



Study Of Religious Practices On Urban Streets – A Catalyst To Define The Character Of Space.

¹Mrs.Spurti Khemlapure, ²Prof.Dr.C.S.Dudgikar, ³Prof.Dr.Sheetal Jagdale

¹Student of M.Arch., ²Principal at College of Architecture, Kolhapur, ³Associate Professor at College of Architecture, Kolhapur.

¹School of Architecture

¹SPSMBH's College of Architecture, Kolhapur, India.

Abstract: The study focuses on the genius Loci of a urban context that is the religion in an Indian city. An urban space discussed in the research is predominantly a street. A Street carries sensory network of the entire Culture, Economic status, and Display forum for any City. But in an Indian context a very important aspect that binds all these together is the Religious show. As Street has been the symbol of any potential growth they are the platform for performance of Religion. Many take Advantage of this aspect such as it street shrines, procession, Cultural display all in the name of spiritual practices gain a lot of political interest, Economic opportunities and Social Interests. This glorification is extremely seen in religious activities. This kind of showcase is seen mostly on the streets because it elements of city where all kind of users irrespective of caste, class, occupation, gender are present for various reasons. While we discuss the religion on street it doesn't have to be a magnificent temple or mosque or a church, in fact a small stone and a tree make genius loci and the users glorify even that too. Whether they are inclusive element for urban fabric and Modern Street has always been an argument. This Study will review the literature on how the religious practices are the vessels that carry the indigenous quality of the Indian street that makes it unique and a reason for survival.

Index Terms – Urban Street, Street Shrine, Religious activities, Characteristics, Display Forum, Catalyst

I. INTRODUCTION

A healthy urban street is an essential part of a growing city as the time spent by the public on street is lengthy and hence they deserve a wholesome atmosphere that is well equipped with needs of users and the need of the city infrastructure as they grow together. For the activities to take place the understanding of urban space is necessitated as quoted by Kevin Lynch "Urban Space is the physical environment of the city that people experience, perceive, and navigate in their daily lives" in the book The Image of the City. This explains how the citizen creates a mental map of urban space having the elements such as paths, Streets, nodes and landmarks this gives rise to a physical dimension of shape volume and faith. Similarly Jane Jacobs in his book 'The Death and life of great American cities' states "Urban space is a lively public environment shaped by the human activity, diversity, and social interaction. It emphasizes the value of mixed-use streets, public involvement, and active streets in creating a dynamic urban environment. The very important public space in Indian cities is the streets where social life takes shape. The streets are Social atmosphere where citizens come together, Celebrate and commute and not only the means of transportation. Streets are the living corridors that formulate the daily interaction and urban life. The pressure of development makes the Indian street important asset as a public space. They become potential as they are used for gatherings, interaction, trade, celebration. The very

important public space in Indian cities is the streets where social life takes shape. The streets are Social atmosphere where citizens come together, Celebrate and commute and not only the means of transportation. Streets are the living corridors that formulate the daily interaction and urban life. The pressure of development makes the Indian street important asset as a public space. They become potential as they are used for gatherings, interaction, trade, celebration. The study focuses on identifying the earlier studies on street shrines, street vendors, and religion on streets and dependency.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The process in research plays a vital role to have guidance to refer for the upcoming stage of a research. In this thesis topic the framework of the entire process is followed by identification, Understanding, Documentation and Data collection, Analysis and proposal of strategies. As the research work is of Urban Field a broader vision is adopted for understanding the field of interest. The research tries to infuse to different area that is the urban and the religious context and defining it as the Street Shrine or a Shrine on the street, thus exploring the relation between the two for emerging with better solutions for their coexistence. The Dilemma of giving priority to the street or the shrine is understood after following the process of study or methodology. One such inspiring research that encouraged the process is the Ashwath katte Project by Dr.Kiran Keswani from Everyday city lab that explored the importance and affect of road side shrines. Thus the research initiated to follow the process of identifies shrines, street with shrines, understanding both components, collecting the information and perceptions to Analyze for a qualitative and quantitative outcome. This will led to give Suggestions and strategies for the selected sites. The study focuses on the Literature study from using the tool and techniques of research papers, Journals, websites that Result understanding the Research Phenomenon and thus we can identify the research gap.

Research Process:

Methodology → Literature Study → Data Collection and Analysis
Recommendations

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Bus Stop Sami: Transient temples in urban south India (Elizza F. Kent):

The urban street design should go hand in hand with the ground reality and standards of design This agenda of absence of proper infrastructure for pedestrian, cyclists and informal users eliminates the spaces but not the user. The paper focuses on the informal elements of street that is the shrines in Tamil Nadu that are found at ends of alleys, or under a tree, at the nodes, this spontaneous appearance of the sacred spots is a ground reality. The sacred and common are always woven together in cramped spaces too. The worshippers glorify the shrines by the activities and this shifts the spaces from encroachments to unauthorized shrines. Thus in 2009 the supreme court passed an order that said no unauthorized shrines would be permitted to exist on the street as everyone has the right to use the public space as it is the path meant for people and directed to state to review the shrines case by case (union of India vs. the state of Gujarat and others) the author further argues that the community that worships having united devotion, these shrines are a way to display their creative and promotional way in public space. Thus causes a radiating effect on the people making it prominent than how it was submerged on the edge. Here making the shrine as an alternative public space and competing with rational urban space. Yet some shrines are short lived as they may not have many followers or lack community support hence some shrines grow due to material and symbolic legitimacy. The legitimacy must be legal and cultural where quasi legalization happens by reorganization of trusts or authorities and cultural by rituals, grandeur. Hence shrines are both physical and spiritual reflection of a society.

It is very important for a shrine to become into a temple to secure its existence. The process of dual legitimacy gives a framework to establish the religious status. In this research the author studies two case studies of nagatamman shrine and bus stop sami temple one that is vanishing

and other enduring stating that the survival is based on community endurance, legal support and culturally active status . Overall understanding how some shrines are woven in the urban fabric due to public participation. Here the spaces that are provided for the people are survived by the people and their participation only. Hence a major importance of inclusive user spaces is very important in urban design and resolution in overlapping activities marks a long lasting comfortable volume.

2. Crossroads of Religions: Shrines, Mobility and Urban Space in Goa (ALEXANDER HENN, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research)

This research explained the dynamics of the religious layers of urban Goa through wayside shrines. The relation between religion, spatial organization, and social hierarchy in Goa shows the system of belief, the gram devata is popular among the gaukars, and becomes the identity of their territories. Similarly, in Goan Catholics, there are patron saints, confreries. Saints like St Francis Xavier are the super local identity. This gives rise to special hierarchies in urban spaces where shrine surroundings become the medium for social and cultural give and take. This wayside shrine in Goa has an overlap with the traffic and urban space, despite having visual and functional unsuitability; these shrines are physically located in inconvenient and hazardous locations due to their expansion of shrine and urban infrastructure. Anyway, this overlap rarely resulted in the removal of shrines, but the local's debate hard to preserve it and insist their integration in urban design. As an example, in 1993 public objection led to relocation of St Anthony Chapel in Socorro, which was dismantled and rebuilt due to road widening of National highway 17. The determination of these street shrines in these cumbersome urban locations is not arbitrary but roots from the traditional duty as a defender of space and people. Historically these were built in public centric places like market, crossroads where human and spiritual traffic met, which resulted for many shrines to occupy seats in urban hubs and intercept the expansion.

3. Role of roadside shrines in the everyday life's of female devotees in Mumbai (Anna Charlotta Osterberg)

The author explains the gender specific influence of road side shrines in Mumbai. How females everyday life, social landscape, personal wellbeing is influenced by the street shrines and the rituals performed to the festivals celebrated around them. The social experience of the women around the shrine becomes their spiritual and cultural solace. The shrine and around becomes their livid space, relaxation solace and offering space which keeps then engaged and socially active. The research is carried out under the subjects like **a.** Roadside shrines and Women's spatial agency **b.** Roadside shrines as recreational spaces.

c. Roadside shrines as extensions of the everyday lived spaces.

d. Shrines and security.

e. Shrines in gendered spaces and shrines as gendered spaces.

The street shrines located on the footpath, nodes, under the trees effect the spatial and momentum perception yet women find them important not for ritualistic only but recreational spaces. Taking examples of women named meera and rekha find street shrines as escape from the daily chores and mundane environment to find vibrancy, women meet friends, conduct programs, gathering, greet one another and also perform spiritual prayers which liberate them from domestic atmosphere for a brief period. Some women spend alone time to avoid everyday gossip in social life. Street shrine are public spaces but are private spaces compared to the large temple. Large temple don't offer individual spaces as they are bound to follow strict rules of time and space on the other hand small shrine are more accessible and in proximity to the their living spaces hence they choose them.

On a street a women find safety in a shrine as the Indian belief system has labelled temples and shrine to be of utmost sacredness. Women find the atmosphere of the shrine surrounding more savers and find economical opportunities to by selling offering like flowers, pooja items and earn income. Women also use shrine to showcase their social class by the kind of offerings and the way they dress. Women find shrines as escape from domestic abusive atmosphere and find peace and calm. The existence of shrines grow beyond traditional rituals, offerings, it provides psychological and emotional peaceful environment that benefit women

4. **Introduction. Wayside Shrines in India: An Everyday Defiant Religiosity. (Borayin Larios and Raphael Voix).**

The study gives light on the everyday religious practices in urban India as the domestic and small shrines are neglected due to size, legal status and informality. The street shrines are crucial to understand the urban religion because these spaces are public, accessible and integral part of everyday life. The study of way side shrine are recently exploration as addressed by many scholars as Street shrines, Pavement shrines, roadside shrines and mini temples. The shrines are described as “mushrooming” urban phenomena that correspond to modern life in urban spaces. These shrines help to study the anthropology through daily routine and mobility. These Street shrines analysis shows they become an identity of locality yet negotiate spatially.

The focus of the research being resistant religiosity linked to street shrines operates at different levels that is Individual, community and state for personal routine and devotion, social identity, participation of authorities, urban planning respectively. This multi level approach should be adopted during the renovation and transformation of urban spaces. This study shifts from understanding of formal, institutional religion to informal, everyday spaces and practices. Concluding as the everyday religiosity should be central focus in urban space a not an odd in modern urban space for Indian context

5. **Roadside Shrines, Storefront Saints, and Twenty First Centaury Lifestyles: The Cultural and Spatial threshold of Indian Urbanism**

This Literature explores the case of Bangalore as an example where roadside shrines and position of religion in urban context effect the urban transformation in rapid modernization in Indian. The study shows how the urban growth, increased infrastructural demand and liberal growth shape the religious dimension of a city life. The former religious spaces usually were places at ends or the beginnings of the precinct, village or city which are later absorbed in the city extensions and become part of the landscape but the emerging forms of religious identity locate themselves in transitional urban spaces.

The concept of threshold in urban context demarcates the spaces in zones and layers of intersection, these overlaps are of the old and new, scared and public, local and foreign. Urban theorist such as Walter Benjamin and Mikhail Bakhtim express street shrines as luminal spaces stitched with everyday conveyance, where beliefs and thoughts are exchanged by migration, movement and social interaction. Here the shrines or religion are a integral part of class formation, regional identity mostly during Tamil migration in Bangalore and these should be important consideration of urban planning agendas and strategy making for social wellbeing.

The study further says how street shrine are heterogeneous formation assembled with numerous elements and belief systems. Some are long surviving institutional and collective traditions in community interest and others are grown from a personal interest as a act of devotion. This reflects the socio cultural and economic dimension of caste, belief and settlement patterns, Roadside shrines rank on the scale of legitimacy, symbolism and permanence and age of shrines in the urban arrangement of land.

Further the paper explains the tangible and visual idea of a public space and understand how women, workers, daily commuters engage with these shrines in different ways. The shrines juxtaposition with the node, market, cultural forces like shrine located in vicinity to the market with dull business is boomed gradually or instantly with spiritual practices the increasing devotees hence balance the instability and economic uncertainty.

The conventional difference between public space and private belief/space is blurred by the street shrines by accepted spiritual practices and everyday rituals making them both sacred and social. This shows how the public life is Indian cities are shaped by spatial practices that are non conventional yet flow with mobility and sacredness. The examples here refer to the thresholds one being the Lashmipura shrine across the street from Bangalore metropolitan burial ground it located itself at the crossroad, traffic junction, market and marginal neighbourhood yet making it spatial social and iconic . The shrine is in luminal zone between public and domestic space. This complexity need attention or least a policy for either its continuation or its transfer because it will not vanish but keeps rising as the Indian spiritual belief system has survive all odds and mingles in all aspects of life whether public or private.

The street shrines are the spatial threshold of Indian cities and need to find a resolution to make them a part of lifestyle.

6. From the Heavens to the Streets: Pune's Wayside Shrines (Borayin Larios)

This research explored the growing role of Urban Street shrines in India, marking their dual nature as both sacred and contested spaces. These two opposite examples- a little shrine on Pashan Road and a developed shrine show how such shrines complete the spiritual, social, and political needs in urban places which lack organized religious infrastructure. Another such shrines are the hanuman mandir that started small and informal under a tree with increasing devotion and word of mouth grew into large number of visitors with no priest and flexible ritual performance. Similarly the Coranica Ganpati shrine started as roadside shrine transformed into institutional temple with management system, and security. This is achieved by power of collective belief, everyday footfall, and social influence. They are viewed in many ways such as devotional sites and community support, and also as land encroachment or unauthorized economics. Despite these stresses the shrines have witnessed vital spaces for small groups, encouraging local network, everyday ritual or even activism. This study demonstrates that the identities of these sites are fluid, challenging their traditional classification as solely religious or commercial

IV. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM AND LIMITATION

The scholarship on Street shrine and its tangled connections with the street have always struggled with problem. In Indian cities the bases of settlement have been nature and divine presence. The adoption of western or global infrastructural standards is blurring the line between Indian modernism and global urbanization.

The following are identified planning challenges, constraints of both street and shrine:

- a. Encroachment over services and mobility:** A primary issue that is concerned with roadside shrines which are found on footpaths and other urban spaces. This is usually pointed as encroachments and intrusion. The Street shrine are never built at once but keep growing for years and decades adding permanent element physically. (Kent, 2018) This kind of growth is from both sides as the street grows with the increasing demand by the vehicles and population. Hence the construction on the edges are often blur lines. There are many cases where the court has intervened has declared many sites as unauthorized construction representing religion on public street and parks. (Voix, Introduction. Wayside Shrines in India: An Everyday Defiant Religiosity, 2018)
- b. Displacement and conflict in Urban environment:** Increasing and rapid urban growth have been hazard to street shrine. For instance: the widening of a street, Construction of flyover, Construction of a metro line in the city like Bangalore. (Srinivas, 2016). The influence on construction has led to disowning of the old traditional street and contextual neighborhood. This loss has caused shifting or displacement of everyday religious spaces. (Srinivas, 2016).
- c. Impermanence and loss of identity:** Street shrines are growing usually starting from a tree or stone or even a poster. They adobe of god in making but lack permanent status as they do not have concrete physical structure or precise mythology and the devotees are not established at once. The locals have to always fight to save the community identity that is linked to the deity and the shrine. There needs to be strong clarification of the identity and political spine behind maintaining the identity. (Kent, 2018)
- d. Visual appearance and class anxiety:** The tussle between increasing the religious performance or presence on the street and the idea of polished public space creates a social classification. The higher middle class opt for hygiene and modern elements in an orderly fashion in the urban spaces. This differs from the contextual planning and local rootedness of the place. Authorities often set visions to discourage these structures and beautify the city. (Osterberg, The role of roadside shrines in the Everyday life of female devotees in Mumbai, 2018)
- e. Commercial gain and Political interest:** Many users debate these shrine become money making strategies. For example during festivals, events, examinations, weddings people are fall prey to such agenda of offering and donations. (Larios, 2018). These shrines are

also political platforms to display power and supported by the authorities to protect it from fear of demolition.

V. RESEARCH GAP

Most of the research works discuss urban street and public spaces missing out on the component of the religious bond Indian streets have. The indianess is keeping the street surviving yet many miss out the inclusion of them getting influenced by the western standards of street design. The literature also missed on the strategy making and solutions for the situations where the issue of shrine existence is discussed but focused on the attachment of citizens to religious elements and problems of traffic and conveyance. The studies lack in application for medium size cities and their spatial impact

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The research examined the relationship between Street and Shrine which has always been in the grey areas of the development in urban context; this is due to the religious and spiritual agenda that is very sensitive in the Indian state. The research saw the dilemma whether to really the retain the religious aspect on the street and the street has survived due to the indigenous religious element on the street. In many ways the shrine has been the identity, safe space, secure platform, gathering platform, idea of expression and most importantly emotional belonging to many individuals and cities. On the other hand the shrine has been evolving so faster than the urbanisation it has caused hindrance to planning and execution of the urban spaces.

It is necessary to reclassify the categories for Indian streetscape as per the major characteristics of the street. This will set a hierarchy of priorities depending on the nature of the street.

For example the Indian streets are identified by many aspects such as vending street, Eatery Street, Religious Street, residential street, and so on. This gives a broader vision and policy making standards for each category. For instance the street with shrine could be recommended to be one way only, or pedestrian, in more contextual strategies it could have footpaths around it.

The integration of all the religious element in Indian street design needs a rework for the preservation of character and make it unique which will enforce a social capital for the users. The design shall highly include traffic management as a priority than just road widening.

The street should be designed for the continuous flow of traffic when it comes to vehicular conveyance. The social inclusive street is should involve vehicle way and pedestrian ways and parking facilities at regular intervals. The situation where crowd is expected to gather requires a space making.

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