

“CAN WE IMAGINE A CITY WITHOUT ITS OPEN COMMUNITY SPACES?”

Shirish Beri

Cities are living organisms – they are not just a conglomerate of inanimate structures, roads, gardens with electricity, water, sewage and telephones.

They are made of the feelings, aspirations, ideas, beliefs and values of their people; not just people but their animals, birds and trees also. Even the walls, windows, roofs and streets have a life of their own and have something to say.

In this busy, hectic, living, urban organism, the most vibrant, communicative and important spaces are its community spaces – the streets, plazas, gardens, playgrounds, cultural centers, entertainment centers, open restaurants, stalls, places of worship and so on.

Some of these spaces with their greenery act as ecological lungs of the city. Most community spaces rejuvenate us, and are conducive to interaction, games, health, information dissipation and recreation. Some support commerce, religion as well as public utilities.

The picture of these community spaces that we see in Indian cities today is a sad one. Overcommercialization, greed and short term gains are encroaching on these spaces, disrupting the functioning of the various activities (mentioned earlier) that are important for a healthy urban environment. Even the street edges are not spared.

This presentation takes a look at various examples of good community spaces as well as the neglected, exploited ones in order to develop our attitude and action towards the future of these very important spaces in our cities.

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