



The Role of Urban Beautification in Urban Landscape Transformation: A Study of Patna Municipal Corporation Area

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Abstract: Urban beautification has emerged as an important strategy for reshaping urban landscapes, enhancing aesthetic appeal, and improving the quality of life of the citizens. Urban Beautification refers to improving the visual appearance and attractiveness of the urban centres. This in general includes expanding the green cover, public art installations and infrastructural upgradations. The need for urban beautification has gained ample importance globally, particularly as cities grow and face issues like pollution, traffic jams, and socio-economic disparity. Amid the existing scenario, the current study explores the role of urban beautification initiatives undertaken by the Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) in

transforming the urban landscape of Patna, a rapidly growing city in eastern India.

The research examines key beautification projects focusing on their impact on urban ecology, social dynamics, and economic growth of the city. The study bases itself on concept building, study materials procured by the PMC Office and feedback analysis of PMC officials and local citizens. The suggestions include participatory planning, adaptive reuse of derelict spaces, and the integration of local heritage and biodiversity into beautification efforts to ensure holistic and effective urban landscape transformation.

Keywords: Urban beautification, Landscape transformation, Sustainability, Quality of life.

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Introduction:

Urban Beautification refers to improving the visual appearance and attractiveness of a city and town. This can include aesthetic features like annual planting and colorful banners, functional aspects like street lighting, and tree planting, and significant infrastructure projects like roadways and sidewalk construction, and the preservation of historical landmarks, and cleanliness, etc. It involves the projects undertaken by organizations or government to make the urban environment more attractive, functional and enjoyable for residents as well as for visitors. Urban beautification is necessary to improve urban areas' quality of life. It makes cities more attractive and fascinating. Our well-being and anxiety levels are improved by parks, green spaces, and public art. Initiatives for beautification can also boost economic growth by attracting visitors, companies, and angel investors. Beautiful cities are more

appealing locations to live and work, which boosts employment and the economy of the cities. Apart from that, the presence of green spaces, public art, and well-designed public areas can have a positive impact on the mental and physical health of urban residents.

The necessity of urban beauty has gained international attention, particularly as cities grow and face issues like pollution, traffic jams, and socioeconomic disparity. Urban beautification is crucial worldwide to rise economic development, foster social cohesion, and enhance the quality of life for locals. In India, where urbanization and population increase are occurring rapidly, urban beautification is especially crucial. Issues including traffic jams, air pollution, and a dearth of public areas are common in Indian cities. By fostering a more livable and sustainable urban environment, beautification initiatives can aid in the resolution of these issues. In an address to the mayors of urban bodies in September 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the need for the “beautification of cities”. Improving urban aesthetics can work as a pull factor to attract business, residents and even tourists that can lead to increased economic activity and investments in the area.

Review of Literature:

Several scholars, urban planners and social scientists all around the world have undertaken studies and carried out research works on the concept, process and implications of urban beautification and beautification programmes. Sokolan (2024) presented a detailed analysis of foreign experience of urban beautification planning and development trends. Tartari et. al. (2022) in their study analysed the relationship between artistic interventions in the public space and their impact on urban cultural landscape with special reference to the city of Milan, Italy. Sen (2021) in her study examined the role of urban green in the health of Indian cities. Ray (2020) has worked on the city beautification program and its various implications for the city of Kolkata. Stewart (2019) has worked on implementation of various greening strategies in the urban centres with special cases of the cities of USA. Singh et. al. (2017) advocated for city beautification initiatives as a way to improve the civic virtues and living conditions of the urban dwellers of Jalandhar, Punjab.

Working Hypotheses:

The working hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. Urban beautification is very important for urban health and urban development.
2. It brings positive impact on the well-being of the citizens.
3. It transforms the overall landscape of the city and boost socio-economic development.

Objectives:

At the backdrop of the above-mentioned scenario, the study has made an attempt (i) to examine the concept, need and importance of urban beautification with special reference to Patna, the study area; (ii) to analyse the status of the urban beautification initiatives undertaken in the city; (iii) to identify and map the urban beautification locations in Patna Municipal Corporation Area; (iv) to investigate the impact of the urban beautification programmes on the quality of life of Patna residents; and (v) to suggest some measures of improvement on this particular issue.

Methodology and Database:

The methodology of the present study follows three distinct stages: (i) **Pre Field-Survey** including concept building, collection of map; and preparation of questionnaire; (ii) **Field Survey** for generation of primary data including the information from PMC office and feedback from the common citizens; and (iii) **Post Field Survey** including the analysis of data. The database for the study includes **112 citizens** residing in the study area and the officials of Patna Municipal Corporation.

Study Area:

The study has been carried out in the strategically placed eastern Indian city of Patna, the capital of Bihar. With a total area of roughly 109.218 square kilometers, Patna is located between latitudes 25°36'0"N and 85°7'0"N longitude. Patna has a population of about 1,683,200, according to the 2011 Indian Census. The Patna Municipal Corporation area is administered by dividing it into 75 corporation wards, which are further classified into six different circles namely: Patliputra, New Capital, Bankipur, Kankarbagh, Azimabad and Patna City respectively.

Development and Beautification of the City of Patna: Patna is the one of the oldest and continually inhabited cities in the world. Its historical

importance can be traced back to thousands of years. The city remained famous for its grandeur and beauty during the ancient historical periods that continued during the British era. Urbanization got pace at Patna after independence, but it never had any structured beautification plans in place. The state built basic infrastructure — roads, bridges and public buildings saw expansions and along with grew the issues like overcrowding, congestion and encroachments on urban greens and water bodies. At local levels and in a sporadic manner some beautification projects went on – the zoological garden, Buddha Smriti Park and Eco- Park to name a few. During 1980s, the then state government took up the task of restoration and beautification of heritage buildings, the centrally located open field – Gandhi Maidan and the historical Patna Museum. But in totality Patna remained a city lacking proper city management and aesthetic development. However, the scenario changed lately, especially at the intervention of Patna Municipal Corporation Area and the consequent Master Plans.

Urban Beautification Initiatives under PMC:

Patna Municipal Corporation has undertaken several city beautification initiatives from time to time; more so since the advent of 21st century.

Parks and open public places: PMC in its beautification drive has undertaken the proper maintenance, landscaping and enriching the existing parks and green belts; such as Gandhi Maidan, Sanjay Gandhi Zoological Garden, Veer Kuer Singh Park, Eco- Park (Rajdhani Vatika) and other smaller green patches.

Public art and murals: In 2018, PMC started an art beautification project focusing on painting the roadside walls with beautiful traditional art forms and social messages. It went along with the **Swachh Bharat Mission**, aiming at a 'clean' urban landscape.

Heritage preservation: In recent years Patna has made some strides in retaining its older history by refurbishing places like Golghar, The Mahavir Mandir, Gandhi Maidan, Vishwa Shanti Stupa, Agam Kuan and other places of historical significance.

Smart City Mission: PMC, as a part of the Smart City Mission is now linking beautification with technological upgrades autonomously. Some of these are smart lighting; green and open spaces development, traffic movement management,

pedestrian-friendly walkways, etc.

River Ganga Beautification: The PMC plans to beautify the river front and to develop more recreational platforms, rides for boating, increased green belts with improved lighting. The idea is to keep the tourists coming, while benefiting residents with a better urban experience.

Ganga Pathway: Commonly termed as 'Marine Drive', this is the most recently built beautiful riverfront driveway along the River Ganga to the northern boundary of the city. Combining with 'Atal Path', a magnificently built motorway, this entire project stands out as an infrastructural masterpiece.

Roadside beautification: Decorative plants have been planted on the roads across Patna, statues and fountains are installed at traffic junctions where well-trimmed greenery exists. Bailey Road and the surroundings of key public institutions, are some examples where a lot of beautification process has taken place.

Cleanliness and waste management: Under the flagship of Swachha Bharat Abhiyan, the PMC has undertaken street cleanliness drives, construction of public toilets, door to door trash collection and waste segregation installing colour coded garbage bins at appropriate places.

Amusement parks: In and around Patna during the recent years several amusement parks and water parks have come up – such as Funtasia water park and Hungama World. Though technically speaking these are located out of the PMC boundary, but have a positive impact on the life of the Patnaites.

Feedback Analysis and Discussion:

In order to assess the impact of urban beautification on the urban landscape transformation with special reference to the city of Patna, feedback analysis has been done on the basis of structured questionnaire-based field survey. The database includes 112 citizens residing in different parts of the city. The respondents considered cleanliness and waste management as the most valued beautification aspect followed by green spaces (Table 1). This is quite understandable amid over congestion, lack of open space and not so well managed garbage disposable mechanism.

Table 1. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: The Primary Aspects

Aspects of Urban Beautification	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share
Parks and green spaces	29	25.9%
Public art (murals, sculptures)	18	16.1%
Cleanliness and waste management	38	34%
Improved sidewalks and pathways	16	14.3%
Enhanced lighting and safety	11	9.8%

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

It has been heartening to observe that 75% of the population under review seem to be aware about the beautification initiatives under progress in the city. Table 2 reveals that as far as the current status of urban beautification in the city is concerned, nearly 56% of the respondents consider it to be fair to excellent as against 44% considering it poor. This indicates towards a lot more efforts and hard work that is required for the beautification projects to turn into effective reality.

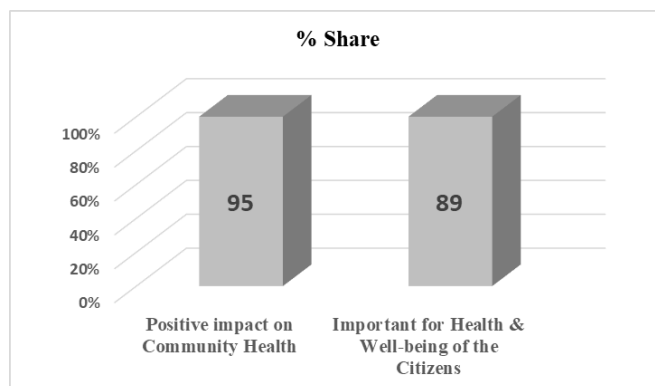
Table 2. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: The Current Status

Current State of Beautification	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share
Very Poor	22	19.6%
Poor	27	24.1%
Fair	38	33.9%
Good	15	13.4%
Excellent	10	8.9%

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

The citizens of Patna in general have the opinion that there is a positive impact of city beautification on the overall well-being of the people on one hand and on the various socio-economic aspects on the other. As much as 95% of the respondents agree to the fact that beautification spots have positive impact on the community health;

and 89% of them strongly opine that green and open urban spaces are very important for health and well-being of the city dwellers (Fig. 1).



Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Fig. 1. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: Impact on Health and Well-being

A clean, green and beautiful urban centre has every capacity to attract tourists and promote the growth of tourism. Patna is a historical city having several sites of tourist importance. The beautification initiatives certainly can boost tourism activities significantly at Patna; and the same has been the reflected from the feedback analysis as well (Table 3).

Table 3. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: Impact on Tourism

Degree of Contribution	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share
Very significantly	27	24.10%
Significantly	53	47.32%
Neutral	10	8.9%
Minor contribution	11	9.8%
No contribution at all	11	9.8%

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

The beauty and aesthetics of a city also promote the people to visit the different places of interest; and in this way to interact among themselves. At the time when hectic work schedules and over indulgence in modern gadgets to a considerable extent have restricted the intermingling of people; it becomes a vital point certainly. Very truly 79.5% of the citizens under review consider that a beautiful city landscape positively influences the social interactions among the citizens (Table 4).

Table 4. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: Impact on Social Interactions

Influences on Social Interactions	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share
Very positive	21	18.75%
Positive	68	60.71%
No impact	8	7.14%
Negative	7	6.25%
Very negative	8	7.14%

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

The feedback from the reviewed population indicates towards certain challenges and deterrents to the effective and successful implementation of the beautification projects in the city of Patna (Table 5). The issues like inappropriate planning, lack of community engagement, bureaucratic interferences and budgetary constraints hamper the smooth implementation and functioning of the beautification drives at Patna.

Table 5. Urban Beautification in PMC Area: Major Deterrents

Deterrents to Beautification	Number of Respondents	Percentage Share
Budget constraints	14	12.5%
Lack of community engagement	41	36.6%
Bureaucratic obstacles	23	20.53%
Insufficient planning	34	30.35%

Source: Primary Field Survey, 2024.

Findings and Conclusion:

The findings of the present study reveal that urban beautification plays a vital role in shaping the visual and functional appeal of cities, making them more liveable and likable. Urban beautification thus is not merely about aesthetics; it is indeed a transformative tool that shapes and reshapes the urban identity and Function ability. Patna is a fast-growing city that has lately witnessed tremendous infrastructural enhancement and rapid population growth. Amid this scenario the city beautification becomes very important for the aesthetic

development of the surroundings and enhancement of the quality of life of the city dwellers.

The findings emerging out of field survey and feedback analysis tend to validate the working hypotheses of the study as well. All the three hypotheses namely (i) urban beautification is very important for urban health and urban development, (ii) it brings positive impact on the well-being of the citizens, and (iii) it transforms the overall landscape of the city and boost socio-economic development, are validated and are proven to be considerably correct. The feedback from the respondents indicates towards the same.

The efforts in the Patna Municipal Corporation Area shows how targeted initiatives can drive positive changes. A continued focus on such projects will certainly ensure that Patna evolves into a model urban centre, balancing development with cultural and environmental conservation aspects. There have been deterrents and problems in this field. The following suggestions and remedial measures to a great extent can prove to be important for the future development and improvement.

- Proper monitoring and maintenance of beautification projects
- Expansion and extension of green belts and water bodies
- Strict action on encroachment
- Street widening and lighting
- Effective waste management mechanism
- Integration of heritage and biodiversity
- Increased community involvement and participatory planning
- Increased participation of Corporate and Non-Government bodies in the overall beautification efforts

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