

HISTORY AS A LEARNING CONDENSER TO IMPROVE QOL (QUALITY OF LIFE)

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Abstract

Spaces in history give that spaces another dimension to promote learning and recreational facilitates to people that enrich their way of life. By providing the context needs, it ensures people's participation and creating a platform to share and exchange views and beliefs. *Meherpur, historically one of the significant districts which situated in the south-western region of Bangladesh, in 1757, the sun of Bengal's independence was set for 200years again the proclamation of independence was read at village Baidyanathtola, now Mujibnagar, on 17 April 1971.* The present government has taken some initiatives to preserve that evidence of history through public accessibility, which is one of the modern approaches in conservation. The objective of the article is to comprehend the socio-cultural context and human needs of society. After that, analyzing the environment issues and considerations it ended up through proposing sustainable design solutions. Furthermore, it proposes to explore the possibilities to improve the quality of life for the community and extract the richness of the site condition into architecture by creating learning and sharing spaces. For doing this, the article applies mixed method (quantitative and qualitative method) to collect and analyze the required data. Spatial mapping, semi-structured questionnaire survey, participant observation, field survey, etc. methods will be used to collect data. The outcome of this research will improve and ensure the better quality of life through the historical and cultural fabric of Meherpur.

Keywords: *History, Learning condenser, Quality of life*

1. Introduction

History, carried our past, influencing our present and shaping our future. The craving for an interpretation of history is so deep-rooted that, unless we have a constructive outlook over the past, we are drawn either to mysticism or cynicism. Before our birth, consider how past ages of eternal time gave no concern, this is like a mirror that naturally holds up to our future time after our death. Spaces in history give another dimension to promote learning and recreational facilitates to people through public participation, which enriches their way of life by offering diversified functions by representing our past. By valuing the context needs, it ensures people's participation and creating a platform to share and exchange views and beliefs through promoting learning spaces, influenced by our history.

History or Cultural Heritage can express 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 (ICOMOS, 2002). Cultural Heritage produces tangible representations of the value systems, beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles as part of human activity which is an essential part of the culture as a whole, Cultural Heritage, contains these visible and tangible traces from antiquity to the recent past, is a wide concept. A history which shaping our future by creating learning spaces or environment to the future generation which improve our way of living. The term quality of life (QOL) addressed and understands by most people as "goodness of life" and being able to live successfully and happily within the environment (Brown and Brown, 2005) which influenced by our history. QOL should not be confused with the income-based concept of standard of living. Instead, standard indicators of the QOL include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging (Gregory et al., 2009). All of these indicators of QOL influenced by the history of designing our spaces to feel, learn, observe and enrich our knowledge to enhance our living quality. Having at one time referred exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, cultural heritage as a concept has gradually come to include new categories. Today, we find that heritage is not only manifested through tangible forms such as artefacts, buildings or landscapes but also intangible forms. Intangible heritage includes voices, values, traditions, oral history. Popularly this is perceived through cuisine, clothing, and forms of shelter, traditional skills, and technologies, religious ceremonies,

performing arts, and storytelling. Today, we consider the tangible heritage inextricably bound up with the intangible heritage. This paper aim is to preserve both the tangible as well as the intangible heritage to enhancing our learning sources which will improve our QOL (quality of life). UN-HABITAT (2012) in a recent report on city’s prosperity has used QOL as an important component of measuring city prosperity index and states that “cities that improve QOL experience higher levels of prosperity; they are also likely to find themselves more advanced in terms of sustainability” and used their historical sites to convert learning spaces to improve their way of living. The Heritage Cycle diagram gives us an idea of how we can relate to the best part of our future (Simon Thurley, 2005).History or Cultural Heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past, which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and transitions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time (Faro 2005).

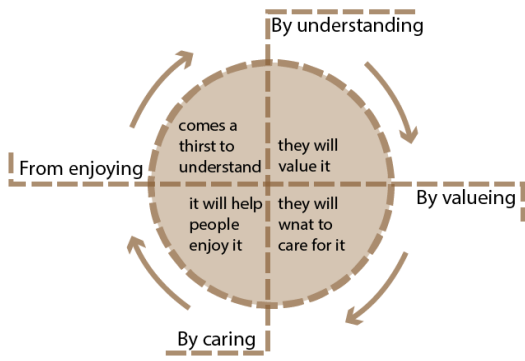


Figure 3, Heritage cycle, (source: Simon Thurley, 2005)

Meherpur, the southwestern region of Bangladesh, takes as a case for this study. The small city contains significant resources of the past from more than 250 years. “Nil-kuthis’s”, now recognized as archeological sites to preserve the history of that time period, which improves the way of living by creating a learning and sharing environment for all groups of people. Local culture and identity give definite meanings to some places and to the urban space as a whole, (Madden, 2012). The linking element between history and culture is the public, (O.Neil, 2006). “When public spaces are successful, they will increase opportunities to participate in communal activity”,(Carr et al., 1993).

This article will provide an insight into the current challenges concerned with heritage building being used as learning space and bringing forth the factors responsible to improve QOL so that the vast range of possibilities related to the revitalization of history or cultural heritage can be adequately explored. Cultural heritage is considered a combination of several elements, which are: human processes, activities, and urban elements, (Abdel Tawab, 2014). Several case studies have been conducted to under



Figure 5, blue-color making process-01(source: field survey)

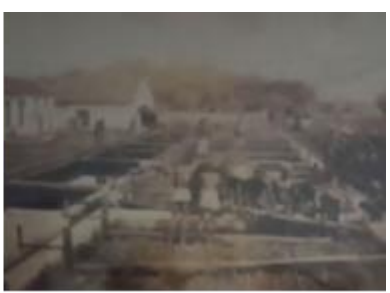


Figure 4, blue color making process -02(source: field survey)

stand the current issues of this current situation to improving QOL with historical spaces. Within the segments of the paper, the first section describes the background of the history of Bangladesh and how it relates to learning and shearing space arrangement. The second segment is based on the case studies

while finally focusing on the indicators of QOL influenced by history to promote learning spaces to improve ways of living, probable findings and public perception for heritage and public space, connectivity to promote learning space with cultural events which considered a catalyst that can promote tourism in heritage sites in the final section.

2. Literature review

History is a continuation of the life of a nation and a reminder of its authenticity. It makes the 'silent past' to human beings in a senseless and unbiased way. History, therefore, assumes the responsibility of unifying the pride and the stigma of responsibility. Throughout the history of the people, the hope of everlasting life flows from time to time.

2.1. UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

Meherpur is a smaller district of the southwestern border of Bangladesh with cultural diversity. This district has about two thousand years of ancient history and tradition. In particular, Meherpur, historically one of the significant districts situated in the southwestern region of Bangladesh because, in 1757, the sun of Bengal's independence was set for 200 years again the proclamation of independence was read at village Baidyanathtola, now Mujibnagar, on 17 April 1971. East India Company started nil-cultivation for the quality of its soil, which makes these spaces more significant. The planters started to exercise their power by inhuman activities, such as torturing, abusing, etc. The cultural variations are also not slight and hence cannot be ignored. But due to cultural ignorance do not know the deeper meaning of each culture and hence assume various stereotypes that exist even nowadays. Hence there is a dire need to educate the people and the visitors, exactly, about various rich cultures and simultaneously encourage the cultural development, giving importance to the lifestyle of the artisans, craftsmen, etc. architecture can act as an important catalyst to bring about all of this (District Statistics 2011 Meherpur December 2013).

On this gray path of history, the border town of Meherpur, "Amm-jhupi" nil-kuthi stands in the middle of the city. One day a victory chariot of Mughal-general Mansingh descended on this path, the sculptor's barge of dust had blown the dust, raising the black hand of plunder, and the memory of Mr. Nawab Alivardi Khan, the master of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa. The blue design of Palashi's defeat was also written here - in this "amm-jhupi". It is reported that this was the last meeting of Mir Jafar and the conspirators with Robert Clive, and as a result, not only did the fate of Nawab Siraj-ud-daula disappear, Bengalis lost their independence. At the beginning of the English period, the blue-colored-blood of the oppressed people of Bengal developed "Amm-jhupi" nil-kutthi. Amm-jhupi stands with the memory of the torture, torture, and exploitation of Kenny-Simpson-Ferguson teammates. As a result of the agitation of the oppressed indigo cultivators, one day the blue cultivar was wiped from the chest of Bengal. With the change of hands, Nil-kuthi became the Kanchari of Modinipur Zamindari Company. After the partition of the zamindari, the chapter ended. Another history of evolution was born on the 5th of May, in the 'Amm-jhupi Session' of the Khulna Division Development Board. This history is a history of exploitation, deprivation, and torture of the past, and the history of the exploration of human interest and labor. At the meeting, "Amm-jhupi" was recognized as a tourist center. In an attempt to revive the rich memory of 'Ama-jhupi' in the adjoining area at a cost of eighteen million two thousand takas. There are two entrances to the blue sapphire. The entire "Nil-kuthi" complex is located on more than 3 acres of land. In the middle of the complex, the main building of the kuthi is located and there is a flower garden around it. In the middle of the main building, there are 5 rooms. The building also has a large hall, a dining room, a theater, and a guest room. Special mapping made the kuthi more significant to represent the context of the site, one the other hand, nil-kuthi carried many special building features like "kori-borga on selling", "kulungi" for lights, fireplaces, "motives" to represent the torture of the East India company. All of these features also play a significant role to feel the history of that time period which will help to create another dimension of life for the future generation to develop their way of living.

2.1.2. Learning from our past and designing our future

There has been complete historical negligence in the last few decades with the growth of Modern Technology. They are on the verge of losing their tradition and culture which represents history due to the influx of new modern equipment and the trend to Western Culture. The idea of adapting to Western Culture is considered prestigious and trendy among this generation as is advertised and promoted by global icons. The lack of promoting and encouraging may not only lead to cultural extinction but also affect historical tourism to a greater extent. First and foremost, the prevailing misconceptions about cultures need to be broken. Interest to learn to follow & adopt the culture will boost cultural value worldwide. Hence there is an immediate need to educate about the history and culture for home and abroad, which will help us to shape our future, influenced by history.

This article proposes to create historical sites as learning spaces which will help to improve the way of living, a place in history and cultures. Moreover, the availability of ample space gives another dimension along with other indicators of QOL. This space will have multi-character but act as a joint single space which will encourage the future generation to be interested in history. The architectural language will vary for each cultural pavilion, but unite them as a whole through various methodologies. The built heritage will integrate with the existing city fabric as well as stand out acting as global recognition for promoting another dimension for the city people to improve their way of living. The indicators of QOL like built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging, all of these will be influenced by history by creating learning and sharing spaces to feel the essence of the past.

3. Methodology

Method means a series of scientific processes to collect and analysis information and methodology refers to the whole process. The research adopted an observational case study methodology by mixed-method both qualitative and quantitative methods. The applied criteria that were subjectively selected are based on both data collected from the literature review and site observations according to stockholder demands. Spatial mapping, semi-structured questionnaire survey, participant observation, field survey, etc. methods are used to collect primary data, again Empirical researches, scholarly articles like Books, newspapers, magazines, journals, online portals, etc. are used for secondary data collection to understand the context.

After reviewing and comprehending history & the chronological development of the history of “amm-jhupi” nil-kuthi, needs to explore by proper illustrations under a specific heading. At first, with the help of community people, the archetype and spatial details have illustrated. The connectivity with surroundings is very crucial to ensure accessibility. Critical illustrations from an environmental perspective will make sure a sustainable development to provide the required expectation of the community.

4. Findings from case study

The history of oppression and torture of the “Nil-kors”, during the British rule in this country, the British established the “Nil-kuthi”, which was established by the British at that time for cultivating indigo in various parts of the country. Among them, Amjhupi, Gangni Bhatpara, and Bamandi Nilkuthi are significant to carry out history. Blue trees were boiled with turmeric water to produce blue-color. In one bigha land, two and a half to three kilograms of blue would be produced, which would cost 12 to 14 taka, but the farmers got only 3 or 4tk. The color that was made from the blue tree was the accumulated blood of the farmers' chests. These “Nil-kuthies” are not just filled with stories of indigo cultivation and torture of indigo cultivators, here is a glorious chapter in history, as we have the story of our glorious waking up.

4.1. AMM-JHUPI NIL-KUTHI

The defeat of Palashi was created in the confusion of the memory of Mughal generals Mansingh and Nawab Alivardi Khan, it is alleged that this sapphire was the last meeting of the conspiracy with English

commanders Clive Lloyd and Milla Jafar, the next story was all about torture and torture. The result of the conspiracy is the fall of Siraj-ud-daula, consequently, the independence of the Bengalis lost their independence. Then, one day in the blood of that tyranny, the “Nile-kuthi” was formed here. In the style of European architecture, these “nil-kuthis” was made. Again, the glory is the deprived and oppressed and tortured Nile cultivators who once defeated the English through the agitation and stopped the Nile cultivators. It has been reported that Robot Clive used to come to Nin-kuthi to spend time. The Nil-kuthi also had its contents, which have been handed over to the National Museum authorities for preservation. During the division of the country in 1947, when the British were leaving, they were handed over to the government of East Pakistan (Bangladesh), along with the property. The main house has a bedroom, snack room, dance hall, and deathbed. There is a tradition that the dancers had to dance. If a nation had expressed reluctance to pay rent or to cultivate the Nile, it would have been killed and thrown to a deathbed. The snack room is so smooth that snakes or ants can't move. There are horse houses, prisons, butchery houses and the residence of the deputies.

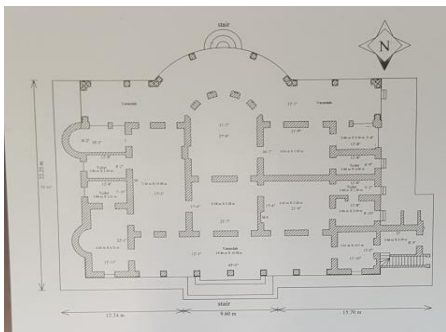


Figure 4, Plan layout of nil kuthim (source: field survey)



Figure 5, Amm-jhupi nil-kuthi (source: field survey)

4.1.1 Special Building feature of “nil-kuthi”

Kulungi: kulungi is an excavated kind of wall detailing feature, mostly used for creating light-shade in the interior, sometimes used as a wall shelf. In nil-kuthis the British used kulungi for the detailing purpose of the wall but this tradition came from our Bengali traditional house, they used this kind of space for light, sometimes as a window. This space also carried a significant story for the next generation which will help them to know history now converted as learning space, influenced their way of living.

Kori-borga in roof: In the past ages, kori-borga made of wood, used for roof construction, is another kind of feature used in “nil-kuthi” but now it’s lost because of the advanced technology. People came here (nil-kuthi) to discover this kind of building feature to feel the past, to smell the history which influenced their way of thinking, creating softness about the past.



Figure 7, kulungi used in nil-kuthi (source: field survey)



Figure 7, kori-borga used in selling (source: field survey)

Khor-khorir’s door and window: In “nil-kuthi”, both door and window made by Khor-khori, another significant building-feature made by wood louver, could be operated as user need. Nowadays we

can't see this kind of window, if we can't take any initiative to preserve them it will be a great loss for the next generation.

Iron made railing: This kind of iron-based railing used in nil-kuthis to make a semi-outdoor-indoor connection, to make space to space connection with people. But nowadays this kind of railing not used because of the advanced invention of materials and also for the cost. But this railing also bears the signature of the historical significance of torture of the British controller. It is the sign of the glorious history of the nil-kuthis, carried from the past 200 years.

Vegetation: Vegetation mapping of this nil-kuthis was more significant, most probably contains an indigo tree, mango garden and litchi garden in that period. Nowadays all of that vegetation, try to accommodate again to give the future generation the real essence of the history of torture on the cultivator. Already a few blue trees have been planted there.



Figure 8, khor-khori used in door and window (source: field survey)



Figure 9 & 10, khor-khori used in door and window and vegetation (source: field survey)

The ruthless house is now being built as a tourist hub, which can be converted as a learning space to preserve the glorious history of Meherpur. The rest of the house, except the main building, is on the verge of destruction due to lack of renovation. In 1978, the Khulna Division Development Board was recognized as a tourism center on 13th May and renovated and developed it, since then, the tyrant has been losing control of the tide. Eventually, this blue sapphire became a Tartu house of bloodshed. Various arrangements have been made to surround the house of the brutal consequences of Bengal by depicting the historical context of the exploitation, deprivation, and oppression of Bengalis through the use of indigo cultivation.

4.2. SPACES CONVERTED AS LEARNING SPACES

The present government has taken some initiatives to develop socio-cultural infrastructure, like these "Nil-kuthis" to explore their history, such as cultural and learning spaces to facilitate their living quality. The cultural variations are also not slight and hence cannot ignore. But due to cultural ignorance do not know the deeper meaning of each culture and hence assume various stereotypes that exist even nowadays.

Hence there is dire need to educate the people and the visitors about the history and simultaneously encourage the cultural development, giving importance to the lifestyle of the artisans, etc. while built-heritage can act as an important catalyst to bring about all of this. By ensuring social participation and learning spaces within historical spaces through permeability, it can also give another dimension to city life to improve their way of living to shape their future from the influence of past, basically from their history.

In line with this, the objective of the article is to comprehend the socio-cultural context and human needs of society. After that, analyzing the environmental issues and considerations it ended up by proposing sustainable solutions where social permeability, cohesion, creating economic opportunities are on top of the influence of their past history. Furthermore, it proposes to explore the design possibilities to improve the quality of life for the community and extract the richness of the site condition into architecture by creating learning and sharing spaces.

It will help the user group, also the visitors from a national and international perspective to feel the significant history (history of torture and oppression) of “Nil-kuthis”, which will also enhance their knowledge.

4.3. VALUES OF HISTORY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

History is essential to carry out the glory of culture that influences social life through disseminating resources to generation to generation. In one way, the intangible part provides information about social context, economy, beliefs, and so on. On the other hand, tangible portion allows experiencing physically and feeling the essence of the life of that time. An archeological site influences the living quality of locals and directly affects the dimensions of quality of life through its materialistic richness, details, spatiality, etc. Historically, Meherpur carries a significant part of the past of this delta, particularly the era of the British. The proclamation of independence took place in this soil. In recent days, the area is losing its value by diminishing physical infrastructures. Importantly, these places have the quality to promote learning and sharing spaces between visitors and local inhabitants about that worthy assentation of history. Quality of life encompasses several different dimensions; broadly, social, economic, culture and environment are major, where historical assets impacted all these directly and indirectly. In general, the socio-cultural portion plays a major role to make a happy life, while the place can be used for social gathering and for exchanging views and thoughts. Additionally, an archeological area opens up monetary options for the locals. In many areas, the government has been involving the community during preservation and conservation time, which tie up them inherently. As a result, many small outlets have developed for displaying crafts, artistic materials, and in both ways, it works as exposure of local artisans.

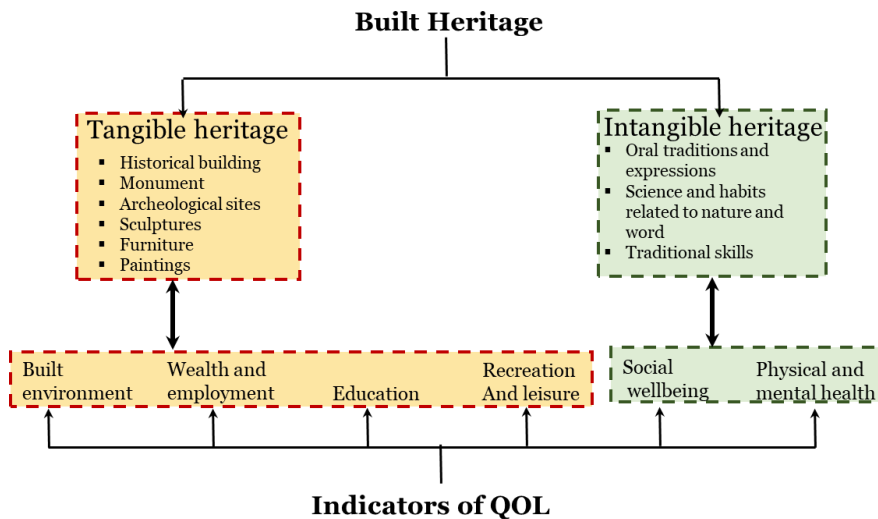


Figure 11, Relationship diagram between built heritage and quality of life (Source: author constructed)

In the modern world, utilize an archeological area as a public space is a very popular method for conserving and preserving. This connection makes the space more vibrant and alive, which steers individual learning with social interaction. These areas are the source of learning the place that contains lifestyles, local craftsmanship ...etc. in physical planning, the presence of past features may be influential behind the establishment of the present. Besides the educational qualities, it can be a place for spending quality leisure time and improve societal relationship within the community. On the other hand, most cases the non-accessible historical sites often face the destruction due to negligence and climatic impacts. Though public accessibility both objectives can be achieved, firstly it enhances the quality of life and can attract authorities about the significance of conservation and preservation of particular area.

5. Conclusion

The historical site can be converted not only as recreation or leisure space but also as learning spaces by preserving the history for the future generation, which will create a great influence in our way of living.

In spite of being a historically enriched city, Meherpur is not so advanced, due to lack of vision of the government. Although the facilities of the community center, echo park, shopping center, and others, the people of Meherpur go to Cuadanga or kustia for better service facilities. A historical site that carries out our past can also hold the character of learning space, where culture, business life, healthcare and administration fuse and profit via common facilities and locations. Multiple functions ensure life and activity throughout the day and the week – even after hours. Space can also be a symbol of a lively community that will represent the context of Meherpur nationally. "Amm-jhupi" nil-kuthi is also being in process to preserve the history of torture by creating adaptive reuse, public activities to create learning and sharing environment which will improve the indicators of Quality of life.

6. Citations and References

6.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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