

THE 'DISRUPTION': A STUDY OF EVOLVING URBAN ACADEMIC SPACES

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ABSTRACT:

Disruption is the phenomenon that has always been associated with the negative schema. The present research ventures to deconstruct this idea through a systematic-critical study of the transforming, or rather evolving Public Buildings/ Spaces of Ahmedabad city, Gujarat, India. The major focus of this study is to examine the impact of digitalization on Millennial Communication, and the experiential learning of the Millennials through these changing modes of Urban Design. The present paper strives to critically observe the various spaces such as, a traditional academic library i.e. Gujarat Vidyapith, and the "Non-traditional" model, i.e. British library. The hypothesis here, is to state the facts regarding the traditional designs, and the changing new designs which are being re-shaped as per the needs of the Millennials. These new designs are neither time bounded nor space bounded, they are accessible and intrinsic. The paper is largely based on an empirical as well as elaborated critical study of Ahmedabad city, Gujarat, India, and the academic spaces mentioned earlier, i.e. The Libraries. This research has been further anatomized through a series of interviews with 'affected' millennials, qualitative analyses of the collected information, etc. The changing designs that are affecting the millennials of the city, their behavioral patterns, and the culture of communication, these are the crux of the present discourse. The focus here, is on the library spaces and the academic communication.

Key Words: Academic Spaces, Disruption, Millennial Communication, Public Buildings/Spaces, Urban Design

1.INTRODUCTION: DECODING THE DISRUPTION

The Cambridge Online Dictionary defines the 'disruption' as to prevent something, especially a system, process, or event, from continuing as usual or as expected[1], whereas Merriam-Webster attempts to decode it as to break apart, to interrupt the normal course or the unity of something[2]. The important aspect of this disruption is that, it very often comes with a negative connotation. The day-to-day usage of the term has been referred to as something intruding and disturbing. But, the thinkers from the different disciplines have started to reject the association of fatalistic meaning to the word disruption, and re-defined it as per their understanding. The Post-Structuralist notion of this disruption has much similarity with Derrida's understanding of deconstruction.

Though, the Modern-day philosophical and logical arguments are over-loaded with the discussion of Derrida's arguments, the researcher couldn't deny the fact that its sociological relevance is much important to be discussed here.

It is significant in the present discussion to understand Derridian rupture, which has not only contributed to provide theoretical conception to most of the applied disciplines today, but it has also helped to redefine their existing models and structures. The concept and notion of this much discussed Derridian rupture can be found in Derrida's famous critique and theory which is known as *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* [3]. The Initial bit of this much acclaimed essay talks about the "event" which has multiple meanings. It has been skillfully defined as the "rupture" and "redoubling".

"The appearance of a new structure, of an original system, always comes about--and this is the very condition of its structural specificity--by a rupture with its past, its origin, and its cause" (Derrida 290).

The present research document has adopted this notion of breaking the structure into pieces and attempted to redefine the role of disruption in the light of the evolving academic spaces. The paper delves into the realms of Newly emerging trends that the urban designers and academicians have adopted to make these academic spaces more functional for its users. The consumption and creation, and designing of these New academic spaces has duly shaped the present piece of research. In order to dig deeper to enlighten the more authentic insights the 'context' of the research has been kept very specific. The Ahmedabad city has recently been announced as the World Heritage City by UNESCO. The real treasure of the city doesn't lie only its rich inheritance of Art and culture but also in the fact that the city has a possession of old libraries, i.e. Gujarat Vidyapith, Gujarati SahityaParishad, SahityaAkademi Library, M.J. Library etc.

Apart from this the city has also adopted these newly emerging ways in which the knowledge can be created, shared, and read. The *Disruption* in the designing of these specialized academic spaces have started to occur with the rising popularity of the reading spaces in the city like Crossword, Ahmedabad's A British Council Library, Moving Library, and Call-Library etc. The design, and facilitated access to these spaces have not only fascinated the readers from the Urban centers, but they also have catered to the better intellectual communication amongst the Millennials of the Ahmedabad city.

2. AHMEDABAD: ‘BEYOND THE WALL’



Fig. 1 “An aerial view of the Sabarmati River, which flows through Ahmedabad.” Yasin D. [4]

Ahmedabad city in Gujarat, India has inherited the magnificent Urban spaces, the rapid growth of the Urban centres has put the city in the category of the fastest growing cities of the world. This process of convergence is not intangible but it is indeed tangible. Every dweller of the city is enabled to exclusively experience this rapid change. Each dawn and dusk can be defined differently for the city, and that’s the true characteristic of *ApnuAmdavad*. The city is the epitome of glory, and faith in the divine, and this can be absorbed by looking at the confluence of different faiths that share the same land.

The Ahmedabad city has also been known as the Walled city, which draws the researcher’s attention back to its elder and older identity. The urban scenario of Ahmedabad has left the identity of the “Walled City” far behind. The proposed projects like the development of Sabarmati river-front, Vastrapur lake, Kankaria lake has changed the experience of living in the city for its dwellers. The city that had restricted variety of spaces for the “wanderers”, now has embedded a wide range of places for outing to be explored on the busy week-day evenings, or the lazy weekends.

The Urban Designers of the Modern Ahmedabad have contributed immensely in shaping the ‘New Freed City’ of Ahmedabad. Today, the city has the ownership of the various appealing parks, gardens, café and restaurants, malls, street shopping centres, plazas and arcades, enclaves etc. The public-transport services, and the academic spaces are also evolving and changing their forms everyday with progressive progress of the city. With the emanation of the proposed MRTS and the existing BRTS, this will be going to switch into the new trends of the emerging Urban spaces- the plazas, Metro station, it’s interface, transition spaces and the intermediate upcoming Urban pockets. There will be a positive change in the overall scenario of Urban spaces of Ahmedabad by this new Mega proposal, the Metro.

3. THE 'ACADEMIA' OF AHMEDABAD'S ACADEMIC SPACES

The major academic spaces of any culture are pre-occupied with the buildings of schools, and colleges and Universities. The library spaces are often being neglected by the researchers who talk about the evolution of education in their nation. The library is one of the most important rubric of the academic spaces of Urban centres. It is believed that the origin of the libraries during the ancient times has much to do with the 'preservation of knowledge'. Later, the development in the field of education witnessed the emergence of the Universities as the acknowledged and recognized academic spaces which formally introduced the role of the libraries into its culture. The handwritten scripts produced by various scholars used to be preserved here in the libraries of the University.

As has been discussed earlier in the present research paper, the Ahmedabad city has also been known for its possession of the ancient and modern libraries that have contributed a lot in preserving the knowledge and wisdom of the scholars under their safe and secured roofs. The libraries of Ahmedabad represent the scholarship of its Millennials. The consumption of these libraries not only show the scholarly and intellectual practice of the younger generation of the cities, but it also well-defines the culture of communication of these Millennials with the Knowledge. These spaces also trace back the impact of Design on the human behavioral patterns, and how it can be decoded from the critical reading of the following research passages.

4. THE 'PASTNESS OF THE PAST' AND THE 'MODERNIST SENSE' OF THE ACADEMIC SPACES

T.S. Eliot a well-known American poet, critic, and dramatist has talked extensively about the 'Historical Sense' of the piece of art [5]. He firmly believed that the creation of art is not inherent but it can be learnt through experiences. The amalgamation of the glorious past with the new present can extract something inimitable. Thus the simultaneous observation of the Gujarat Vidyapith that can be identified as the traditional and one of the most glorified library space of Ahmedabad. It truly embodies the spirit of Eliot's 'pastness of the past'. The place is not only enriched with the abundance of knowledge in the form of the collection of rare and invaluable books, journals, and reference works, but also has the nostalgic feel to be offered to its users. The aesthetics of the library lie in the fact that it is a part of the University: 'Gujarat Vidyapith' which was founded by Mahatma Gandhi, who had also contributed and provided his exceptional services as the Chancellor of the University.

Here are the rubrics of the Gujarat Vidyapith library which includes its services, functions, structures etc.

"The library remains open 364 days a year, remaining closed only on the first day of the *VikramSamvat*. The membership of the library is open to the public at a nominal fee. Gujarat Vidyapith Library is a central library with glorious history during independence struggle. collection of more than 6 lakhs books, volume sets, rare books and reference. Since its inception it has also served citizens of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, making it academic as well public library. Reading area has seating capacity for more than 350 individuals. The library is

spread among three floors. Total area of library is 6670 sq. mtrs. Solar panel is installed on the top of library and that lightens a part of library. Besides the students and staff, library caters its services to the general public. People from all walks of life use library services. On an average library is serving to about 5000 to 6000 users every year." ("Gujarat Vidyapith") [6].

The transformation of the traditional model into a Modern day library can be observed through its adaptation of the technology such as:

"complete database of all library documents are available in library software SOUL. The retrieval of books information is available through OPAC. Library is receiving the services of UGC INFONET electronic journal consortia. ERNET India is providing a lease line internet connectivity and electronic journals are available through UGC INFONET programme. All the departments are accessing electronic journals online through campus network. Library has also facilities of computer lab has 18 computers with internet and e-journals access for students and staff, 15 computers are for library and information science students and 32 computers are for library operation including user access terminal." ("Gujarat Vidyapith").

The consumption of the library space of Gujarat Vidyapith is mostly driven by the students affiliated to Gujarat Vidyapith-The University. The library building is surrounded by the serene and blissful Nature, the spacious sitting area, and the availability sanitary facility give the opportunity to the Millennials to acquire the knowledge, share it with each other. The space is not just knowledge driven but also Gender-sensitive. The young girls who belong to the rural areas or the lower strata of Socio-Economic conditions can also enroll themselves at very nominal prices. The values of Mahatma Gandhi seem to be well-preserved in this traditional sample model of the present research. Though the present space is well-stud with the Modern and technological amenities, it largely represents the conventional way of visiting the libraries, and experiencing the preserved knowledge by attending the space physically.

On the other hand, the World Heritage City has embedded the Non-traditional library space that too has history behind its glorious existence, but it has managed to surpass the boundaries of tradition way back and moved ahead with the new identity of 'Newly Evolved Academic Space.' If the advent of the British Council of India in the form of a library space in India to be analyzed, it can be critically thought over from the Post-Colonial lenses as one of the most important purpose behind the British Colonization was that the White Masters believed that they are the true possessors of the Knowledge and they can manipulate it, donate it, and mold it as per their capitalistic beneficiary needs and requirements. The British Council library too, was established across the globe in various countries as the representative of the British authority over the Knowledge.

As per the records the first ever British Council library was founded in China, and later it was introduced to the countries like Japan, Indonesia and later in India. The library functions with dissimilar and unique ways and purposes. It represents the intellectual and cultural amalgamation of various Nations. The rubrics of the Ahmedabad Library of the British Council are as follows:

“It has the wide collection of over 20,000 books, DVDs, magazines and newspapers, apart from that the user is enabled to Browse through full collection online or can visit the library Tuesday to Sunday. The library member can also connect with British library through Facebook, Instagram, twitter, Blog, YouTube and RSS. The online chat facility can be availed for the user using live chat feature, Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. The British Library, Ahmedabad also organizes lot of exciting events takes place for children’s and adults. The British Council in Ahmedabad has launched a library tour for school children and teachers to explore the amazing world of books, magazines, online resources, films and English language workshops.” (“British Library”) [7].

The British Library, Ahmedabad also conducts workshops to learn to access the online database of lot of online journal, books, theses, and reading materials from “Zinio, Instantflix, Ebrary, Academic One file, Comics Plus, Atomic Training, JSTOR, PressReader, Oneclick digital and many more.” The data states that the users of this popular academic spaces include the Millennials too. The exposure and experience that the Non-traditional design of this space provides to its users has actually revolutionized the experience of the library-as a major academic space. The Millennial communication here is not restricted to the face-to-face interactions but it can go beyond the building of the British Library even over a mobile screen.

5. CONCLUSION

The Millennial Communication has been much influenced by the existence of such evolving academic spaces. Getting education, or acquainting oneself with the abundance of knowledge today is neither time-bounded nor space bounded. The representative academic spaces of Ahmedabad i.e. Gujarat Vidyapith and British Library have shaken conventional meaning of Academic space design. In a way both of them have produced the rupture that has reshaped the reading culture of Ahmedabad city. The consumption pattern and users’ participation can be studied further as a separate research. The limitations of the present research are the unavailability of quantitative data sampling which, too can be dealt with in the separate research work. These academic urban spaces have undoubtedly redefined the overall urban scenario of the Ahmedabad city in its entirety. The present research opens up the possibilities for the readers to unfold the intricacies of these hidden urban spaces and their changing designs that contribute most to the world of innovations.

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