Revealing Architecture: Case of the Sacred Cultural Landscape of Ekamrakshetra Bhubaneswar

Piyush Das[1*]

[1] *School of Architecture, Vellore Institute of Technology University Katpadi-Tiruvalam Road, Tamil Nadu, India*

*rupanpiyush@gmail.com

The historic sacred cultural landscape of Bhubaneswar (Ekamrakshetra or the region of one mango tree) has diverse cultural resources both tangible and intangible which can be categorized under cultural and natural. The built resources which are comprised of temples, mathas (institutional), water tanks of various types (Pokhari, Sagara, Kunda, and so on), etc are very significant and their architectonics are unique to understand when seen and perceived from the lenses of the local practices, rituals, and other activities under the sacred realm. The continuing landscape, where the traditions and customs etc are still in practice, the built finds new meaning and narrative. It reveals as per the ritual. It reveals as per the time. For example, as per one ritual, one needs to take a dip in Bindusagara (the largest water body) early morning and experience breathlessness for a moment, and get up. Then while the water level is at the chest, one has to face east and pray to the Sun god. Then one looks in the northeast direction and sees the amalaka (the top part of a temple's sikhara) of a shrine of a particular deity, then closes eyes and prays. And so on. A curated pathway, varied itineraries of seeing and looking, the idea of none seeing (closing eyes and praying), and many such actions are the part of everyday rituals and practices of that place. The perception of the same curated experiences changes based on the time of the day. It changes based on the season or a time of a particular festival. The built in the landscape reveals the norms of these sacred systems, which one finds mentions in the regional texts such as Swarnadri Mahodaya, Ekamra Chandrika1, etc which describe the sacred landscape and other related entities. The pieces of evidence of the experiences and perceptions can be attained only by true knowledge. As per Nyaya-sutra2 supreme felicity or nirsreyasa is attained by true knowledge. This paper attempts to comprehend the idea of revealing architecture by understanding the primary texts describing the place and builds a new narrative for the architecture of the sacred cultural landscape of Bhubaneswar while referring to Nyaya sutra theories. The methodologies may be considered more holistic than the conventional method of seeing and perceiving architecture in the context of Ekamrakshetra.

Keywords: Revealing architecture, Sacred cultural landscape, Perceptions and Indian knowledge systems

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1 Swarnadri Mahodaya and Ekamra Chandrika are Pre-Medieval texts describing the realm of the region of Ekamrakashetra (Bhubaneswar)

2 An ancient text of Nyaya school of Hindu philosophy (6th century Bc-2nd Century CE)

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of true knowledge as per Nyaya-sutra and the relevance

1.1 The idea of darsana (seeing): a chronology

Atmavidya (the science of soul) which was later known as *anviksiki* dealt with two subjects, soul and the theory of reasons. Later the discipline came to be known as *darsana* (seeing). The Vedas which were composed between 150 B.C. to 600 B.C. have sections on *upasana* (prayer), *karma* (ritual) and *Jnana* (knowledge). The idea of soul is indeed necessary to understand. Kathopanisad explains the idea of soul and explains that it neither gets born nor dies. A person in chariot can be explained as soul while the body is the chariot, the charioteer being the intellect, the mind being the reins, the senses being the horses and the surrounding object being the spheres of operation, both organic and inorganic matter has soul. Texts such as Satapatha Brahmana and Brhadaranyakopanisad talks about soul and its existence in all objects. The *atmavidya* was a discipline from 900 B.C. to 600 B.C. It was around 1st century B.C., that the discipline of *anviksiki* which was dealing with soul came to be known as *darsana*. The word *darsana* can be found in Mahabharata, Bhagavata Purana, Nyaya-Bhasya and Vedanta-Bhasya. [1,7,10]

Anviksiki which deals with theory of reasons finds mention in Manusamhita, Gautama-Dharma-Sutra, Ramayana and Mahabharata etc. it was also known as *Hetu-sastra* or *Hetu-vidya* (science of reasoning and finds mention in Manusamhita). In references like Manusamhita, Skandapurana, Vajnavalkya Samhita *Anviksiki* also is mentiond as tarka-vidya or Vada-Vidya. [14,15]**.** There have been many teaches of *Anviksiki* such as Carvaka (650 B.C.), Kapila who talks about matter and soul (650-575 B.C.), Dattatreya (650 B.C.), Dunarvasuatreya who talks about senses (550 B.C.), Sulabha a lady (550-500 B.C.), Astavakra (550 -500 B.C.). It was Medhatithi Gautama (550 B.C.)who is known as

the founder of the discipline. He is mentioned in references like Padma Purana, Skanda Purana, Gandhavva tantra, Kusumanjali etc.[1,7,14]

Taittiriya aranyaka (900-500 B.C.) has used four technical terms for the theory of reasons such as *Smriti* (scripture), *Pratyaksa* (perception), *Aitihya* (tradition), and, *anumana* (inference). While Ramayan mentions tradition, inference and scripture. Manu-samhita mentions *Pratyaksa*, *Anumana* and *Sastra*. While explaining the theory of reasons, Aitareya Brahmana Kathopanisad mentions *tarka* (reasoning), *Vada* (debate), *Yukti* (continuous argument), *nirnaya* (ascertainment), *prayojana* (purpose), *Prameya* (the object of knowledge).[1,7,16]

1.2 The idea of true knowledge as per Nyaya-sutra

As per Nyaya-sutra supreme felicity, *summumbonum* (*nirsreyasa*) is attained by the true knowledge .they are of sixteen categories [12, 14]

(1) The means of right knowledge (*pramana*).
Perception (pratyaksa), Inference (anumana), comparisons (*upamana*), and verbal testimony (*sabda*) are the means to true knowledge. Perception happens when an object interacts with a sense[3]. The object being determinate[4], unnamable[5] and non-erratic.
Inference precedes perception and are categorized as 'a priori (*purvavat*), ' a posteriori (*sesavat*)' and 'commonly seen (*samanyatodrsta*). A priori is derived from perception with a cause, while a posteriori is a knowledge which looks at the effects of perception. Commonly seen are the perceptions derived from known objects.
Comparison happens when similarity happens with a previously known object. The verbal testimony or the word which comes from a reliable person is also the mean to right knowledge. They are of two ways of referring words of objects

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3 Sense is the knowledge of the soul while interacting with the mind
4 Indeterminate knowledge is separated in the process

5 The knowledge gained through perception are independent of the language or the name and meaning of the object

one being the matter which is seen and the other which is not seen.

Rumor (*aitihya*), presumption (*arthapatti*), probability (*sambhava*) and non-existence (*abhava*) are also to be included in the above said means of right knowledge.

(2) The objects of the right knowledge (*prameya*)

The soul (*atma*), body (*sarira*), senses (*indriya*), objects of sense (*artha*), intellect (*buddhi*), mind (*manah*), activity (*pravrtti*), fault (*dosa*), transmigration (*pretyabhava*), fruit (*phala*), pain (*duhkha*), and emancipation (*apavarga*) and the main objects of right knowledge.

While desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain and cognition are the determinants of the soul, the body is defined by gestures, senses and sentiments. Intellect is the apprehension. Activity is defined by the interaction of voice, mind and body. They are three types, Bodily, vocal and mental actions. Fault causes the activity. Transmigrations talks about the idea of rebirth.

(3) Doubt (*samasya*) develops when one finds (1) recognition of common properties, (2) recognition of non common properties, (3) conflicting testimony, and (4) irregularity of perception.

(4) Purpose (*prayojana*) is the need to act.

(5) Example (*drstanta*) are the cases which satisfy each men of various intellect.

(6) Tenet (*siddhanta*) are the frameworks of a certain school, hypothesis or implication. They are of four kinds. A dogma of all the schools (sarva-tantra) are the one which are not opposed by any school while acknowledges and claimed by at least one school. A dogma peculiar to one school (*pratti-tantra*) are accepted by a group but rejected by the other group. A hypothetical dogma (*adhikarana*) are something, if accepted and then the paradigm shift happens. An implied dogma (*abhyupagama*) are not declared but follows the examination of some.

(7) Members of a syllogism (avayava) are understood bu proposition (pratijna), a reason (hetu), an explanatory example (an affirmative and a heterogenous-negative) (udaharan), an application of the example (an affirmative and a heterogenous-negative) (upanaya) and a statement of the conclusion (nigamana)

(8) Confutation (*tarka* [6]) is applied to ascertain the real character of a thing and applies to the unknown.

(9) Ascertatainment (*nirnaya*) removes the doubt by getting the answer of a question from two different sides.

(10) Discussion (*vada*) happens between two parties who comes from two schools

(11) Wrangling (*jalpa*) aims at gaining victory

(12) Cavil (*vitanda*) engages in mere attacks on the opposite side

(13) Fallacy 9hetvabhasa) leads to more then one conclusions because of erratic (*savyabhicara*), the contradictory (*viruddha*), the controversial (prakarana-sama), the counter-questioned (*sadhyasama*), and the mistimed (*kalatita*).

(14) Quibble (*chala*) is the opposition offered to a proposition by an alternate framework and can be of three types (1) in respect of a term (*vaka-chala*), (2) in respect of a genus (*samanya-chala*), and (3) in respect of a metaphor (*upacara-chala*)

(15) Analogue (*jati*)

(16) A point of defeat (*nigrahasthana*)

1.3 Relevance and the new methodology

The idea of perception of architecture is multifaceted. It is indeed of relevance to use the same tools (both tangible and intangible) that has been used to conceptualize, construct and perceive certain architecture and when we see them today to asses. On such front texts like Nyaya Sutra does give such clues when one is referring to temple architecture of Odisha, India, that were mostly built between 6th Century Ad to 13th Century AD.

One has to understand that the built are not to be seen in isolation. The built are not to be

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[6] Also known as argumentation, reasoning, hypothetical reasoning etc

assessed just by its tangible feature. The built are not to be seen as fixed entity irrespective of time, season, etc. One must identify and asses the metaphysical planning principles that have been the governing principles in the cases of such sacred cultural landscape sites.

In Indian religious contexts, metaphysical planning, a dominating idea, is frequently observed. Concepts of metaphysical planning are evolutionary processes that can be understood in terms of time. These ideas largely depend on the available natural resources, built environment, and cultural entities in a certain location at a specific time. The most important factor is one's view of the environment, which creates the basis for stories and narrations. This results in a new cultural expression that might include stories, beliefs, modifications to natural resources, construction projects, and other things. Human perception is based on the five senses (hearing, vision, touch, smell, and taste), as well as taught instincts (dependent on memory) [2,4].

Under this paradigm of cultural systems, revealing architecture as a concept emerges. A site survey with the temple priests (twenty two) results in to understanding of the sacred landscapes. And the study of the primary texts gave clues to ways of doing *darsana* of such places. The new methodology applies the idea of perception from Nyaya Sutra and uses it in the sacred knowledge of the place. By refereeing to the concept of *asta ayatana* and some rituals the paper attempts to describe the new way of seeing architecture that is revealing architecture.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE PARAMETERS THAT DEFINE THE ARCHITECTURE OF EKAMRAKSHETRA

Sacred Indian cultural landscapes are intricate areas that have changed through time due to beliefs, changing landscapes, shifting cultural ecosystems, perceptions of time, history, memory, knowledge of the biotic and abiotic environment, knowledge retention and transmission strategies, and more. Such intricate cultural landscapes contain a variety of elements, both tangible and intangible, that can be either cultural or natural. These resources are all interconnected in various ways and function and have functioned as a single system of a single resource. [3,4].

Eastern India's Ekamrakshetra is one such intricately sacred and historic area. The numerous cultural heritage remnants found in the Ekamrakshetra region are of great importance. The history of this area has been recorded for more than two thousand years. Different religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, have produced a variety of cultural outcomes in this region. The terrain underwent numerous intricate processes of alteration and adaptation as various Hindu religions proliferated. The distinctive sacred landscape is still there today and displays excellent resources for many typologies [3].
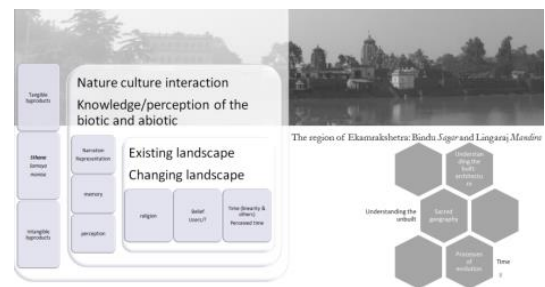

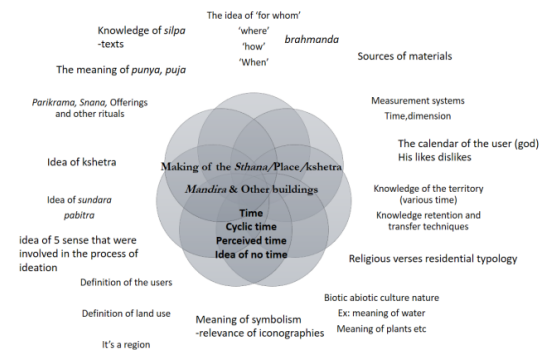Figure 1: The idea of perception in a sacred landscape.

Figure 2: Parameters behind the planning and architecture of Ekamrakshetra.

Figure 2 gives the draft idea of certain parameters which would have been the key factors toward the making of the place and shaping the architecture of the same. Some of the pointers are mentioned below:

- The knowledge of architecture in different periods, availability of materials, cross-cultural influence in a different period. The changing system of measuring time and dimension. For

example, the dimension system was relative in those times, when these buildings were being constructed.

- Understanding the user system while understanding the idea of for whom, where, and when. Understanding the daily and yearly calendar of gods and their personalities (ethnoscience study to understand the same, where the rituals, practices about the belief system can be investigated and traces may lead its connection to the planning of the place)

- The notion of a region, universe and the cosmos (metaphysical planning principles)

- Defining the new typology and land use

- Meaning and knowledge of the biotic and abiotic environment (change of meaning with time). for example, the idea of water is sacred, the idea of a stone means something else. Trees have different values and significance. Also, it is essential to understand how these knowledge systems were retained, modified, and transferred with time.

- Five senses lenses to investigate. The built cannot be just understood by its visual entities. The notion of five senses with perception and time has to be seen and understood when the architecture of such sacred regions are investigated.

- The meaning of aesthetics has to be understood through the lenses of all the discussed parameters and as well as the understanding of the cyclic concept of time.

3. THE IDEA OF REVEALING IN ARCHITECTURE AND *DARSANA*: CASE OF ASTA AYATANA

Figure 3: The Bindu Sagara along with Ananta Vasudeva temple (part of first ayatana)

There are eight sacred enclosures consisting of groups of temples and tanks, which represent the four cardinal points and four intermediate points of the cosmos. The sacred geography is described by these eight *ayatanas*. In Ekamra Chandrika in the fifth chapter description of these eight *ayatanas* have been given. Though in the description only the temples and tanks find its mention but it has to be understood that in the historic context there would have been other associative features. There would have been different visual connection. For example if we are talking about a tank, we need to know the stream (Surface of underground) which is feeding it. Thus the terrain feature becomes important part of the *ayatans*. The sacred groves find its place in the narratives.[5,6,8,9].

If we read carefully the description given for each *ayatans* regarding how one should do *parikrama*, whom to worship and when etc, we need to understand that the whole narrative can be explained in the dynamics of the *Sthana* or geography (ground and various tangible entities both natural and cultural), the *Samaya* (time) and the most importantly the *homo sapiens* who carries the intangible attributes of the sacred geography in terms of various traditional knowledge systems.

Even today in daily worship this sacred landscape is perceived. Hence it's a continuing landscape. It is a significant Indian Cultural Landscape.

Once Sage Vyasadeva explains the *asta ayatana* of Ekamrakshetra. The first *ayatana* consist of Bindu Sagara as the holiest with Anata Basudeva, Devi Padahara, Tirtheswara and Lingaraja. The second chapter of Ekamra Chandrika explains how Bindu Sagara was dug. Drops of water were collected from various *punyatirtha*, *nadi*, *Sarasi*, *Puskarini*, *Tadaga*, *Bapi*, *Kua*, and *Sagara* and were added to the Bidu Sagara in the presence of Lord Rudra, other Gods and Rishis.

The description of the second *ayatana* is in a sequence by which one must visit and offer prayers. It starts with a water body named Papanasana *Kunda*. By taking bath in the kunda one goes to the *Sivlok*. Then one must visit Maitreswar and Varuneswar temple and worship with all proper rituals. Doing so one attains *Varunlok*. At the *vayaba kona* of Lingaraj around sixty *dhanu* away there is a Bamboo forest. In that forest there is a deep sea with clear water. Taking bath in the sea helps one to attain *Swargalok*. One must chant specific mantras after taking bath in that sea and then visit the temple of Isaneswar which is situated at the southern side of the sea. One attains *Indrapada* by worshiping him properly. One must visit the Yameswara temple which is situated at the west side of Ligaraja templae at the *Vayu kono* (North-west) around a hundred *dhanu*. One must do *parikrama* for three times of the temple and fifteen times *sastang pranam*. One doesnot rebirth by doing so. One must worship with *gandha*, *puspa*, *dhupa*, *deepa* and chant specific mantra [6].

As stated in Nyaya Sutra The means of right knowledge (*pramana*) are Perception (pratyaksa), Inference (anumana), comparisons (*upamana*), and verbal testimony (*sabda*). The place and the built, as per the sacred systems are to be seen under various curated systems (As shown in fig 3). For example, as stated in the second *ayatana* the built be it temples or water body are experienced, which are controlled by (A) time, (b) actions such as taking bath, movement &, *parikrama* etc, (c) idea of distance (relative measurement system such as *dhanu* which means one cow length), (d) Chanting or the idea of sound, (E) idea of direction, (f) idea of numbers such as number of times one is required to do *parikrama*, (g) idea of smell (flowers and *Dhupa*), (h) idea of heat etc.[6,8,9,11].

Figure 4: Understanding the place and the built, as per the various curtaed systems.

Under such systems, the architecture of the building became larger and much more holistic then the today's conventional notion of plan, cross sections or representation.

Figure 5: Schematic mapping of the second *ayatana*.

At the eastern side of Lord Lingaraj a little bit of *Aisanya kona* (North-east) around a hundred *dhanu* (one cow length) away there are two *punyatirtha* or holy water bodies named Ganga and Jamuna, nearby Gangeswara temple is extremely sacred. Taking bath in these water bodies gives the benefits of doing hundreds of *yangya* (a sacred ritual). At the *agni kona* (South-east) of Devi Padahara there is a temple named Lakshmiswara. Kotitirtha nad Kotiswara temples are the part of the third *ayatana*. *Dana* (offering) and *pinda dana* (offering for dead ancestors) are very significant here. Taking bath in this water body is very beneficial. After that one must do *parikrama* (moving around a temple as part of rituals) around Kotiswar temple three times before doing *darsana* and *puja*. At the *nairta kona* (south-west) of kotitirtha there is a temple named Swarnajaleswara. At a distance of seven *dhanu* at the *aisanya kona* (North-east), there is a puskarini. The temple nest to it is known as Suparnajaleswara as there is an instalment of

Suparna (garuda). The temple of Sureswara is located at a distance of one hundred and fifty *dhanu* at the *aisanya kona* of lingaraj. Sidheswara temple is situated at a distance of two hundred *dhanu* at the *aisanya kona* of the lingaraj. Mukteswara temple and the water tank nest to it are also part of the third *ayatana*. [6]

At the southern side of Siddheswara, Kedareswara and Gouri Devi reside. There is a water body named Gouri kunda next to it. The *kunda* is constructed in the Sidhharanya. While having Krushan tila on head one must take bath in this tank during *Navami* of *Krushnapakhya*. One must chant the relevant *matras* after taking bath in the *kunda*. There is temple named Daiteswara at the western side of Sidhheswara. At the eastern side of Siddheswara there is a temple named Indreswara or Rajatani. Lord Viswakarma constructed the temple. All of them makes the fourth *ayatana*.[6]

Brahmeswara temple and Brahma Kunda forms add to the fifth *ayatana*. As per the *vidhi* after taking bath in Brahma *kunda* one do *darsana* of Bhahmeswara. Once Lord Ligaraja mentions about a huge land at the eastern part of his temple, at around one thousand one hudred twenty *dhanu* distance. There is a high land there which looks like Meru. He wanted a temple of him to be constructed there and which is called Bhahmeswara. In the holy forest the river Gndhabati flows. On the bank of gandhabati a temple named Gokarneswara is situated. It was worshiped by an *asura* named Sunesa or Gokaran. One must do *darsana* at the temple after taking a bath in river Gandhabati. At the bank of river Gandhabati, there are other temples named Upaleswara, Amratkeswara, Madhameswara and Jatileswara. All of them makes the fifth *ayatana*. [6]

The sixth *ayatana* includes the temple of Megheswar and Megeswar tank. After talking bath in the tank and then offering *tarpana* to ancestors and gods and then if one visits the lord Megeswar one attains *Indralok*. This temple is situated at a distance of one thousand seven hundred *dhanu* at the *aisanya kona* of the kalpabriksya next to the temple of lingaraja. There is a temple of Bhaskareswara at the *vayu kona* of Megheswara. It is situated at a distance of one

thousand five hundred *dhanu* from the temple of lingaraja. There is a water tank next to it named bhaskareswara tank. At the westernside of it there is a temple of Kapalamochana. This is situated at the aisanya kona of the temple of Lingaraja at a distance of eight hundred *dhanu*. One gets free from al sins by worshiping the temple.[6]

The temple of Alabukeswara and the Alabutirtha water tank are the part of the seventh *ayatana*. Taking bath in the water body and doing *darsana* one attains *Nandilok*. Holy water of eight *tirtha* of ekamraksetra are added in the water of Aabutirtha. One must do *japa* of five hundred aghor matra and eat alabu (lau). At the northen side of Bindu Sagara there is a temple of Uttareswara. All this form the seventh ayatana. [6]. In the asta ayatana temple of Rameswara is the holiest. There is a water tank named Ramakunda is situated next to it. It has a perennial water stream named Asokajhara which is considered to be extremely holy. One attains Kailasa Dham if one worship Rameswara after taking bath in the water body. One must visit the linga bigraha of Siteswara, Hanumadiswara, Labeswara, Bharateswara, Laxmaneswara and satrughaneswara. After that one must visit Gosasahsreswara temple. The water body next to it has a thousand *dhanu* continuously offering milk. One gain many *punya* by taking bath in the water body. During *astami suklapakya* of *Aswina masa* one must wear clean cloths and then keep gomutra, gomeya, khira, dadhi, ghruta and kusajala on head. While doing so one must take five times bath in the water body. At the *vayu kona* of Gosasahsreswara kunda there is a temple of isaneswara. This is situated at distance of two hundred *dhanu* distance from Lingaraja at the *Vayu kona*. [6, 11]
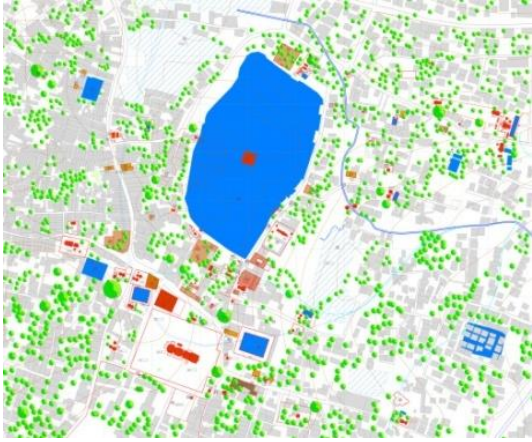
Figure 6: A map showcasing the vicinity of Bindu Sagara, Ekamrakshetra.

4. NEW KNOWLEDGE

As described in the systems of *asta ayatanas*, one finds the glimpse of the idea that how the built and un-built finds its place in the narratives of the sacred realm. There are uncountable festivals and rituals that take part on daily basis, weekly basis and so on. The continuing landscape, where the traditions and customs etc are still in practice, the built finds new meaning and narrative. It reveals as per the ritual. It reveals as per the time. For example, as per one ritual, one needs to take a dip in Bindusagara (the largest water body) early morning and experience breathlessness for a moment, and get up. Then while the water level is at the chest, one has to face east and pray to the Sun god. Then one looks in the northeast direction and sees the *amalaka* (the top part of a temple's sikhara) of a shrine of a particular deity, then closes eyes and prays. Then one moves to the entry of the gigantic Lingaraj temple. Upon reaching there one must again look at the east to pray to the lord Ganesha and so on. A curated pathway, varied itineraries of seeing and looking, the idea of none seeing (closing eyes and praying), and many such actions are the part of everyday rituals and practices of that place.

The perception of the same curated experiences changes based on the time of the day. It changes based on the season or a time of a particular festival. The built in the landscape reveals the norms of these sacred systems. The investigation of the selected primary texts containing the knowledge system of the sacred region, reveals that it is necessary to understand the sacred systems and the ethno science of the place for the real and holistic understanding of the architecture. The new paradigm of seeing the architecture of such places may be finds its place in the future discourse of research.

5. CONCLUSION

Indian traditional knowledge of architecture and planning has been always worked in systems, where each entity connects to other aspects of the system. When we explore Indian scared regions the complexities are even more, where each component of any built or un-built gives pieces of evidence of connectivity with all aspects of a place making. It is indeed necessary to understand these places in a manner where each entity can be described using the parameters that went behind the making of the same. This knowledge dissemination is required to move away from the narratives that have used mostly the western lenses of Visual art history to describe the tangibles in a place like Ekamrakshetra.

This process may offer new findings in the related discipline in terms of various shared traditional knowledge of planning and architecture, which we have lost with time or we have lost the vision to understand them. The transdisciplinary methods of revisiting texts of varied related disciplines may as well offer new knowledge of managementof a complex place like Ekamrakshetra where the components of nature and culture have been intermingling and are continuing. The idea of revealing architecture while contextualizing the then sacred system does talk about new ways of seeing architecture. The 'methods of knowing' a place, that the research intends to do may be of relevance and can be applied to similar sites for a holistic understanding leading to sensitive interventions.

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