

The Value of Rural Defoliated Area and Ecology, Study about Open Spaces in Rural Areas

K.Madhivadhani

Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, Thiagarajar College of Engineering, Anna University, Madurai, India
Email : vadhani27@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

It is known that Open spaces are always play a vital role in Rural and Urban areas and these spaces are strongly related to the behaviour of that particular environment and also related to the settlement pattern . But because of Urbanisations, Industrial Revolution, Urban sprawl these open spaces as well as the defined settlement patterns are transformed and disintegrated into various forms with different characteristics, so that the nature of these open spaces are also changed. This research is made in order to find out the functions of open spaces with respect to user's behaviour and also for analysing its transformation. The author surveyed the village open spaces in Tamil Nadu, India. These Open Spaces are analysed based on "Internal" and "External" characteristics of its form and also based on its behaviour. The result of the study indicates that the value of rural open spaces.

Keywords: Open Spaces, Rural, Evolution, Courtyards, Gathering Spaces.

1.Introduction

Open Spaces are always used for various activities, the amenities and livelihood. Every element had a story to tell, of their past. In this era of modernisation and globalisation, where each component is being replaced by the modern facilities; Open spaces are the free spaces, in most cases at least, and caters to all people of different background. But these open spaces represent the unique characteristics of the people with respect to their culture and tradition. Most of their occupations, religious practise, dwelling cluster, traditional games etc all these activities are totally based on these open spaces. They play a host to wide array of activities and act as platform where people perform their daily schedules. Open spaces not only form the image of the region and the way it is perceived but also become places where people interact under a collective identity. But now-a-days these open spaces lost its active role in the society, most of the open spaces are just a barren land and also fully enclosed with prosopis juliflora. With the emergence of constant degradation of the quality of open spaces emerges the necessity to understand why open spaces are not able to fulfil its role in our society. The open spaces aid the betterment of human life in today's hectic life. Thus there is a requirement for understanding this topic so as to realize the importance and the need for development of humanity.

2. Rural open spaces

Open spaces in villages are very important to define the form and character of the village. In general open spaces can be a land that is not built but plays a major role of settlement type. These open spaces are the spaces between or around the built structures also. These rural open spaces reflect the past history and they give identity to the settlement form. Viewed from the distance these open spaces may seem deceptively simple, created by a cluster of mud plastered or brick buildings shaded by few trees, set among a stretch of green or dun-

coloured fields, with a few people coming or going, ox-carts, cattle lowing, creaking, and birds singing.

All present an image of harmonious simplicity. The open spaces in urban settlements are well planned and have definite and confined spaces, unlike the open space in rural areas that are generally organic and have evolved over time to fit exactly in the environment it belongs to.

2.1 Culture and tradition based on open spaces

Both the villages are leafy rural setting and rustic architecture is quite unique and evokes yet another time, harmoniously engaging with the surrounding as Architecture, earthworks and sculptures strikingly frame and engage with the picturesque topography. There is an easy flow of energy between the various elements. The rustic of leaves can embracing the nature. The village life is idyllic, adapting to it's various cultural metamorphosis. The villagers are normally habituate in using and sharing the common facilities of a village including the shrines, ponds, school playgrounds, grazing grounds and so on. There is an Interdependence between the people, proving a matchless unity amongst the villagers.

2.2 Open spaces Architecture

The building and the materials are thoughtfully and delicately used to reveal the architectural style of the village. Reflecting a traditional approach, mud cum thatch houses in the village are such that it feels so light, that it can breathe and the thought is small that it doesn't capture you in it. With time, the panchayat has helped to renovate or restore the houses of a few with modern materials like bricks and cement which are easily available and are much more durable. The settlement is scattered, letting the environment to evolve. Naturally open spaces are mainly used for occupation purpose even the equipments are just stored in the open spaces, most of their occupations are mainly related to the open spaces such as agriculture, pot making, stone carving etc., as shown in the (fig: 1&2)



Fig: 1- Pot making



Fig: 2- Stone carving

On the other hand a pavilion is one such. Its most rudimentary form comprising four poles and a roof, is perhaps the oldest form of constructed architecture. The genesis of this shelter goes back several thousand years when raw wood and thatch were used in the first human efforts to build. Since then, this element has remained an important feature of architecture, particularly in Tamil Nadu. This was obviously the first attempt at creating space outside natural formations. The essence of this form remained unaltered even when the construction

materials changed. Stone as raw slabs, twigs, bamboo, banana plants, clay pots, large leaves and cloth have all been used to create this basic form as shown in (fig:3). A unique feature of this space is its versatility, both in terms of function as well as adaptability to regional construction technique. Its greatest virtue is, of course, its ability to grow to make larger spaces by a simple add-on process. While on the one hand its strength lies in its universal character, it adds to its meaning through thematic manifestations. The shelter – related themes include functions celebrating life, religious rituals, pleasure and death. Not only these but, its essence is independent of caste, creed and class. It is only in its final form that the expression of wealth, or its absence, can be seen. The difference lies in the details. While the rich built with expensive materials, carved important parts and even studded their pavilion with inlay work in precious stones, the poor simply erected wooden poles or stone slabs and create humble shelters. However, the underlying commonality of form emerges from the response to the quality of comfort in particular climatic conditions. It is clear that such open shelters best during summer evenings in arid regions, or even in the warm humid regions, allowing a free flow of fresh air. As a matter of fact, in many parts of India, during some seasons, people could carry out their activities in sue space almost for the entire day. With the passage of time, specific designs were developed for certain purposes and the pavilion form evolved in a few distinct categories. The mandapa being associated with temples, has very definite connotations. It constitutes the front space of a temple. Open on all its sides and with a very distinctive roof, mandapas demonstrate a very evolved form of the pavilion as shown in (fig:4).

Intended to be used for gatherings. However, mandapas can exist independently and yet serve some temple-related activity.



Fig: 3- Shelter madeupof Stone and Thatch



Fig: 4- Independent Stone Mandapa on Open Space

3. Evolution of open spaces

Open space is a transition in environment between MAN-MADE and the Cosmic Nature and to integrate nature with our city fabric. An open space is therefore not merely a physical entity but a metaphorical reality-one which absorbs and radiates energy between the two environment. Open spaces are initially created as a micro level usage space such as Courtyards generally categorised as Domestic open spaces and when its act in a macro level they are used as Public gathering spaces. These transition is shown in the (fig:5).

The evolution of the form and functionality of open spaces in rural settlements traces its evidence back to the customs and traditional beliefs of the people of different settlement patterns. These open spaces are evolved through the basic settlement pattern of the village.

Basically evolved from the micro level open spaces such as “Courtyards” and “Verandas”(Thinnai) to the macro level open spaces such as “Markets”.



Fig: 5-Evolution of Rural open spaces

4. Domestic open spaces

Domestic open spaces are private spaces that reflect the lifestyle and livelihood patterns of its residents. Domestic open spaces are classified into two as internal enclosed open spaces which are called as courtyards and the external open portion of the building is called as veranda/thinnai as shown in (fig: 6). The courtyards in traditional Chettinad style houses imply that people had the luxury to provide such a space amidst their house, which also proved to be effective climatically. The backyards and front yards were used for various domestic activities like cooking and washing utensils. Particularly they used the domestic spaces for making “Coir” as it was one of their major form of livelihood.

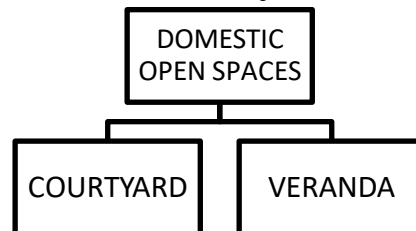
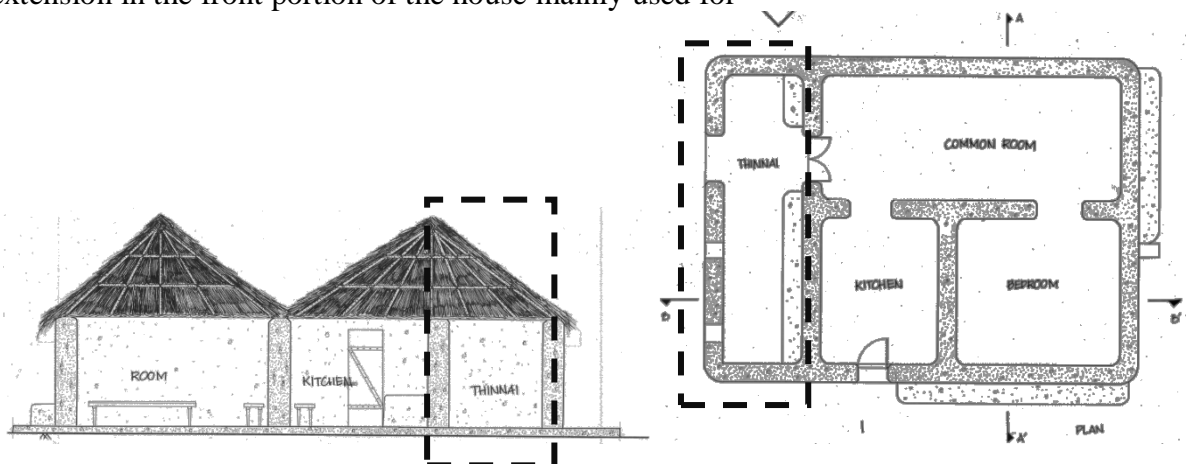


Fig: 6- Classification of Domestic open spaces

Curled up in the lap of nature, the different spatial elements of village has followed it's function beautifully without many scars. The construction is a will full agglomeration of brick, mud, tile and thatch. The small openings with a heady combination of mud finished floors keep the interior dark and cool.

The courtyard is the most elaborated portion with spacious living rooms open into the veranda as shown in (fig:7). The courtyard serves as the venues for ceremonies. Starting from birth to death the size vary according to the climatic condition and economic condition of the occupants. Verandas that give individual personality to the various places. Verandas/thinnai – front yards are the raised platform made up of earth and plastered with cow dung or with clay and the edges of the overhanging roofs acts as a shade. At the bottom of thinnai was sloped packing, to strengthen the wall against running rainwater. Veranda/thinnai spaces are small extension in the front portion of the house mainly used for



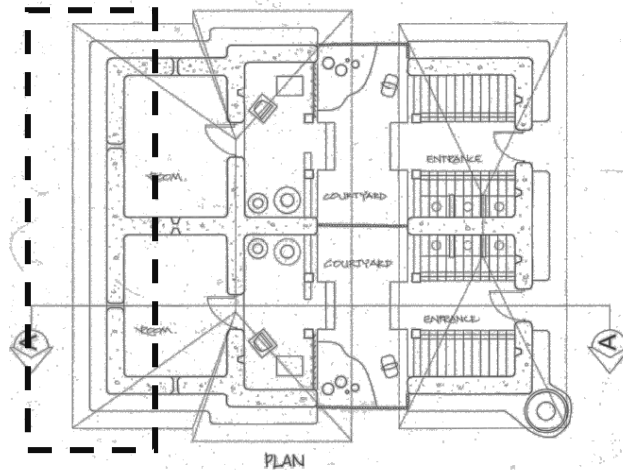
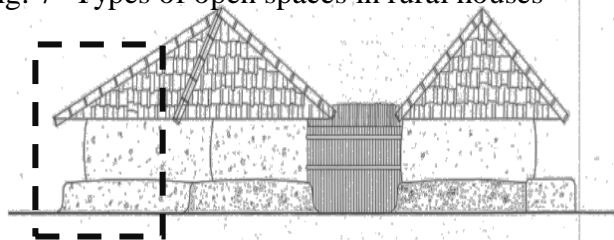


Fig: 7- Types of open spaces in rural houses



5. Public gathering spaces

Public open spaces in the villages were used for various purposes. Now they are used for administration activities like holding Local bodies meetings and other social gatherings as shown in (fig:8). There are open spaces that are associated with Temples and Religious activities. These spaces are utilized for conducting rituals and offering and are generally located in front of the temple. Naturally formed open spaces around ponds and lakes are also an integral part of the recurrently used public spaces. In Oduvanpatti village, the main gathering space acts as the core of the residential areas.

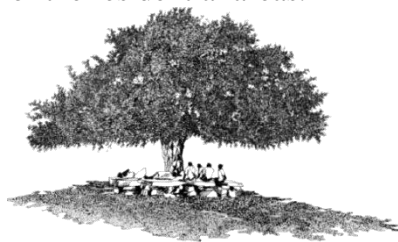


Fig: 8- The main gathering space – the core of the residential area

The open grounds are used as Playgrounds. This is the only source of entertainment for the children in the village. The teenagers in the village play games like cricket and volleyball in the evening. This open space is used for cooking food for the whole village during the festival times.

Markets

Markets are commercial spaces that integrates an open space on the ground level to arrange the shops in a sequence manner to maintain the open space open. Markets have public goals. These can include helping preserve local agriculture, revitalization of a commercial district, and increasing small business opportunities. Markets create public spaces. They help to create

a safe, inviting, and lively place that promotes interaction and community activities among a wide range of people.

Two types of market:

PALPORUL SANDHAI – All types of commodities are sold here, along with wet market.

KALNADAI SANDHAI(Cattle Market) – live cattle (cows, goats, calf, ox) are sold but the main cattle sold regularly is goat.

Both the internal and external courtyard spaces are typically in rectangular or square in shape with four side covers. In epics its strongly believed that the four sided shapes are always used for solving problems. Similarly almost all the open spaces in rural areas are surrounded by four sides, it can be a wall, street, temple tanks, etc.

6. Conclusion

The study shows the open space alignment of villages, and these open spaces always have a unique character based on its settlement pattern and also based on people's behaviour. These spaces mainly used to gather the crowd and also acts as a stress relieving factor.

The purpose of an open space may include the preservation or conservation of a community or a region's rural, natural or historic character, the conservation or preservation of a land or water area for the sake of recreational, ecological, environmental, aesthetic, or agricultural interests.

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Author Details:

Miss.Ar.K.Madhivadhani

Assistant Professor,Department of Architecture,

Thiagarajar College of Engineering,Anna University,Madurai, India.

Postal Details: 258 B,5c, Mettu Street, Kavery Lane, Kumbakonam – 612001.

Contact No: +91 9442262120

Email id: vadhani27@gmail.com

Facebook: Madhuvadhani