

## Ajmer Dargah: Sustaining the Identity of a Religious Precinct

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**Abstract :** The idea of secularism in India has taken a different direction after independence when religion became a reason for a great divide in, otherwise harmonious society. Since then the religious spaces became protected and more sacred and not shared. However, there is a larger threat on beliefs, rituals, and the spirituality of these religions in the form of technology, tourism and globalization. In a way, they weaken the importance of religion from our society over a period of time. The importance of religion to a sense of place has been overlooked or diminished. Religion provides symbolic meaning to places which distinguishes certain physical environments from otherwise similar ones. The rapid transformation of urban spaces, eliminating the territorial differences of sense, spirit and identity have started creating urban centers rooting out this genre of unique urban spaces from our cities. Indian cities, with a strong identity created by rich and colorful overlays of culture through its evolution, have been threatened by this de-territorialization. This paper enquires the relationship of the symbol of the identity and religiosity of a place, through spatial form, rituals and activity, and accommodating the technology and the changing social structure within the bounds of that relationship. The subjects for this enquiry are Sufism and the Sufi city-Ajmer. The internal transformations in the ideologies of Islam and Sufism and the changes in the society surround it triggered the phenomena of de- territorialization. The need for establishing a symbiotic relationship between the spiritual content and the social life, through the manifestation of space, time and activity derived from this concern on abated territory of Sufism inside the city. Redirecting transformation catalyst such as tourism, technology, etc, towards the improvement of physical and social conditions, preservation of the heritage and the expansion of the notional idea of religion over the city will help to re-territorialize city as a Sufi city.

**Keywords :** sense of place, religion, Islam, identity

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