

Vāstu-śāstra for Christian Spiritual Well-being

A practice-based doctorate in sacred architecture

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BACKGROUND

I investigate whether the application of **Vedic Vāstu-śāstra (ancient architectural wisdom of India)** could enhance spiritual well-being in Christian architecture. I examine the application of Vāstu principles in three pre-colonial churches of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, located in the Malabar Coast (Southwest India). I also engage with the broader discourse on Christian inculturation for church architecture.

Main Research Question:

To what extent can Vāstu-śāstra contribute to spiritual well-being, where inculturation is needed, based on the example of three St Thomas churches in South India?

METHODOLOGY

I adopt the transpersonal research method of Intuitive Inquiry, supported by a hermeneutical cycle. I use a triangulation with a mixed-method design approach, incorporating:

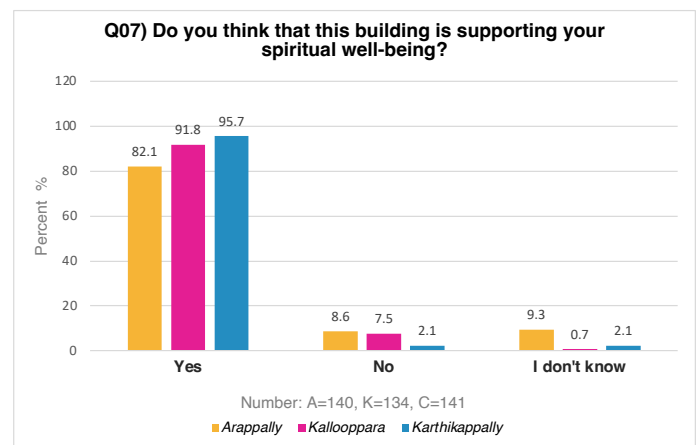
- Six in-depth interviews with local priests and Vāstu experts.
- Architectural analysis of the three selected churches (Arappally, Kalloppara Pally and Karthikappally Cathedral), along with participant observation in their spaces.
- 482 surveys using the SHALOM SWBQ tool to assess spiritual well-being.

KEY FINDINGS

1.Evidence of Vāstu-śāstra application in pre-colonial churches of South India: I observed that the three selected churches successfully integrate Vāstu principles while preserving the vernacular architectural style.

2.Compatibility with Christianity: Vāstu-śāstra principles are universal, they align with church architecture and facilitate spiritual well-being.

3.Impact on worshippers: The sacred atmosphere of these churches fosters spiritual well-being (personal, communal, environmental and transcendental) helping devotees experience God in multiple ways, as evidenced by surveys results and participant observations.



IMPLICATIONS & APPLICATIONS

In this research, I highlight the role of Vāstu-śāstra contributing to Christian spiritual well-being and its potential application in sacred architecture. Based on my findings, I suggest teaching Vāstu principles in seminary education to equip clergy and architects with a deeper understanding of sacred space. The selected churches demonstrate how Vāstu can be harmoniously applied without syncretism, offering a model for future church designs.

Additionally, I clarify misconceptions about Vāstu-śāstra, which arise from its fragmented and distorted use in contemporary Indian practice. I also present a universal formula for applying Vāstu principles in sacred architecture to create sacred spaces worldwide that foster spiritual well-being.

*Dr Julia Dalalba: architect specialised in interior design for health and spiritual well-being, merging the Indian knowledge of Vāstu-śāstra with Yoga philosophy.

Keywords: *Vāstu-śāstra, Christian Architecture, Spiritual Well-being, Sacred Space, Intuitive Inquiry, Inculturation, Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.*

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