



**Timeless experience: a study of
recreational spaces in Indian Palaces**
Case studies: Deeg and Jagmandir Palace Complexes
Rajasthan

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The foregoing study is hereby approved as a creditable work on the approved subject, carried out and presented in a manner sufficiently satisfactory to warrant its acceptance as a pre-requisite to the Degree of Bachelor of Architecture for which it has been submitted.

It is understood that by this approval that the undersigned does not necessarily endorse or approve any statement made, opinions expressed or conclusions drawn therein, but approves the study only for the purpose for which it has been submitted and satisfied himself/herself as to the requirements laid down by the Thesis Committee.

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Title of Study: Timeless Experience: a study of recreational spaces in Indian Palaces
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stone carvings - Fatehpur Sikri

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Preface

*'There is something more than architecture in these palaces,
these fanciful pavilions...emblematic of the old-world traditions of their race
...every stone is touched with the spirit of romance'*

-Percy Brown

Indian palaces, with all their notions of extravagance and royalty, run through the ancient Indian myths and folk-tales. These palaces remain as the surviving representatives of a now vanished civilization. They therefore combine a nostalgic appeal with a more immediate and accessible charm.

At all periods of their history, amongst the finest examples of art have been the palaces built for the security, residence and leisure of the kings, their women and the courts. The palaces reveal the development of a consistent architectural style: palace architecture shows an amalgamation of various indigenous and imported styles.

Royal architecture had to provide suitable settings for private pleasures where monarchs could meet with their queens and concubines. The palaces in this study are considered with respect to their use for recreation and to the aesthetics and ideals which inform their design.

Miniature paintings executed at Mughal and Rajput courts hint at the life in these palaces:

The Royal figure at night is accompanied by one or more female consorts seated in an upper pavilion of the palace, or lying on a terrace beneath an awning. Cushions are spread out and there are cups for wine and other intoxicating drinks, as well as trays filled with fruits and sweetmeats. Female attendants, discreetly posed to one side, are present even at the most intimate moments. Storm clouds with lightning and distant views of forests with flying birds enhance the erotic aspect of the scene.

It is these aspects of spaces that endear them to pleasure palaces that form the focus of this study. Thereupon the study assumes that essence of these spaces is not an elusive quality but achieved by deliberate architectural effect, by devices that are susceptible to analysis.

Aims and Objectives

Palaces for recreation reveal clues to their development: The aim of this study is to analyse these places and determine how the essence of these spaces is manifested architecturally. In order to achieve this, the study asks certain questions which form the objectives of this work:

Tracing the development of recreational spaces in Indian palace architecture:

-What is the role of recreational spaces in Indian Palaces?

Keeping in mind that nature formed an important part of design:

-what are the common architectural features of these spaces?

—what are the basic forms and their spatial characteristics?

-how are forms organized in the whole to generate the necessary experiences?

Scope of the study

For the ease of study, only palaces from the north-western region of India have been discussed. Although certain examples might not be from the same region, they have been chosen for their similar historical and cultural background, thus providing them with a common architectural development. Various regional styles and amalgamations result from this architectural development, stylistic studies are not part of this enquiry.

Case studies:

The studies chosen are solely recreational palaces. As a result, the elements and spaces are elaborately developed as compared to other examples. This makes them ideal cases for the study of the essence of recreational qualities in palace architecture.

Method

The study of palaces seeks to present historical data and interpret it in terms of common themes of recreational spaces.

The framework of analysis developed from the above focuses on the elemental and organizational principles of pleasure palaces to locate the underlying architectural themes that give these spaces their very essence. However, while the analysis of case studies bases itself on the framework, it also describes spaces on understanding through observation and documentation.

Accordingly, the case studies; Deeg Palace and Jag Mandir Palaces were understood through various visits. Jag Mandir Palace complex formed part of a documentation carried out for purposes of the Documentation cell, Udaipur; by this author.

Chapter 1

Structure:

Royal life and palace architecture of India

- 1.1 Divine power of kings:
- 1.2 Elements of palace architecture
 - Architecture for defence and security-citadels, walls, gateways, towers, doorways, military structures.
 - Architecture for formal administration- private darabars, public darbars.
 - Architecture for worship-temples, mosques and other religious structures.
 - Essential services
 - Privacy and pleasure- harems and zananas, private quarters, pleasure pavilions and islands, gardens, resorts and lodges.

Chapter 2: Architecture for recreation in Indian Palaces

structure

2.1 Introduction to the aspect of recreation in Indian palaces

Introduction

Historical development of palace architecture

2.1.1 Early India

2.1.2 Muslim invasions, foundation of Sultanate, Islamic Architecture

2.1.3 Sultanate architecture in India

Delhi

Malwa

Gujarat

The Deccan

2.1.4 Rajput Achievements – history

2.1.5 Rajput architecture in India

Chittor

Udaipur

Gwalior

Orcha and Datia

Late Rajput palaces

Amber

Nagaur

Jodhpur

Jaipur

Bundi and Kota

Deeg

2.1.6 Mughal achievements – imperial architecture in India

Agra

Fatehpur Sikri

Delhi

Mughal gardens

2.2 Architectural manifestation of recreational spaces in the palace

2.2.1 Basic elements and formation of spaces

2.2.2 Organizational principles

Chapter 3: Case study analysis

Case 1: Deeg Palace complex, Rajasthan

3.1.1 Historical background

3.1.2 Spatial organization

Palace complex

The scheme

Axis, Geometry

3.1.3 Spatial relationships and spatial qualities

Built - non built relationship

Mass - void relationship in horizontal spaces

Mass - void relationship in vertical spaces

Sequence of spaces

Open enclosure

Polarity and endlessness

Movement

Play of natural elements: Water, Gardens

Individual structures

Gopal Bhavan

Keshav Bhavan

Kishan Bhavan

Nand Bhavan

Suraj Bhavan and Hardev Bhavan

Pavilions

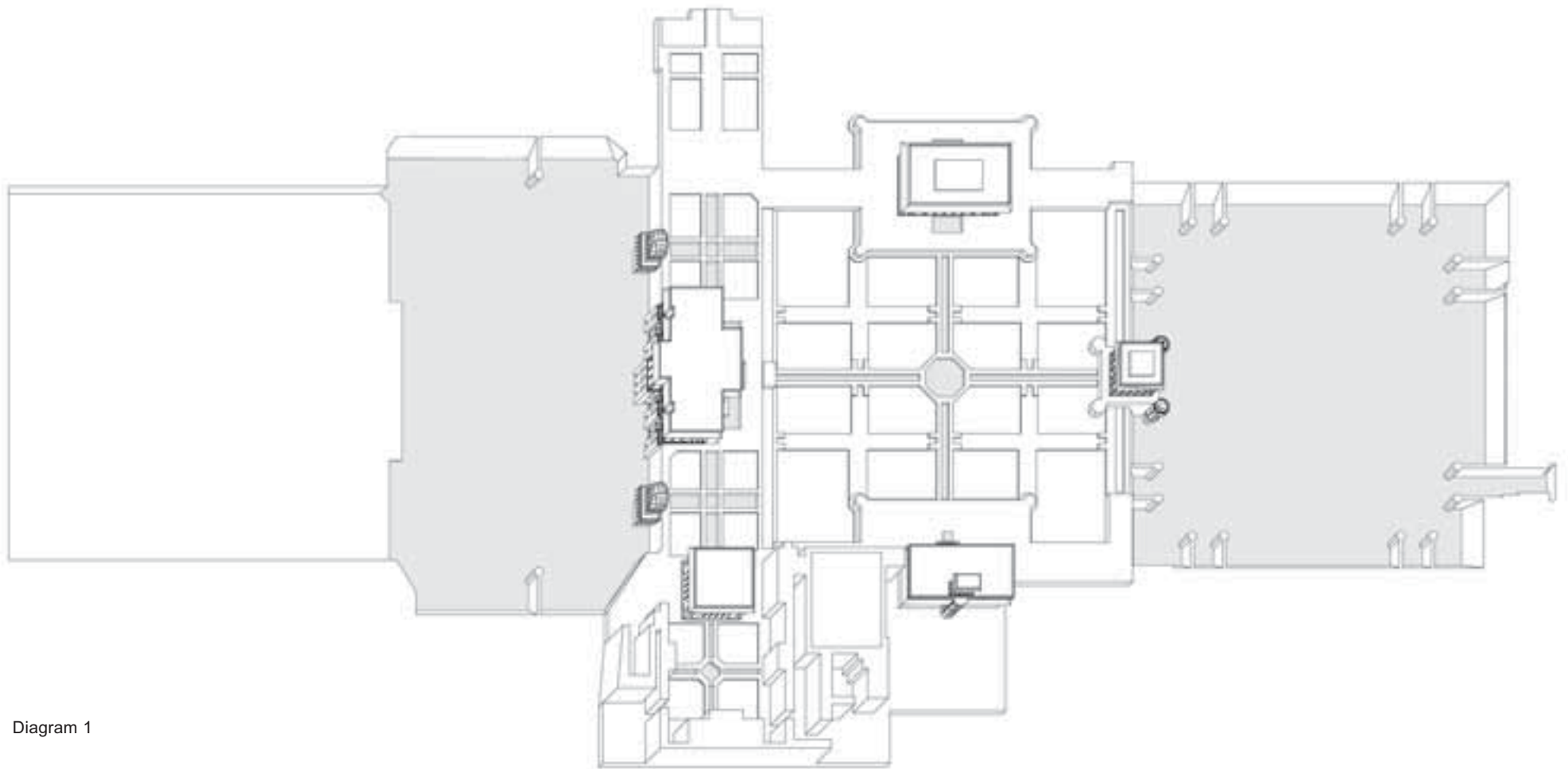


Diagram 1

Analysis

Case 1: Deeg palace complex

Deeg Palace Complex

Source: Base drawings are courtesy of Samir Desai – Deeg palace complex: a study emphasizing water as a special design element – Undergraduate thesis, S.A., CEPT, Ahmedabad. All drawings for purpose of this study are reproduced courtesy of the above by the author.

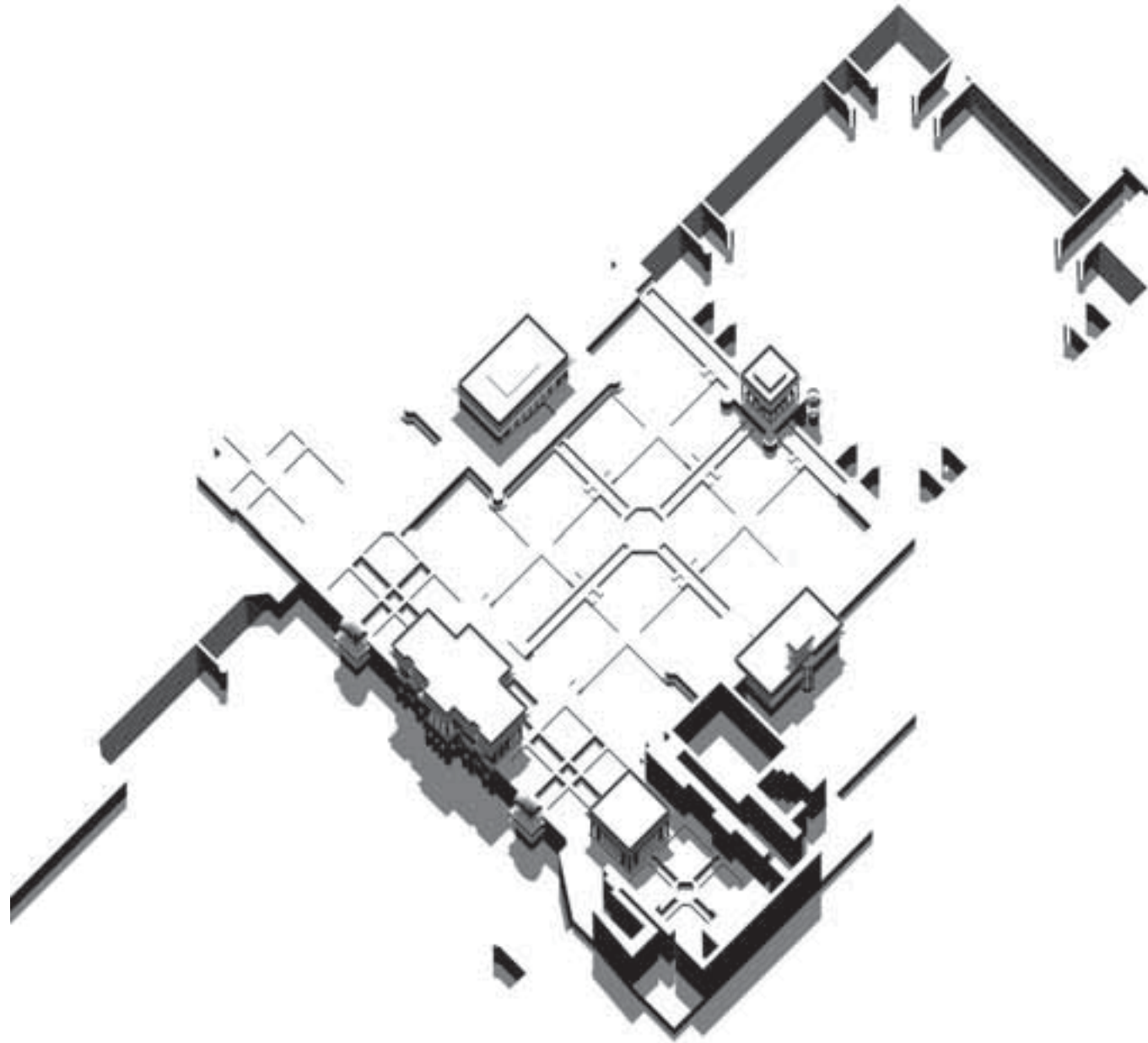


Diagram 2
bird eye view

Deeg Palace Complex

Chapter 3: Case study analysis

Case 2: Jag Mandir palace complex, Udaipur, Rajasthan

3.2.1 Historical background

3.2.2 Spatial organization

Palace complex

The scheme

Axis, Geometry

3.2.3 Spatial relationships and spatial qualities

Built - non built relationship

Mass - void relationship in horizontal spaces

Mass - void relationship in vertical spaces

Transparency and opacity of surfaces and volumes

Sequence of spaces

Open enclosure

Polarity and endlessness

Movement

Play of natural elements: Water, Gardens

Individual structures

Gul Mahal

North pavilion (Darikhana)

East Pavilion (Bara Patharon ka Mahal)



Diagram 1:

Analysis

Case 2: Jagmandir Palace complex, Udaipur

Jagmandir Palace Complex, Udaipur.

Source: All base drawings measure drawn by the author: Ujval Panchal with the help of Virsingh Kavarkshatriya and Krutarth Jain, 2001. Permission for use of these drawings granted by: Documentation Cell, Mewar Palace Organization Pvt. Ltd., City Palace, Udaipur (Copyrights reserved).

In conclusion

'If there be a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here'

The sensual gratification of pleasure pavilions is best explained in this verse from Amir Khusraw.

Nowhere is this sense of pleasure more heightened than in parts of the palace that were used for entertainment. Although in each type of palace the manifestation of recreational space might be dependent on different factors, the essence of recreational spaces remains the same. This essence, seemingly elusive, is a deliberate architectural effect that is achieved by devices this study has attempted to analyse. The most characteristic feature of recreational spaces is the quality achieved by means of its elements and their spatial arrangement. This quality of romance is achieved by calculated devices.

In these palaces, the interaction and openness to nature adds to the sense of romance. Palace gardens brought in a direct connection to nature where the ruler could enjoy the refreshing surroundings as well as a certain degree of privacy. Pavilions, verandahs, balconies add another dimension to the experience of transition from the built to an open landscape while serving as retreats. Open forms of pavilions, terraces and courts heighten experience for the observer by surrounding him with nature.

The placement of these forms within the whole is not wholly dependent on a strong underlying principle. Primary elements were placed on major axes but otherwise there appears to be no definite hierarchy of spaces. The sequence of well modulated and interlinked spaces is highly developed to provide a free plan and transparency of spaces that allows the place to breathe. The open arrangement of elements within the overall composition provided an ideal setting for entertainment and leisure with fine views of the surrounding landscape.

With the articulation of volumes the dialogue between spaces and nature becomes immediate. The ratio of open to closed spaces is higher in places of pleasure allowing an easier flow of spaces within these interconnected volumes. Pavilions placed on terraces provide stunning views of the surrounding landscape while themselves forming part of the landscape. Pavilions placed on water are related to water by means of steps. The articulation of forms with respect to the landscape also adds to the dimension of drama in these spaces. The change in height and form of terraces outline a varying skyline and pavilions on terraces provide a dramatic silhouette to the skyline.

Another feature of these spaces is that, being interlinked with nature, they afford a variety of sensorial experiences. With every turn of the season or change from day to night; the spaces appear to transform from within. The play of light on the arcaded galleries and complex forms or the fragrance of flowers as they change from season to season, teases the senses. Where reality would not suffice, ingenious methods were used to evoke the effects of nature. The presence of nature within these spaces plays on the observer's senses, making it a delightful experience.

The elaboration of these spaces in the use of decoration enhanced their use as places for pleasure. The luxurious and refined tastes of the Royals found their expression in the inventive pleasure pavilions. The use of marble as a decorative material was common. Mirrored pavilions were a visual delight. The use of screened walls where the women looked out from, framed breathtaking panoramas. In the private chambers within these pleasure pavilions, rooms were enclosed by surfaces decorated with inlay, painting and mosaics in various patterns. Luxurious furniture and silks lined the floors as the continuing emblems of royal indulgence that brought an air of majestic romance into these spaces.

An important part of recreational spaces is that they are not bound by function. The spaces remain open in that they can accommodate any activity without being defined by any one of them alone. Miniature paintings often show the versatility of these spaces: courtiers are shown eating and drinking, listening to music and enjoying displays of fireworks in various parts of the palace.

It is the careful planning of such spaces that gives life to their very essence as we have observed through this study. And so they remain for us, essentially pleasure pavilions: to enjoy nature as well as indulge in the joys of royal life. The easy flow of spaces which hint at the love of ease and luxury creates a true '*Paradise on earth*'. The timeless, old-world charm of these spaces will thus endear them to us forever.

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