Spatial Design of Protests: Exploring the Literary Lineage of Protest Sites

Apsara Bala¹ and Nirmala Menon²

1: Doctoral Student, Digital Humanities and Publishing Studies Research Group, SHSS, IIT Indore. Email: phd2101161002@iiti.ac.in; 2: Professor and Head, SHSS, IIT Indore. Email:

[nmenon@iiti.ac.in](mailto:nmenon@iiti.ac.in)

# Abstract –

The increasing scale of interest to research in the field of protest has addressed the different aspects of the collective action (social, cultural, political, etc.), but little gained attention to the ‘space’ in which the materialization and manifestation take place. Public spaces as a practical as well as symbolic place connect citizens and have always been central to social movements and political protests. But the growing hostility and colonial attitude towards protests coupled with the rhetoric of disruption have affected the evolvability of the phenomena. In this way, from Tahrir Square to Occupy Wall Street, Tiananmen Square to Shaheen Bagh, and Farmers’ protests, accompanying a multidisciplinary approach the research efforts have involved discussion on protest, public space, people, literature, and architecture. The accessibility of the public in the central space (Delhi) that had the opportunity in holding the state power accountable and respond to their demands became obsolete (Guha, 2007). The displacement of the designated space for protest also distanced the visibility of the dissent from those in power. This unacceptance that the central space possesses has laid bare the socio-spatial inequalities between government and citizens. Thus, with the exploration of the spatial nitty-gritty of protest, this research focuses on securing the

availability, accessibility, and reachability of public spaces in the inclusion of all the members of society.

The research poses questions on the importance of a particular space for protests and the criticism against the designation of spaces for the same. The aim of the study includes analyzing the spatial aspect of protests and the role of accessible public spaces and governmental interventions in them. As a part of the methodology, the research accommodates textual analysis (literature that has acknowledged/ described/ philosophized the spatial aspect of the protests) while intending to explore all the spatial viewpoints for protests. The simultaneous mapping method helps in visualizing the historical displacement and transformation of accessibility – from Rajpath to Farmers’ protest taking place at the edges of the city due to spatial denial (Zuberi, 2020). The paper, therefore, constitutes a two- part analysis – theorizing the public space in relation to protests and the practical part that comes with mapping out public spaces on an urban cityscape. The designation of places for protest, the shrinking of public spaces, and calling upon restrictions can land on monitoring and controlling the designated spaces granting only permissive accessibility (Mantri, 2021). Also, the acceleration of privatized public spaces having the illusion of access has steadily replaced the real public spaces. This study in connecting and analyzing the relation of public spaces with protests, in this way, tries to explore the myriad intricacies growing around the notion.

Public space, literature, people, and architecture can be viewed from a wide range of perspectives, but here protest is the key concept to tie them up in one unified whole. This research becomes pertinent for being devoted to a social cause in talking about the accessibility of public spaces through a discussion on protests and providing scope for future research to work on many unpacked/ unheard stories from the protest sites. Again, the

multidisciplinary approach running along with a multilingual analysis of literature has doubled up for the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the study.

**Keywords –** Occupy Movements, Public space, Accountability and accessibility, Displacement, Protesters, Socio-spatial inequalities, Urban design

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