Transformation of Built form Characteristics in Agraharams

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ABSTRACT

The culture and architecture are two interlinked concepts that help man to evoke uniqueness as an individual and a social being. A person's or a community's identity in a particular setting can be expressed through architecture. It is promising to create spaces with differences in spatial organization, street pattern, landscaping features, etc., according to the lifestyles, beliefs, rituals and customs of the inhabitants which finally becomes the identity of that particular place. But what happens to the identity of a place when all the inhabitants are migrants who left their homeland for better education or job opportunities and settled in a location where all social -cultural aspects are poles apart from theirs? This paper explores how the Architecture evokes the identity of the migrant communities in Kalpathy, Palakkad district, Kerala, without affecting the indigenous style of the location and the character of the total setting. This synthesis and metamorphosis of various religions and traditional practices has also been phenomenal in shaping our cities. Over the ages, many of these communities have been successful in maintaining uniformity in their social and Architectural fabric. This paper is intended towards highlighting the above mentioned aspects and how a unique culture gave rise to a new form of settlements known as Agraharams. Today, Agraharams are an epitome of how migrations driven by religious reasons, can shape the society as well as the built fabric of any city.

Keywords : Culture, Architecture, Migrant Communities, Architectural Fabric, Agraharams

I. INTRODUCTION

The Agraharams of Kerala is the standing remnants of the history of a cluster of people who had migrated to Kerala. "An Agraharam or Agrahara is the name given to the Brahmin section of a heterogeneous village or to any village populous by Brahmins".

This research examines the concepts followed in the planning of Agraharams - Tamil Brahmin Villages in parts of Kalpathy in Kerala, stressing upon the social aspect of the community living. It is also intended to highlight the various traditions and customs followed over centuries by Tamil Brahmin sects. Some five centuries ago, a majority of Tamil Brahmins, fearing the invasion of a Muslim ruler, migrated and settled down in various parts of Kerala and established their own communities and villages-Agraharams based on Traditional aspects of Vedic Town Planning. Over the years, times have changed but the villages are in a time-warp, continuing the traditions and customs of their ancestors.

It is possible to create spaces with differences in spatial organization, street pattern, landscaping features etc., according to the lifestyles, beliefs, rituals and customs of the inhabitants which finally becomes the identity of that particular place. But what happens to the identity of the place when all the inhabitants leave their homeland for better education or job opportunities and settle in a location where all socio-cultural aspects are different from theirs?
This research examines the concepts followed in the planning of Agraharams - Tamil Brahmin Villages in

Kalpathy located in Palakkad district, Kerala, stressing upon the social aspect of the community living. It is also intended to highlight the various traditions and customs followed over centuries by Tamil Brahmin sects. Some five centuries ago, a majority of Tamil Brahmins, fearing the invasion of a Muslim ruler, migrated and settled down in various parts of Kerala and established their own communities and villages-Agraharams based on Traditional aspects of Vedic Town Planning. Over the years, times have changed but the villages are in a time-warp, continuing the traditions and customs of their ancestors. An Agraharam may be considered as an early form of Indian Utopia with closed knit communities, and **a sustainable lifestyle with low-cost dwellings and vernacular architecture,** where everyone followed what the Temple priest said and the village functioned with active public participation from everyone.

This research examines the Spatial & Social Planning of Agraharams.

The research is mostly based on readings available online, research papers, blogs and interviews of persons who have lived in such Agraharams since their childhood. For years, researchers have published papers and articles on the Agraharams of South India, the vernacular architecture of Agraharams has been well documented, it is quite challenging to trace the authenticity and history of a community which has sustained itself through time for over 5 centuries and preserved its heritage well.

II. METHODOLOGY
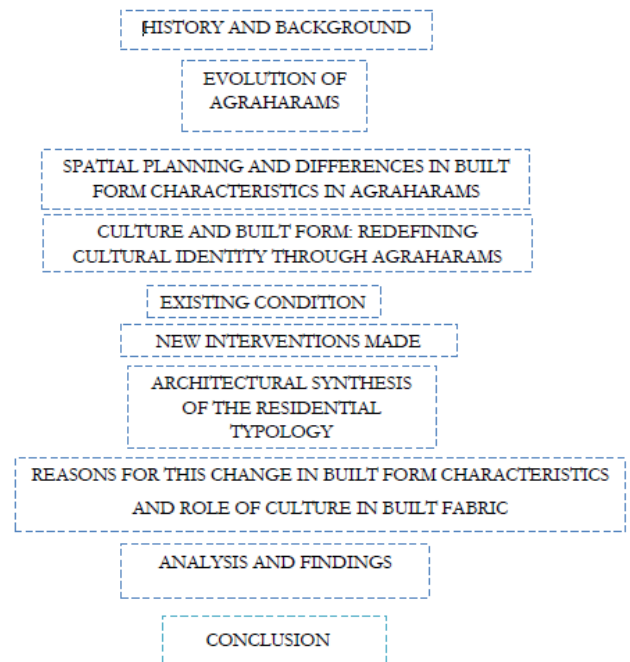
III. HISTORY & BACKGROUND

The evolution of this particular architectural typology speaks about the social position of the Brahmin community. Even though these migrant Brahmins exerted power in the caste ridden society, they were always a minority when compared to the local indigenous population. Hence, when they moved into a new place and made their settlements there was always a tendency amongst the members of the communities to settle together to ensure safety. (Evolution)

Another reason behind this was that in most cases the early migrants to a particular place may be the members of a same family, and thus when they settle down in an unknown land, they automatically evolved into a close interwoven community whose principles were based on strict religious norms. (Evolution)

The agraharam settlements of today have endured transformation. The Brahmin immigrants of south India had migrated to various parts of the

subcontinent and made their settlements around temples. () The name originates from the fact that the agraharams have lines of houses on either side of the road and the temple to the village God at the centre, thus resembling a garland around the temple. As a community which handled the Vedas and religious texts, the Brahmins wielded power and influence in the social hierarchy. As the priestly class, they received royal patronage and respect from the rulers and all the other communities. Wherever they went, the Brahmins made their settlements around temples, around which their everyday life revolved and took place. The planning of the agraharams followed a grid iron or concentric ring pattern, with the temple as the main focus. The selection, orientation and location of the house in traditional Kerala concept were significantly influenced by the concept of vasthupurushamandala, the cosmic diagram and related geometric ways of spatial planning in relation with time and nature based on astrology and mathematical computation, which formed the primary resource of Hindu architecture. (Singapore)

IV. THE CULTURE AND BUILT FORM

It is very clear that the planning and design of any built space require an idea about the activities and requirements of people who are going to perform there. These requirements are always derived from their lifestyles, thought patterns and social needs based on their culture, traditions, and customs. So the spaces where people live must be a reflection of their culture. In this manner, the architecture and the cultural aspects can be correlated.
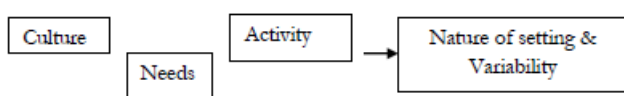
V. SPATIAL PLANNING

"Since, the temple played a vital role in the Brahmin communities; the houses were planned on either side of the temple in rows. *"Agaro Harscha Harishcha"*, the meaning being temple on either side, defines the *Brahmin* colonies, in which the Brahmins lived on either side of the temple. A Garland of houses is the simplest synonym which can be used to describe the spatial planning in Agraharam. The word can also be interpreted as a grant or piece of land given by the Kings to the Brahmins to sustain themselves and rehabilitate their communities in an alien land. The Brahmins built row houses for themselves with the upper end culminating in a Temple. **Thus, an Agraharam can be defined as a collection or group of houses with the temple being the central crux or the focal point** .Some temples also had a village pond near it, often a part of the temple premises. The row of the houses was either single or double storeyed. The settlements were based on the aspects of Vedic town planning and lifestyle. The houses shared a common wall between them, the streets were narrow and the houses were characterized by a peculiar Architectural style. The settlements evolved as closely knit communities as it was a tendency for people of the same community to settle down together for ensuring safety and they based their lifestyle of strict religious norms based on principles borrowed from the Vedas. **It's interesting to note how the spatial planning influenced the culture and tradition of the villages and there was a certain amount of synthesis and blending with the existing topography of the land.** In a due course of time, these *Agraharams* attained a unique style which became a part of the Dravidian Architectural heritage, which was a key factor in shaping the built fabric of the society.

The traditional row housing pattern which was synonymous with *Brahmin* settlements was an alien feature for the South Indian agrarian society. The houses of Kerala, known as 'Nalukettu' have architectural features that are believed to have

evolved by tradition going back in the history. Overall, it leads to an indigenous planning system. In the basic planning of both traditional vernacular Dravidian Architecture and in the *Agrahaarams,* some similarities can be found owing to the fact that both types evolved from the traditional Vedic town planning system. Albeit, there can be variations owing to region, climatic factors and locally available building materials. One of the classic examples of a prominent *Agrahaaram* is Kalpathy, in Palakkad district which is one of the oldest *Agrahaaram* settlements in Kerala and came up due to the large scale migrations caused by unstable political situations in Thanjavur (Tanjore). Over the years, Kalpathy has been declared a Heritage village, owing to its rich history and tradition. Most of the houses still stand intact, through all these years. The whole *Agraharam* was laid out on the principles of Vedic Town Planning which has been considered synonymous to perfection in City Planning. The indigenous architecture responds to the vagaries in climate, blends with the topography, and vibrates the cultural trends, lifestyle, spiritual and religious parameters. These illustrative examples speak the language of skill and craftsmanship, appreciation of culture, respect to local materials and methods of the building science." Source: (Evolution)

VI. TRANSPLANTING THE BUILT FORM

Apart from their expertise in Vedas and rich cultural heritage, they brought with them a whole new way of living. Kerala, which was known as the land of scattered homesteads, now became home to the linear housing cluster called agraharams, which was transplanted to a new climatic and geographic locale with only minor modifications.

Fig 1- Pattern of Tamil Brahmins migration to Kerala

VII. SETTLEMENT IN KERALA

It was considerably important that all works inside the temple (right from the pooja ceremonies to the cleaning up) should be conducted only by Brahmins. So there was no scarcity for work for any Brahmin who migrated from the neighbouring states and associated themselves with capital. The administration of the state also offered them a notable position as they were considered very trustworthy by the ruling class of the State. It could be seen that the majority of the Tamil Brahmins formed the official setup for the King.

VIII. ARCHITECTURAL SYNTHESIS OF AGRAHARAMS

"In contrast to the traditional style of Kerala, the layout and design of the Brahmin Agrahaarams are quite different. A number of parameters like temple association, royal patronage and social position influenced the layout. Also, religious and political factors were important in shaping the community. The traditional Nalakettu plan can be seen in synthesis with the *Brahmin* houses in an *Agrahaaram.* Houses had an elongated and narrow profile in an *Agrahaaram* .The courtyard was omitted at times and a backyard was given as a utility area. Linear planning was followed in an *Agrahaaram.* The compact house plan was evolved from the elaborate Nalakettu plan with the length being greater than the overall width and the rooms being arranged just one after the other. These housing typologies have evolved and matured in terms of Architecture due to various factors like locally available materials, climatic conditions and the

skill which was employed while construction. Climate responsive design can be seen directly in Nalakettu plan." (Evolution)

Fig 2 - Plan of Kalpathy Street

IX. FEATURES OF AGRAHARAMS

The various components of the Agraharam are the following:

• **Puramthinna** — the long corridor/verandah running in front of the agraharams. This space also acted as a community congregation place where the men assembled for religious discourse.

• **Akan/Minna** — the small room next to pramtbinna, this room incorporates the konippadi (stairway) leading to the upper storey.

• **Rethi** — this is the central room in an agraharam which acts as the living/bed room, the important religious ceremonies and rituals associated with the Brahmin community are also performed in this place.

• **Thaw** — it is the space around the courtyard, the bormakrindam or the place for the sacrificial fire is located here.

• **Mittam** — the courtyard is a part itself and often there is no separation between these two spaces.

• **Adukkala**— this is the kitchen.

• **Kuthil** — these are the rooms located at the extreme end, where the ladies during their menstruation are housed.

• **Matti-** is the attic room. The stairway from the akabinna leads to the machu. This room is assigned for the use of newly wedded couples.

• **Kottil** — the independent structure located at the extreme end, it is often used as a cow shed or as storage space.

In the old days the agraharams did not have toilets associated with the house and the

• **Alarbil** — Machu is the attic room. The stairway from the akamtbhma leads to the Racial. This room is assigned for the use of newly wedded couples." (Evolution)

The kitchen is locally called as adukalai and has thalvaram adjoining it acting as an utility space and it holds the tulsi madam (Evolution)
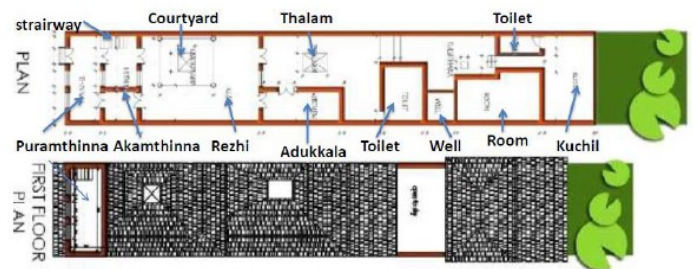

Fig 3 - Spatial Planning of Agraharam

X. LAND USE PATTERN

Houses consist of elements that helps them follow their customs. All houses are in linear form. Houses have different privacy levels like public, semi-public and private areas. External courtyard situated at the back provides more privacy and the single entrance in the front increases its security. Each houses have individual water connection and well. Water supply is from Malampuzha dam. Use of clay tiles on the roof makes its interiors cooler. The usage of glass in between roof tiles to allow sunlight inside. No. individual parking space for the traditional houses. No gates for h0uses width of any individual house cannot be engaged. No parking space no gates for houses width of any individual house cannot be changed. Provide common parking space. Individual parking does not work in it. The context of kalpathi increase the number of public water pipes.

The entrance to a shrine or a temple is sacred and so is the threshold, for it marks the division between the sacred and the profane worlds, the domestic odor

makes a clear distinction between the outside world and the inside world many doors are vividly decorated and richly ornamented. for the authenticity of this cultural heritage to endure, it is imperative it remains respectfully preserved.
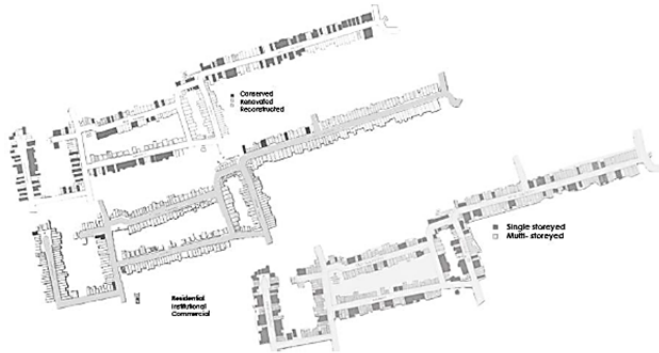

Fig 4 - Zoning according to use and building type

XI. DESIGN

- A conventional agraharam house comprises of a stone bench in the verandah and an open courtyard in the core of the houses.

- It is well-ventilated with wooden beams or terracotta tiles for the ceiling and wooden staircases.

- The street are aligned east west with the row houses clustered along either side.

- The backyard of the houses is linked by narrow lanes.

- The row housing pattern reflecting the lifestyle of the Brahmin community was unknown to the south Indian agrarian society. The indigenous communities had farmlands in close proximity to their living spaces and often the individual houses stood apart in the centre of a large plot.
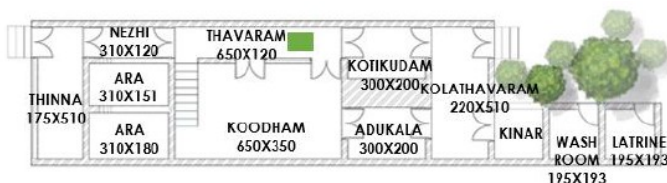

Fig 5 - Plan of a typical Agraharam unit

The street in front of the houses transform themselves into an active community space serving as a commercial space for vendors, a play area for children, a meeting place for elders a venue for religious processions and meeting.

The central space is the coolest and the darkest area in the typical agraharam. This private, ceremonial, and community space also accommodates the storage facility. These agraharam houses were designed in such a manner to minimize the harsh glare of sun by providing deep verandahs that shielded the rooms.

Courtyards provided natural light and ventilation and were especially useful for the chanting of Vedas in early morning. Windows were strategically placed so as to catch the natural sunlight.

Roofs were usually slope and tiled so that the rain water could run off. Doors were all aligned in a straight line from the main entrance till the back of the houses.

The agraharams were constructed according to its own principles of architecture. Each house opened out into the street and each had a vasal-thinnai, which led to the ul-thinnai, rezhi, thazhvaram, adukkalai and kottil. Many of the agraharams had small inner courtyards, which provided adequate daylight to the rooms.

Houses are constructed in row type with common wall construction

The occupants own the eastern wall of the house whereas the western wall under the ownership of neighbour.

Fig 6 - Section showing the spatial planning of the Agraharam

- g+1 height or g+2 height

- Width of the plot – 10' x 15' – length – 100'

- Spaces are compact

- A typical feature is that entry in to a room - Via thinnai from one street and exit is through the backyard to the another street

- The linearity of the houses is based on the beliefs upon Brahmins to follow principle of Vasthu

- The purity and sanctity are the major criteria which determines the linearity

- The flow of spaces from semipublic to privatized area are distinct and reached by passage

XII. AGRAHARAMS – CLIMATE RESPONSIVENESS

- Row housing pattern reduces the exposure of the external wall surfaces to sun as the house share a common wall

- The movement of warm air around the house is minimized and helps to keep the interior cool and comfort

- Direct openings and large volumes are avoided

- Street side- where walls are exposed to direct sun or rain the use of thinnai and pandhal provide shade and protection.

- The roof has steep pitches with an angle of 45degree to drain rain water efficiently

- In these the country tiled roofs, the successive layers of tiling traps the heat any gives effective heat insulation.

- The pitched roofs with the broad eaves were typically employed in design to shed off the rainwater

- The entire unit was kept symmetrical about an axis to aid the sharing and division of spaces across the main hall for the joint family members. The concept of the central open space served the purpose of bringing in the light, ventilation and the draining of rain water to the exteriors or to the well for adequate recharge.

- The whole exercise of architecture was an energy efficient, eco- conscious and a scientific technique that these inhabitants had followed.

Fig 7 - Agraharams on either sides of the street

XIII. REFLECTING SOCIAL POSITION IN TIIE BUILT FABRIC

The traditional architecture in Kerala is best manifested in the timber works of the indigenous craftsmen. The traditional buildings of south Kerala, including the heritage structures found in the fort area which predates 19th century use timber as the major building material. The superstructures as well as the roofing framework in these buildings are made using timber. Whereas, in north Kerala the major building material was laterite stone which was easily available. The reliance on the building materials has contributed to the scale and proportion of the traditional housing patterns. The cementing materials as well as the plastering materials used in the old days were different from those used today. In the past mud mortar was used, in the palaces and the houses of the nobles and other prominent communities they used lime plaster, with jaggery, sand and the oil extracted from a fish as the ingredients added to it. Roofing was done using thatch or clay tiles (fish scale tiles and Mangalore tiles). The thatch roof demanded periodic care as it has to be renewed every year; this ensured the proper maintenance of the roofing system.

The building materials used and the scale of the building reflected the economic status of its occupants.


Fig 8- Transition from the past to the present

XIV. THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The planning of the agraharams followed a grid iron or concentric ring pattern, with the temple forming the central point or the focal point. The row of houses is either single or double storied, with the traditional pitched roof form striking a significant profile against the sky. The streets were narrow and formed an integral extension of the 'living space' (Evolution). The linear settlement pattern culminated at a temple or was arranged around the temple in various concentric rings. Water bodies were always seen in the vicinity of these settlements as the Vedic life recommended both spiritual and physical purity.

The row houses sharing a common wall had a long verandah running along the front portion, supported by stone and wooden pillars. (Evolution) This unique architectural style finds itself alienated from the vernacular architecture practices and traditions of the Kerala. However, this architectural style embeds within the true history of this community, their lifestyle, customs and traditions.

Kalpathy has 4 main streets — **new Kalpathy, old Kalpathy, Chathapuram and Kalchatti**. The pie diagram shown below, have calculated the new houses, old houses and renovated houses in these streets. When one look at the population of this agraharam, we can find many retired or elderly people here; comparatively children and young adults are very less in number. Schools weren't there during olden times and now the children prefer to study in the city rather than their agraharam, even parents also thinks so. So after their education, these young generation goes abroad for further studies and job opportunities and even settle there with their own family. They only come back home to visit their parents. Women before, were not allowed to study but as time moved on, many of the women have started business in Kalpathy, and many others have left the place for bigger dreams.
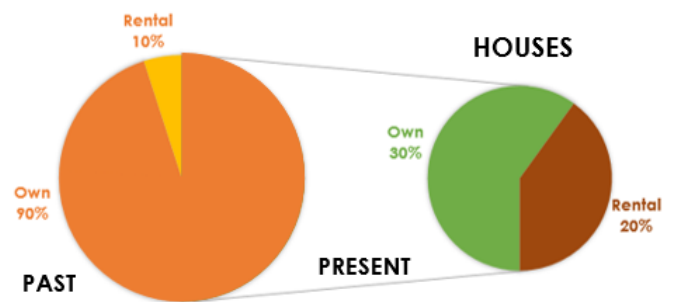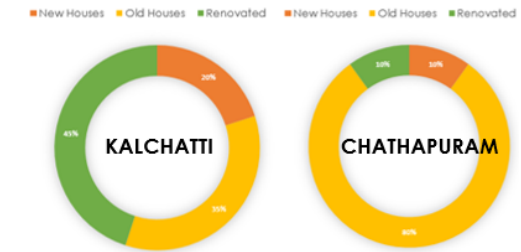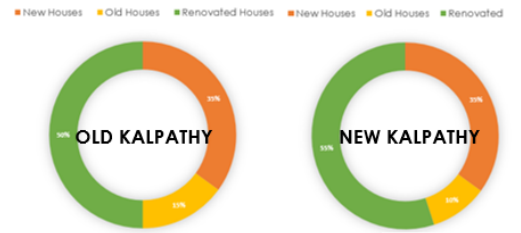
Most of the families living there prefer municipality dam water rather than well water. According to the heritage act, set by the government, the houses were supposed 70 be maintained as it is and only the interiors of the house could be renovated. The residents didn't seem happy about this, they also wanted to live in luxury but were restricted due to the act. Thus many youngsters leave this place.
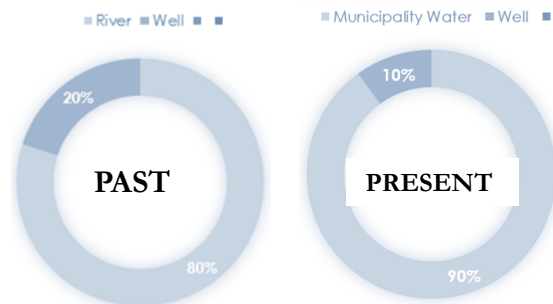
The modern buildings are feebly designed for the existing climatic conditions leading to tremendous use of existing electrical equipment's and severe use of energy to maintain desired indoor conditions. These buildings are without adequate insulation, unshaded, over glazed and they use vast amount of energy to

provide thermal comfort especially when the weather conditions are harsh and extreme.

XV. VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE & UNIFORMITY IN DWELLING UNITS

Another aspect of the Utopic societies is uniformity, where every house is identical, and the rich and the not-so-rich co-exist in complete harmony with each other and live in same dwellings of almost equal size and shape. This is observed in the dwelling units of Agraharams where the houses were traditional and an ethnic and innate approach to the building up of spaces followed. Vernacular Architecture is the art of the truth of the inhabitants of the region. The indigenous architecture responds to the vagaries in climate, blends with the topography, vibrate the cultural trends, lifestyle, spiritual and religious parameters. They exude skill and craftsmanship, appreciation of culture, respect to local materials and methods of the building science. The houses were mostly two-storied and had a verandah in the front.

In contrast to present, agraharams are more adaptable to the environment in many ways. Traditional builders use knowledge passed on from generation to generation to ensure that their buildings could modify the impact or a hostile outdoor environment. According to principles evolved over numerous generations, traditional buildings are equipped with thick walls and courtyards. These principles include physical functionality, low energy usage, comfort, durability and affordability.

Upon studying the Agraharams, it is found that the mean radiant temperature of the agraharam is very low when compared to that of a modern house. This is because of the cooler surfaces in the interiors of the agraharam. The coolness is because of the traditional materials and traditional planning and design techniques that they have adopted. The air movement in agraharam is continuous due to the presence or the courtyard and is maintained throughout the agraharam whereas windows, presence of wet spaces like courtyard are the spatial features. The usage of

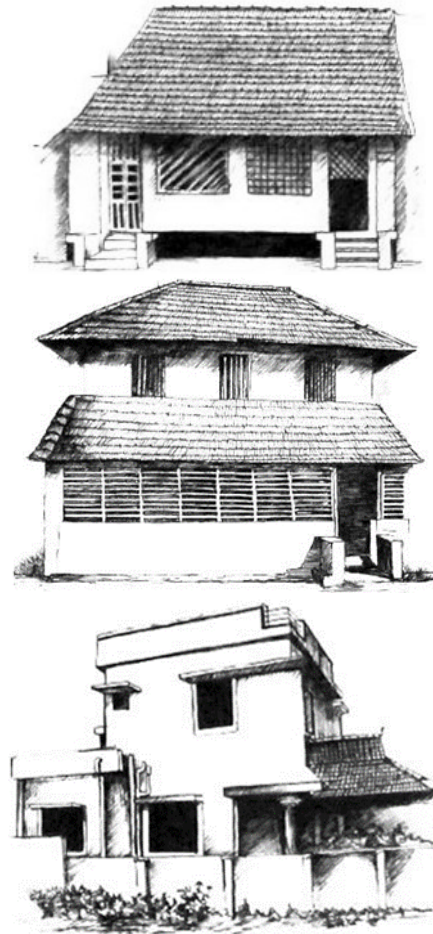prefabricated architectural elements such as leaves of doors and windows, timber stairs.

Fig 9- a) Conserved House b) Renovated House c) Reconstructed House

At present in renovated agraharam the air movement is not continuous. The reason for significant temperature difference between indoor and outside temperature of agraharam in summer is because of the evaporative cooling phenomena that takes place in lime mortar based masonry wall of agraharam, low thermal conductivity, less thickness of roofing and walls of concrete based modern building depict the higher mean radiant temperatures and higher temperature variations of modern building compared to agraharam.

XVI. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

"The vernacular dwellings have a special character that the spaces are multifunctional and each of their activities requires a different pattern of spaces. The dwellings are designed by keeping in mind the future expansion. **Architectural characteristics are defined by their work culture**. The form of a building is evolved from its functions. So it is continuously expanding as per their requirements. Hardly any change is seen in the living pattern and lifestyle. Some of the Brahmins migrate to city for job opportunities or higher education. Thus, migration is a major problem of urban settlement. The planned housing is defined by the economic status of the users. Modern materials are used which are changing with new construction methods and techniques. In vernacular designs, there is a subtle change in material and character. The acceptability of new material and technique is less. Therefore, they have a specific character and lifestyle. In urban settlements the changes are easily noticeable; acceptability to new material and techniques is high. A new disposition is coming up which has no significance with the vernacular style of that region. Hence in the urban planning the provisions for these settlements should be provided. The impact of globalization has threatened traditional and cultural values by the forces of economic, cultural and architectural homogenization. This has brought disregard for traditional environment .In the race of modernity, values, beliefs, culture are removed from the society". (Tamil Brahmin Settlements of Kerala)

The settlement is designed for traditional community in their own traditional pattern by integrating their values, customs, beliefs, rituals and lifestyle. It is one of the major and best examples of **reflection of culture in architecture and the built form fabric in contemporary design.** (Tamil Brahmin Settlements of Kerala)
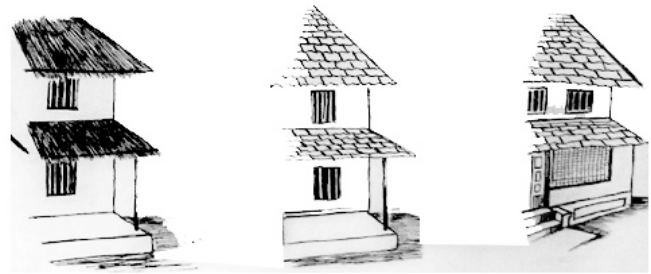

Fig 10 - a) Thatched Roof   b) Tiled roof with open thinna c) Tiled roof with closed thinna

XVII. FINDINGS

Relationship between Culture and Built Form

Comparative analysis of all these five settlements has been made to draw conclusions. The social, cultural parameters like occupation, religion, Privacy, Safety, Position of women, Family structures etc. are considered in this evaluation. After that the relationship between culture and built form has been established with following Findings.

1.   Location & Orientation:

The strategic location of the settlement was decided by the religion and occupation. For example, the location of Agraharam settlement is based on the temple position and all the houses were arranged in a linear pattern different from the clustered pattern usually seen in Kerala traditional architectural style thus forming a garland around a temple.

2.   Form & Typology:

This is determined by the social need of the inhabitants. The row of houses is either single or double storied, with the traditional pitched roof form striking a significant profile against the sky. The streets were narrow and formed an integral extension of the 'living space'. The row houses sharing a common wall had a long verandah running along the front portion, supported by stone and wooden pillars. The house has a verandah at the entrance for social activities and a platform, slightly raised from the street, which runs the entire length of the row houses. It also acts as a transition from the street to the

dwelling. A passage which starts at the street face, runs through the house ending at the backyard, doors leading to inner areas. (Evolution)

3. Housing Pattern:

The housing pattern has been decided by various factors like the position of the temple, climatic considerations etc. Group living has been preferred for safety and security which determined the settlement pattern with group housing. Social interaction among the community members is of prime importance and hence street plays a vital role in social living in this community. The street pattern is also determined by considering these social needs.

4. House form:

Mostly rectangular with a small inner courtyard. This form is derived from the basic Nalukettu form of Kerala. Spatial arrangements are based on the cultural needs of people in different communities

5. Social interactive Spaces:

Street is a major social space in many settlements. In Agraharam, internal street is an extension of living space.

6. Visual connectivity:

Each settlement of the community has proper physical integration between each other. The streets are slightly distorted at an angle to maintain visual privacy of two different community settlements. Within a particular settlement, the streets are straight and visually connected. In Agraharam, Inner Street is wide and main functions occur at the street level.

7. Symbolic significance:

Each Settlement has its own symbol to represent their culture. Use of Symbols for ornamentation is very common. Thulasithara (thulasi platform) is another symbol which is common in Agraharam.

8. Integration and Continuity with the setting:

Most of the inhabitants are engaged in similar occupations like education, temple related jobs which binds them together and creates a sense of community and a sense of belongingness. There is no dominance of any community. They used common features like rectangular plan, sloping roof with deep over hangings, same height of the building, street – built ratio 1:1 or 1:2, common building materials, similar ornamentation and detailing like wooden brackets, eave boards etc. to maintain homogeneity

| Past | Present |
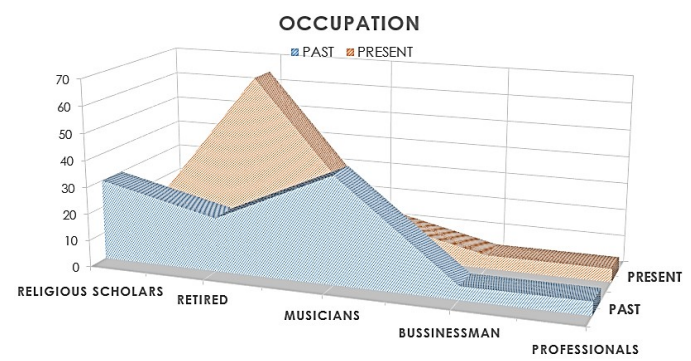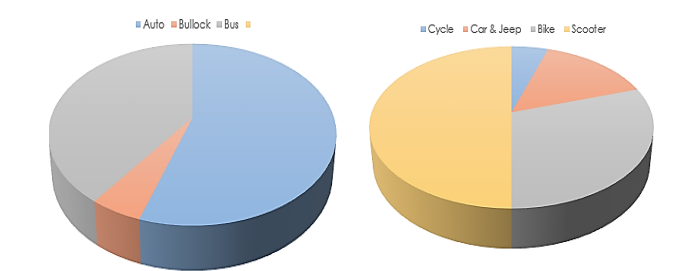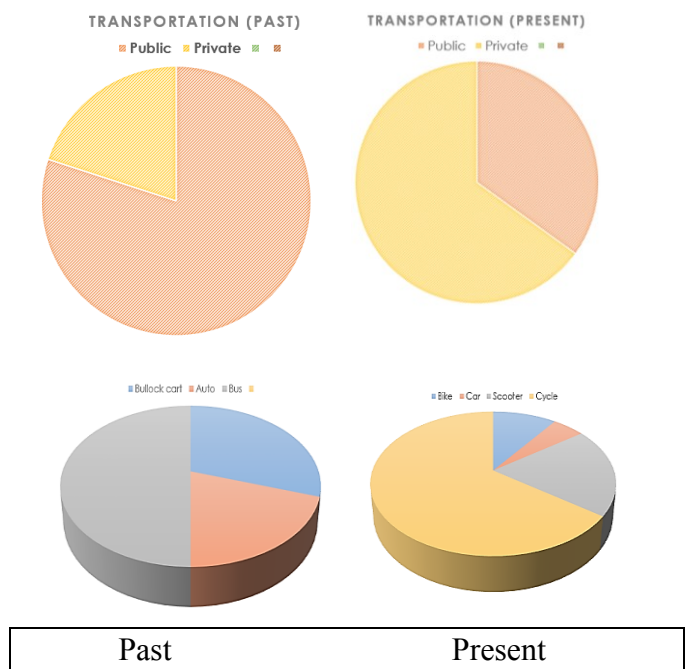
Percentage of Female working population
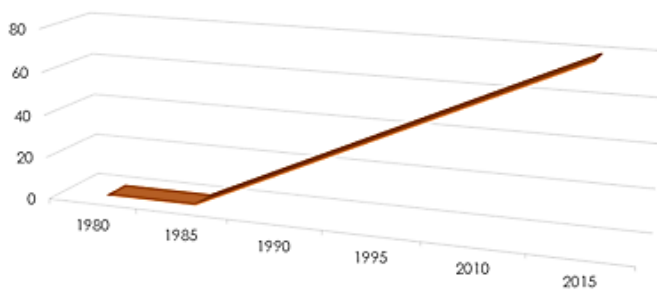
9. Transformation in to modern setting

The study brought out the idea that even though there are many differences in the settlement pattern these days, they maintain a unique identity both in city level and settlement level in all the agraharas. These similarities are mainly due to the effect of environmental factors like climate, topography etc.

XVIII. CONCLUSION

Architecture as a focus of human life reflects the culture in every society interacting closely with structural, economic, political, historical, and social features of society. The changes in culture and architecture are reciprocal. The agraharam settlements of today have undergone transformation. "The impact of one is reflected on the other. India's rich cultural heritage is vanishing due to the influence of urbanization and globalization among which the agraharams are a good example to depict this scenario. In order to protect and conserve our rich cultural and architectural heritage the elements of vernacular should be incorporated in the contemporary planning and architecture. Provisions should be made to incorporate vernacular architecture and traditional knowledge in the policies, the rules and regulations. The policy makers, planners and architects should consider this in their work for betterment of society". (Singapore) "Quality of life is enhanced through good architectural design which responds to the needs and wishes of users and use of natural materials and good urban design which allows

creation of green spaces and reduction of noise and pollution." Birkauser (Tipnis, 2012).

The Agraharams not only **shaped the cultural fabric of the Kerala society** but also influenced the city planning in more than one ways. The Brahmins migrated from various parts of Tamil Nadu to parts of Kerala and some of the cities have major concentration of Agraharams like Palakkad. The migration pattern is noticeable since Palakkad was the most accessible given the fact that the Palakkad gap provided a natural protection from the invaders. In due course of time, these *Agraharams* not only occupied various portions of land in Kerala, but also altered the built fabric of the place as these settlements strictly followed the Vedic town planning rules, with houses being built on both sides of the Temple and also, the lifestyle and the Architecture seen in *Agraharams* is a contrast from their neighbourhoods. This synthesis altered the existing built fabric of the society and is still intact today.

Therefore, "the role of culture in promoting architectural identity seems vital. This research with the hypothesis that architecture is a complete symbol of human culture tries to study the role of culture in promoting architectural identity" based on the study of Agraharams in Kalpathy. (architecture)

This paper unfolds various architectural aspects in the context of different cultural beliefs and practices which helps in the creation of identity of the society. The cultural differences among communities are well reflected in each settlement. Each and every element are planned very carefully that it maintains the homogeneity in every aspect which creates a new visual experience to its visitors. It is clear that family structure, the position of women in the family, religious beliefs and practices, and ways of making a living all contribute to the urban context and creates an identity of its own, without losing the integrity of setting whether it is in the homeland or in migrated land. It shows how the spatial-cultural aspects can be

incorporated in architecture to maintain the ethnicity of our land. This study contributes to the further scope of research related to the relationship between culture and architecture by giving insight into the knowledge of the influence of sociocultural values of different communities on urban morphology. This article contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between culture and architecture which may help in future development with proper social integration between different communities without losing their identity and achieve long term sustainability.

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