



## MAPPING THE SACRED: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF PLACES OF WORSHIP IN VILLAGE LADWI OF HISAR DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

Religion and geography appear to have little in common at first glance. The majority of those who are interested in the study of religion are also generally less interested in the study of geography. Religious places have always played a significant role in societies' social and cultural fabric. This paper explores the function of religious places in the village of Ladwi, focusing on their historical, cultural, and social significance. Through examining the sacred spaces with an empirical approach, the paper explores how religious places contribute to the spiritual and social well-being of their respective communities. The central focus of this research paper is to understand how a religious place functions in the space, place and location. Hisar is known for its rich cultural history and there are various temples, Geographical study of religion in the concerned area has been neglected, which is why this study aims to investigate the development, spread, and impact of religion on people's lives from a geographical perspective. Geographical factors play a vital role in answering pertinent questions about religion. Places of worship also hold significant importance as they are integral parts of the cultural landscape. The historical background of worship places is complex and multifaceted, and studying it from a geographical perspective can provide valuable insights. However, there has been a notable absence of such research in the concerned study area. Therefore, investigating the factors that contributed to the origin of worship places is an important goal of this study.

**KEYWORDS :** Religion, sacred, Cultural landscape, worship, community

### Introduction

For ages, people have argued over the term "religion" derivation. The Latin term for "conscientiousness" or "reverences (for the Gods)" is where the English word "reverences" obviously stems from. But it's unclear what religion's first forms were. Religion is the presence of a sacred or holy belief.

Various groups of people and communities view religion differently. It is challenging to imagine Thailand or India without Buddhism or Hinduism since many of the great religions of the world have grown so intricately entwined with specific racial groups, cultures, governmental systems, lifestyles and regions. (Tyler 1990 p.12). Although geography and religion have been connected since the Ancient World, there is still no strong linkage between them. (Kong, L. 1990). Several natural or physical elements, such as mountaintops, water sources, trees, caverns, grottoes, stones, and animals, are connected to sacred locations. Religiously motivated beliefs and behaviours play a significant influence in human affairs, making the spatial and environmental components of religious behaviour, artefacts, and attitudes fertile ground for the mind of the geographer. (Stoddart R.H & Prorok V. Carolyn). Humans have always looked for a sense of security even in the primitive times when they started living in a pack. The sacred places are the sources of the feeling of being secure., Religion and cosmological beliefs frequently take on a spatial quality, such as notions of where specific religious activities should take place, where items should be placed, which lands or locations are considered to be holy, or how spiritual landscapes appear and are structured. (Knott K 2009). Geography has also been an important part of spirituality, as mankind has seen divine power in the natural elements or processes, therefore we see different religious characteristics closely associated with the spatial characteristics of the respective space. Sacred places have been a very important cultural feature of human settlements all over the world and not limited to the cities but to the forests and remote areas which are still away from the complexities of the world. Human settlement and religious sites have a symbiotic relationship in which each has a considerable impact on the other. To survive, the earliest human settlements were frequently situated close to water supplies and fertile terrain.

Religious practices developed into a more organised form as

human communities got more sophisticated and well-formed, and temples were built to both honour the gods and make worship easier. The link between places of worship and human habitation is dynamic and multifaceted, with one having a considerable impact on the other. The constructed environment and spiritual beliefs of various communities throughout history have both been significantly shaped by this interaction. Primitive religion was distinguished from the socio-culture act where customs and rituals are defined as emotional reality. what is the reality? how can we know? who are we? why do we stay with spirituality? Religion has been an approach to answering one or more questions. Therefore, it is necessary to study the places of worship or sacred spaces. To understand this perspective village Ladwi of Hisar, Haryana has been selected for the insights.

### Study Area

The village Ladwi is in Hisar district situated in Haryana, India. It is 22 kilometres from the district headquarters in Hisar and 9 kilometres from Adampur to the west. 238 km from Chandigarh, the state capital. The coordinates of the village are 29.2334° N, 75.5524° E. The Ladwi village has a population of 3682 of which 1955 are males while 1727 are females as per Population Census 2011. Ladwi village is known for its rich cultural heritage and traditional customs. The Ladwi is one of the oldest human settlements in the region which was established in 1214 A.D and went through different cultural shifts people migrated from different places and brought their customs and beliefs with them. The spread of the village is in 17.69 km<sup>2</sup> of area



Base Map: Google Earth (Air Bus 2023)

GIS-based Map showing the Geographical Location of the Study Area. (ARC MAP)



**Objectives:**

- To understand the spatial distribution of sacred places in the village Ladwi?
- How did the spiritual or sacred landscape evolve in the village of Ladwi?
- What are some functions performed by sacred places?

**Methodology & Data Sources**

This study aims to conduct a geographical analysis of places of worship in the village of Ladwi. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach has been used, which includes an empirical survey, and interviews for data collection and analysis. The paper is more inclined to the qualitative aspect.

**Data Collection:**

- **Observation:** The initial stage in gathering data was to observe the village in order to identify and pinpoint the places of worship. The observation has conducted by strolling through the village and recording each place of worship's location, structure, and affiliation with a particular religion.
- **Interviews:** To learn more about the background and significance of each place of worship, interviews were held with village elders. These conversations took place in the regional tongue, and they were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis.

**Secondary Data Collection**

- (I) Ladwi's historical and demographic information was collected from local government offices and libraries as part of the secondary data collection process.
- (ii) Maps and Satellite Imagery: To map the various sacred places of the location, Google Earth map Airbus (2023) was used for GIS operations.

**Results and Findings**

**Spatial distribution of sacred places**

Sacred spaces are locations that hold significant religious or spiritual importance to people. The spatial distribution of sacred spaces varies depending on religion or spiritual practice, cultural traditions, and historical factors. It facilitates the analysis of relationships between different aspects together and creates maps to understand the landscape.

The arrangement of any geographical phenomenon on the surface of the earth is referred to as its spatial distribution in geography.

**Table No.1**

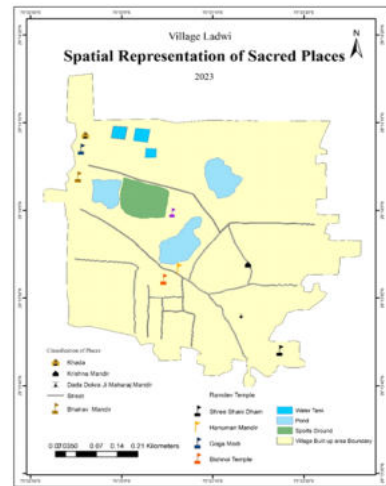
Sr. No.	Sacred places based on the Religious/Spiritual beliefs	Number of Temples	Coordinates
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1.	Khada	01	29°14'8.57"N, 75°32'56.02"E
2.	Goga Medi	01	29°14'6.99"N, 75°32'55.61"E
3.	Bhairav Baba Mandir	01	29°14'3.82"N, 75°32'55.26"E
4.	Bishnoi Temple	01	29°13'52.14"N, 75°33'4.66"E
5.	Hanuman Temple	01	29°13'53.35"N, 75°33'6.39"E
6.	Ramdev Temple	01	29°13'59.75"N, 75°33'5.59"E
7.	Krishna Temple	01	29°13'53.80"N, 75°33'13.87"E
8.	Dada Dokra Ji Maharaj Mandir	01	29°13'47.93"N, 75°33'13.11"E
9.	Shree Shani Dham	01	29°13'44.03"N, 75°33'17.39"E

Source: Field Survey, 2023

During the field visit, it was recorded that there were many sacred spaces in the village. The number of these temples was one, but there were variations in beliefs and associated Gods and local deities. This indicates a diverse society within the village. The mapping has been done to understand the relationship with other associated elements.

Map showing the location of various sacred places in village Ladwi. (2023)



**1. Khada** - It is located in the North-West part of the village on a major entry point of the village. This sacred place can be found in almost all the villages in North India.

**2. Goga Medi:** It is also located in the North-West part of the village in the sacred groves and close to Khada and Bhairav Baba temples.

**3. Bhairav Baba Mandir:** This temple is located in the western part of the village on Kohli-Mahalsra road.

**4. Bishnoi Temple:** This Temple is having a central location and there is a pond nearby the temple

**5. Hanuman Temple:** This temple holds the most nodal geographical position and has a pond in the north direction.

**6. Ramdev Temple:** This one also comes in centrality and the area around it is barren and, on its Western side there is a sports ground.

7. Krishna Temple: This sacred place is located on the eastern side of the village and surrounded by houses this temple is dedicated to Lord Krishna.

8. Dada Dokra Ji Maharaj Mandir: This sacred place is associated with the local deity and is situated in the south-eastern part of the village.

9. Shree Shani Dham: The location of this religious place is in the outer part of the village.

### Evolution of Sacred places

The village lies in the western part of Haryana and is close to Hisar, which has deep historical roots and has been influenced by various cultures. It also has a rich and complex history which shaped its landscape. The village was established in 1214 A.D and as per the records from the local people, people from the Islam faith were in Majority. The sacred places from that period were not traced during field visits. The people who founded this village migrated to other parts of the country. The village also received people from diverse areas and villages who settled later and it can be seen through various Temples and religious places.



The location of sacred sites frequently reflects the significance of irrigation and water resources because the majority of the history of social and political activities in the area has also had a significant role in determining the location of sacred sites in the villages of Haryana. Overall, the development of sacred sites in the villages of Haryana reflects the distinctive historical and cultural character of the area.

In the study area, people who moved in and settled here also brought their faith and later it became part of the religious landscape. The oldest and the biggest temple is Lord Krishna or Vishnu Temple which is having a central placement and has been a very important sacred place for the whole village. Other temples like Lord Hanuman temple were built on the wasteland where people used to dump. Sometimes these sacred places also preserve the land for society from encroachment.

People also built their sacred places which show distinctive faith. In the village, the Bishnoi temple reflects a particular way of worship. There are several temples which are in the outer parts of the village which shows that they came to the landscape in the later part and the Gods act as guardians for the native of the village.

The growth of a religious space can be a complex and multifaceted process.

1. Establishment of a sacred site: The growth of a religious space typically begins with the establishment of a sacred site. The sites were found to have an association with natural feature ponds or trees.

2. Formation of a community: The sacred sites attract a community of followers who come to worship and pay their respects from the neighbouring villages

3. Development of infrastructure: As the community grows, it

may develop the infrastructure necessary to support religious practices, such as a temple or prayer hall. Most of the sacred spaces were found in such spaces.

4. Expansion of the religious space: Over time temples have included new structures and facilities.

5. Incorporation into the broader community: The religious space may become an important part of the broader community, with people from outside the religious community also visiting and participating in its activities. The people of the village visit most of the temples.

### Functions of Sacred Places:

Sacred places, whether they are natural formations, man-made structures, or religious sites, serve various functions for people and communities. Here are some of the functions that sacred places may perform:

1. Connection to the divine: Many people in the village believe that sacred places provide a direct connection to the divine or spiritual world.

2. Ritual and worship: Sacred places are often used for religious rituals and worship. These rituals involve offerings, prayers, or other symbolic acts. In the study area, some internal functions are performed in the sacred space which are as:

I. Prayer: In temples, the priest performs prayer every morning and evening before sunrise and after sunset. In different temples, there are specific days when people go for prayer or blessings.

II. Bhandaras: Public feeding is also another function performed by places. Few temples give food or eatables every week, whereas in some temples there are specific occasions.

3. Inspiration and contemplation: Many people find inspiration and solace in sacred places, which may offer a sense of peace and tranquillity. These places may be conducive to contemplation, meditation, and reflection, providing individuals with space for spiritual growth and self-discovery.

4. Protecting the environment: Many trees were found in the temple complex, especially in the outer temples of the village. These trees are also considered sacred; therefore no one causes harm to any life form in the sacred landscape.

### Conclusion

The evolution of religious places has been a continuous process that has influenced geographical space in significant ways. From the early days of animism to the organized religions of today, religious places have played an essential role in shaping spiritual beliefs and the built environment. The impact of religious places on geographical space is evident in settlement patterns, urbanization, and the design and architecture of buildings. As society continues to evolve, religious places will likely continue to transform, reflecting the beliefs, practices, and cultural values of future generations. In the village, it was found that there is a strong diversity in sacred spaces. The distribution of these spaces is almost the entire village. There are various functions which are performed by these spaces which are an essential component of Society.

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