

Use of Darkness in Religious Places – A Study of User Perception on Use of Darkness for Enhancing the Sense of Place

PADDDK Panadura^{1#} and NMRAT Nawaratne¹

¹Faculty of Built Environment and Spatial Sciences, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka

[#]koshilsu888@gmail.com

Abstract

Architecturally we can control the sense of place by using darkness. Most of the time, people turn into darkness when people want to live in their own thoughts. Religious place is a place which has a huge relationship with human thoughts because it cures human mind and people usually look for the truth and inner peace. Identified matter was, that there is a dark chamber in every religious place. Hindu kovil has a chamber where the god lives. Catholic churches have altar space which covered from the outside and light up only for God. Buddhist temples have Buddha chamber which is dark inside. The question which is identified was why all religious chambers are dark. Does it give some kind of a spiritual feeling to the pilgrims? Can darkness enhance the spirit of place? If the darkness can treat the human mind then as Architects, we can use it to enhance the spirit of place. Then it will help people to create inner peace in their own places. This research focuses to identify how darkness affects pilgrim's thoughts and how does it feel as a sense when in a place of darkness. A questionnaire was developed to identify the participants' perception of being in the dark in the worship spaces and they got many different answers with equal base. All comments relate to the factor that darkness helps to concentrate their mind and helps to create a virtual gap with the outside busy world. After doing a survey test it proves that darkness helps people to concentrate their mind and calm down inner thoughts. Finally, architecture can use darkness for spaces that need relaxation.

Keywords: *Darkness, Dark spaces, Religious places, Sense of place*