

REIMAGINING THE TEMPLE PRECINCTS OF RAMANATHASWAMY TEMPLE, RAMESWARAM

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Bachelor of Architecture degree

By

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**DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
SCHOOL OF BUILDING AND ENVIRONMENT**

SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY) Accredited

With Grade "A" by NAAC

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MAY 2024



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BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Thesis Report is the bonafide work of **Muthu Malliga G (39210051)** who carried out the Thesis entitled "Reimagining the temple precincts of Ramanathaswamy temple, Rameswaram" under our supervision from December 2023 to May 2024.


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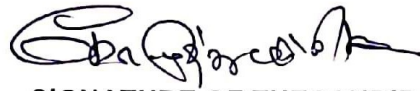


DECLARATION

I, **MUTHU MALLIGA G** hereby declare that the Thesis Report entitled "The reimagining of Temple precincts of Ramanathaswamy temple, Rameswaram" done by me under the guidance of **Ar.Selvendiran**(Internal Guide), **Ar. Ramkumar SSSR** (Internal Review Member) and **Ar. Sathish Moses**(External Guide) Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Architecture Degree.

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MUTHU MALLIGA G

THESIS SYNOPSIS

Rameswaram is a renowned pilgrimage town boasting ancient heritage structures and temples. It contributes significantly to the national GDP with 6.23% and employs 8.78% of the workforce. Notably, the 12th-century Ramanathaswamy temple is a focal point, attracting millions of pilgrims and tourists annually - approximately 5 million foreign visitors and 562 million domestic tourists.

The study employed practical analyses, including surveys and questionnaires targeting local residents, shopkeepers, pilgrims, and tourists, both domestic and international. Additionally, urban documentation of the pilgrim zone was conducted. Findings revealed significant challenges within the urban landscape despite its spiritual prominence, notably congestion, inclusivity, and accessibility issues.

This thesis project aims to develop urban design solutions and architectural interventions that promote inclusivity for pilgrims and tourists, enriching their spiritual experience by catering diverse needs. Proposed interventions also addresses these challenges while fostering new opportunities for the town's development.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION – PILGRIM TOURISM

Pilgrimage tourism is a form of tourism, partly or wholly, by religious sentiments. Char Dham is a set of 4 Indian pilgrimage sites where people believe that visiting these sites is a path to attain spiritual salvation. All the 'dhamas' are related to four epochs.

- Dham of Satyuga - Badrinath, Uttarakhand
- Dham of Tretayuga - Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu
- Dham of Dwaparayuga - Dwarka, Gujarat
- Dham of Kaliyuga - Jagannatha Puri, Odisha.



Fig 1.1: Char Dham

1.2 SITE INTRODUCTION – RAMESWARAM

The island spreads over an area of 61.8 km² whereas Rameswaram municipality covers an area of 53 km² with an average sea elevation of 10m from the mean sea level. Rameswaram is situated on the south and it the only dham where the Shiva Shrine is present while the other 3 dhams have Vishnu Shrine. The history of the island Rameswaram focused on being the transit point to reach Srilanka and the presence of Ramanathaswamy temple. Rameswaram, as a town renowned for pilgrimage, most of its inhabitants engage in the tourism sector, which encompasses trade and services. The service industry expanded from 70% in 1971 to 98.78% in 2001. Also being an island town, the traditional occupation was fishing. This pilgrimage tourism all revolves around the great epic “Ramayana”. According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009 by the World Economic Forum, Rameswaram is ranked 11th in the Asia Pacific region and 62nd on the list of the world’s attractive destinations. It is ranked the 14th best tourist destination for its natural resources and 24th for its cultural resources, with many World Heritage Sites, both natural and cultural, rich fauna, and strong creative industries in the country.

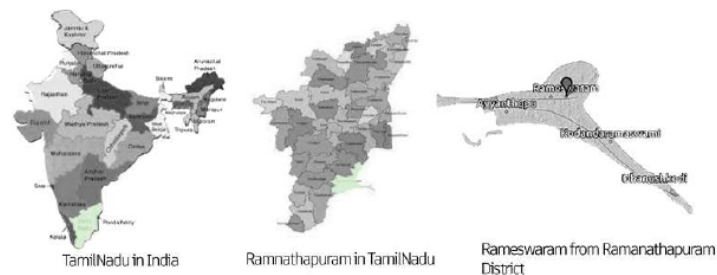


Fig 1.2: Location map of Rameswaram

1.3 NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The Ramanathaswamy temple, Rameswaram attracts nearly 10,000 - 20,000 people per day on an average. This increased crowd and lack of proper facilities needs to be addressed as a part of improving pilgrim tourism at the Rameswaram. This also helps the city’s socio ad economic growth.

1.4 AIM

The aim of the thesis is to cater diverse needs of the tourists & pilgrims while enhancing the temple precincts as a pedestrian only zone and providing public transportation to reduce the existing traffic congestion.

1.5 OBJECTIVE

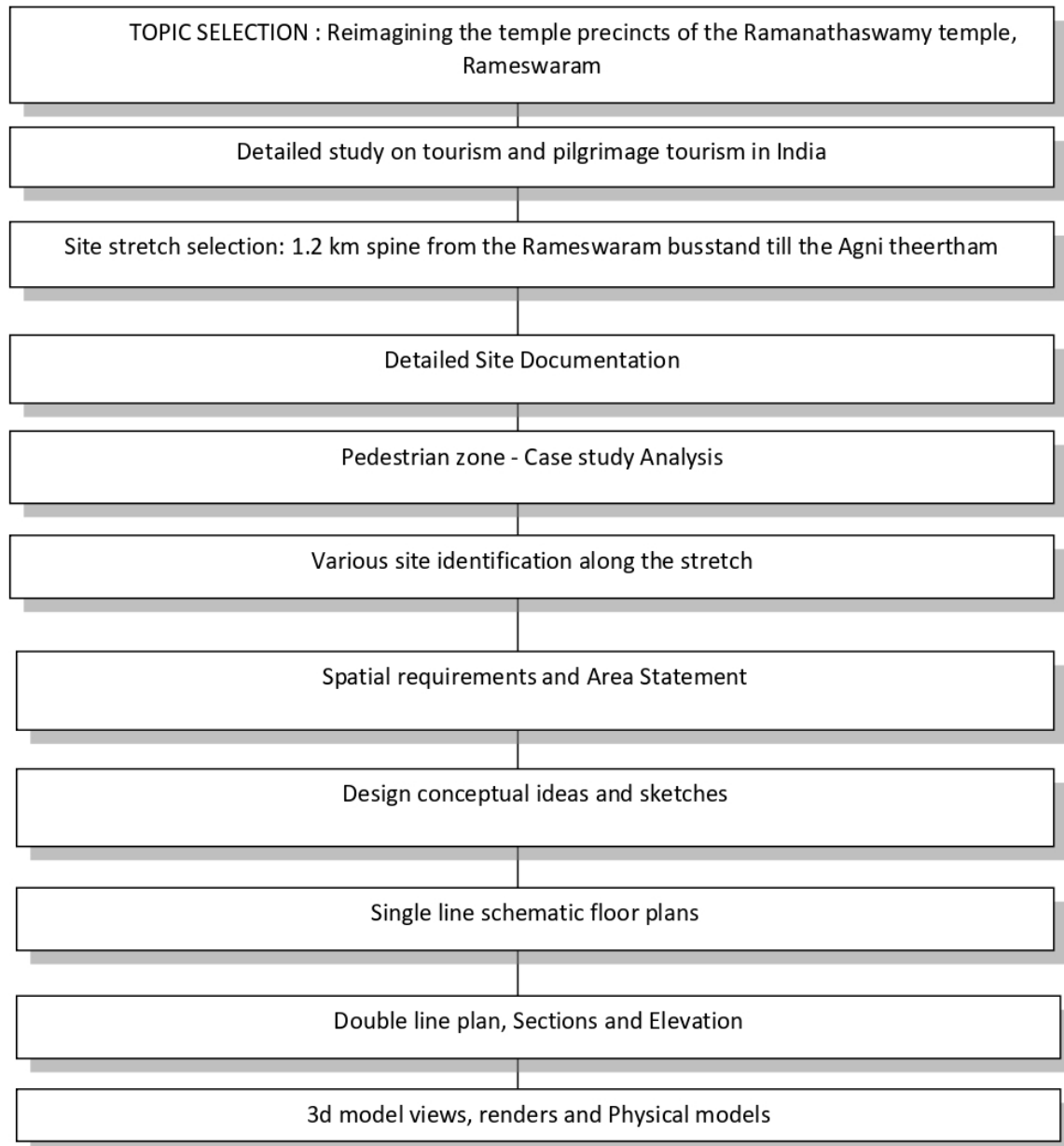
(a) Restriction of vehicles into the temple precincts to enhance the pedestrian experience.

(b) Designing the pedestrian and vehicular lane into the proposed site.

(c) Revival of cultural nodes

(d) Architectural design solution near the temple catering the needs of the pilgrims and the tourists

1.5 METHODOLOGY



CHAPTER 2

DATA COLLECTION AND STANDARDS

2.1 RAMESWARAM TOURISTS DESTINATIONS:

The Rameswaram consists of various tourists destinations which also include tourist destination which comes under Religious, Museums, Beaches and Adventurous. Some of the major destinations are listed below with the distance from the Ramanahaswamy temple to show the proximity from the main tourist destination of the Rameswaram.

S.no	Destination	Distance from the temple(kms)
1		
1.1	Agni Theertham	0.2
1.2	Ramar Theertham	1.9
1.3	Panchamuki Hanuman temple	2.1
1.4	Lakshmana Theertham	2.3
1.5	Ramar Padam	3
1.6	Villondi Theertham	8.3
1.7	Kothandaramar or Vibishena temple	11.4
2	MUSEUMS/MEMORIALS :	
2.1	Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam museum/house	2
2.2	Electronic moving statue / Shri krishna	2.2
2.3	Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam memorial	6.3
2.4	Vivekananda memorial	14.9
3	BEACH :	
3.1	Rameswaram seashore	0.4
3.2	Sangumal beach	1.1
3.3	Rameswaram boat jetty	2.7
3.4	Kunthukal beach	14.9
3.5	Dhanushkodi Palam – old Harbour	20.2
3.6	Dhanushkodi / Ram Setu View point	25.1
4	ADVENTURE :	

4.1	Holy island water sports	1.3
4.2	Rameswaram boat house	1.5
4.3	Rameswaram light house	4
4.4	Pamban bridge	14.8
4.5	Dhanushkodi light house	20.6

Table 2.1: Tourist destination of rameswaram



Fig 2.1: Tourists destinations in Rameswaram

2.2 STANDARDS – CRZ:

Coastal Zone Regulations

CRZ - I

Ecologically Sensitive Areas

CRZ-II

Urban (developed) areas up to the shoreline of the coast

CRZ-III

Rural and urban areas which fall outside CRZ-I and CRZ-II

CRZ-III (Rural Area)

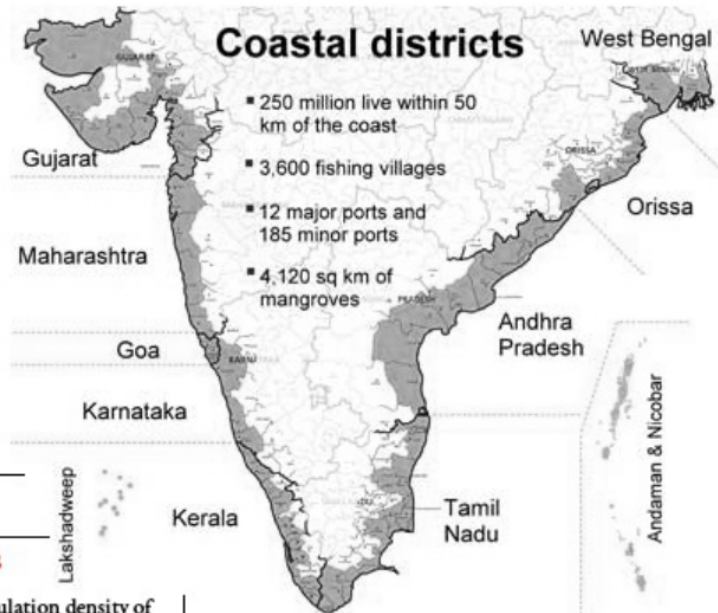
CRZ-III A

Densely populated areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre. A NDZ of 50 meters from HTL.

CRZ-III B

Areas with population density of below 2161 per square kilometre. A NDZ of 200 meters from HTL.

Coastal districts



CRZ -IV

Aquatic areas up to territorial limits

Fig 2.2: CRZ rules

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE CASE STUDIES

3.1 STROGET, COPENHAGEN

Once a small fishing village, grew to become a bustling trading port. The inner city of Copenhagen continues to be the most important business and cultural area.

On 1880 the city was set up as a great workplace and in 1962 there is an increase in car and parking and it leads to lack of space to walk. So the Government decided to initiate a 1.1 km pedestrian trial in the city to reduce the congestion and pollution in the city. On the positive outcome in 1964 the street has been permanently pedestrianised for the people. In 2000 the total total of 1,00,000 sqkm – area has been pedestrianised.



Fig 3.1: Copenhagen street

The policies and interventions incorporated are;

1. Limiting no of parking spaces
2. Increase on street parking charges
3. Decrease in no of lanes on several main roads.
4. Used as bus and cycle lane

Reasons for the success :

One of the main reasons to achieve this victory is by giving adequate time to adapt. to develop to a new city culture also encouraging walking and use of public transport, proper orderly and step wise decisions made by the government with proper and clear goal in mind.

As a part of beautification and facilitation of street some of the elements are used in the pedestrianisation. They include

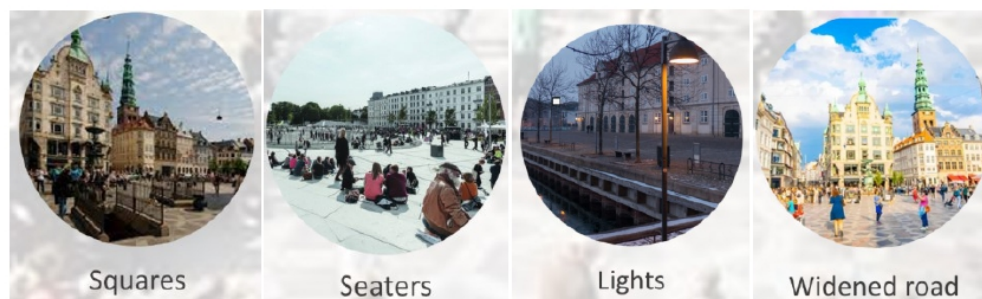


Fig 3.2: Street Elements

3.2 TIMES NEW SQUARE, NEWYORK

Step 1 : Tactical urbanism - Roads are closed off -
Inexpensive multicolored plastic and lawn chairs.

Step 2 : Temporary art installations

Step 3 : Following those temporary trials,
final design has been proposed

Step 4 : Redesign indertaken phase by phase

Step 5 : Snohetta's final scheme. This final scheme includes the permanant redesign features with signages, Flushing the surface, more rationally placed benches ,tactile elements for differently abled people to create an inclusive design, precast concrete pavers.



Fig 3.3: Times New Square

3.3 MADURAI MEENAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE

One of the oldest cities in Tamilnadu which is rich in heritage and cultural history. It is an important landmark in the city. The Madurai city corporation wanted to relieve the center pressure for space and infrastructure thus born the idea of Pedestrianisation.

Elements incorporated for Pedestrianisation

80 mm concrete paver block

150mm footpath with finished flames granite

Storm water drains



Fig 3.4: Madurai Meenakshi amman temple

3.4 HERITAGE STREET, AMRITSAR

Once congested with Rickshaw pullers and hawkers has got its new visual identity due to the proposals.

The proposals include :

Grand entry gate

Homogeneous facade for 170 shops along the route

Homogeneous Paver design

Memory lane - Filled with galleries informing public about the history of the temple.



Fig 3.5: Amritsar heritage street

3.5 KHAN MARKET, DELHI

Khan Market in the heart of Delhi has been a hub of culture, cuisine, and commerce for a long time. The market is noted for its boutique shops, upscale eateries, and vibrant atmosphere, making it one of the most expensive markets in the world.

Elements incorporated in the proposals include :

1. Pedestrian corridor
2. Standing arrangement along the road edge
3. Shading device in pedestrian streets
(Fabric / Tensile)
4. Signages
5. Drinking water supply
6. Segregated dustbins

3.6 UDAIPUR WALLED CITY

Khan Market in the heart of Delhi has been a hub of culture, cuisine, and commerce for a long time. The market is noted for its boutique shops, upscale eateries, and vibrant atmosphere, making it one of the most expensive markets in the world.

Elements incorporated in the proposals include :

1. Pedestrian corridor
2. Standing arrangement along the road edge
3. Shading device in pedestrian streets
(Fabric / Tensile)
4. Signages
5. Drinking water supply
6. Segregated dustbins



Fig 3.6: Udaipur Walled city

CHAPTER 4

SITE STUDY AND ANALYSIS

4.1 SITE STUDY:

Site is identified as a whole spine starting from the Raameswaram bus stand till the Agnit heertham. The ignored pilgrimage sites has been identified in the spine and the main temple forecourt has been considered as the main site for the temple complex.



Fig 4.1 Site isometric view

4.2 SITE JUSTIFICATION

This is the only way to reach the Ramanathaswamy temple and other tourists destinations and the whole area has been affected by various challenges like congestion, accessibility etc. which needs to be identified.

4.3 CULTURAL SEQUENCE IN THE SITE:

Once the pilgrims or the tourists reach the site through the Rameswarasm bus stand or the Rameswaram railway station, they tend to check in to their hotels and reach the Agni theertham first before entering the temple and take dip in the sea and then enter the 22 wells inside the temple through any one of the four gopuram entrances. After completing the spiritual bath people need to again visit the hotel to change their wet clothes to dry to enter the temple. Then people start to explore other tourist destination after temple dharshan.

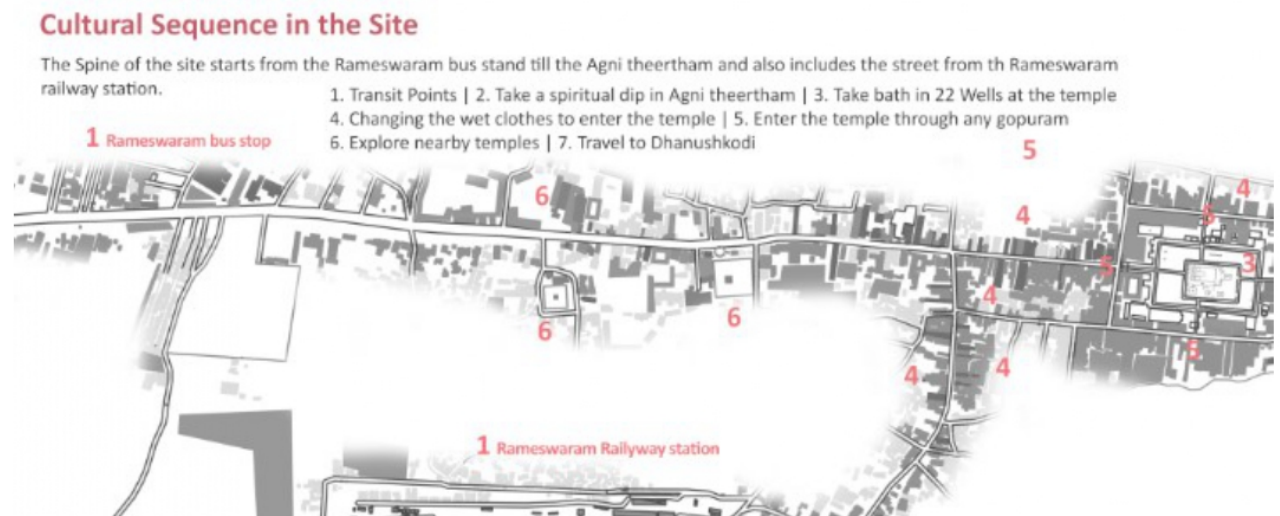


Fig 4.2: Cultural sequence map of the Rameswaram

4.4 SITE :

4.4.1 SITE 1: AGNI THEERTHAM:



Fig 4.3: Agni theertham site

4.4.2 SITE 2: SHOPPING SQUARE:



Fig 4.4: Shopping square site

4.4.3 SITE 3: PRANAMI PLAZA:



Fig 4.5: Pranami plaza site

4.4.4 SITE 4: DEVALAYA PARKING SITE:



Fig 4.6: Devalaya Parking site

CHAPTER 5

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

5.1 AGNI THEERTHAM

5.1.1 AREA STATEMENT

Area		Sqm	Acre
Site Area		54321.69	12.9
Built up area		15014	3.710034
Temple Forecourt		44883.5	11
Women's Chamber		4992	1.233548
Men's Chamber		3738	0.923678
Devalaya kesa Nilayam		1194	0.295043
Information center/ Art gallery		995	0.245869
Landscapes		4813	1.189316
Water fountain seaters		1068	0.263908
Statue		466	0.115151
Bus Parking	5	2694	0.665701
Parking area		1212	0.299491
Bus bay		841	0.207815
Landscapes		641	0.158394
Waiting Area	678	2557.58	0.631991
Semi open Waiting area	570	1133.5	0.280094
A/C Waiting area	108	485.5	0.119969
Toilet block		53	0.013097
Landscapes		642.46	0.158755
Sea View Dining	120	889	0.219676
Dining area		717.8	0.177372
Kitchen		172.7	0.042675
Sea View Deck	460	936.5	0.231414

Table 5.1: Agni theertham - Area requirement

5.1.2 CONCEPT

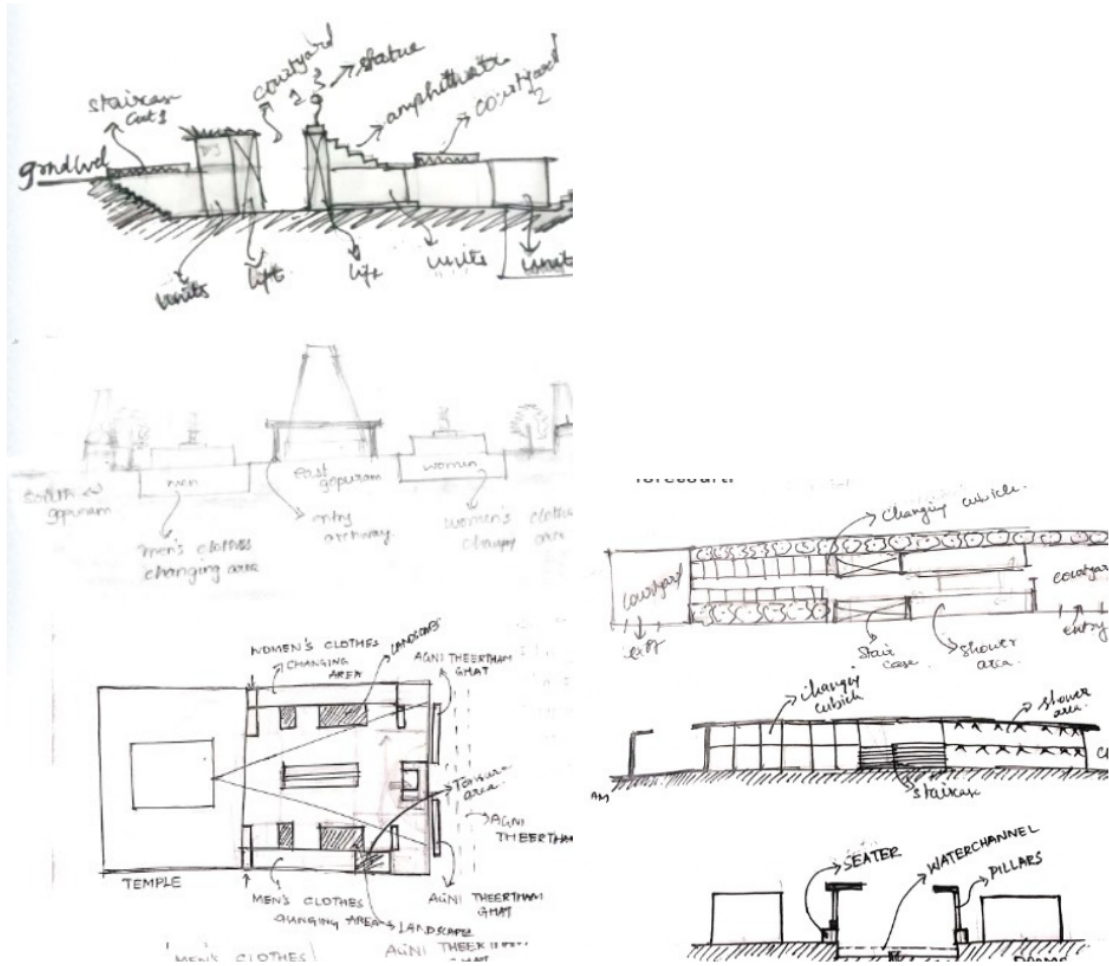


Fig 5.1: Concept sketches

The initial idea was to take out the structure below the ground and design an unobstructed view of the Ramanathaswamy temple from the Agni thertham for the pilgrims / tourists. Since it comes under CRZ rules and to not disturb the existing ecology the structure is built above the ground.

The proposed structure for women & men's chamber was build on the both sides of the

site merging well with the temple architecture with an unobstructed view from the ghats. These two buildings act as a face of the temple forecourt.

5.1.3 VEGETATION

Vegetation and landscaping are carefully selected based on the visual obstruction from the Agni theertham to the temple gopuram. Some of the vegetation used in the site are Flax *Linum usitalissimum* which grows up to 61 – 91 cm tall, Wild Petunia *Ruellia Humilis* which grows up to 61 cm tall, Egyptian lotus used in water fountain, Mexican Zinnia, Carpet sedum.



Fig 5.2: Vegetation (a) *Flax Linum usitalissimum* (b) *Wild Petunia Ruellia Humilis* (c) Egyptian lotus (d) Mexican Zinnia (e) Carpet sedum

5.1.4 ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

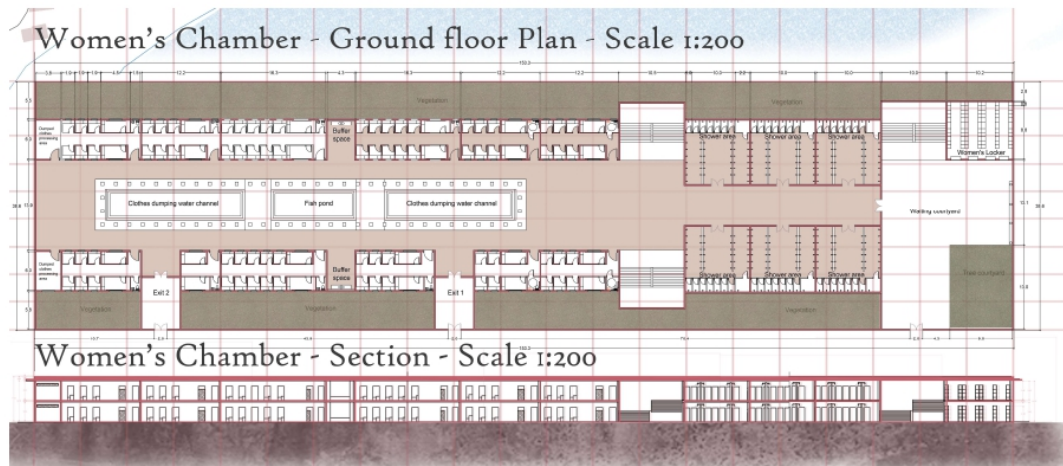


Fig 5.3: Women's chamber plan and section

Women's Chamber - First floor Plan - Scale 1:200



Women's Chamber - Elevation - Scale 1:200

Fig 5.4: Women's chamber First floor plan and Elevation

Changing unit Scale 1 : 50

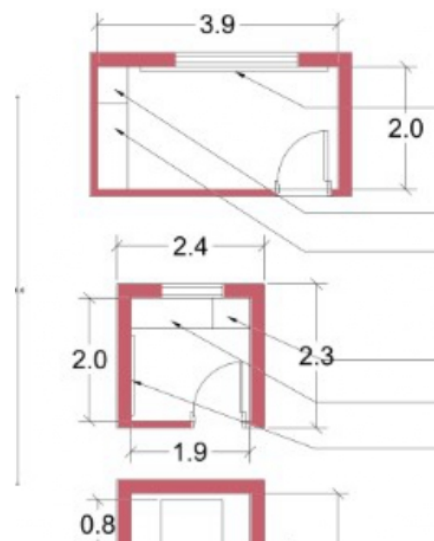


Fig 5.5: Changing unit plan and section

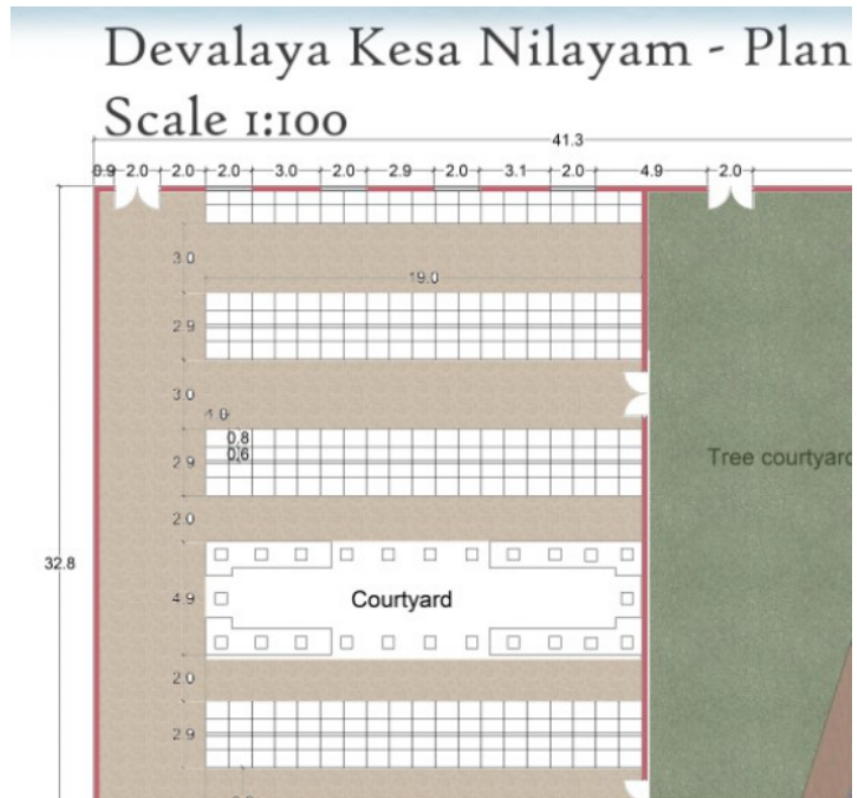


Fig 5.6: Devalaya kesa nilayam plan

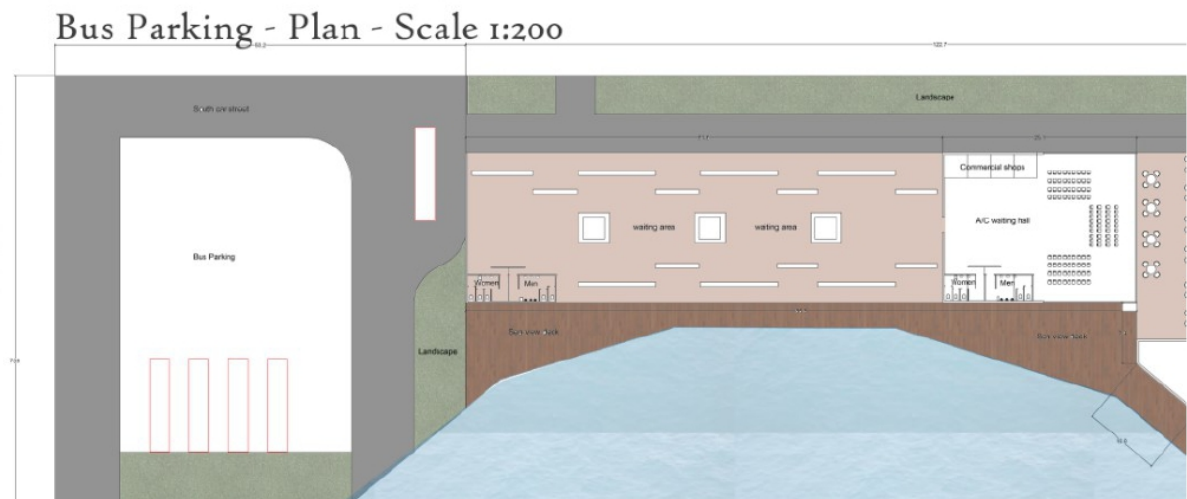


Fig 5.7: Bus Parking plan

5.1.5 RENDERS

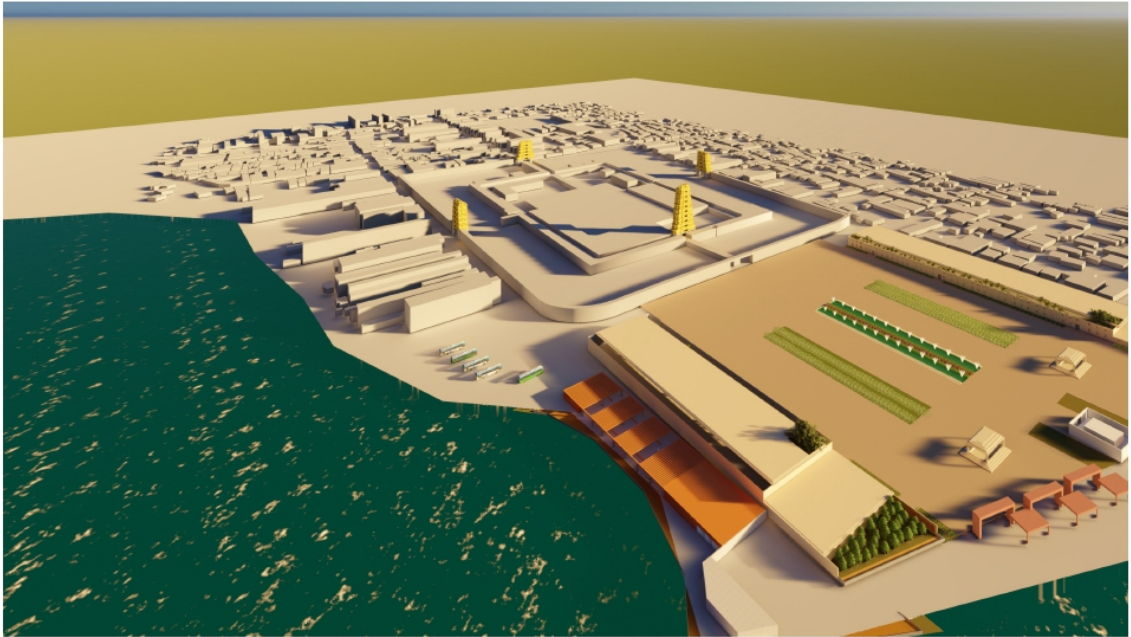


Fig 5.8: Site isometric view



Fig 5.9: View from Agni Theertham

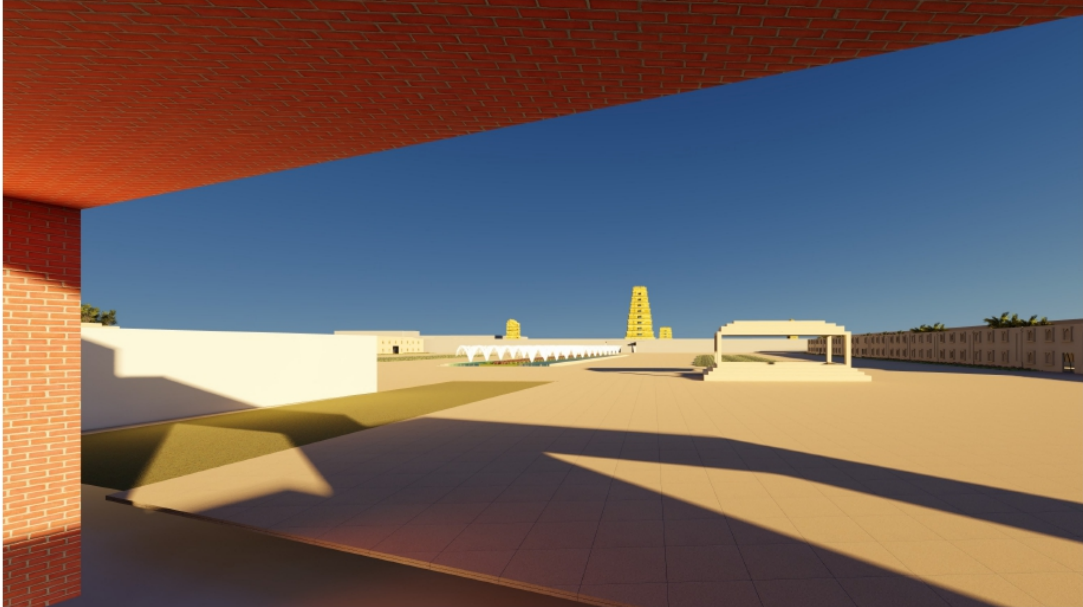


Fig 5.10: View from Agni Theertham ghat



Fig 5.11: Women's chamber

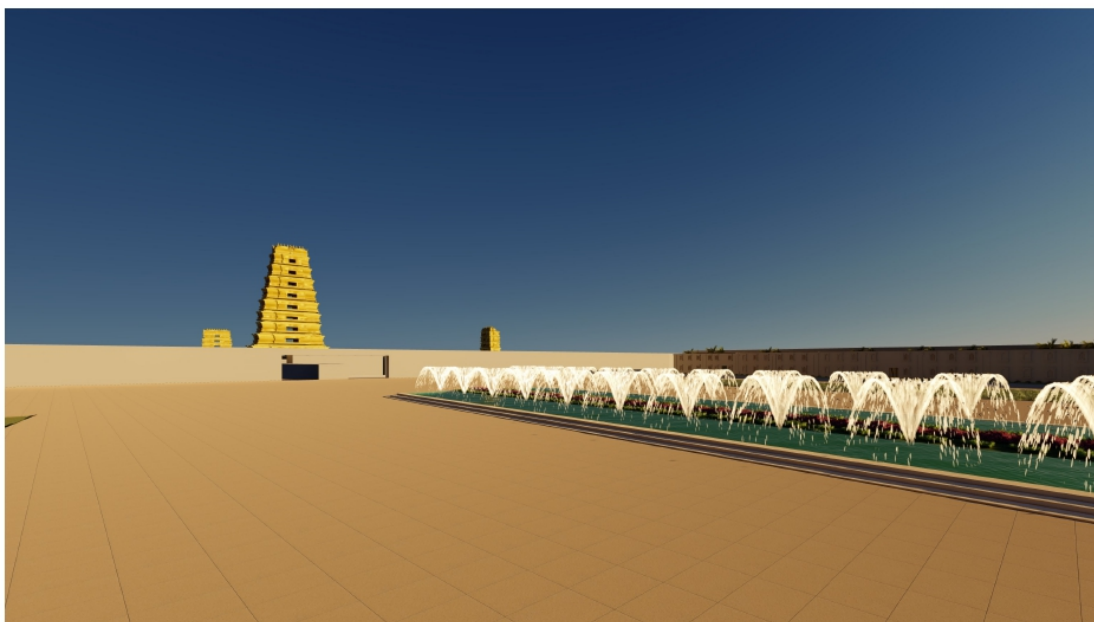


Fig 5.12: Fountain seaters

5.2 STREET DESIGN

5.2.1 AREA STATEMENT

Total stretch	1.2 km
Elements	Distance
Seaters	20 m
Pergola	100m
Drinking waters	600m
Treecourt	500m
Waterbody	700m
Statues	500m
Street Lights	40 m
Commercial kiosks	500m
Solar Shades	40m

Table 5.2: Street design - Area requirement

5.2.2 STREET VIEWS

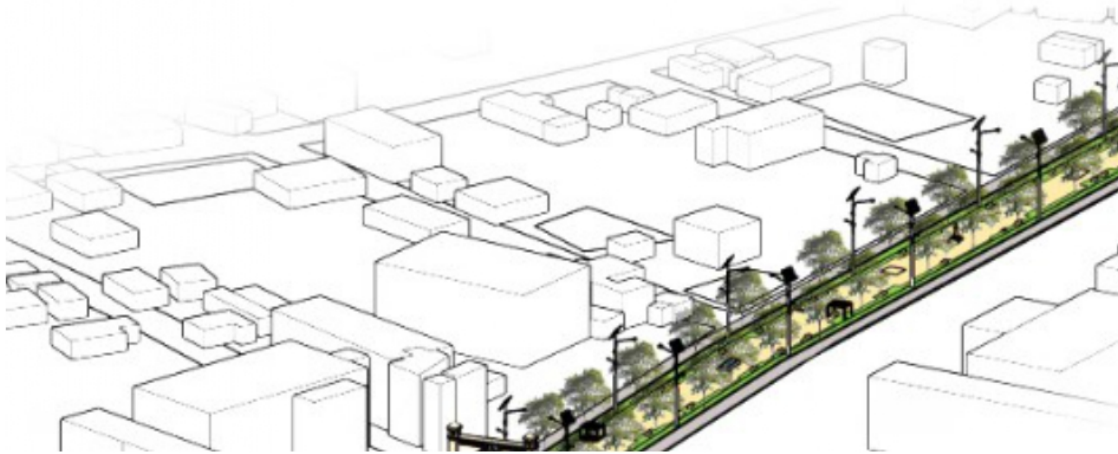


Fig 5.13: Street isometric view

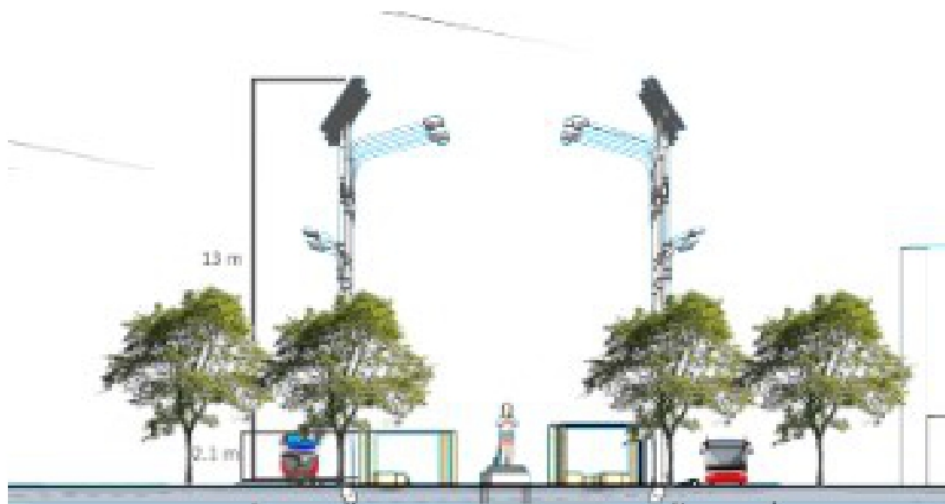


Fig 5.14: Street section

5.2.3 RENDERS



Fig 5.15: Entrance archway



Fig 5.16: Pergola



Fig 5.17: Water feature



Fig 5.18: Hanuman Statue

5.3 SHOPPING SQUARE

5.3.1 AREA STATEMENT

SHOPPING SQUARE		
Area	Sqm	Acre
Site Area	60986	15.06995
Ramar theertham	24037	5.939663
Ramar theertham tank	5141	0
Seating area	1186	0.293067
Lakshmana theertham	10334	2.553583
PRANAMI PLAZA		
Area	Sqm	Acre
Site Area	14540	3.592907
Built up area	2170	0.536218

Table 5.3: Shopping square - Area statement

5.3.2 ARCHITECTURAL VIEWS



Fig 5.19: Shopping square site plan

5.3.3 RENDERS

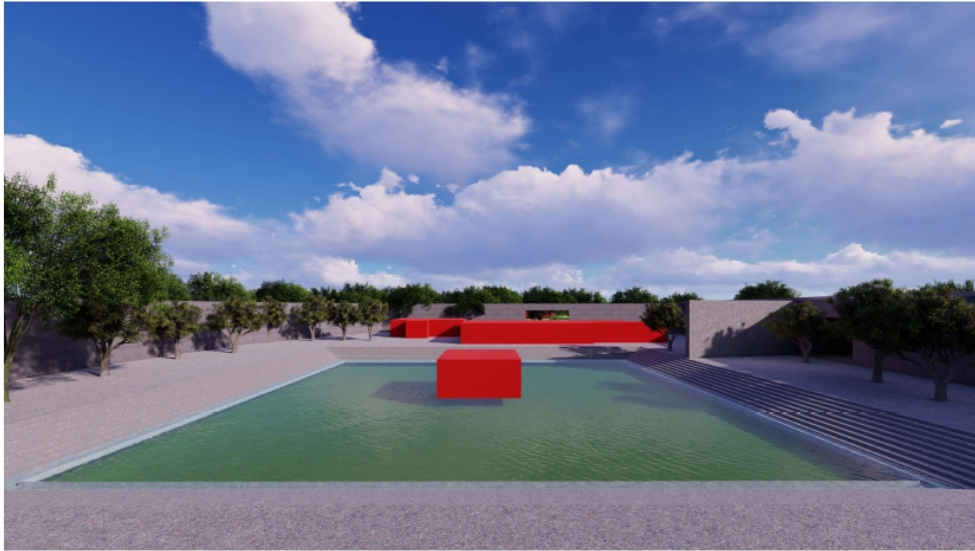


Fig 5.20: Lakshmana theertham



Fig 5.21: Pranami plaza Slipper stand

5.4 DEVALAYA PARKING AND MADABAM

5.4.1 AREA STATEMENT

Area	Sqm	Acre
Site Area	51648	12.76248
Built up area	21060	5.204031
Ground cover	7123	1.760129
Devalaya mandabam	12000	2.96526
Multi level parking	9060	2.238771
Tourist Bus parking	3786	0.93554
Bus parking	1510	0.373129
Wheel chair shed	275	0.067954
Landscape	3827	0.945671

Table 5.4: Area requirement

5.4.2 VIEWS



Fig 5.22: Multilevel Parking



Fig 5.23: Devalaya Mandabam

CHAPTER 6

6.1 CONCLUSION

Considering all these challenges the design solutions include introducing the pedestrian-only zone which covers 1.2 kilometres from the Bus stand to the railway station street, establishing public squares at different nodes (these nodes are created by identifying the least interacted or neglected pilgrim destinations and emphasizing them), completely restricting the vehicle movement near the bus stop creating the vast parking facility and redesigning of the road lanes for the pedestrians, cyclists and for battery cars, designing of the commercial streets throughout the stretch. Drawing upon the principles of Urban Inclusive design strategies the study proposes a framework enhancing accessibility, and fostering community engagement with the urban fabric of Rameswaram. The collaboration and the holistic approach which involved the social, economic, physical and spiritual aspects provide an opportunity to propose a framework which acts catalyst to transform the urban fabric of Rameswaram positively. These innovative design solutions to a complicated spiritual context can emerge as a model for inclusive urban development where spiritual, cultural and accessibility converge to create a dynamic urban experience for all.

CHAPTER 7

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