

# From the Sacred Tree to the City of *Gopurams*: The Grass-Roots Urbanism of the Hindu Temple

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"Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification!."

Karl Marx

Though the magnificent Meenakshi Temple in Madurai in south-India appears at first glance to be the result of an exclusive, solo architectural design, a closer examination reveals quite the opposite. It is in fact a piecemeal cohesion of multiple buildings and open spaces, beginning with an anonymous stone *lingam* (phallic symbol of Shiva) in around 1600 B.C., and the subsequent commemoration of that sacred spot over centuries of communal worship, patronage and craftsmanship. In this sense, the entire temple town of Madurai as it stands today represents the teleological end of an ancient lineage of grass-roots activism powerful enough to bear the makings of an entire city.

Some three millennia since Madurai's inception, such patterns continue to exert a dominant influence on the contemporary Indian city. With the daily influx of village migrants into the Indian metropolis also comes the 'import' of rural patterns of life, bringing among other things a sacred substratum into the public and private dimensions of urbanity. The Indian city turns 'supernatural' (a mountain is not just a mountain but the abode of the Gods) sprinkled with a thousand nameless spots of religious solace that transcend all norms of law and nurture a parallel urbanism associated with Hindu temples.

While Hindu Temples have long been the subject of significant architectural scholarship, much of it has remained focused on their idea as embellished

'objects'. Even as their formal and stylistic canons are repeatedly elaborated, their elusive urbanistic patterns remain underestimated<sup>2</sup>. As alternative dialogues on place-making and populist informality, and as contradictions to mainstream practices, these patterns reveal another paradigm of urbanism - of spontaneity, bricolage, multiplicity and ambiguity.

## THE TREE

As the antediluvian allegories of Hindu India, trees have since Vedic times connoted the idea of supernatural abodes: where things happen as part of larger cosmic orders and under whose branches lies a place of enlightenment. Not surprisingly the origins of many Hindu temples have begun with a tree, and, shading a smeared stone or a diminutive portrait of divinity, or marked with flags and banners, the *devasthanam* (literally 'place of the Gods')<sup>3</sup> has mysteriously appeared under its boughs - be it along the roadside or remote in the fields. As the anointed abode of the *gramadevata*- the deity synonymous with the surrounding locality and everything within it - it is worshipped through diurnal and seasonal rituals directly under that 'possessed' canopy. In time, a smeared stone may seem to bear the spiritual weight of an entire community, and with prayers increasingly answered, elicit its transformation into the rudiments of a Hindu shrine. When such a tree dies, the spot remains sacred, believed to be vibrant with the energies of the innumerable rituals that became the focus of community worship. In short, a tree marks the *genius loci* of a place to be.

This notion of a 'place' under a tree remains a central rural to urban transfer from the idea of the *chaupal* - the village center under a Banyan or Peepul tree where elders gather to discuss mat-



Image 1 – The shrine under the tree as a ‘community center’ (photo – author)

ters of importance - tracing back the Vedic image of a *guru* preaching to his disciples under a tree, and implying the need for little more than a shaded space to impart wisdom. The ancient Vedic altar is a variation on this theme: a simple stone or brick platform demarcating sacred space, centered around a smoking fire that consumes offerings and chants made to the Gods<sup>5</sup>. With the rural to urban emulsification, selected street trees now become the local shrines of markets, taxi stands and squatters; anaconic places regularly adorned with vermilion and flowers and venerated with earthen oil-lamps. Clearly it does not take much to make a ‘center’ in urban India, these minimal places beneath a tree representing the simplest prototypes of an Indian urbanism (Image 1).

### THE SHRINE

As parallel components of this urbanism, anonymous wayside shrines like their biological counterparts shroud all sources of their existence. Growing as mysteriously as their inception, these sacred impregnations into the public realm are nurtured through silent communal consensus, be-

coming the centers of various invisible cults where the urbanite and the villager, the aristocrat and the gentry (and even the cow, the dog, and the pigeon) can strangely coexist despite their differences. In his essay *Look Out! Darshana Ahead*, Ranjit Hoskote observes how the 1990s streetside shrines in Mumbai’s suburbs in fact “follow a standard evolutionary graph: first the platform, then the parapet; in due course, an archway, this additive process culminating in the consecration of a miniature temple, rendered in grey-veined marble, complete with grille-guarded, white-tiled sanctum, bells, saffron pennant, and that vital basis of the shrine’s financial model, a collection box.”<sup>6</sup>

In the city of Panaji, around its 3.5-mile long promenade along the Mandovi River, one can trace such an elusive sacred trail. Beginning with a miniature temple at Miramar Beach and ending with another at the City Bus Stand, as many as a dozen shrines at different stages of evolution along taxi-stands and roadsides embody the silent activism and spiritual will behind this informal cartography of belief. For instance, the *Maruti Deul* grew in about three decades from a diminutive altar into a franchised shrine backed by a respectable bourgeois patronage, and served by an assigned priest. Likewise the shrine today commonly known as *Campal Ganesh* transformed within a decade from a street tree into a small chamber with a communal guardianship strong enough to warrant a law suit against the municipality that threatened its removal for the purposes of road-widening<sup>7</sup>.

Ironically, for all such populist paranoia, these shrines are illegal encroachments on the public domain, blatantly violating zoning ordinances and by-laws, and it is not that they always escape their infractions. In Mumbai for instance, in October 2003, the municipal authorities, undeterred by citizen protest, launched a campaign to demolish street shrines. But though several illegal shrines and temples have vanished leaving behind traces of their trees or paving, their continuing veneration as sacred ‘ruins’ implies possible reincarnations through a rigorous religiosity that could compete with the best of their accredited city temple counterparts.

Yet for all their semiotic association, these shrines are contradictions to the canonized symbolism of a Hindu Temple. Their orientation to the cardinal directions is ad-hoc as opposed to the strict east-

west alignment of franchised city temples; they all face any and every way, as if no canon mattered at all, and unlike the managed hygienic environment one associates with city temples, most are so wonderfully raucous and 'dirty', open to all people and practices. Perhaps it is this legal and sectarian immunity that augments their presence as artifacts charging urban space. For the field of space that surrounds these shrines gradually garners a complex social significance. It is from where one prays to the deity; it is the *pradakshina-patha* or path of ritualistic circumambulation symbolizing holy union<sup>8</sup>; it is the setting for communal festive gatherings. And with this open space as important as the object itself, the shrine as an activity magnet now attracts not just daily worshippers, but entities interested in commercial dealings with this evolving destination - the mobile food shack, the craft stand, the flower seller, the alm-seeker, even the loud-speaker playing devotional music all represent integral elements of this evolving larger urbanism.

### THE COMPOUND

The enlargement of a shrine into a larger temple, and the erection of a fence to secure its sacred contents and demarcate it from the secular world is not just a sign of its growing repute, but also of its changing status-quo from anonymous illegitimacy to recognized ownership and legality. Too conspicuous to avoid social curiosity, temple enclosures are typically the result of serious individual or communal patronage, with legitimate co-operatives and funding sources, and permits for their design and construction. Various regional contexts across India have generated their own specific temple compound prototypes. The Goan prototype, one of the most intricate in the entire palette is elaborated here.

In the coastal Indian region of Goa, the temple compound at its elaborate best is not limited to the confines of its enclosure. It is as seen in the Shantadurga and Mangueshim Temples in Kavlem part of a larger symbiotic ensemble of adjoining paddy fields, plantations and orchards together called a *sthal* (literally 'place'). With a large ablution water tank located asymmetrically outside the compound, the enclosed precinct centers around the sculptural temple, with other sacred elements such as the *deepasthamba* (tower of lights), the *tulsi* (basil shrine), and sacred trees and small-

er shrines arranged in careful relation to it. The side and rear enclosures of the compound contain rooms for lodging, storing sacred appurtenances and follies, a kitchen, and administrative and service facilities; and gates within these walls lead to the residences of priests and other staff, eventually dissolving into the village beyond<sup>9</sup>.

Within this defined realm, the patterns of an everyday urbanism reach a crescendo during festive gatherings. The annual *jatra* (fair) at the Navadurga Temple in the village of Madkai in Goa typifies this polarity. Organized through meticulous planning by various committees comprising both villagers and urbanites, an elaborate event repeats its timeless festive rituals on that appointed day each November. The temple compound sits on a hillock connected to the road by an enormous stone stairway. On the night before the festivities, this road is closed to traffic, and transformed into a transient 'plaza', with temporary stalls of bamboo and cloth. The stairway itself becomes the setting for flower sellers that occupy its edges along the entire length. An enormous shed of bamboo and thatch erected in front of the temple, further serves the flower, bangle and color sellers. And around the temple various bamboo and canvas stalls transform the otherwise serene enclave into a bazaar-like setting for buying and selling food, toys and daily appurtenances. The temple itself decorated with string lights is brought alive as a sculptural form in the dark hours of the morning when the climax of the festival occurs.

The sacred *ratha* (chariot) that carries the deity is in fact a sacred palanquin decked by the devotees with a thousand red flags. It stands in the 'plaza' below the temple surrounded by crowds of worshippers, musicians, and lamp carriers, along with twin smaller counterparts representing the two demons she will vanquish that night. At the appointed hour before daybreak after a series of chants, the three follies are lifted off the ground and danced to a rhythmic drumbeat by various devotees from near and far. The dance first happens in the 'plaza', then up the great stairway, then under the temporary shed, into the great temple *mandap* (gathering hall), and then repeatedly around the temple in a clockwise direction (*Image 2*). The circumambulation continues until early morning when the two 'demons' are eventually destroyed and the *ratha* journeyed through the hillock before being dismantled for distribu-



*Image 2 – Sequential scenes at the annual festival of the Navadurga Temple in Madkai. From top to bottom: the 'ratha' dancing in the 'plaza; up the grand stairway; within the temple's gathering hall; and finally around the temple (photos – author)*

tion among the faithful. For those few hours, with the red chariot mysteriously 'hovering' above the ecstatic crowds the physicality of the temple compound transforms into a surreal world charged with the ever-kinetic energy of drumbeats, fireworks and a hundred lamps and flickering flames, as if everyone was in some sort of trance, and as if nothing outside that compound ever mattered<sup>10</sup>.

In the city, within the confines of various sacred compounds lie such *laissez-faire* worlds of devotion and ritual reenacting their rural precedents. And beyond these confines lie the numerous shacks and sellers that gradually form a permanent kinship to this blessed domain. With its overall form now legalized, patronized and sponsored, the spontaneous growth of various sub-structures within the precinct continues the patterns of its shrine predecessors, and, just as the statuette under the tree grew into a temple, do various temporary structures petrify into an eventual permanent ensemble, morphing the compound into a larger place.

### THE CAMPUS

We come then to a new urban form - the sacred campus<sup>11</sup> - an incremental accretion of shrines for multiple deities and their accompanying figural and sometimes labyrinthine field of voids, unfolding a journey through closed, semi-closed and open to sky spaces. Despite the patronage and sponsorship behind their monumental forms, it is their continuing traditional role of a 'commoner's institution' that makes it relevant to this discussion. Like the detailed account of the Rajarajeshwara Temple in Tanjore dating back to 1011 and listing a staff of 600 - including dancing-girls and masters, singers, drummers, conch-blowers, accountants, parasol bearers, lamp-lighters, potters, carpenters, astrologers, tailors and jewelers that in return for their services were given land for cultivation and sustenance - today most sacred campuses like universities continue to have wealthy endowments, land investments and tenants<sup>12</sup>. One of the wealthiest in this list is the Vishnu temple at Tirumala, with a temple staff of

6000, an average of 30,000 pilgrims visiting each day, and an annual income of about \$165 million. The sacred campus is in this sense a 'plebian corporation' of, for and by the common man, an association of likeminded citizens coming together for a co-habitation addressed solely and single-handedly to the service of God.

Though the formal variations of sacred campuses across India are themselves a subject of study beyond the scope of this paper, the Dravidian prototype of Tamil Nadu is discussed to illustrate the dramatic possibilities. Here, a large enclosed precinct with concentric rectangular *prakaras* (stone fences) and *gopurams*<sup>13</sup> (sacred gateways), forms a mega shrine complex introverted to the surroundings, yet symbolizing through its gigantic elements the urban scale of the sacred center. They may seem today little more than formal symbols, but these walled enclosures historically did not just give protection from outside invasion, they also had political functions. Reversing the fortified town's precedent, they did away with the

peripheral wall; the town surrounding the sacred campus could now open into nature assured of a fortified core for safety. Meanwhile the *gopurams*, hardly local markers orienting the temple within the urban labyrinth were the nexus of two worlds: the sacred and the profane. They offered like the gates of a medieval European town, the first greeting to the distant pilgrim and the local devotee; at once a custom house for trade transactions with the temple, and a triumphal arch with its gigantic turrets as a regional means of communication with other cities (*Image 3*).

Contrary to their 'built-at-once' appearances, these sacred campuses are in fact the summations of centuries of ad-hoc structures, borne through both the modest ambitions of devout commoners and the magnanimous charities of their chieftains. For instance, the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai, beginning with a modest *lingam* in 1600 B.C., transformed into two shrines for both Shiva and his consort Meenakshi, then merged within a larger compound in the center of



*Image 3 – Arunachaleshwara Temple, Tiruvannamalai, showing concentric temple campus and surrounding townscape (photo courtesy – S. Aravindh)*

the surrounding hamlet, and between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, with increasing religious repute and royal patronage, eventually became the magnificent sacred 'fortress' we see today<sup>14</sup>. At the Tillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, the four *gopurams* are likewise the result of four autonomous patronages beginning in 1133 A.D. and ending in 1695 A.D. At the Ekambareshwara Temple in Kanchipuram, the piecemeal construction of the complex over centuries is in fact evident in the striking irregularity of its walls and *gopurams* – no two *gopurams* align, and no two walls are parallel, with hardly a right angle anywhere<sup>15</sup>.

At Srirangam on the banks of the Cauvery, the four concentric walls enclosing the sacred campus expand into three outer layers of town fabric. Each of the seven concentric 'ripples' forming the 176-acre town is named after the king who constructed them at different periods of time. Each wall has a *gopuram* in all four cardinal directions receding in size towards the sacred vortex, the latest addition being the 236-foot high, thirteen-tiered *Rajagopuram* built at the southern rampart by the late 44th *Jeeyar* of the Sri Ahobila Mutt in 1987. Between every two walls is a parallel street with activities getting increasingly holier as one moves within – the innermost ring contains shrines and prayer halls, the second ring, the priest's dwellings and flower and fruit stalls, all the way to the outer most with the least sacred activity of normal businesses<sup>16</sup>.

As a contemporary prototype, the sacred campus brings a new dimension to the idea of monumentality. The incremental creation of a monumental urban place and form, and its contemporary evolution through ancient traditions of patronage, style and construction, are in-fact less the stagnation of tradition and more the transcendental expression of socio-sacred will. On the thin line that separates the compounds of ignorance and superstition from spiritual quest and solace, the sacred campus adds to Alois Reigl's three dimensions of monumentality<sup>17</sup> – "Use Value, Age Value and Historic Value", a fourth 'Holy Value' transcending all pragmatic, aesthetic and social dilemmas, to simply fulfill a zealous desire to interact with the sacred.

## THE TOWN

Thus even when sacred constructions in India are decentralized they have always attracted people

interested in the workings of the sacred precinct, thereby nurturing symbiotic habitats around them. The formal boundaries of such habitats may be ambiguous within inner cities, but a number of historic precedents provide valuable clues in this regard. The Surya Temple for example stands as the transitional center between the Pushpavati River and the village of Modhera that has grown to its east. The Brihadeshwara Temple stands along the western edge of the town of Tanjavur at the apex of its early village form, the Arunachaleswara Temple campus stands at the edge of the 1 mile square town of Tiruvannamalai, the sacred city of Vrindavan along the banks of the Yamuna is bordered along its north, east and west edges by the Jagat Kishore, Govindadeva and Madana Mohana shrines, and the Meenakshi Temple complex stands embedded within the dense 4 square mile urban fabric of Madurai along the banks of the Vaigai.

And larger towns have evolved through the piecemeal cohesion of autonomous villages growing around individual proximate temples. The morphology of the 3 square mile town of Kumbakonam can be traced as the incremental accretion of hamlets evolving around a number of sacred centers such as the Kumbheshwara, Srangapani, Chakrapani, Banapurishwara and Vishvanatha temples all standing between the Cauvery and Arasalar rivers. The 4 square mile temple town of Kanchipuram along the Vegavati River can be deciphered as the accumulation of two smaller villages growing independently around three major sacred campuses – the Shiva Kanchi village around the Ekambareshwara and Kamakshi Temples; and the Vishnu Kanchi village around the Varadaraja Temple; with smaller shrines such as the Mukteshwara, Vardhamana and Vaikuntha Perumal temples nurturing their own hamlets and neighborhoods<sup>18</sup> (*Image 4*).

In these temple towns where all streets lead only to that one point – the darkest, the holiest, the most sacred – it appears that the timeless zeal for holy union has ironically kept them engaged in the affairs of the contemporary world. Today, though the first four rings at Srirangam are still occupied by the *Brahmin* class, there are ATM machines within its sacred confines; and at Tiruvannamalai, it is customary, even necessary to obtain an advance digital reservation, with the crowds of devotees eventually given an electronic wrist

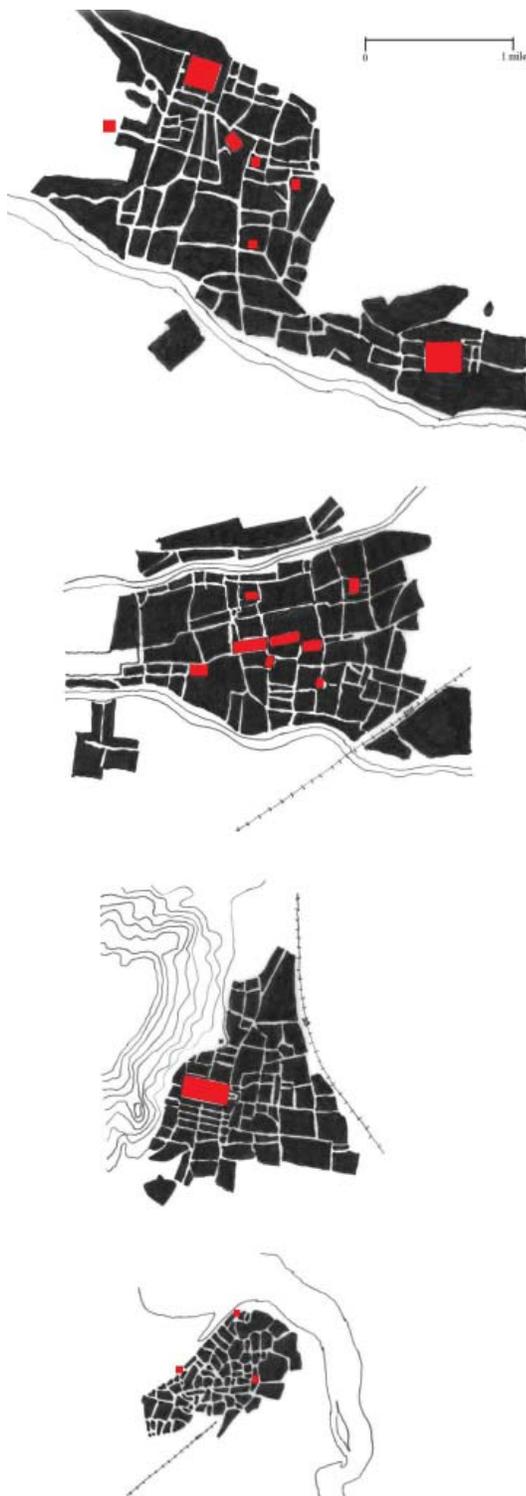


Image 4 – Temple Towns drawn to the same scale. The temple precincts and shrines are shown in red. From top to bottom: Kanchipuram, Kumbakonam, Tiruvannamalai & Vrindavan. (drawings by author)

band to monitor and manage the worship schedule. As the modernizing evolutions of an ancient commonplace urbanity, where the stagnation of canon and the pragmatics of technology infuse to redefine the meaning of tradition, temple towns are thus sacred fossils, and well-managed modern corporations all in one.

#### AN URBANISM WITHOUT URBANISTS

The metamorphosis from an anointed tree and quotidian shrine to a sacred compound, campus and town continues to this day. At a sacred tree we observe a 'possession' and transformation of 'nowhere' space into a place of identity. At a wayside shrine, we encounter an anonymous bricolage towards a modest object of association. Within a sacred compound, we observe the populist expressionism of ritual and craft, and, in a sacred campus we experience an egalitarian world of devotion, leadership and management. As the formative nuclei of larger urban habitats incepted and nurtured by common folk, the tree, the shrine, the compound and the campus thus represent the prototypes of a contemporary Indian grassroots urbanism.

Hardly a bourgeois utopia, the demographic associated with (but not limited to) this urbanism largely comprises rural migrants, slum dwellers, and denizens of the pavement, that far from being a burden on the urban economy in fact supply it with a vast pool of labor for the 'unpleasant' jobs that organized labor does not like to do. Through their unlicensed religious entrepreneurship and uncanny ability to elude law and authority arise the intuitive manifestations of commonsense, labor and kitsch. In this sense, do the millions of wayside shrines and their continuing evolution suggest a sort of parallel 'building industry', where the ingenious 'self-help' skills of the city's floating populace - masons, brick-layers, construction workers, gardeners - can contribute to a significant employment base for the urban economy within a facilitating socio-political context?

One also observes, from the spontaneous urbanism of the tree to the formal shaping of the campus, the commensuration of both void and solid as the essential duality for public life - suggesting a climatic paradigm for a hot climate like India. The menu of open space-types: the modest platform

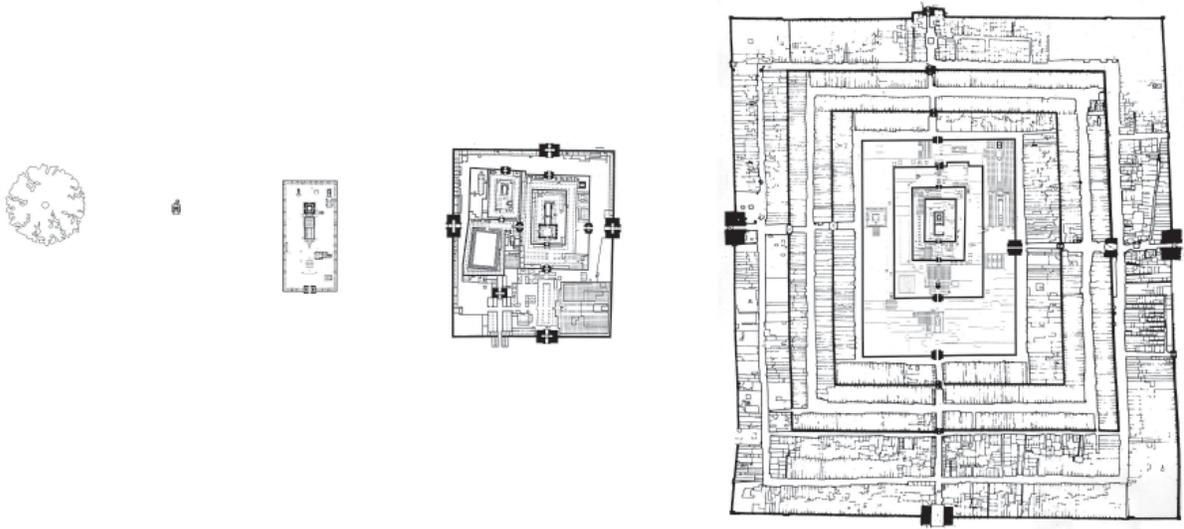


Image 5 – From left to right: The tree, the shrine, the compound (Brihadeshwara Temple), the campus (Meenakshi Temple), the town (Srirangam) drawn to the same scale. (drawings by author)

beneath the boughs, the path around the shrine, the festive compound, the labyrinthine open spaces of the temple campus; and the accompanying range of building elements: the semi-open canvas stall, the porous temple built-form, the cross-ventilated thousand-pillared *mandapam* (meeting hall) – all represent precedents for appropriation within contemporary urban design practice.

In fact day by day, the Indian city seems to reinforce precisely this climatic notion with rural migrants bringing among other things, the spontaneous usage of the 'urban void' for economic reasons. Just as economic paucity in Indian villages is compensated by building less, and using the open space around the dwelling for daily activities, these migrants live in shacks less than five square meters, *possessing* the adjoining urban space to eat, sleep and socialize. The village *otla* (multi-use built platform outside a hut) is analogous to the shrine under a tree replacing the need for an enclosed community hall, affirming this instinctive wisdom.

Religion as Karl Marx noted "is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality.....Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people"<sup>19</sup>. Thus,

against the backdrop of accredited city temples, can we afford to forget, in any planning effort, the significance of the hidden order of the thousands of revered trees and wayside shrines? Size does not matter; what matters are the locations of these sacred dots powerful enough to bypass socio-economic legitimacy and influence urbanity. In them are the seeds of a non-utopian urbanism, celebrating and building on everyday ordinary life and reality with little pretense of a perfectible future. The city (or at least parts of it), can now be understood as evolving 'villages' around maturing holy nuclei whose future forms may not be entirely unpredictable. Today's trees and shrines are tomorrow's centers and monuments; in the grass-roots efforts behind them lie the hopes and spiritual aspirations of the millions of underserved who simply want a stake in the city. They need to be identified, accepted and celebrated as essential elements of the Indian urban landscape.

#### ENDNOTES

1. This quote is taken from Karl Marx's introduction of his 1843 work *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* which was subsequently released a year later in Marx's own journal *Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbücher* - a collaboration with Arnold Ruge.

2. There is significant scholarship on Indian Temple architecture, while a comprehensive volume on temple towns remains long over due. For scholarship on the

formal and stylistic attributes of the Hindu Temple see Michell George, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to its Meaning and Form* (University of Chicago Press).

3. The word devasthanā derives from two Sanskrit words: deva (God) and sthāna (place) and is used here to communicate the idea of the shrine under the tree. There are several regional linguistic variations of this word across the Indian geography.

4. The Sanskrit word gramadevatā stems from two words: gram (village) and devatā (God). The gramadevatās coexist side by side with the Brahmanical gods of later Hinduism and may have originated as agricultural deities to ward off epidemics, crop failures, and other natural disasters.

5. Ancient Vedic sacrificial rituals performed around an altar with fire survive to this day. They require that the altar be constructed of layers of bricks, from which the deity is invoked through the power of hymns. After this ritual, the altar is abandoned. Historic texts describe altars as falcon-shaped and most altars conform to the shape of a bird, or more accurately, the shadow of a bird on the earth.

6. See Hoskote Ranjit, "Look Out! Darshana Ahead" in *The Hindu*, Magazine section, Sunday, Jan 04, 2004

7. Campal is an intermediate area within the city of Panaji in Goa; and the shrine is dedicated to the Lord Ganesh, hence its name Campal Ganesh. Information about the law suit against the municipality was compiled by me through talks with locals in November 2005.

8. Pradakshina or Parikrama meaning circumambulation, is a consistent Hindu ritual of worship where devotees walk around the garbha-griha (sanctum sanctorum) clockwise in odd number of times, in a symbolic union with the Divine. In the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Diana Eck lists several meanings of circumambulation. Among them are: honoring, centering, bonding, setting apart, and reaffirmation of the sacred territorial claim. Additionally, circumambulation may symbolize the fluidity of meaning characteristic of Hindu thought, such as: completeness yet continuity, fulfillment yet quest, contentment yet pursuit, comprehension yet mystery.

9. This narrative is based on personal observation and field work done at the Shantadurga Temple in November 2005.

10. This narrative is based on personal observation and field work done at the Navadurga Temple during the annual Madkai jatra in November 2005.

11. The word campus originates from the Italian word campo describing a shaped public area that grew to represent the central place of a university, and eventually came to represent the interconnected aggregate of figural voids between the university's buildings. This piecemeal formation of a figural public space, constructed sequentially through incremental projects and defining the elements of building, open space, and landscape is a consistent characteristic of the Hindu temple complex. It is in this sense referred to here as a sacred 'campus', the word implying all of its grounds and buildings, and its total physical presence as an urban institution.

12. For more on this see Shankaranarayana Rao A. V., *Temples of Tamil Nadu*, pg 111 – 124, Vasana Publications, Bangalore, 2005.

13. There is speculation that the word gopuram comes from go probably referring to cows or go shala meaning cowshed and puram meaning city, neighborhood or residence. Ancient temples in India had separate quarters inside the temple precincts to house cow-sheds. Often these cowsheds were built abutting the temple tower giving it the unique name of gopuram - the 'residence of cows'.

14. For more on the Meenakshi Temple see Shankaranarayana Rao A. V., *Temples of Tamil Nadu*, pg 111 – 124, Vasana Publications, Bangalore, 2005. The foundation of this temple city is mentioned in the Puranas (prehistoric texts) as a certain native finding a divine Shiva lingam (phallic symbol) in a virgin forest. A merchant named Dhananjaya is said to have spoken of this to the south Indian king Kulasekara Pandyan around 1600 B.C. who had the forest cleared and a sanctuary built in the spot. It is believed that the temple city was enlarged to its present form between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, with king Tirumala Nayaka improving its defenses and fortifications and building the Pudumandapam (large gathering hall) around 1633. The dilapidated temple complex was renovated in the mid-twentieth century.

15. Ibid

16. For more on this see Volwahren Andreas, *Living Architecture: Indian*, pg 43-58, Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, New York, 1969. The south Indian temple own of Srirangam is said to represent a Mandala, a cosmic diagram of the worlds situated in concentric rings around Brahman. The south Indian mandala differs from the Vastu-pursha mandala described in north Indian manuals in that it does entertain the legend of the disordered Being was confined by Brahma within the orderly form of the mandala. The south Indian mandala instead visualizes the center of all Being as Brahma around which are concentric rings, the innermost being the world of Gods, beyond which are those of the human world, and the outermost those of goblins, demons and spirits.

17. See Riegel Alois, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and its Origin' in *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982), 25-51. Riegl delineates three value types behind monumentality: 'Use-Value' points to the practical lure of re-inhabiting the special place or building, maintaining that primarily, the place must be repaired and safe. 'Age Value' is derived from the ideological aesthetic that the place portrays through its decomposition in time, considering the ruin superior to the reincarnation. 'Historic Value' is a social perception stemming from when a place transcends its use to become a symbol of special societal ritual.

18. There is no available record to validate these evolutions. This narrative is based on a larger personal analysis of temple town forms.

19. From *Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*