



## Reframing the Sacred: A Phenomenological and Interpretive Study of Spatial Experience

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### Abstract

The present study considers sacredness to be a lived experience of the space that is interpreted differently in the religious sphere than in the secular one. The study is based on the phenomenological idea and particularly the ideas of Mircea Eliade, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and modern day philosophers and it looks into how sanctity is revealed through human consciousness, memory, and sensory contact with the surrounding space. The aura is no longer seen as a static or built-in quality but rather as a phenomenon that appears under specific circumstances of space and time, and through experiential activities. The emphasis is laid not only on singular individual subjective accounts but mainly on the spatial and architectural conditions which make and influence the experiences to happen. One of the important features of the study is the concept of sacredness as a social phenomenon that is produced by the interplay of human perception and the place's material and sensory attributes. The researchers show that people's experiences of the sacred can occur in many different contexts such as memorials, streets, and homes, relying on such things as material transitions, spatial thresholds, sound, and light as the elements of the process. By using the interpretive phenomenological research method, the study investigates how people meet, conceive of, and get physically engaged with space. Critical literature review and thematic analysis are applied in the identification of the main characteristics of sacred space including liminality, sensory intensity, and shifts in temporal perception. The results not only draw the attention of the academic community but also give the needed insights for the architects, urban planners, and scholars who would like to design modern spaces that are rich in meaning, emotions, and experiences.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, Sacred Space, Lived Experience, Urban Transcendence, Symbolism, Spatial Design, Collective Memory, Interpretation.

### Introduction

Sacredness is commonly associated with religion, rites, and special structures such as mosques, temples, and churches. Nevertheless, in our modern world, many people consider the urban and rural spaces of daily life i.e. homes, parks, streets, or memorials—as the places of their sacredness. These places are not religious in the strictest sense but they can be regarded as

powerful, tranquil, or even divine in their own right. This indicates that sacredness is not merely a religious issue. It is also a matter of people's perception and experience of space, both in the personal, emotional, and sensory contexts. This paper aims to illustrate the notion of sacredness as an experienced phenomenon by resorting to a phenomenological method. Taken this way, sacredness is not a characteristic of a place, rather it is a result of people's meaningful interaction with that place. It might be through the light streaming into a tranquil room, a sound reverberating in a large hall, or the fragrance of the flowers in a garden that one senses it. Such mundane events are the sources of people's serenity, bonding, or transformation, thus making the place divine. The goal of the research is to reconfigure sacredness as not a static and religious phenomenon, but one that varies from place to place. Sacredness can occur to a person, through rituals, or as a collective memory. It can intrude during solitary moments of thinking or during community activities like protests or festivals. In the end, it always hinges on people's interaction with the space in the various ways of movement, emotion, sound, time, and memory. To validate the above assumption, the paper draws on a vast amount of literature from the fields of philosophy, architecture, religious studies, and cultural theory. Literature is pivotal as it reveals the historicity of the concept of sacredness and also the ways in which it can be viewed more liberally in the present. Thinkers like Mircea Eliade and Maurice Merleau-Ponty present us with fruitful notions concerning how humans perceive and attribute meaning to a certain space. The religiously defined

The central research question guiding this study is:

**How can sacredness be redefined and understood as a phenomenological and spatial experience beyond religious boundaries through a critical analysis of existing theoretical and architectural literature?**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper presents a theoretical framework to reinterpret sacredness as a lived and spatial experience grounded in contemporary secular life. While inspired by Eliade (1959) foundational ideas of the sacred as an absolute, *sui generis* reality revealed through hierophanies, the lens proposes a transformation of this concept to reflect modern sensibilities and spatial experiences. Eliade (1959) dichotomy between sacred and profane is acknowledged but critically reworked. In contrast to Eliade's static and religiously bound view, the framework embraces sacredness as fluid, plural, and participatory, constructed through individual perception, cultural memory, and sensory engagement with space. The sacred no longer belongs to institutional religion, and it appears in collective ceremonies (like the political ones), memorials (like Ground Zero), and personal transformations. Therefore, the modern sacred is an emergent paradigm with the ability to redefine transcendent values, previously tied only to religion, through secular optics or pluralistic ones (Muti et al., 2024). This redefinition very often comes along with the sacralization of nature, community, or even individual well-being as immanent phenomena through the attainment of universality and significance (Salahuddin et al., 2024). The process dominates a conscious giving of respect to objects or concepts that are considered for a safe blow, which means defending the new social order from being violated, giving status or prestige, and responding to sacred prompts in niche environments (Paden, 2017). Hodor & Fekete, (2019) point out that the sacred is dynamic and not fixed; it is continuously created under the influence of the current political, economic, and social conditions. The model includes a classification by Evans (2003) and refers to four areas of sacredness, Personal, Spiritual, Civil, and Religious. These areas emphasize the connection between meaning, identity, and memory in both

traditional and modern contexts. The holy thing is thus a characteristic of the subject's experienced meaning rather than of the object itself. According to Irarrázaval (2020), Phenomenology considers sacredness not as a quality of space but as an arising phenomenon through human perception, interaction, and memory. From the perspective of lived experience, sacred places are formed through rituals, emotional connections, sensory experiences, and social interactions. This subjective experience influences identity, community, and psychological well-being.

### **Participatory & Relational Sacred:**

Sacredness through collective rituals or cultural engagement (e.g. Qawwali at shrines, Tahrir Square protests).

1. **Transformational & Liminal Sacred:** Transitional experiences facilitated by architectural sequences and thresholds (e.g., mosque entrances, urban memorials).
2. **Temporal & Evolving Sacred:** Memory-bound reinterpretations of space over time (e.g., Stolpersteine in Berlin, repurposed schools and homes).
3. **Personal & Sensory Sacred:** Sacred feelings triggered by light, texture, sound, and spatial rhythm (e.g., libraries, forests, museums).

Rather than intended for empirical validation, this framework serves as a conceptual lens to dissect how sacredness manifests in modernity. It does not claim a universal or fixed definition but encourages open-ended exploration into how design, memory, and perception continuously reshape sacred experiences in contemporary life, through a thorough discussion.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyze the notion of sacredness outside of religion.
2. To look into the phenomenological qualities of the holy place.
3. To point out the ways that sacredness can be felt through the physical, emotional and sensory dimensions.
4. To investigate the role of design in promoting sacred experiences in non-religious and city environments.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research presents significant contributions not only to theoretical but also to practical areas. It opens a path for academic researchers to pass through the architectural, phenomenological and religious studies borders. In contrast, it elaborates on the ways of making such spaces that would help the audience experience emotions, reflect spiritually and remember their cultural values, for instance, through the resonating, intoning, and memory-making qualities of the environment. Furthermore, it reconfigures the idea of sacred space in modern urban life.

### **Limitation of Research**

This study is mostly theoretical and does not include any fieldwork. It depends on existing literature and theoretical ideas, which may limit how widely applicable the findings are. Also, experiences of sacredness are very personal and vary across cultures, making it hard to interpret them universal.

### **Research Methodology**

The research adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in phenomenology. It conducts a qualitative, phenomenological method grounded in interpretive literature review and

theoretical synthesis of selected spatial case studies to discuss the sacredness attributes. Hence this research offers a comprehensive world view to explore how sacredness materializes through design and experience. Phenomenological concepts are illustrated through spatial examples such as Qawwali gatherings, Ashura processions and the Jewish Museum Berlin. Spatial sequences, sensory qualities, and temporal transformations are treated as "data" through conceptual case illustrations rather than field observations. This research doesn't acquire any empirical data.

### **Findings and Interpretations**

Through the understanding of the sacred, we have developed the attributes of the sacred spaces. These attributes define the character of sacred spaces, but the question of how these characteristics can be experienced through architecture leads us to explore the design language that reveals the manifestation of these attributes as sacred. The sacred phenomena of space, as lived by the human body and manifested through perception, memory, and time, lead to the comprehension of space and the development of a spatial understanding of the sacred experience as a whole (Shakeel et al., 2025). The space itself does not inherently possess sacredness; rather, sacredness occurs through the experience of the human mind and body, appearing in the form of variable events. Hence, in order to understand the lived phenomena of space, it is essential to recognize the multiple events a space holds. The manifestation of these events is dependent on the user and on the phenomenological qualities ascribed to the space. As previously discussed, these aspects will be thoroughly examined through a range of literature by various authors, exploring how they interpret and present differing concepts.

### **Relational and Participatory Engagement**

The phenomenon of participatory sacredness is the result of collective involvement, shared practices, and cultural narratives rather than fixed spatial qualities. It is dependent upon the way people gather, interact, and use a space together. The transformation can be temporary or long-lasting, depending upon the usage or the contact with the space. These engagements can be sensory, symbolic, or ritualistic, shaped by cultural, social, or religious practices. It is interesting to note that participation can be a quiet presence or an active involvement. The meaning of such engagement depends on both the character of the space and the individual's ability to interpret it. Calhoun (2020) cites that public places can transform into political reshaping and social involvement areas. They offer a venue for the public to come together, swap notions, and show their concerns as a group. People encircle the area and attribute their thoughts through sounds, gestures, and their physical presence. Sound, motion, nearness, and the placement of people in space are what bring about this change. All these things transform the normal spaces into areas that share importance and sometimes even holiness. Besides, the collective actions done repeatedly create the memories of the place as one of the long-standing relationships, strength, or community. One clear case is the case of Tahrir Square in Egypt. The square was earlier an ordinary public space but now it is a place where people of different faiths or views could unite. They did that by coming together, singing, and also through their fight for rights which was the 'power struggle' in the end. Likewise, Ren et al. (2020) mention that practices such as rituals, storytelling, and community traditions which are cultural activities also change the spaces and unite the people more. Rao (2018) argues that presence and activity of people make a space sacred and add up to urban identity and civic pride. Hence, the symbolic value of a space goes beyond its material shape (Amin, 2008). Fazal (2024) comments that Sufi tombs in the Indian subcontinent, where Qawwali music is played, become alive with spirituality through the sound and the collective listening taking place. Though such practices are not exactly formal rituals, the participants of the shared sensory experience are the ones who create a vibrant spiritual

atmosphere. It is through the shared sensory experiences that sacredness is created. In the same way, the Ashura processions change the image of the streets into holy ways with people chanting and moving together. The same could be said about the Hajj pilgrimage where participant's physical movement played a major role in fashioning and creating a holy experience in a transient space. In all these instances, sanctity. In these cases, sacredness doesn't become an inherent quality but is produced and experienced through shared action and ritual practice (Quang et al., 2022).

The mutual engagement of meaning among people turned ordinary city areas into places of cultural remembrance and identity (Soltani, 2020). To illustrate, the protests at Minar-e-Pakistan momentarily altered the perception of the area as a place of resistance and public proclaiming. The physicals gathering of people along with their mutual purposing was responsible for the changed understanding of the area (Amin, 2015). Such modification of perception corresponds to the liminality concept, whereby the place receives a new significance through the communion of present and act (Adisaputri & Widiastuti, 2015). Besides, festivals and community events are other avenues for demonstrating this phenomenon, the case at the Penafrancia Festival in the Philippines being one where movement, music, and performance are the means through which shared meaning is created (Peterson, 2020). Research investigates the relationship between public sacred spaces and the congregation of the faithful. Safe and comfortable are the most common feelings people associate with such spaces. The involvement of the general public that reaches out even to the non-participants of such practices has been reported in Estonia and Finland (Jonuks&Äikäs, 2019). It is the opposite in the Philippines, where youths relate the sacredness with everyday beauty, rituals, and ordinary experiences, which in return are linked to peace and community life (Peracullo et al., 2019). A phenomenological approach could regard sacredness as a space that is not static but rather in the making through sensory engagement, physical presence, and communal experience. The participants do not refer to sacredness in terms of the interior but rather through sound, movement, and visual means which make the ordinary spaces significant (Sani, 2015). Furthermore, it is also evidenced that the synchronised movement and collective bodily actions are at the heart of this phenomenon (Rebuya et al., 2020). Scholars argue that sacred spaces can emerge outside formal religious settings. They are shaped by human agency, cultural expression, and embodied practice (Ricketts, 2018; Thiessen &McAlpine, 2013). The body acts as a medium through which sacred meaning is produced. Sacredness, therefore, arises through lived experience and sensory engagement. This understanding aligns with Paden's (2017) view that sacredness is socially constructed and often temporary.

### **Transformational and Liminal Sacred**

The sacredness of life is very often felt through transformation and liminality, moments very close to God, through which one can get great spiritual understanding. The usual way of such experiences is to go through a process of detachment from what is ordinary, in this way the person can be where God wants him/her to be (Royyani&Rahajoe, 2014; Quinney, 1990). The passage through liminal spaces is the most important part of this journey, where the individual stays in the middle between the past self and the new one who is just about to be born, so that he/she can have a more powerful spiritual interaction (Bergmann, 2017 ; Ross, 2019). Dulaney& Fiske (1994) inform us that Liminality, a concept by Victor Turner, means the state of being in the middle "between", where all the previous social roles and relations are put aside, thus encouraging and facilitating the process of self-exploration and change. Crane (2016) states that this idea goes beyond just rituals, as the whole culture can be seen in the same way, where the

rules that had been in power are no longer applied, and therefore, the new meanings can be born. These liminal situations are characterized as "hotspots" or interstitial zones where the-existing paradigms are challenged and reconsidered (Greco & Stenner, 2017). These places of "thinness" or "borderlands" are spots of creation where the struggle between chaos and order can result in the growth of the individual both psychologically and spiritually (Hoyle, 2002; Brown et al., 2021). Transformative experiences like those in tantric retreats or holy pilgrimages can prompt a person to the awareness and healing that are at their peak (Plancke, 2020). The building of religious spaces that surrender such states has always been in vogue. The commission of ancient temple complexes and the modern therapeutic environments are to guide users through transforming journeys by spatial design, sensory elements, and symbolism. This whole process is subject to the influence of personal factors like age, gender, race, and the environmental situation (Breier et al., 2020).

### **Architectural Expressions of Liminality**

The meaning of the spatial sequences in the context of sacred experiences is very profound. The entrance to mosques, shrines, and churches greatly served as liminal zones, to be more precise, they acted as steps leading to the divine. In Islamic architecture, the pishtaq and iwan served as the main parts which bridged the profane and the sacred. Their size, light filtered through, and framing of the holy place created a moment of expectancy (Karimi, 2010). The phenomenological analysis of such spaces suggests that their features such as size, light, and enclosure, are the ones which determine how individuals will emotionally and spiritually engage with the space (Xu et al., 2025). The such transitions in no way aesthetic only but are intentionally designed to invoke veneration and absorption, thus leading the visitor through a ritual passage. The above mentioned design strategy is observable even in non-religious contexts. In the medical sector, well-designed spaces like the Cancer Care Centres of Maggie's, gradually change from the cold hospital atmosphere to one of the latter filled with natural light, warm materials, and the soft texture. The shifts are the ones that mainly support the emotional well-being and constitute the grounds to characterize the spaces as sacred through love, empathy, and presence (Lehman, 2011). Very much the same, memorial spots in cities usually come up to be the places that people are able to see death as a reality and consequently heal through their meditation. They do it via sound and light, physical (material) and symbolic changes which are able to control the emotional states and facilitate taking the painful experiences beyond the mere existence of suffering thus turning them into more significant (Broudehoux & Cheli, 2022). The pilgrim's journey to a shrine or sacred site also exemplifies this idea for example (Sani, 2015) argues that Sequential movement through thresholds progressively intensifies the spiritual experience, culminating in an encounter with the sacred. Sarkisyants( 2021) found that ancient Egyptian temples led worshippers through enclosed corridors into expansive halls. while Japanese Torii gates symbolically mark the transition from the everyday to the sacred. These examples illustrate how physical movement through space becomes a ritual, imbued with symbolic meaning. The idea is well exemplified if one considers the case of the pilgrim who goes on a journey to a shrine or sacred site for instance (Sani, 2015) says that Sequential movement through thresholds gradually strengthens the spiritual experience and leads finally to the encounter with the sacred. Sarkisyants (2021) mentions that in Egyptian temples worshippers were first led through to the massive halls via enclosed corridors. On the other hand, Japan's Torii gates symbolically mark the division of the worldly from the divine. All these instances highlight the fact that the literal movement from one space to another is a ritual that is full of meanings that are not only related to religion but also to art, history, and literature. likely and often noticeably upturned, as studies in perception have indicated. McCunn and Gifford's

analysis, (2017) noted that the respondents pointed out that the features like framed views, dim lighting, and narrowing passages resulted in an increase of anticipation and veneration and thus, the spiritual experience was enriched overall. The human brain is stimulated by the spatial cues and as a result, it constructs emotional as well as cognitive responses that in turn deepen the engagement. The bond between spatial design, memory, and perception is an integral part of the lived experience of sacredness. Bodily memory and the sensory experience are the two aspects that contribute to how space is felt emotionally understood (Jelić et al., 2016). The combination of these aspects makes the liminal spaces powerful not only in religious contexts but in other places like houses, hospitals, and everyday settings for influencing emotional states. For instance, houses of the mourning turn temporarily into sacred places due to the rituals and emotional intensity involved. Shifts in materials, such as going from stone to wood, darkness to light, or closed areas to open spaces, magnify the physical sensation of transition. Hospitals with biophilic features and natural light lessen anxiety and promote wellness (Abbas et al., 2024). The changes turn the area into one that is not only emotionally significant but also highly functional. Some of the transitions create a safety and support feeling for the users, and the environments have been made sacred by the design and care that has been given to them (Wang et al., 2022; Chavoshi et al., 2024).

### **The Temporal & Evolving Sacred Space**

The temporal and evolving sacred concept gets across the idea that the sacred places are not stationary but rather, they are constantly altered by historical happenings, cultural stories, social methods, and people's memories. Hodor & Fekete (2019) have characterized it as a vibrant, process-centered quality that comes out through the reinterpretation, shared participation, and change over time. The Temporal & Evolving Sacred mirrors the conception of the sacred as a gradually transforming process that turns the place from unholy to holy, through the reinterpretation, changing the use, and shifting of cultural or social contexts. The majority of such actions involve memory as the foundation of recognizing such places as sacred, which in turn refers to the process of the reinterpretation and the spatial adaptation from profane to sacred, thus raising the status of the location (Thiessen &McAlpine, 2013) The non-sacred places are very often turned into sacred ones by means of their frequent use, emotional ties, and storytelling. For instance, a school may seem like a boring place during one's studies, but eventually, the repetition of activities, sounds, and personal growth all connected to that environment will change it into a sacred space of memory and identity (Casey, 1983). Memory is crucial in this process of change, but not only as a mental act; rather, it is a physically, incarnated experience that involves place, time, and feeling. Through architecture, as well, the collective memory is kept alive, for it assimilates the cultural values, identities, and historical narratives in the very material forms that have been built. Urban areas, reflecting the past and memories both of single persons and society as a whole, apply architecture as a means to recall, remember common things, and stimulate the feeling of being part of the community (Soltani, 2020; Krishnamurthy, 2012). Memorial parks, plazas, and streets open to the public become areas where the past is recalled and interpreted in new ways; the co-existing stories be they formal or personal are the ones that give spatial meaning (Broudehoux&Cheli, 2022). Sarkisyants (2021) cites parks like the Victory Park in Rostov-on-Don, or the Ground Zero memorial in New York as instances of how historical trauma, collective heroism, and national identity are made apparent through designing, staging, and using various symbols. In the same way, In South Asia, India, Rajpath (now Kartavya Path) in New Delhi is not only a ceremonial avenue but also a place for national memory to be visibly expressed as it hosts the Republic Day parades as well as protests by citizens. These daily urban settings are an example of how the historical layers, public rituals,

and citizen engagement make the space into sacred memory scapes in turn. Architecture shows off its symbols through various ways such as statues, plaques, and arrangements in space which serve as memory and identity anchors. In Berlin, the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) turn ordinary pavements into sacred spots of remembrance. These small markers join together the material and the intangible, joining personal stories with the awareness of the whole society (Ren et al., 2020). The same can be said of the Hiroshima Peace Park which is a memorial that shows not only the collective grief and the hope but also the ever-different interpretations of the future generations. Urban memory is a complex phenomenon, not a simple one. Different interpretations that conflict with each other often coexist. In post-socialist cities such as Opava or Mostar, the changing ruling powers reshape the urban memory through their policies. Street naming, monuments, and cemeteries become areas of conflict that show the different movements to write identity anew, to hide it, or to take it back (Jirásek, 2020; Ilić & Alempijević, 2017). Such instances illustrate that the sacredness is closely interlinked to the power and politics, and it is formed by who controls the narrative and the spaces. Along with individuals, nature can also be the source of sacredness. The case of sacred groves in South Asia is a perfect example of how the conservation of nature is rooted in religious beliefs. Through various rituals and taboos, the sanctity of trees, animals, and natural settings is maintained, and these sacred ecologies serve as biodiversity reservoirs (Bhagwat & Rutte, 2006; Rajesh, 2016). The practices observed are indicative of the harmony between cultural heritage and environmental poise, an aspect that reflects a constant fluctuation between tradition and modernity. Sacred symbols be they astrological, religious, or geometric profoundly affect the reading and the use of space. Being a part of the architecture, they support and strengthen the culture's values and the associated rituals, thus turning the place into an interactive experience of common meaning (Tolentino, 2019). Monuments, myths, and material transitions (e.g., from stone to wood or light to shadow) evoke sensory and symbolic layers that deepen sacred resonance. Temporal sacredness also emerges through rituals of mourning, farewell, and healing in homes, hospitals, or civic spaces. Domestic thresholds, memorial benches, or hospital waiting rooms, through light, materials, and layout, create emotionally resonant environments. Spaces such as Maggie's Cancer Care Centres demonstrate how intentional design fosters psychological comfort, empathy, and sacredness through care.

### **Personal sacred space**

Personal sacred space denotes the unique and sensitive areas of individuals where they feel very much connected, emotionally dragging, and absolutely full of life. These areas usually make one feel as if he is with God, very safe, and very close to others, but these feelings are not only based on the characteristics of the places but also on the ways people think about, interact with, and give meaning to them (Amorim 2019; Rao 2018). The holiness of such areas might be a result of their innate spatial features like natural beauty or spiritually significant architecture or they could be imposed through the person's experiences, memories, and emotional attachments. Instead of seeing space through the eyes of an outsider, phenomenology starts with the inner experiences and the purposes of the individual. It tries to define the experiences as they are actually lived, getting the core of how holiness is felt, recalled, and realized (Qutoshi 2018; Tavakol & Sandars 2025). It is the home that can easily be called the most typical example of personal sacred space. It is most likely the first place where a person develops his or her identity and bonds emotionally with others. Domestic space, in various ways, through its layouts, individual activities, recollections of childhood, and relations with family, among other factors, contributes to its holy nature (Malik & Hassan 2019). A house thus becomes a sacred space not only by keeping things private and safe but also by the experiences of the inhabitants which are continuously made more

prominent by the daily practices and by the senses (Erfani 2022). Hence, the dwelling is not just a refuge but also a depository of values, dreams, and feelings formed through a mixture of personal interpretation and cultural practices (Carrà, 2014). According to Heidegger (1951), dwelling is interpreted as a mode of existence in the world a mutually beneficial interaction between human beings and nature which brings forth significance and belonging. This concept develops further the idea of a domicile to include not only the emotional, sensory, and symbolic aspects of the site. Living is a radical involvement with the people's setting, and the area is changed into a place through activities of love, remembrance, and ceremony (Kutá & Teichmann, 2021). It is in this habitation that the divine may spring forth, enlightened by colors, sounds, tones, beats, and human feelings (Kerr, 2013). To sensory organism, the whole of personal sacred space is very much alive. These five senses of a person even go so far as to say the individual is step with the world according to the way the person perceives it. To give an example: the feel of polished stone in a church, the feel of a mat in a mosque, or even the air from the tree-lined area can all have different impacts on the persons involved. It is such sensations that bring wise the divine to the physicality of the body and thereby make it a personal experience instead of an idea (Salam, 2020). Likewise, the role of light whether it is coming from above, natural or through colored glass windows affects the atmosphere and concentration within a space, and also has the effect of directing people's attention to certain symbolic objects or occasions (Tuan, 2021).

Sound is another factor but not the least that is responsible for the existence of the sacred. In the territories of religiosity and contemplation, the sound's nature, whether one of soft silence or of chants and echoing, creates a certain and particular emotional and spiritual state. The quiet base humming of the frequenters of a temple, the echo of a great cathedral, or the soft bending of leaves in a wooded place can all be sources of a sense of something higher than oneself and also closeness at the same time. All these can also be termed as auditory experiences which help in controlling the focus of the mind and the emotional field of the space and hence they promote reflections and peace of mind (Bachelard, 2014). Nature-based sacrality, especially in Hinduism, is an example of the coexistence of holy ground and ecological consciousness. Not only do characters represent the symbolic power but also their connection to the creation of the maintenance of the reciprocity between nature and mankind (Leyton-Flor & Sangha, 2024). The combination of these practices, which involve rituals, care, and memory, shows the way to the interdependence of place, self, and ecology. From the perspective of humans, that is the kind of relationship that exists between the sacred and the world, and it is through engaging with the world that one perceives of the sacred. One's engagement could be through the physical, sensory, and emotional experience of a place. Sacred places could be one's home, the courtyard behind the house, the forest nearby, or the church. Their sacred character lies in their ability to complement and nourish the inner life of their inhabitants. Therefore, sacredness is not something that is fixed or universal but is rather subject to the continuous negotiation of time, feelings, and experiences. A phenomenological approach unveils the sacred not as an object but as an experiential process that is rooted in the body and in perception. It further reveals how people make the places around them' shelters of meaning, identity, and emotional depth rather than just spaces that provide protection, but spaces with a very profound sense of being at home in the world.

## **Discussion**

Sacred space is not a single, unchanging concept. On the contrary, it is diversely constructed through individual perception, collective engagement, spiritual development, and even by the

passage of time through memory and history. Each form of sacred space reveals the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive processes through which people ascribe significance to places. The four types namely Relational and Participatory, Transformational and Liminal, Temporal and Evolving, and Personal Sacred Space are interrelated and cumulatively they provide a more profound insight into the nature of sacredness. They illustrate that sacredness is not only associated with religion but also with identity, emotion, and the most fundamental human experiences. When people come together and share their experiences, Relational and Participatory Sacred Space is created. The space gets its value through such acts as protests, prayers, or cultural gatherings. It is the people who are present in the space that give it the power of sacredness, rather than the space itself. Thus, for instance, a square where the protest takes place becomes sacred because of the vocal expressions, presence, and the cause of that protest. Yet, even in such common grounds, every individual might be experiencing something different. This brings closely to Personal Sacred Space, in which sacredness is exclusively tied to individual's private thoughts, memories, and emotions. In the same way, even during a community event, like a Sufi Qawwali or a procession, people feel sacredness in their diverse ways, often through auditory, emotive, and physical expressions. Transformational and Liminal Sacred Space exemplifies how space can be an influencer and a vehicle of change for people. It is about going through the process of changing from one state to another for instance, from sorrow to tranquility or from uncertainty to understanding. The enlightened moments most often occur in certain places like altars, hospitals, or memorials. The physical setting is usually arranged in such a way as to facilitate that emotional or spiritual process through light, movement, or silence. But then, in a semblance of ways, each individual might still have a different experience of that change or transformation. So participation and transformation work together. Being with others during a difficult time or a ritual can help people feel supported and make the experience more powerful. Temporal and Evolving Sacred Space gives us a richer understanding of sacredness. It indicates that sacredness can be a gradual process till the very end. At the beginning, a certain place might not be viewed as holy, but later on, it can be regarded as such through the map of memory, the repetitive actions, or even the occurrence of some historic events related to it. To illustrate, a kindergarten might be usual while a kid is going through it, but it will be an extraordinary place in his or her memory later. Or a road may turn into the icon of resistance where a demonstration took place. These divine sentiments are the results of playing an active role in personal as well as collective narratives. Places like monuments, parks, or any major streets get their sacredness through the rituals, activities, and storytelling connecting people to the past. This indicates how memory, use, and collective meaning over time determine what we perceive the space as. Personal Sacred Space is a theme that practically concentrates on one's feelings and perceptions. It narrates how even very trivial things like sunlight coming through a window, aroma of food, chirping of birds, or touch of a heated surface can turn a place into a cozy and holy one. Through silence, intimacy, and depth, this holiness is inwardly experienced. It is not dependent on fellow beings or ceremonies but is influenced by daily living, taking comfort in repetitions, and so on. Nevertheless, it links with the other motifs because every sacred spot has a starting point which is nothing but how our body and senses react in there. It does not matter whether we are alone or together with others; our feelings and recollections give meaning to the space. On the other hand, there are some distinctions among the themes.

Still, there are some differences between the themes. For example, participatory sacredness focuses on group meaning, but not everyone in the group may feel the same way. A person who feels left out may not experience sacredness. Similarly, personal sacredness may not be visible to

others or recognized in a public setting. Transformational sacredness often relies on planned design and ritual, which may not allow space for change to happen naturally. Temporal sacredness depends on time and memory, but those memories can also be changed or forgotten by politics or social change. In spite of the variations that exist, the four kinds of sacredness are very much connected to each other. Each of them in their own way clarifies the process how people to the different extent render meaning to the place. Sacredness, in a way, is not a definite or absolute condition. Rather, it is a gradual process of transformation. It can take on different forms instantaneously, for example, through a ritual or a protest, or it can be an extremely slow process of through memory and emotion. It can happen either in a very large audience or in very quiet circumstances. It can be influenced by design, nature, or feeling. All these different situations point out the fact that sacredness is a concept which is being enacted through the use of one's body, senses, actions and memory. It is not only a visual experience. It is something that we are part of.

## Conclusion

Sacredness or Sacred quality is not an unchangeable property of certain buildings but rather a spiritual quality coming from people's interpretation and their interaction with space. It is through architects and planners' vision and creativity that sacredness can be embedded in the daily life through design. Acknowledging sacredness in unholy and commonplace places brings about the democratization of spiritual experience which in turn invites reflection, care, and meaning-making into wider spheres of life.

## Recommendations

1. Design practices need to be developed in a way that users can participate and thus give significant meaning to the space.
2. Memory and narrative should be used as design tools to bring about the experience of sacredness in secular contexts.
3. The debate about sacred architecture should include modern urban and personal settings.

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