

HISTORICAL STUDY ON CULTURE AND HERITAGE OF MAHABALIPURAM

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ABSTRACT:

From the history it is identified as Mahabalipuram is otherwise called as 'Kadamalai' which means land of sea and mountain. Tamilnadu state and famous heritage sites are inseparable, historically, the ancient heritage, civilization, model, and convention resembles Tamilnadu. This prehistoric state takes pride in being one of the world's oldest civilizations in the world. The history states that even from time immemorial Tamil people existed and lead a well-planned life. This architectural marvel serves as a master key in understanding of Tamil culture and Heritage. It is necessary to give awareness of Cultural Heritage and the ethics of its care in study curriculum and to identify tools that can be developed to help communities for the better understanding and conserve their heritage. This paper outlines the symbol of existing rich culture, tradition, norms, lifestyle, and monuments standing for longtime more than 1000 years as a historical place of importance. It shows us the past glory of our history, trade and connections with rest of the world. All the possible efforts must be made to protect our rich tradition, culture and heritage of our country.

Keywords: Culture, tradition, Heritage, monuments, Travel history, preservation

1.1. INTRODUCTION:

If it's India's history, you just can't forget Mahabalipuram near Chennai. And with that fact, one thing that's assured is a whole list of heritage sites in near Chennai. Right from the Basilica and Vivekananda House, there's so much for a history buff here that he just might run out of time. While some of the most intricate, ancient temple structures scoring big on the most loved historical places in Chennai, there's much more to it. And of course, there's the beach after hours of scouring through history. A monument complex popularly known as Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram is positioned on the Coromandel Coast of Bay of Bengal. Mahabalipuram is situated in close proximity to Chennai in Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu. The architectural magnificence of the 7th and the 8th century monument makes Mahabalipuram a peerless illustration of ancient civilization and beliefs. The temples that are in the shape of a chariot are also known as Panch Rathas Temples. The list of Panch Rathas Temples in Mahabalipuram comprises Ganesha Ratha, Dharmaraja Ratha, Draupadi Ratha, Arjun Ratha, Nakula- Sehdeva Ratha and Bheema Ratha.

1.2. CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cultural Heritage refers to the cultural aspects like heritage sites, monuments, folklore, traditional activities and practices, language etc. that are considered vital to be preserved for the future generations. It gives people a connection to certain social values, beliefs, religions and customs.

According to ICOMOS, (2002) Cultural Heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including

customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Cultural Heritage is often expressed as either Intangible or Tangible Cultural Heritage. In tangible culture includes (buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artifacts, intangible culture (folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity). The term cultural heritage encompasses several main categories of heritage:

A). Cultural heritage

Tangible cultural heritage:

- movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts)
- immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, and so on)
- underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities)

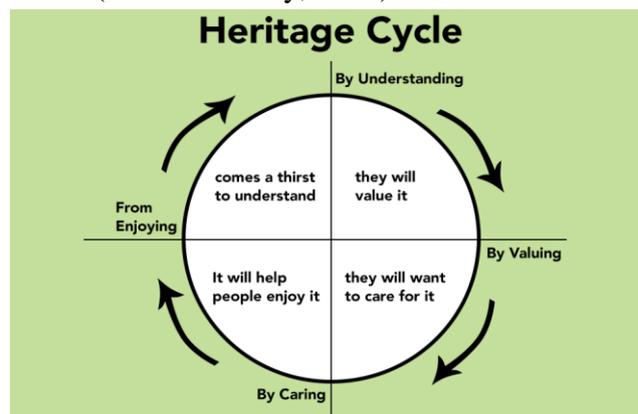
Intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals

B). Natural heritage: natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes, physical, biological or geological formations

C). Heritage in the event of armed conflict.

1.3. THE HERITAGE CYCLE

The Heritage Cycle diagram gives us an idea how we can make the past part of our future (Simon Thurley, 2005). In a clockwise direction the wedges and arrows read:



(Source: <https://www.cultivatingculture.com>)

- By understanding (cultural heritage)-people value it
- By valuing it-people want to care for it
- By caring for it-it will help people enjoy it
- From enjoying it- comes a thirst to understand
- By understanding it...etc

1.4. WHY CULTURE AND HERITAGE SITES ARE NEED TO BE PRESERVED?

“Culture lies not in objects or monuments but in the mind and compassion towards all sentient beings”.

“cultural heritage allows identifying each other by distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”- UNESCO-2002.

Culture heritage can give people a connection to certain social values, beliefs, religions and customs. It allows them to identify with others of similar mindsets and backgrounds. Cultural heritage can provide an automatic sense of unity and belonging within a group and allowed us to understand about previous generations and the history of where we come from. We can see it in the buildings, townscapes, and even in archaeological remains. Culture can be perceived through natural sources as well: the agriculture and landscapes associated with it. It is preserved through books, artifacts, objects, pictures, photographs, art, and oral tradition. Cultural heritage is in the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the religions we follow, and the skills we learn.

Itma, (2007) confirmed that issuance of instructions for maintaining heritage buildings such as obtaining the official demobilization to change or demolition or addition of a supplement of the heritage building is very important.

1.5. CONNECTING WORLD: HERITAGE PLACE OF MAHAPALIPURAM

India's unique culture has led to several celebrations, traditions, and customs. Most of these customs have been rooted in texts and scriptures, which are older than science and have been scientifically proved to be advantageous for mental and physical health. The following are the facts about Mahabalipuram place are given hereunder:

- 650 to 750 AD is considered the best time of the Pallava kings.
- Among the temples, the Varaha Mandapam, Krishna Mandapam, the Five Chariots and the Shore Temple are mainly visible.
- It is, believed that the Pallavas were full of the knowledge of moving forward, new ideology and architecture, so they left the imprints of their work in many places of Mahabalipuram.
- It is, said that this place has been, named after the same Mahabali demon that Lord Vishnu conquered by retaining Vamnavatar.
- It was a very big port, brought many traders to India.
- Mahabalipuram has been, included in the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 1984.
- Mamallapuram was a sea-port during the time of Periplus (1st century AD) and Ptolemy (AD 140).
- Ministry of tourism is running a project namely "Integrated Development of Mamallapuram" for its reservation.
- Most of these monuments are monolithic ie, carved from a single rock.
- Pallava kings craftsmanship depicts many types of beautiful images and ideology.
- Raja Narasimha Varman was a great warrior and wrestler so, he named Mahabalipuram as Mamallapuram because it means 'a great wrestler'.
- Rocks made by cutting stones are also worth seeing.
- The bass reliefs (structures emerging from the rock base) of the Ganges descent are very famous.
- The city was the capital of the Pallava kings in the 7th century.

- The monuments at Mahabalipuram are situated on the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal, in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu, India.
- The monuments at Mahabalipuram got the status of UNESCO'S World Heritage Site in 1984.
- The Pallava kings continued to dominate the country until the end of the 9th century, about three centuries AD.
- The Pallava kings ruled South India after the decline of the Gupta dynasty.
- The Pallava kings used to be very powerful, and their thinking was very different.
- The Shore Temple is the last monument that was, built.
- The temple portion of the Shore temple is made, of granite stone. The Shore Temple was, built around 700–728 AD. The Shore temple is most attractive for tourists.
- The temples of Mahabalipuram are known for their carvings.
- The towns of Mallapuram were found 2000 years ago.
- The Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture is taking care of the conservation work at this site.
- There are five chariots devoted to the Pandavas.
- There are several temples at the Mahabalipuram i.e. Krishna Cave Temple, Mahishasuramardini Mandapa, Araha Cave Temple, Panchapandava Cave Temple and structural temples includes the Shore Temple and the Olakkannesvara Temple.
- There is a college in Mahabalipuram that teaches architecture and temple architecture. From, the ancient coins of Chinese coins, Persian coins, and Rome coins, it can be inferred that the harbor may have been, there earlier.
- This was the second capital of great Pallava ruler Narasimhavarman-I (AD 630-68).

1.6. TRACING THE HISTORY

- Mahendravarman I started the building of the rock-cut temples in South India.
- He built Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram, an immortal centre of artistic excellence by making it '*the birth place of South Indian architecture and sculpture*'.
- The excavated shrines initiated by Mahendravarman are simple pillared halls called Mandapas cut into the back or sides of walls.

The pillars can be studied and understood as part of three stages of development.

1. First stage: This is the stage were seven feet height.
2. Second stage: Pillars were (50 feet height) consisting ornate design.
3. Third stage: Pillars come under the mandapa of ratha temples. It rises up to the pillar separated by kumbha or melon capital above which a padma flares up to the palagai or abacus.

- Cave temples built by with the presence of inscriptions.
- Each mandapa is special in unique way which was carved from one single rock.
- Mandapas were beautifully carved and built with sculpture portray Puranic stories.
- The scene depicting the Goddess Durga's attack on Mahishasura is seen in the Mahishasuramardini Mandapa.

- Mamalla style of architecture is the open art Gallery type.
- Several miniature sculptures have been carved beautifully on the wall of a big rock.
- Fall of the River Ganges from the head of God Siva and Arjuna's penance are noteworthy.
- The images of deer, monkey, cat, mouse and other animals are beautifully carved on this huge rock.
- The upper rock-cut temple at Tiruchirapalli is considered by far the best of his cave temples which has the first representation of Gangadhara.
- As a Jain, prior to his conversion to Saivism, he built a cave temple at Sittanvassal.
- Pancha Rathas also referred as Pandava Rathas are the most excellent architectural edifices of the monolithic temples of Mahabalipuram. The 5 rathas are called as 1). 'Dharmaraja Ratha' 2). 'Bhima Ratha', 3). 'Arjuna Ratha' 4). 'Nakula Sahadeva Ratha', and 5). 'Draupadi Ratha'.

1.7. HERITAGE SITE: WHY IT MUST BE PROTECTED?

In an era of globalization, cultural heritage helps us to remember our cultural diversity, and its understanding develops mutual respect and renewed dialogue amongst different cultures. The soil and people cannot be separated. *The study of history gives a better understanding our group of people rights, their identity, the history, how they influenced by this interconnectedness. Among others Archeological aspects convey our special skills which is endorsement. Unfortunately, sites are frequently threatened by development projects that can destroy this cultural heritage and environmental record. Mahabalipuram, situated about 60 km south of Chennai in Tamil Nadu, is an ancient port town known for its stone carvings and stone temples. It was built largely between the 7th and the 9th centuries. This port city of Pallavas is one of a kind tourist destination worth a visit.*

- *UNESCO declared World Heritage Site.*
- *Five chariots dedicated to the Pandavas.*
- *There are bass reliefs of the descent of the Ganges that are very famous.*
- *It around 200 years complete the sculpture by many generations of Pallava dynasity.*
- *Shore temple is very popular which is the most prominent of them all.*
- *Most of these monuments are monolithic, i.e. carved out of one single rock.*

The monuments at Mahabalipuram are situated on the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal, in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu, India it includes 40 sanctuary, big open-air rock relief. Among others famous monuments are i). Pancha Rathas of Dharmaraja Ratha ii). Arjuna Ratha iii). Bhima Ratha, iv). Draupadi Ratha v). Nakula Sahadeva Ratha and also vi). Ganesha Ratha which recognized by UNESCO as heritage site.

1.8. CONCLUSION

Our memory of our golden old treasure must be preserved. It part and parcel of our own unique, culture of blend and tells of history of the past, our lifestyles in culmination with tradition and efforts, skillful artistic work and nature of culture etc., Innovation in the architecture is greatly influenced. Therefore restoring our past glory which are reflection our

history of years together of different kingdom. Let us come together and stands unite in preserving:

- 1) " Speaking Rocks is the wonder of our country; preserve it for our offspring"
- 2) Our past makes our present, save monuments.
- 3) save the monuments to keep the fire of our elders enlighten.
- 4) Save our Monuments , Save our nations pride.
- 5) Save the past save our monuments.
- 6) Monuments are historical, save it for the future generations pride.

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