

Temple Corridors in Indian Cities: A Blend of Tradition and Modernity

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Abstract:- Temples and heritage corridors have successfully contributed to the redesign of Indian cities, yielding positive outcomes in terms of cultural heritage, tourism, and business. Such projects aid in revitalizing historical districts, preserving traditions, and fostering greater public concern for urban environments. Nevertheless, several challenges persist, such as the risk of commercialization, altering the authentic image or identity of places, social inequality during gentrification, and balancing modernization with conservation. Despite these challenges, these initiatives highlight cultural identity, which should be safeguarded through careful planning to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. A critical question remains: has the transformation of Indian cities diminished their aesthetic and cultural value? Temple corridors in Indian cities blend Indian culture with contemporary architectural and planning techniques. This paper reviews the development, significance, and evolution of temple corridors within the urban Indian context, focusing on their roles as cultural institutions, social amenities, and tourist attractions.

Keywords:- Temple Corridor, Modernity, Socio-Economic Impact, Urban Planning.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian cities are a living representation of the country's time line encompassing the ancient period, tradition, and the era of globalization. The most discernible aspects of this tapestry are the temple corridors that run through most of the Indian cities. These are not just pathways to shrines but areas of contact between the temporal and the divine, the past and the present, the indigenous and colonialism, the religious and the economic. These are passages situated in the middle of an active city and being alive, they are evidence of India's ancient religious traditions and its flexibility to the influence of progress. Actually, temple cloisters have always been important from the cultural and economic point of view. It has been used for various functions that include; worshipping, festivals, marketing, and social functions. In the past, temples were usually situated in the middle of cities and the latter functioned as central places for the development of communities and their prosperity. These cloisters are elaborate architectures, carved with complex designing and statues and inscriptions depicting various dynastic and period's art. The solution to the problem of managing heritage and the city for the sustainable

development of the area is the idea of heritage-based urban planning. This approach is focused on the mission of incorporating cultural values into urban planning and recognizing that history, monuments, and traditions are the parts of the city's cultural characteristics and well-being. These principles are integrated in order to develop cities that are economically productive, environmentally sound, culturally rich, and which are able to embrace all people. The strategy sees heritage as an opportunity and not a hindrance for the improvement and sustainability of urban areas. In this way, with the involvement of all the significant stakeholders, it guarantees that Indian cities are developing properly, not losing their unique and valuable identities.

These corridors have different dynamics and possibilities in the modern cities of India. These are some of the social issues that are associated with rapid urbanization such as overcrowding, pollution, and commercialization of sanctuaries. At the same time, it opens reasonable opportunities for the regeneration and further effective development of cities. Modern day city planning and cultural tourism management engage in the pursuit of innovation and infrastructural advancement while at the same time respecting the cultural antecedents. This balance is important if temple corridors are to remain a part of tradition while at the same time meeting the new generation's needs. Also, these corridors help in enhancing spiritual practices and culture, believe in local customs and promote spiritual and cultural events thus maintaining a balance between the modern and traditional approach and help in the economic growth as well. Intense increase in religious tourism and hence, infrastructural development in heritage cities of India have paved the way for the need to understand the role of heritage promotion for unique city identity. They are the foundation to this goal which is visible in the recent structural changes in the urban landscape of India initiated by the Government of India such as; HRIDAY, the PRASAD Plan, and the Swadesh Darshan Plan. Also, other central government-sponsored plans and programs like the Smart Cities Mission and CITIIS are well aligned with these efforts.

II. NEED FOR THE RESEARCH

A. Historical Significance of Temple Corridors

Temple corridors have been a part of religious architecture in the country for as long as the history can remember. In the past, these corridors played not only the role of religious trails, but also of the communication and business lines, as well as social interaction. Temples were built in the central part of cities, and halls became popular trade and cultural zones. The architecture and the carvings of the cloister depict the artistic work of the different dynasties and different period of the history. This corridors in the Indian cities are not just the passage ways to the places of worship but are monuments of history and culture which reflects the Indian society and religion. These corridors with their complex construction and dynamism are an architectural and economic index, an index of the social life of ancient and medieval India. Temple cloisters are believed to have originated from the ancient India whereby temples were constructed as shrines to the gods. These temples were usually built at the core of cities or on strategic geographical positions for instance, at river sides or on hills. When it comes to early Indian architecture, temple cloisters were created in a way to complement the religious experience of the believers. These corridors were frequently decorated with magnificent columns, divine statues and with paintings of myths on the walls. It should be understood that such architectural elements were not only beautiful but also played an educational role, telling religious stories and passing on instructions to the faithful.

B. Socio – Economic Impact

The cloisters of Temples in the Indian cities are not only the symbols of religious and cultural importance, but also play a great role in the socio-economic structure. These sacred approaches have been in the past involved in economic activities and social relations and have been crucial in the community and general urban economy. In this respect, the socio-economic effects of temple corridors can be discussed in relation to their contribution to the local economy, tourism, and the prospects and issues associated with the processes of urbanization. The passage of the temple has always been the main trading area, where various shops, stands, and other types of commercial premises were located in front of the temple. These markets deal with all sorts of merchandise including flowers, incense and offerings, which are

associated with religious activities, as well as foodstuffs and clothes and various hand crafts. The economic activities in these corridors are a source of income for many kinds of individuals in society, such as craftsmen, traders, sellers, and workers. Stores along the approach include those catering for millions of pilgrims that throng the temples every year; from religious icons to local foods and other trinkets. This business feeds many families and plays a substantial role in the economy. The tourism that comes with the temple corridor also brings in more revenue to the area, apart from creating a cultural exchange and bringing the world's attention to the great history of India.

C. Urban Challenges & Opportunities

Urbanization has a positive and negative impact on the temple corridors in the following ways. Over time, there is growth and development of cities and these aspects affect the temple corridors including overcrowding, pollution and commercialization. Solving these challenges involves proper planning and management of the corridor in order to preserve the culture and economic heritage of the area. Besides, such activities can greatly boost travel and improve the tourism business, create employment and business for local inhabitants, and positively impact the city's income. They can also be used as a way to renovate and invigorate older cities, promote renewal and help local companies. However, challenges remain. Some potential issues that might be observed during the redevelopments of the places of authenticity include commercialization of the areas. The threat of gentrification to displace the locals out of their homes and the tension between new age architecture and identity are still active issues.

III. GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & POLICY FRAMEWORK

To achieve this goal, urban planning and development policies are crucial and are evident in the recent urban reforms that have been undertaken by the Indian government namely; HRIDAY, the PRASAD plan as well as the Swadesh Darshan plan. Moreover, the plans and programs initiated by the central government including Smart Cities Mission, CITIIS are also in synchronization with these. The Government of India has introduced several plans and policy measures to augment the infrastructure base in the temple towns and to safeguard the cultural values and to boost tourism.

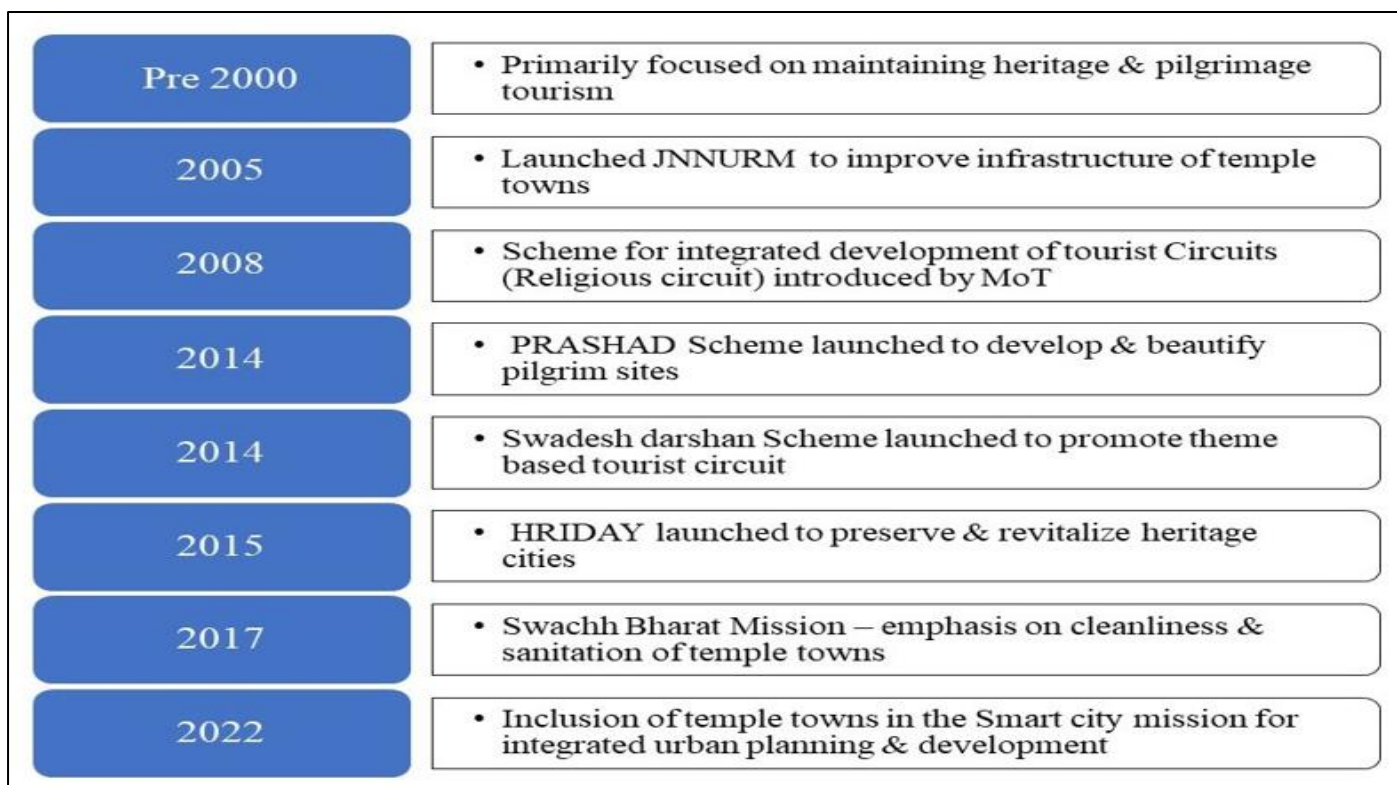


Fig 1: Timeline of Policy Framework
 Source: Author

Some of them are PRASAD scheme (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual and Heritage Augmentation Drive) and Swadesh Darshan scheme launched in 2014-15 for developing and beautifying the pilgrimage sites and to formulate the tourism circuits based on themes. HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) is proposed to rejuvenate heritage cities especially temple cities like Varanasi and Amritsar; Swachh Bharat Mission is a pilgrim experience in the area of cleanliness which is sine qua non to enhance the quality of pilgrim experience. In addition, recent central government missions include the Smart City Mission, launched in 2015, and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), launched in 2015.. Some of the other programs are National Mission on Cultural Mapping and Clean Ganga Mission, the later of which has affected few temple city like Varanasi which is situated on the bank of Ganga River. Taken together, these plans are intended to provide for satisfactory development, enhance the quality of life, and enhance the spiritual value or experience in temple towns in India.

IV. CURRENT SCENARIO OF TEMPLE CORRIDOR

The transformation of religious passageways in India signifies a progressive picture of contemporary structures of growth along with the conservation of the religious and cultural paths. These projects are mainly concerned with the provision of the physical facilities required by the pilgrims including roads, footpaths, resting places, latrines, and proper lighting. Also, the application of technologies in the pilgrims' route, including 3D mapping, digital guides, as well as

security systems add up the level of convenience and security for the pilgrims. Furthermore, consideration is paid to the preservation and presentation of history and culture related to the religious centers located in the religious corridors. It makes certain that different stakeholders' needs and perceptions of projects are met appropriately because of the involvement of community members. Thus, today, economic breakthroughs are observed, but at the same time, there is a careful balance between the processes of constructing modern urban landscapes and preserving cultural identity, as well as the further sustainable development of tourism. So, the appeal of each city does not lie in the fact of historical legacy, but in the ability to continue the history and build the future that would be in harmony with the past. For the past few decades, there has been tremendous development activity with regard to heritage sites or temple corridors in India. As per the PRASHAD scheme, GOI aims to develop pilgrimage sites in a sustainable and planned manner by establishing a comprehensive urban infrastructure providing through temple corridors as opium of the people. Such corridors includes:

- Mahakal Corridor
- Kashi Corridor

Kashi Vishwanath Dam Corridor in Varanasi is a new project of development surrounding the sacred Temple known as Kashi Vishwanath temple. This attempt at the contemporary development of the area, which is trying to respect the historical aspect includes road broadening, ghat restoration, and the temple connectivity with other structures. Analysing the effectiveness of using heritage for developing

urban planning, the project shows the willingness to conserve the heritage through the restoration of historical buildings as well as the introduction of historical architecture to the new structures. Nonetheless, there are issues to do with community engagement since some people from the area have been displaced and there are issues of how inclusive the setup is. Further, as the project focuses on the sustainable development through enhancement of tourists' facilities, the problem of overcrowding and the consequences from incoming tourist flows remain crucial for the preservation of the historical buildings and natural environment. Altogether, the main issues that the project has to solve are the conflict between development and the protection of the heritage, the involvement of the communities in the management and the development of sustainable tourism for the project to be viable in the long run, and the integration of the protection of the heritage and modern planning.

The Mahakal Dham Corridor in Ujjain shall beautify the approach periphery of the Mahakaleshwar temple while also respecting the prehistoric context of the place. Amenities have been harmonized well in the site without erasing the cultural significance of the place. It has therefore been argued that the positive attributes include the following: conservation

of the importance of the temple, development of the physical structures, involving the people, and the development of tourism as a motor of economic development.

One such another proposed corridor is of **Grishneshwar Corridor** in Chh.Sambhajinagar located near UNESCO heritage site Ellora, Verul village.

V. GRISHNESHWAR TEMPLE CORRIDOR

Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, which are considered sacred abodes of Lord Shiva in Hinduism. It is located near the famous Ellora Caves in the Chh.Sambhajinagar district of Maharashtra, India. It has been identified under the PRASHAD scheme by the Government of India, an initiative to develop the pilgrim site and enhance the tourist infrastructure for the better experience of the devotees. Grishneshwar is well connected from Chh.Sambhajinagar which is approx.30 km, accessible from all modes of transportation such as 29 kms from Aurangabad railway station, 36 km from Aurangabad airport while 28 km from central bus stand of Aurangabad. Other connections from Grishneshwar are 104 km Jalna, 99 kms Shirdi, 117 km from Dhule & 172 kms Nashik.



Fig 2: Grishneshwar temple

Source - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grishneshwar_Temple

There are several other tourist destinations near Grishneshwar that are rich in cultural, historical and natural attractions. One of the prominent tourist destination is UNESCO world heritage site i.e. Ellora caves. Other attractions are Mahismal Hill station, Bhadra Maruti temple, Daulatabad fort, Panchakki, Bibi ka Maqbara, which helps to create a tourist hub and increase the influx of tourist and helps to boost the city's economy.

Being one of the 12th jyotirling, Grishneshwar attracts devotees from all over India, especially during the Maha Shivaratri, Shravan month, Shani Amavasya when special prayers & rituals are performed. Weekday visitors are comparatively less in number and are not as regular as weekend and festival pilgrims to the Grishneshwar Temple. The average footfall in the temple during weekdays is recorded to be between 25000 to 30000 pilgrims. For instance, there are morning and evening aarti which are performed on a daily

basis and have a constant stream of devotees and add to the lively spiritual experience of the temple for the remainder of the week as well. Pilgrims through the temple in large numbers especially on weekends and holidays, whereas, week days do not witness such rush and hence, Grishneshwar Temple is comparatively less crowded. In Mahashivratri, which falls under the Great Pilgrimage Festival, the number of pilgrims visiting the temple is between six to seven thousand daily. In this event, the number of pilgrims who flock the place is about 4000-5000. Specifically, the footfall is up to 1 on every

Monday, which is 48 days a year. 5 – 2 lakh Pilgrims and devotees. The major crowd is observed during the festivals like Mahashivratri and Shravan at the temple. Many shops dealing in religious articles, trinkets, and other items along with other fun rides are present in the streets. Therefore, while the streets are used and lively during such occasions, they also undergo a number of issues including traffic jam, overcrowding and poor provision of services and facilities for such a dynamic population flow.

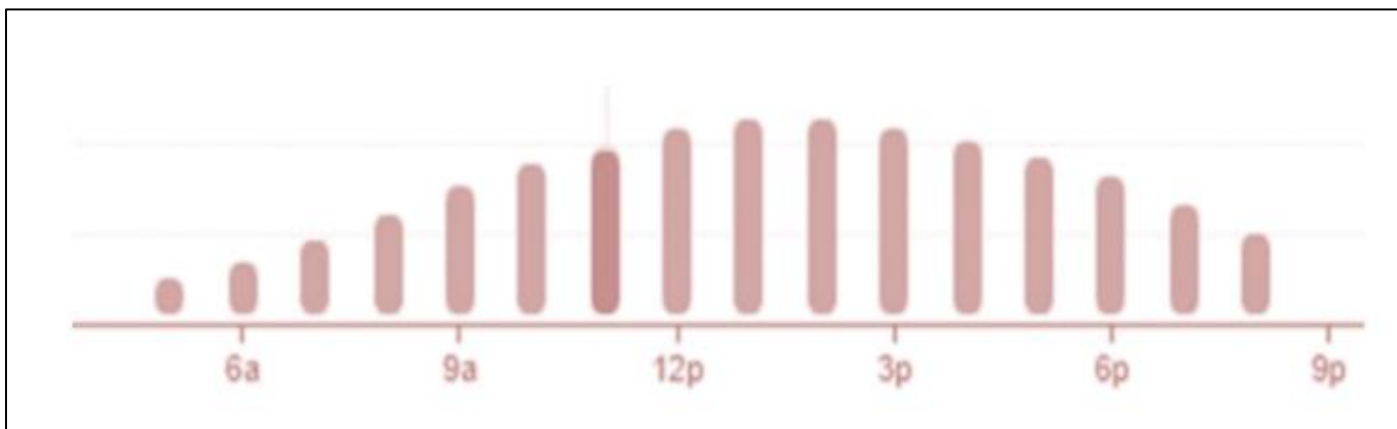


Fig 3: Footfall During Weekdays

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=ellora+CAVES&q=ELL&gscrp=EgZ>

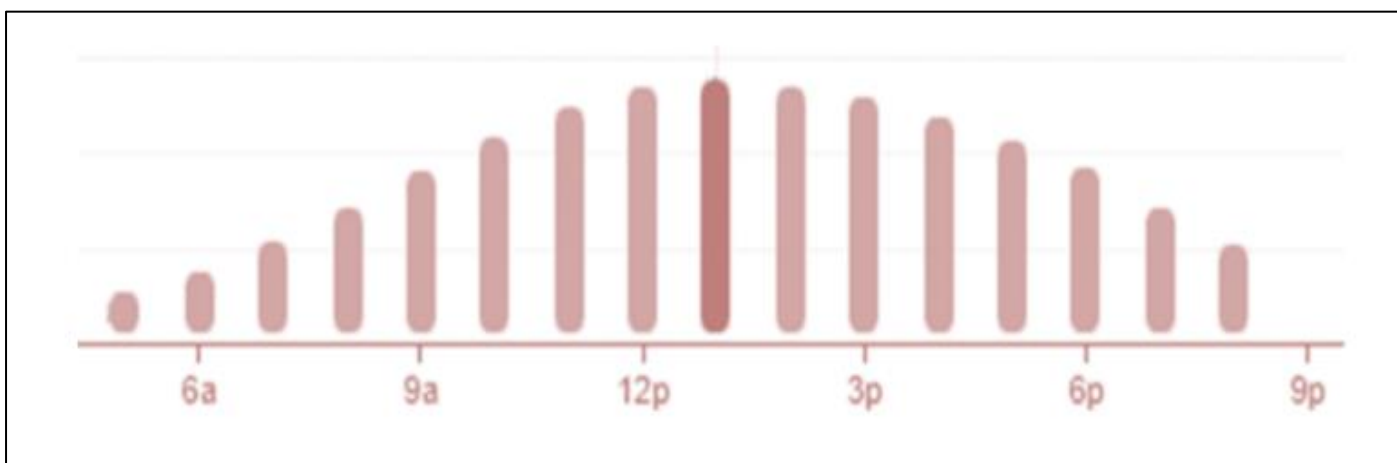


Fig 4: Footfall During Weekends & Events

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=ellora+CAVES&q=ELL&gscrp=EgZ>

The modern urban issues that are observable in Grishneshwar bear the imprint on the physical appearance and importance of the site as a place of worship. During the festival period it is overcrowded a pressure of pilgrims affects the limited number of facilities available in the village like parking space and sanitation. The approach to Grishneshwar is dusty with traffic hindrances and there are no sufficient means of public transport. Furthermore, the ongoing increase in the area’s urbanization threatens to destroy the cultural and historical aspect of the place it is in and constructions of buildings and businesses can also disrupt the serene atmosphere of the temple. One of the very critical issues is

inability to properly manage wastes and dispose them off in the right manner. This is because human traffic is normally associated with a lot of littering, which in turn affects the natural environment in that particular area. These problems should be solved only by emphasizing on the infrastructural development, enhancement of public services and by adoption of sustainable development so that the spiritual and cultural heritage of Grishneshwar can be saved. Henceforth by reviving the Grishneshwar corridor it can overcome with the current challenges facing and reboot in the form of better space for pilgrims.

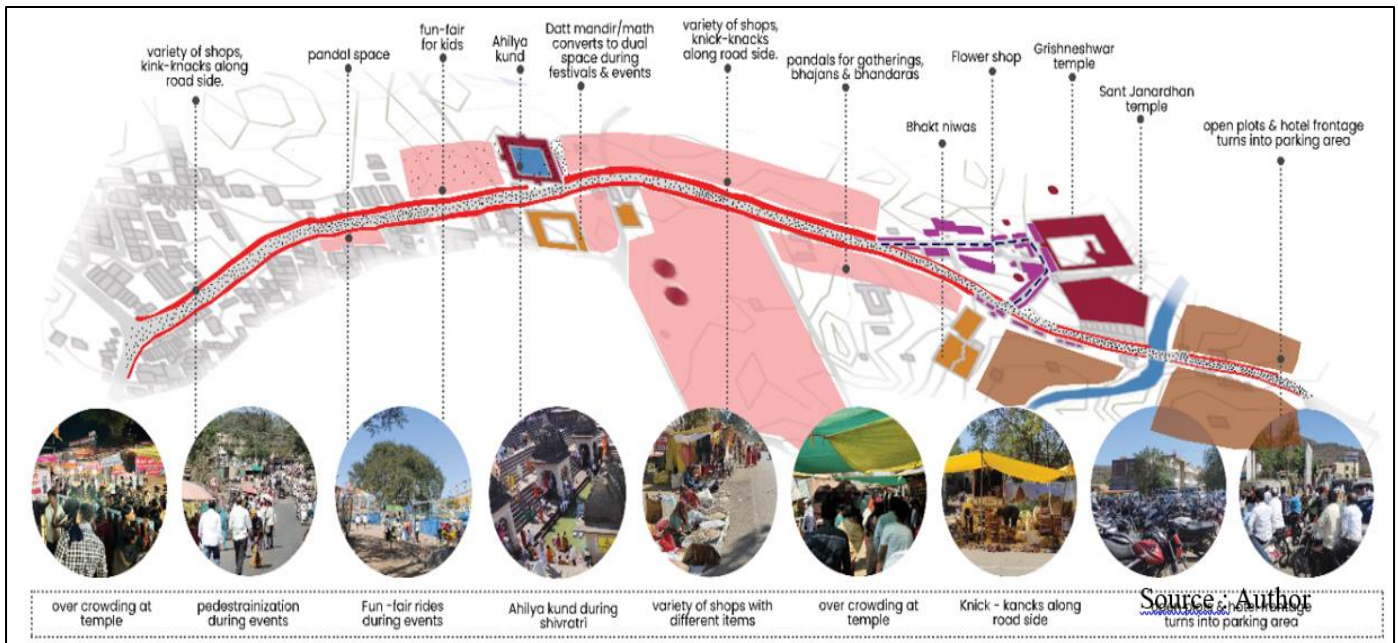


Fig 5: Festival Based Activites
 Source: Author

VI. CONCLUSION

The new temple corridors in India built recently are epitome of how the country is keen to preserve the cultural and religious architectures. Although corridors demonstrate architectural brilliance and are conducive to accessibility and modern technology, the possible environmental issues, costs, and stakeholders' effects must be considered. Thus, keeping in mind and analyzing these factors, India can go on designing temple corridors that are in harmony with the future and yet rooted in the past. The question remains on the minds of many: Is the process of change in cities of India compromising the basic structure and quality of the city and reducing the complexity of cultural and aesthetic structure that provided the basis for city's popularity? Maybe that's the way it is. It is not to strive for the change or even its opposite, but to discover this perfect balance when history and contemporary life are one. It is still a challenge, but the pursuit of keeping the being of Indian cities alive in the middle of the processes of globalization is still very much an inspiring flame that can light the path moving forward in the continuing narrative of transformation. The temple cloisters of Indian cities are the reflection of the country's culture and religion. With the progress of the modern life and the process of urbanization that is actively taking place now, these spiritual trails remain the evidence of the people's ability to preserve traditions and to modify them to the certain extent. Thus, through appropriate proportionality of the modernization and the conservation, the Indian cities will ensure that the temple corridors are active and significant components of spirituality, trade and social interaction. The essence is in adopting appropriate urban design, development and embracing the historical characteristics of such cities. The challenge of maintaining the growth of the cities and at the same time the retention of the Indian culture is a very

sensitive area to address as it seeks to retain the spirit of the Indians in the two cities as they are transformed.

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