

Strategic Analysis of Loss of Urban Heritage in Bhopal City Due to Infrastructure Development

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Abstract : Built along the edges of a 11th century CE man-made lake, the city of Bhopal has stood witness to historic layers dating back to Palaeolithic times; early and medieval kingdoms ranging from the Parmaras, Pratiharas to tribal Gonds; the Begum-Nawabs and finally became the Capital of Madhya Pradesh, post-Independence. The lake more popularly called the Upper Lake was created by the King Raja Bhoj from the Parmara dynasty in 1010 AD when he constructed a bund wall across the Kolans river. Atop this bund wall lies the Kamlapati Mahal - which was part of the royal enclosure built in 1702 belonging to the Gond Kingdom. The Mahal is the epicentre of development in the city because it lies in the centre of the axis joining the Old core and New City. Rapid urbanisation descended upon the city once it became the administrative capital of Madhya Pradesh, a newly-formed state of an Independent India. Industrial pockets began being set up and refugees from the Indo-Pakistan separation settled in various regions of the city. To cater to these sudden growth, there was a boom in infrastructure development in the late twentieth century which included precarious decisions made in terms of handling heritage sites causing the destruction of significant parts of the historic fabric. And this practice continues to this day as buffer/ protected zones are breached through exemptions and the absence of robust regulations allow further deterioration of urban heritage. The aim of the research is to systematically study in detail the effect of the urban infrastructure development of the city and its adverse effect on the existing heritage fabric. Through the paper, an attempt to study the parameters involved in preparing the Masterplan of the city and other development projects is done. The research would follow a values-led approach to study the heritage fabric where the significance of the place is assessed based on the values attributed by stakeholders. This approach will involve collection and analysis of site data, assessment of the significance of the site and listing of potential. The study would also attempt to arrive at a solution to deal with urban development along with the protection of the heritage fabric.

Keywords : heritage management, infrastructure development, urban conservation, urban heritage

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020