the other hand enriched with symbolism from mythological references. The array of huge granite boulders rounded and seemingly detached from one another are haphazardly arranged to give unending hues of pink, ochre and grey in a landscape that is the result of some three thousand million years of erosion, which began underground but once uplifted has resulted in this unique landform.

The largely granite based landscape has offered itself as an unending source of building material for centuries. The landscape is a unique showcase for the cyclic life of a settlement, magnificent structures being fashioned from the local granite rocks that become ruins assimilating once again into the very same landscape from which they were fashioned.

The Tungabhadra River flowing northeasterly adds its own dimension to this landscape. Its valley is rich in boulders and scattered with lagoons, islands and smaller pools of water. Large tracts under banana and coconut plantations add manmade texture to the landscape. Cascades and rapids in the upper reaches versus continuous flooding and a gentler course in the lower areas make this river an inseparable element of the natural landscape of Hampi (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

Mythological landscape

Hampi is widely referred to as the seat of the Vijayanagara Empire, a great city that was established here in the mid 14th century. However, the association of this region as a mythological landscape goes back thousands of years. While the Tungabhadra River forms the central spine, the landscape it flows through is imbued with religious meaning from different eras. The site is commonly referred to as Pampaksetra, literally the abode of goddess Pampa, daughter of Lord Brahma, considered the Creator of the universe in

Hindu mythology. She is also believed to be the consort of Lord Shiva, the Destroyer in the trinity of Hindu gods (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

Another significant, though later, reference to this site is its association with the ancient Hindu religious text, the Ramayana. Linked with the monkey kingdom, this region is to this day popularly referred to as Kishkinda kshetra. It is of relevance here that many events described in the particular chapter of the Ramayana are associated with specific locations in this region. While these connections survive in the collective memory they are reinforced by the sculpted presence of these gods and goddesses and depictions of events in the various temples in Hampi as well as rock outcrops scattered around the landscape.

Besides the legendary associations, the historic value of the site is further reinforced by the presence of prehistoric rock shelters that abound in this region and evidence of Megalithic burial chambers a few kilometres west of the settlement of Anegondi (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

Religious practices and cults
The worship of Goddess Pampa and Lord Virupaksha or Shiva continues to this day in the Virupaksha temple complex on the banks of the Tungabhadra. Other incarnations or forms of Shiva can also be found in temples or rock carvings in the landscape. Rock reliefs of goddess Kali referred to as Ellamma are also worshipped in many areas. Carvings and idols of Rama, incarnation of Lord Vishnu and other figures from the epic Ramayana can also be found in this area in the various temple complexes as well as along roads and pathways and on rock carvings.

The lasting influence of the cults begun or encouraged by the various Vijayanagara regimes is visible far and wide in the Indian landscape even today. The worship of Lord Venkateshwara at Tirumala, near Tirupati in the State of Andhra Pradesh was developed as an important pilgrimage centre under the kings Krishnadevaraya and Achyutraya of

Hampi. This temple complex today has emerged as the second richest in the world after the Vatican.

Besides the main temples and deities, there are numerous other cults, gods and saints that have enriched this scared landscape. Among these the cult of Alvars along with the worship of Tirthankaras, holy deities in the Jain religion in the villages of Anegondi and Kamalapura, and other parts of the urban core are worth mention (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

Therefore this region has immense significance from the religious perspective, as the Vijayanagara kingdom is believed to be responsible for the revival of Hindu intellectual traditions along with the construction of temples.

Architectural heritage

By the middle of the fifteenth century, the Vijayanagara kingdom had attained the status of an empire as it extended from the Bay of Bengal in the east of the Indian sub continent to the Arabian Sea on the West and Krishna river in the north of the Deccan plateau to the province of Tamil Nadu in the South (Michell 2000).

Two centuries of wealth and power are evident in the plan for Vijayanagara, believed to be the largest for any of its contemporaries in the Indian context. As only the solid masonry structures such as fortification walls, gateways, temples, shrines, colonnades and tanks survive they give only a brief idea of the size and architectural complexity of this settlement at the time (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

An oval shaped zone, approximately four kilometres long along the South West and North East axis represents the extents of the urban core with the eastern end marked by a temple complex. An irregular layout with perimeter walls navigating the granite ridges and radial roads lead to a smaller zone located more towards the Western end of the urban core which signifies the royal centre of the metropolis. This area is scattered with remains of palaces, platforms for viewing festivities and peripheral activities such as

stables, stores etc. The architectural styles used in these structures vary depending upon the period of construction. However, what is worth a mention here is the fact that many of the palaces, elephant stables etc. represent a marriage of the Hindu and Islamic architectural styles unique to this complex (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

An irrigated valley segregates the urban core and the sacred with the latter extending two and a half kilometres along the southern bank of the river. Four independent quarters or 'puras', as they are known, form the sacred centre. Each of these is composed of a walled nucleus, the temple that is approached through a colonnaded street serving as a bazaar during festivals. A tank or kalyani for religious ablutions is located in the vicinity of each temple. Hampi with its Virupaksha temple is still in use and predates Vijayanagara rule. Though this Virupakshapura has shrines from the 9th century, the other quarters are mainly from the 16th century and have lost their original use and are now seen and treated merely as archaeological ruins (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

Regional area

Besides the urban core, royal and sacred centre, at the height of its prosperity, the city of Vijayanagara extended to include the sub urban settlement of Kamalapura, Malpannagudi, Anantashayanagudi, the small town of Anegondi and the burgeoning town of Hospet. Which indicate a region of greater than 600 square kilometres under the influence of the metropolis.

It is also essential to mention here the role of this regime to establish a sophisticated irrigation system that is in use till today. The Turrutu canal still irrigates these lands with the water being used now for sugarcane and banana cultivation. Though some parts of the network are still in use, large tracts have been damaged or taken over by contemporary development and activities (Fritz and Michell, 2003).

While these multiple factors contribute to the significance of the site, the management mechanisms continue to be building centric. The site is however threatened with developmental pressures. The construction of a massive suspension bridge through the

site by the Public Works department meant that the highway traffic was being allowed to move through the site thus irreversibly damaging the delicate balance. This in turn resulted in the site being proclaimed an endangered site by UNESCO and resulted in stopping the completion and use of the bridge and inconveniencing the locals. In this way this incident has done more harm than good in that the villagers across the river have to spend more than an hour travelling around the river instead of simply using the bridge, a facility denied to them at the moment thus bringing in direct conflict the contemporary needs and conservation values (Fritz and Michell, 2003) (Thakur 2004) (Yang and Trouilloud, 2003).

While these conflicts and opportunities offer a range of dilemmas, the situation has been compounded by the conservation philosophies and practices prevalent in India today.

Criteria I represent a masterpiece of creative genius

Iii bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or has dissappeared
Iv be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

Introduction to Heritage Management in India

Through a brief introduction to the management mechanism in use at Indian sites today, I aim to highlight the hurdles of managing a Cultural Landscape once this site gets re-nominated as one.

The Indian administrative framework at the centre is composed of various ministries. Heritage conservation is dealt with by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, which is further divided into the Department of Culture and the Department of Tourism. The former is responsible for the Archaeological Survey of India and the National Culture Fund. Further, there are other central ministries that are relevant to heritage conservation.

For instance, the Geological Survey of India falls under the purview of the Department of Mines, part of the Ministry of Coal and Mines. The Ministry of Environment and Forests is responsible for the Botanical Survey of India. (Government of India 2002, Government of India website). Given the multiple values of this site, in order the manage Hampi as a Cultural landscape, these multiple agencies will need to work within a framework defined by what comprises the significance of the site.

Similar to the administrative set up the legislative framework in India is dealt with under the Central, State and Concurrent lists. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act was formulated in 1958 at the Centre and is under the purview of the Director General, Archaeology (National Informatics Centre 2002, Archaeological Survey of India website). This Central Act is responsible for the protection of both movable and immovable property. Monument protection specifically falls under concurrent lists that are under central as well as state jurisdiction. This 1958 Act remains the overriding legislation today.

However, there are many shortcomings in this act especially in the management of Cultural Landscapes. Ribeiro (1989, 3) concludes that the 1958 Act concerns itself primarily with the protection of monuments and sites "…more in an introverted fashion and not in relation to the overall surrounding of the area". P Singh (1998, 9) reiterates that there is no mention in the 1958 Act of the environment and setting of monuments. Further, although the provision of stipulating areas near or adjoining the monuments as 'prohibited or regulated areas' may be exercised, this has been largely ineffective in the absence of protection against developmental activities.

An amendment was passed in 1992 to the Ancient Monuments and Sites Act 1958 to include an immediate area of 100m as 'prohibited zone' and a further 200m as 'regulated zone'. While this may have helped in better management of architectural sites, it has not contributed to the management of larger complexes or Cultural Landscapes. For instance, in the case of Hampi, the area under consideration as the central core extends up to 25 sq.kms. Keeping in view this amendment the effective areas to be managed end up as clusters of

concentric circles around the individual monuments with no consideration to the landscape setting, unique water system, settlement patterns or agricultural practices (Thakur 2004).

Jacques and Fowler (1995, 416) reiterate that a significant hurdle is the delineation of Cultural Landscapes, which has resulted in discouraging the adoption and implementation of this concept by those who manage it. They highlight that, as conservation ideology for cultural landscapes is based upon the conservation approach adopted for cultural monuments or natural resources, the subjective aspects of natural and associative values prove to be demanding for the existing regulatory systems.

Another concern revolves around the role of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and its practices of repair, maintenance and management of cultural sites. Set up in 1861, under the colonial regime, ASI continues to be the most powerful government organisation responsible for India's cultural heritage. Under the 1958 Act, ASI has declared 3606 monuments as being of national importance until December 2000 (National Informatics Centre (2002) 'Archaeological Survey of India homepage').

ASI operates under three distinct branches. The project survey branch undertakes building surveys for secular buildings and temple survey for religious structures. The excavation branch is responsible for large-scale excavations. The horticulture branch maintains gardens around monuments (National Informatics Centre (2002) 'Archaeological Survey of India homepage'). The State departments of Archaeology are responsible for monuments that are not considered of national importance. But these departments, in most cases, are limited in their influence as they lack legal authority to acquire or protect buildings.

Apart from the central legislation, each state has its own set of planning legislations and policies, which directly or indirectly influence heritage conservation. In the case of Karnataka state the "The Karnataka Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1961' is responsible for the protection of monuments of both national and regional importance. In the case of Hampi, the

distribution of monuments between these two departments created its own conflict in jurisdiction (Thakur 2004).

Further to this, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment to the Indian Constitution proposes decentralization of financial and executive powers (Thakur 2004). Therefore introducing the importance of local governance and stakeholder participation can be seen as a step forward in the management of Hampi World Heritage Area Site (HWHS). The lack of awareness of the significance of the site versus the basic needs of the local population make this a two edged sword which needs to be used only after intensive stakeholder workshops that can create a platform for mutual understanding of the issues involved between the local people and the departments of archaeology managing the sites. This is especially important considering that Hampi was placed on the list of endangered sites for the construction of the bridge across the river demonstrating the conflict between the aspirations of the various interest groups.

In spite of these hurdles there is an opportunity at Hampi to attempt the development of a framework that can facilitate the management of larger sites through the institution of the Hampi World Heritage Site Management Authority established under the "Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority Bill 2002" (Thakur 2004).

However the main issues here are that firstly, the practice of an architectural approach to conservation of larger sites ends up with the areas around the monuments being considered primarily for the purpose of viewing, appreciating or managing the monument. Secondly, in the case of Hampi where the core area itself is quite expansive, neither the State Department of Archaeology nor ASI are neither empowered nor equipped to patrol the entire area. This has resulted in smaller areas around the main monuments getting cordoned off within walled or fenced enclosures and 'beautified with lawns and shrubberies: landscapes befitting a contemporary public park.

Therefore even if Hampi is nominated as a Cultural Landscape of outstanding universal significance, the absence of an appropriate legal and management mechanism that

understands and translates the significance of the site as a whole will render this a fruitless exercise. In the absence of such a holistic approach Hampi will continue on the list of endangered sites.

Conclusions

Though it is not possible to offer exact dates for legends associated with this site, a study of the remains and presence of other evidence leads to the assumption that Hampi has a history dating back to at least three thousand years. Further, these remains and associations reinforce the historicity of this site and the need to conserve it in its entirety to represent the evolution of a culture within this landscape. While this establishes the need to nominate Hampi as a Cultural Landscape, it also highlights the hurdles in our understanding of the concept of Cultural Landscapes and their administration.

It is essential to mention here that the emergence of the concept of Cultural Landscapes was the result of the need to broaden the definition of heritage from its architectural bias and this further served the means of balancing the World Heritage List in favour of non-material, indigenous civilisations.

This also implies that there is a need to develop a flexible system of classification whereby there is scope to classify and name historic properties based on their particular context and characteristics, almost an extension of the NARA principles to redefining our heritage.

Therefore, though the World Heritage Convention highlights the definition and classification of this category of heritage, aiming for representation from Western and Eastern civilisations, it may be observed at Hampi that there is no clear distinction and the site can be nominated into more than one category. This is because at Hampi, the

natural landscape, the mythical landscape as well as the architectural dimension all play an equally significant role in the creation of the overall experience. This suggests that there needs to be some system by which the Member states are allowed to nominate or re-nominate their sites as Cultural Landscapes within their particular context without attempting to slot their heritage into one or the other categories.

The second issue which most large cultural sites are unable to come to terms with is the process of delineation of Cultural Landscapes. By the very nature of its definition this heritage represents tangible natural or man made remains as well as intangible associations, legends and beliefs. While it is possible, to an extent, to physically delineate the property from the perspective of tangible remains this does not hold good from the point of view of intangible ideas.

Even from the perspective of the definition of core zones for administration, it is impossible to draw a line on the landscape indicating that the points thereafter would be of little importance. The idea of marking areas of diminishing importance and formulating policies accordingly may be a line of thought. Unlike core and buffer zone concepts currently in use, these delineations need not indicate concentric zones but be more realistic in their response to the terrain and the requirements to protect the significance of the particular site.

Documentation, presentation and interpretation of the intangible aspects of heritage may be a starting point for their protection. This methodology could be extended to connect sites, relics and landscapes beyond the historic environment in question. For example, in the case of Hampi, to link the shrine of Tirupati as well as other scared and royal enclaves connected to the Vijayanagara kingdom that are located away from this region may create a level of interest and awareness to engage the locals as well as tourists and pilgrims.

The main hurdle in Hampi is the multiple perceptions of the site for the various groups involved with it namely, the locals, tourists, tour operators, site managers, pilgrims, priests, government agencies, ASI and others. The significance of the natural setting as

well as the various complexes of historic buildings, irrigation networks, mythological associations and contemporary use patterns as well as policies governing their future need to be clearly laid out in the forthcoming Site Management plan after discussion and deliberations with all the government agencies and private owners alike.

Therefore, this site needs to be developed as a model for stakeholder participation and starting a meaningful dialogue between the managers and the locals to serve as a starting point for the administration and management of large and complex sites such as Hampi. The Hampi World Heritage Site Development Authority has a significant role to play in setting off this process.

The statement of significance is the starting point for managing any cultural heritage site. This also indicates that the significance of the site needs to be clearly defined to all involved or affected. Unless this is effectively carried out, site management will be ridded with conflicts of interests, which may remain unresolved further complicating the situation, as in the case of the construction of the bridge in Hampi.

Increasing significance of the site may result in an increased tourist inflow. This coupled with the natural rate of growth of the urban and rural settlements within this area have already begun to challenge the future sustainability of this site with many of these activities challenging the very significance of the site. While there are many lacunae in the existing legal and administrative set up in the Indian context, the problems are further heightened due to ineffective execution using the legal and administrative tools that are presently available. The establishment of the Hampi Development Authority seems to be a step in the right direction and offers the opportunity to implement the Site Management plan in the most effective way.

The brief introduction of the legal and administrative framework has clearly indicated the need to make adequate changes to incorporate a wider definition of heritage in the system. While there is a distinction between formal heritage management and local traditional practices in our nation, these need to be brought together for effective

management of our historic environment. Though these changes may take a while, we are all aware that the developmental pressures will continue to triumph over our eminent sites and historic remains. It is as a nation that we need to recognise this grave threat that economic prosperity and urban development have brought upon our cultural heritage.

Environmentalism became a much-debated topic in India in the eighties and nineties. In the same spirit, the twenty-first century needs to be dedicated to cultural heritage. We require to do the needful for sites as spectacular as Hampi while they are relatively intact and before it is too late.

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