

VIJAYAWADA

Heritage villages as sentinels of culture in Amaravathi



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Heritage of villages to continue with planned expansion

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's assurance that village precincts and their culture and heritage would be safeguarded as a priority in the capital region has brought enormous relief to the residents.

A fear that the tsunami of works to be carried out in this part of the State as part of development may damage the fabric of their ancient lifestyle and thus the heritage associated with it has been giving sleepless nights to the old-timers.

Community engagement

Ideally, this could be done to all the villages. But, in reality, depending on careful cultural mapping, community engagement and feasibility of options for interventions, at least three or four villages could be safeguarded to international standards, opine experts.

Parakala Prabhakar, Advisor (Communications) to the Government, who chairs the Culture Committee, has said: “No city has so consciously evolved cognizant of its flora, fauna and villages. It is a Telugu, Andhra city that is consciously inspired by its past and is now visioning into the future. It is a people’s capital where the names, designs, edifices will all be tempered by the diversity, both cultural and biological, of Andhra Pradesh.”

Fantastic opportunity

Amareswar Galla, Committee member and Chief Curator of Amaravathi Heritage Town, finds the whole process responsive, innovative and inspirational. He says much of the past discussions were based on catalogues of kings and queens, de-contextualised antiquities with hardly any consideration of associated meanings, stories, traditions and intangible heritage.

“But now we have a fantastic opportunity to critically reflect and move forward on all those things that inform our heritage consciousness as Andhra people are making us feel proud of a capital that is reflective and revealing of our layers of heritage values through contemporary creativity, design and architecture.”

Professor Galla was the first Chairman of the Joint Heritage Committee of Canberra, the Federal Capital of Australia, a fully planned and more than a 100-years-old national capital. During his term, he also networked and examined other planned capitals such as Ottawa, Brasilia, Pretoria and Islamabad. He says the biggest challenge would be to safeguard the ‘atmosphere in the villages and cultural landscapes that carry the signature of Andhra people’.

Making the locals part of the preservation drive, he chaired a meeting in Thullur with officials, elected individuals, farmers and village elders explaining to them how other nations have enabled traditional heritage of villages to continue with planned expansion of capital regions.

Citing examples of Hoi An near Danang in Vietnam and Hahoe village near Andong in Korea, Prof. Galla said they were made possible through active participation of the local communities.

Momentum started

At Lingayapalem, sarpanch Anumolu Satyanarayana brought together key people in the village to garner their views and suggestions.

The momentum, as one can see, has started to develop a framework for safeguarding the village heritage in the capital region.

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