

Investigating the Streets of Indian Village

Deepak Kumar¹ and Archana²

¹Mysore School of Architecture, Mysore

²School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal

E-mail: ¹arcdeepak.spa@gmail.com, ²archanasingh.t@gmail.com

Abstract—In the present scenario of haphazard urbanization cities are growing and galloping villages and their agricultural land. In this process villagers lose their inherent culture, their sustainable lifestyle, their agricultural land instantly for money. Neither they nor the developers realize the important things which they lose compared to short-lived things which they gain. In this turmoil where rural areas wear glamorous clothing of urbanization, amongst other numerous things they lose their existence in and around street. Streets in traditional villages were the place which supports social behavior, promote place making, promote recreational activities, safe for women and children and livable. Compared to an urban street which is designed this self evolved village streets offers everything which we aim to achieve in our so called 'designed Urban street'. This paper tends to investigate and analyse those various spatial and temporal aspects of Indian village..

1. INTRODUCTION

After Independence India followed the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru which were very much influenced by Stalin's socialistic economics. He had visions of future India through Marxism and capitalism of the soviet Russia. While Gandhiji believed in ideal society and his idea of ideal society was that which have no vertical division but only horizontal, with no high or low in caste, job, wages and status (communist approach with democracy in freedom). According to him Industrialization resulted exploitation. He suggested that villagers can use the machine to the extent if they can afford it and to the limit that they shouldn't get exploited. India can stand on global point of view by confiding on its villages by being "self-contained" or adopting policies of "SWARAJ".[2] The reason for mentioning Nehruvian theory vs Gandhian is to emphasize the wrong turn which our country had taken long back.

Lots of research is getting done on cities e.g. smart cities while villages are thought only to be funded by government funding schemes. Our orientalist approach towards villages and false symbolization cities as landmark of growth of human race has created more trouble for us. To solve all this instead of concentrating on villages we are concentrating on cities.

All city planners, urban reformers and municipal officials since time have claimed that public space serves a number of social and political ends, from public health to cultural assimilation. Necessity of public spaces which serves social needs is neither surprising nor groundbreaking. While the first

encounter of a public space which we regularly have are our streets. Numerous Urban design guidelines are formed copied and tried to be implemented to make our streets livable, safe and places for social interaction yet we romanticize about the traditional streets especially which once were village streets in context of India which people and scholars rarely talks about.

2. BIRTH OF THE VILLAGE STREET

A village street compared to an urban street has lot of spatial differences. All urban streets or roads are first designed in the process of planning that's why they are straight, linear in nature and of definite width with proper turning radius for vehicles. Transport planning departments and development authority of any city tries to make sure they are designed for vehicles where pedestrian movement are tried to be segregated from the vehicular movement, the second step of development comprises laying down of plots and marking each plot for their respective function. Now while in case of a village street are the leftover spaces which are only meant for circulation. In case of a land with observable variation in topography first higher ground were occupied by important place markers like temples, or mansions the subsequently houses. Street layout was organic and mainly derived from the topography of the site. For example as shown in fig 1 in this given village called Savda in western part of Delhi it's clearly evident.



Fig. 1: Relief map of Savda Village [6]

Looking into the science of human settlement 'Ekistics' we can better understand the evolution of a village through its history in terms of its size and quality. The target is to

understand the city of optimum size, the city which respects human dimensions which villages truly are.

Constantinos A. Doxiadis, an Architect and Urban Planner emphasizes that human settlements, is a very complex system of five elements - nature, man, society,

shells (that is, buildings), and networks. It is a system of natural, social, and man-made elements which can be seen in many ways - economic, social, political, technological, and cultural.

The morphological analysis of rural settlements or villages reveals the arrangement of houses with all characteristics attached to them. The morphological structure of settlements or villages as concrete expressions of human activity in space, involve five principles of settlements formation advocated by Doxiadis. According to Doxiadis a village generally consists of four parts;

- (i) Homogeneous part-fields, houses etc;
- (ii) Central part- built-up area; shops etc;
- (iii) Circulatory part-roads - streets etc;
- (iv) Special part- temple - school etc;

While the first, second and fourth part are built they all together are weaved from the third which are streets.[3]

3. DOXIADIS PRINCIPLES TO UNDERSTAND VILLAGES

Doxiadis proposed five principles, illustrated with hypothetical diagrams (Fig. 2). The first principle is the maximization of man's potential contact with natural elements (e.g water, trees etc.), with other people cultural elements (e.g buildings, roads, etc.).

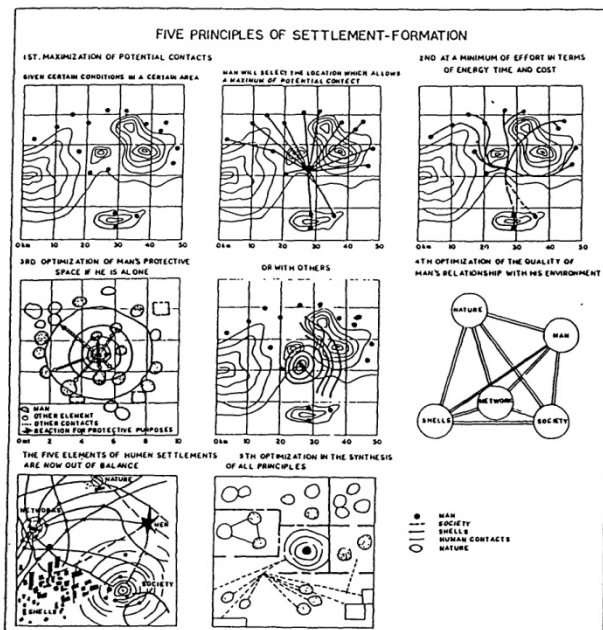


Fig. 2: Five Principles of Settlement formation [5]

The second principle is the minimization of efforts required for the achievement of man's actual and potential contact, according to the general principle of least effort. The third principle is the optimization of man's protective space at every movement individually or in a group, in any situation or locality, whether it is temporary or permanent, whether he is alone or part of a group. The fourth principle is the optimization of quality of man relationship with his environment, consisting of nature, society, shell (building and houses of all sorts), and networks (lanes, street, road, communication, etc.). The fifth principle is that man organizes his settlements in an attempt to achieve an optimum synthesis of the previous four principles.[4]

4. CASE STUDY: SAVDA VILLAGE, NEW DELHI

Savda village is primarily a agricultural community of 1200 population located on western fringe of New Delhi. The community comprises mainly Jats and Dabas. The village was originally a piece of land donated by the king to the Jats that's why the boundary looks like a perfect square. Based on Doxiadis principles various components of this village can be investigated and analyzed as follows

Site planning: Its Street follows the natural topography of the site, so in most of the cases built forms and streets are placed along the contour which is very prominent here. This site planning along contour has helped in natural drainage of the site and avoids water logging and other water borne issues. This has also results in wandering streets which have width varying from one place to another. The resultant organic character adds other dimensions and characters to the place.

Restricting vehicular movement: Winding streets restricts vehicular movement and promotes pedestrian circulation and make it more child and elders friendly.

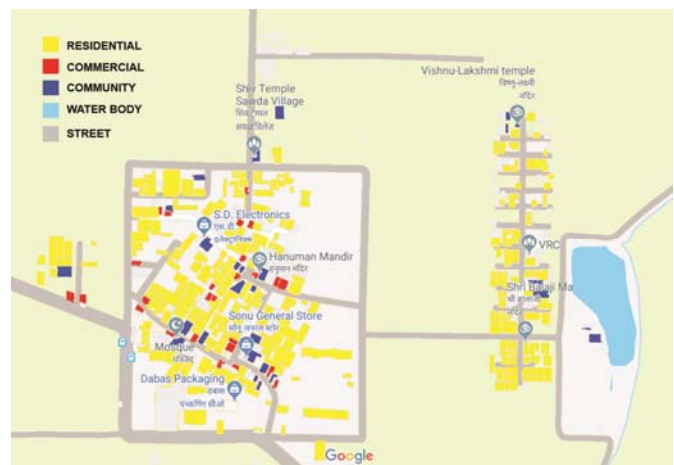


Fig. 3: Socio Spatial Structure of Savda Village [6]

Identity and character: The organic pattern of the streets also gives the places different identity and character. Wandering street opening up into chowks or node give the place

imageability not like Lutyens Delhi where all roads look the same unless there is a way finding signage.

Human scale: Human perception of vision is also limited to 30m and after that we can't clearly recognize the face of the person. This reduces the scale of Village Street to human level and increases our perception of space.

Public, semipublic and private zones: The mere simple division of spaces in form of Public, semi public and private doesn't always fit well with villager way of living. A village street is also a place to meet and interact which acts as public spaces. Semi public spaces like extension of houses like seating outside the houses are though semipublic spaces in nature but they are best for children and their mother to sit interact with neighbours as well as keep an eye on their houses. While in day time this can be used by any user of the streets and in evening for elders. This also ensures famous Jane Jacobs idea of 'eyes on the street'. [1]

Trees as markers: Chowks are mostly marked by a banayan tree or other and are used for small gathering for youths and occasional gathering for any important matter related to their neighborhood. They provide comfort in terms of its shade, give identity to the place and sometime trees like peepal becomes part of the ritual activity. Nature in its various forms is worshipped in villages which lead people to respect and fear from it.

The streets thus in present case becomes the perfect example of democratic space in villages. All of these factors strengthen the social bonding in villagers and contribute a lot towards establishing the third pillar of sustainability which is social sustainability. Some wider part of streets which are especially closer to Temples/Mosques or Panchayat bhawan are used for weekly baazars and place for promoting necessary economic activity. During festival time the entire streets become a place for drama and theatre and create memory for lifetime in their lives.

Presently in Savda village there is are four temples and one mosque. All of these places are placed near chowks marked by at least one tree next to it. The one on called the Balaji temple extreme has a small pond next to it.



Fig. 4: View of the temple adjoint to the small pond which is mainly used for all major cultural activities [6]

5. CONCLUSION

Villages and their cultural layers (which are inspired from nature) are evolved through overtime and are just enough for our existence on this planet. It is very evident that in this era of consumerism our villages set the perfect example of living and are ideal place for learning which can guide our future growth.

Instead of finding out the necessity of things and then doing it, in a village it is getting celebrated in its various forms. The respect for nature and its importance clearly shows us that a tree is not just a tree in context of village.

Designing streets for vehicles are not at all adding solution to our problems of traffic management and pollution. Housing internal streets can be wandering making it more pedestrian friendly and interesting.

For the ease of design and construction plotted development by real estate developers rarely consider contour intervals which leads to flash flood and water logging, while just considering the natural terrain helps act as one pill solution to most of the existing issues.

Every village is unique and has different cultural background. They are defiantly older compared to our modern cities. They themselves have conservation value which needs to be understood well before developing anything specific to their context.

Much more study and research need to done which can compare village's specific to the region which can guide further growth of the place.

REFERENCES

- [1] Jacobs J.(1961)The death and life of great American Cities.
- [2] Gandhi, M. (1962). Village Swaraj. Ahmedabad.
- [3] Ekistics, the Science of Human Settlements ,Articles From Science, v.170, no.3956, October 1970, p. 393-404: 21
- [4] Articles
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52651/9/09_intr_ouduction.pdf
- [5]Articles
http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/113954/10/10_chapter%204.pdf
- [6] Author