



HAVEN: CENTRE FOR RETREAT

A sanctuary for peace and healing

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Abstract

A peaceful and harmonious life can be attained when there is coherence in our mind, body and spirit. However, human beings, by nature, are social creatures. Our connection to others is key to not only our survival, but also to our happiness, well-being and success. Hence, it is not enough to focus only on individual welfare. We must also learn to nurture the relationships in our lives and foster our place in and with the community around us. Additionally, nature is an aspect of the world that has been unappreciated for far too long. Nature provides us with many benefits and is vital to our existence. Yet we fail to reciprocate any of it. We must adopt the habit of giving nature its due credit and learn to care and preserve it. Hence, the idea was to design a place where one could be in tune with himself, the community around him and his surroundings. Happiness and peace can only be achieved when there is an equilibrium within **self**, the **community** and **nature**.

The objective of this paper is to put forth the thought process and methodology that went about in the design of Haven: Centre for Retreat – a sanctuary for peace and healing'. The design process initiated with a comprehensive analysis of the site and an understanding of the programme required for such a project. There is currently no existing establishment of this nature in Bangladesh. Hence, the programme was derived from various findings across the world through which the general requirements of a retreat could be collected and modified to suit the context. Site specific functions were incorporated as well into the overall programmatic layout. The concept and design were generated in parallel. After a thorough study of the existing literature review and the needs of the project, a concept was deduced. The next phase revolved in identifying the zoning, keeping in mind the various contexts which were applicable in the process. A continuous back and forth procedure with various developments and alterations along the way, the report finally concludes with the outcome that incorporates the volume of work conducted during the semester of Fall 2015.

Acknowledgement

My thesis is the culmination of years of learning, hard work and the effort of many. This acknowledgement is a dedication to every person who has guided and supported me throughout the course of duration of one of the most challenging ordeals of my life.

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Chapter 01 | **Introduction**

1.1 Background of the Project

1.2 Project Brief

1.3 Project Introduction

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Project

1.5 Given Programme

1.1 Background of the Project

I believe good health is intrinsically tied to mental as well as physical fitness. To achieve a peaceful state of mind, one needs to focus on the proper functioning of both these elements. However, these are not the only things that define us. To lead a balanced and happy life, we also need to nurture the various relationships that constitute our lives, our interaction within and outside of our community. Another aspect of the world that we neglect unfortunately would be nature. Nature plays a vital role in our world and has given us a lot generously. At some point, we must balance the scales and appreciate and reciprocate it. Haven is the culmination of all the various elements that ultimately formulates our world. Especially, in a city like Dhaka, I believe, a place that accommodates one to nurture themselves, their community and their surroundings is highly needed, but sadly, rare to find. Hence, the aim of this project is to provide a place, nestled within nature, where one can go to relax, revitalize their mind and body and do a bit of soul searching. Haven aims to be a retreat where the city dwellers can escape from the chaotic hustle and bustle that they have to endure on a daily basis. This project is unique in many ways but mostly in the sense that there is no existing as such in Bangladesh.

1.2 Project Brief

Title: 'HAVEN: CENTER FOR RETREAT' - a sanctuary for peace and healing

Project type: An experiential, psychological retreat for the mind, body and soul

Site location: Gazipur, Dhaka

Site area: 75 acres

Client: Anika Rabbani, owner/instructor at 'Yoganika' and a strong advocate for health and fitness

1.3 Project Introduction

According to World Health Organization (WHO) -

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Haven aims to be a holistic, experiential retreat for the wellness of the mind, body and soul, basically a multidisciplinary platform that will act as a place of self-recollection, an abode to attain inner peace. It will deal with functions that cater to the human mind, body and spirit as well as focus on community living and nurturing nature.

Fitness, meditation and yoga are not just fundamental in maintaining our physical health, but they also provide us with a positive outlook on life. Although, such practices are not properly conducted in our country, there is a growing awareness and interest towards them. As this is something which is beneficial to people, the project can prove to be quite significant to society as it will promote a healthier and more disciplined lifestyle, one that not only emphasises on the physical health but also on the mental well-being of a person. Moreover the visitors shall be able to learn many new things in a retreat of such nature for Haven does not just strive to provide a place for relaxation but also a place for enlightening.

A concept like this is not yet seen anywhere in Bangladesh whereas it is already a practice in many developed countries. Resorts and getaways are available throughout the country but none that caters specifically to the nourishment of the mind, body and soul.

Bangladesh has an abundance of spaces, especially in the outskirts of the cities, where a retreat of such nature can be established. This project demanded a site that was close to nature but at the same time one that was not too detached from the urban development. After all the main purpose of Haven is to provide people with that small escape from their hectic city lives, so it needs to be easily accessible yet not so far that it takes them too long to commute back and forth. Hence, Gazipur was chosen to be the site for the project. Gazipur is just a little further north along Dhaka city and home to beautiful forests, rivers and lakes. It is definitely one of the attractions of the country and the ideal place for peace and harmony.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Project

Aims:

1. Engage all sorts of people in a collective space, not too detached from the city, where they can be in-sync with nature
2. Establish a clinic catering to mental health and therapy
3. Design proper meditation, yoga and fitness spaces
4. Build library and research centre for educational purposes
5. Establish recreational facilities for leisure and entertainment

6. Build workshop/training space
7. Design accommodation for the visitors

Objectives:

1. To help people find inner peace and revitalize their mind through achieving balance and harmony
2. To create a place where people can learn to be more aware and informative of health and fitness
3. To increase tourism and spread the proper practices of yoga and meditation
4. To normalize the idea of having psychological disorders and the need for healing
5. To provide a better life to people of all culture, religion, age and society
6. To focus on nurturing community relationships
7. To motivate people to preserve the environment

1.5 Given Programme

1. Clinic/Therapy Centre
2. Multipurpose Hall
3. Cultural Centre
4. Accommodation
5. Library
6. Restaurant
7. Meditation Hall
8. Yoga Studios
9. Administration
10. Workshop/Training Space
11. Research

Chapter 02 | **Site Appraisal**

2.1 Site and Surrounding

2.1.1 Site Location

2.1.2 Site Topography

2.1.3 Existing Land Use (Macro)

2.2 Historical and Social Background

2.3 Climatic and Environmental Considerations

2.4 SWOT Analysis

2.1 Site and Surrounding

The site chosen had to be very strategic. The site had to attract as many people as possible and be situated close to the city, while at the same time providing that enclosure within nature. The site required a location that is surrounded by greenery and preferably a water body and hence, ultimately it was deduced that Gazipur would be most fitting for the establishment.

2.1.1 Site Location

The exact site chosen can be accessed by the Dhaka – Mymensingh Road, along the right arm of Gazipur Chowrasta, through Joydebpur Road. The reason for taking this area is that it has direct access to a major road that leads right into the center of Dhaka, and it is surrounded by lush green, lakes and rivers, which are characteristic features of Gazipur.

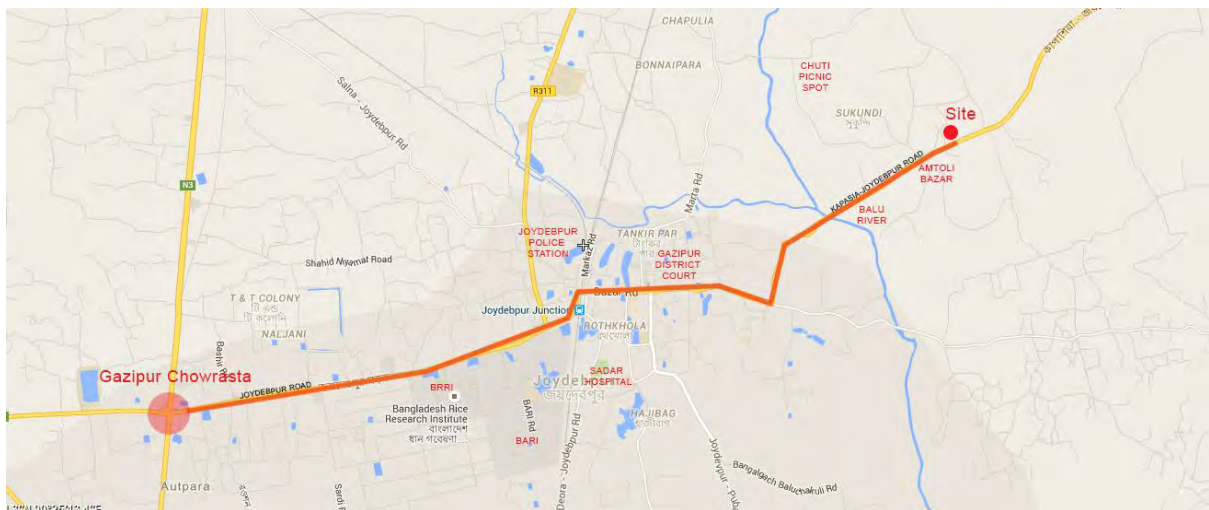


Figure 1: Google image showing site location, Source: <http://wikimapia.org/>

The site is surrounded by various establishments such as resorts, schools, colleges, hospital and so on. The site is a potential and strategic zone for creating a project like this, since it can attract all kinds of audience from the nearby vicinity as well as Dhaka city. Since the target audience was mainly city dwellers, who can't take a break from their normal life and relax, thus, the site was chosen to provide a convenient access and the existing water body along with the Balu River, which is close by, will only further add to the design.



Figure 2: View of the site from the access road, Source: Author

2.1.2 Site Topography

An analysis of the site topography revealed that it was mostly dominated by vegetation, dense trees and large, open patches of dry, sandy earth. The site was bounded to the south by an access road and an informal pathway along the west. Through further exploration, it was discovered that the northern areas of the site underwent minimal sound penetration.



Figure 3: Topography diagram

2.1.3 Existing Land Use (Macro)

The existing site and surrounding study reflected the characteristic traits evident in most of Gazipur. This includes an abundance of vegetation and paddy fields as agriculture is prioritised here immensely. The road network is minimal and insignificant and built form is scattered and minimum in number.



Figure 4: Existing site and surrounding

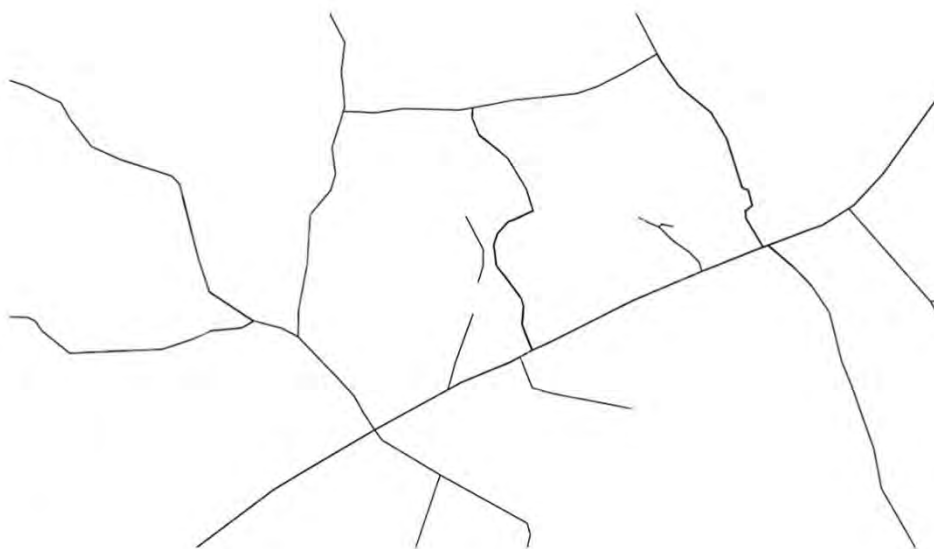


Figure 5: Road Network



Figure 6: Water body

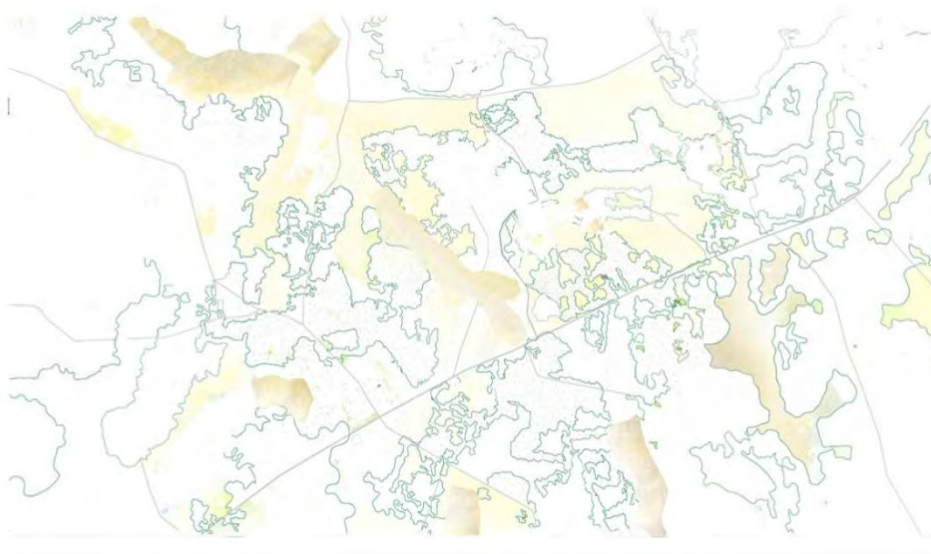


Figure 7: Paddy fields

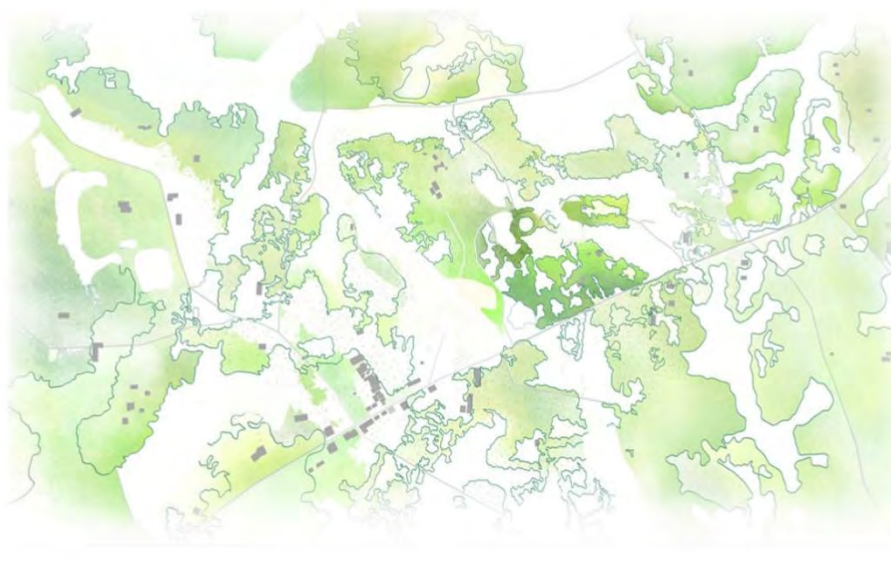


Figure 8: Vegetation



Figure 9: Built form

2.2 Historical and Social Background

Gazipur Sadar Upazila, with an area of 446.38 sq. km, is bounded by Sreepur on the north, Savar and Uttara and Rupganj on the south, Kaliganj (Gazipur) and Rupganj on the east, Kaliakair and Savar on the west. The main rivers in the region are Turag, Balu, Labandaha and Salda. TongiKhal is noted as well. Balu is very close to the site chosen.

- **Historical events**

Joydeb Narayan Roy Chowdhury, the zamindar of Bhawal built his residence at Pirabari on the southern side of the river Chilai and named it Joydebpur. Kalinarayan Roy Chowdhury achieved the title of 'Raja' in 1878 and the residence of the zamindars of Joydebpur came to be known as the 'Rajbari' (Royal Palace). Three people were killed in a resistance movement at Tongi on 4th March, 1971. The Pakistani army killed Hurmat, Manu Khalifa (tailor), Niamat and Kanu Mia at Joydebpur and Chandana Chowrasta on 19th March, 1971.

- **Archaeological heritage**

Dholsamundra (the capital of the local Pala kings) at Boali, Toke Badshahi Mosque; Dighi and mazar at Chaura; old bridge (built by Meer Jumla) at Tongi, Bhawal Rajbari and the maths at Joydebpur.

- **Marks of the War of Liberation**

Mass graves and killing sites: pond area near the Joydebpur Palace, Gachha School Compound and Tongi Shahid Memorial School compound; memorials: 'Jagrata Chourangi', (the first sculpture commemorating the War of Liberation at the turn of the Chandana Chowrasta) and in front of the Deputy Commissioner's Office (Joydebpur Palace).

- **Cultural organisations**

Club 6, library 68, mosque based library 107, museum 3, theatre stage 1, theatre group 5, Literary Society 1, Women's Association 3, Women's Co-operative Society 89, cinema hall 10, community centre 10, Shilpakala Academy 1, Shishu Academy 1, Dak Bungalow 2, Circuit House 1, park 1 (Bhawal National Park), Biswaljtema Ground 1, Nuhash Chalachhitra Palli (film shooting location) 1.

- **Land use**

Total land 41300 hectares; cultivable land 30645 hectares, fallow land 1140 hectares, forests 5052 hectares; single crop 49.3%, double crop 26.2% and treble crop land 24.5%; land under irrigation 42%.

2.3 Climatic and Environmental Considerations

Gazipur has a tropical climate. The summers are much rainier than the winters there. This climate is considered to be Aw according to the Köppen-Geiger climate classification. The average temperature in Gazipur is 25.8 °C. The average annual rainfall is 2036 mm.

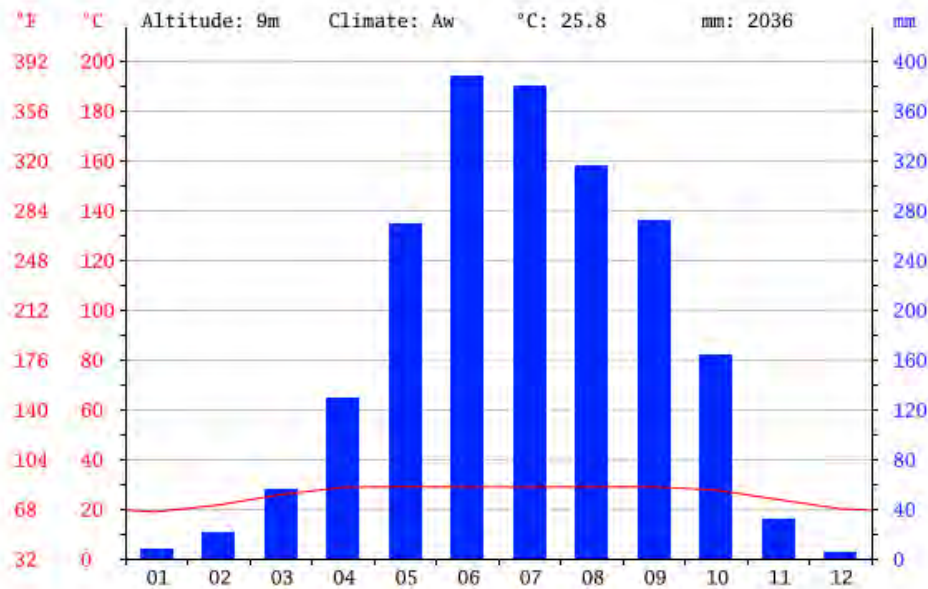


Figure 10: Climate graph for Gazipur, Source: <http://en.climate-data.org>

The least amount of rainfall occurs in December. The greatest amount of precipitation occurs in June, with an average of 388 mm.

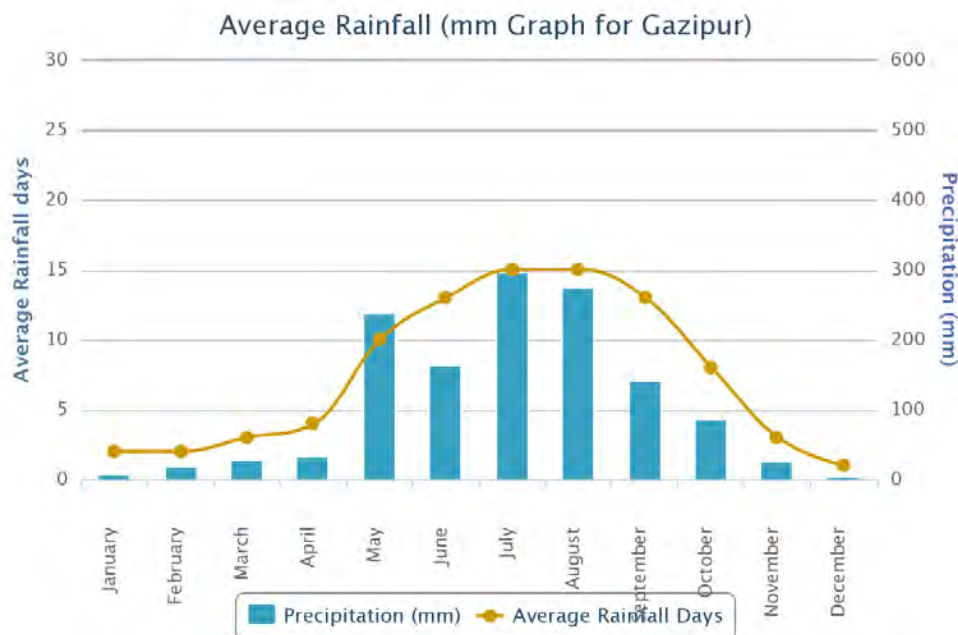


Figure 11: Average rainfall graph for Gazipur, Source: <http://en.climate-data.org>

The temperatures are highest on average in May, at around 28.9 °C. The lowest average temperatures in the year occur in January, when it is around 18.8 °C.

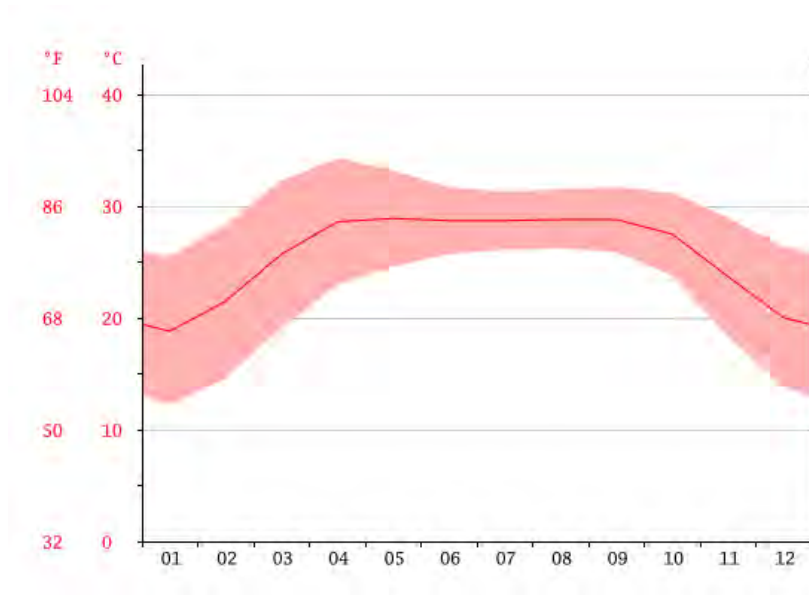


Figure 12: Temperature graph for Gazipur, Source: <http://www.worldweatheronline.com>

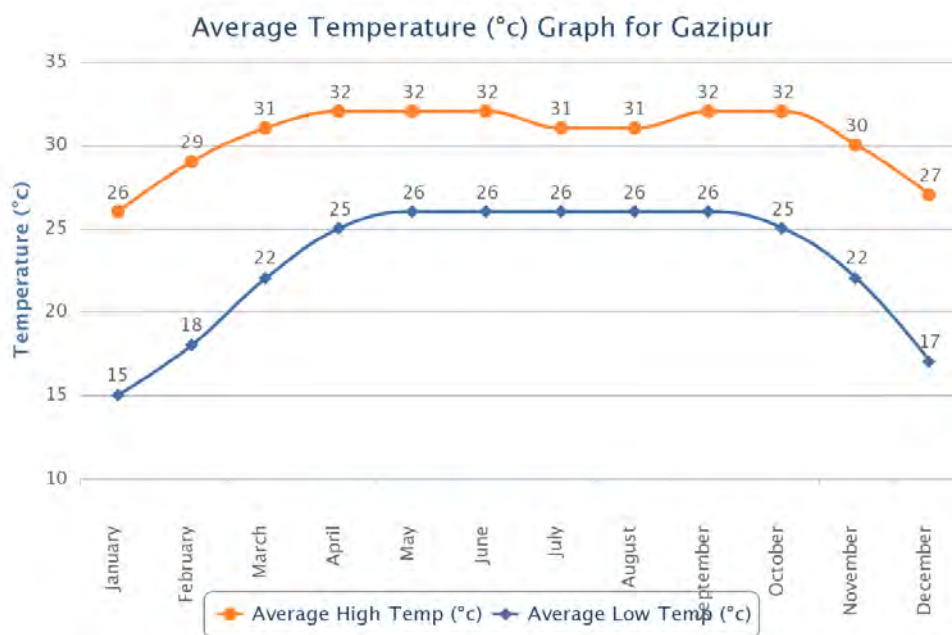


Figure 13: Average high and low temperature graph for Gazipur, Source: <http://www.worldweatheronline.com>

The variation in the precipitation between the driest and wettest months is 383 mm. The variation in temperatures throughout the year is 10.1 °C.

month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
mm	8	21	55	129	269	388	379	316	271	164	31	5
°C	18.8	21.5	25.7	28.6	28.9	28.7	28.7	28.8	28.8	27.5	23.7	20.0
°C (min)	12.2	14.6	19.1	23.0	24.6	25.7	26.1	26.2	25.9	23.8	18.4	13.8
°C (max)	25.5	28.4	32.3	34.3	33.2	31.7	31.3	31.5	31.7	31.2	29.0	26.3
°F	65.8	70.7	78.3	83.5	84.0	83.7	83.7	83.8	83.8	81.5	74.7	68.0
°F (min)	54.0	58.3	66.4	73.4	76.3	78.3	79.0	79.2	78.6	74.8	65.1	56.8
°F (max)	77.9	83.1	90.1	93.7	91.8	89.1	88.3	88.7	89.1	88.2	84.2	79.3

Figure 14: Climate table for Gazipur, Source: <http://www.worldweatheronline.com>

2.4 SWOT analysis

Strength:



- The site has surrounding water bodies and forest which will provide for pleasant views and a source of fresh wind.
- There are all kinds of trees present; from medicinal to floral and due to this the weather is always bearable.
- The vast amount of open lush green land will provide the serenity and calmness required for such a project.
- Site is bounded by two road networks.
- Site is easily accessible from Dhaka city which makes for the perfect getaway.
- The local 'bazaar' is located close to the site which is convenient.
- The site is significantly near to useful facilities such as hospitals, police station and schools.

Weakness:

- The primary road is quite far from the location, which can be hampering at times.

Opportunity:

- The site has the potential to develop into a beautiful retreat/center, accommodating fitness, meditation, relaxation and healing.
- There is scope for increased tourism, thus, helping the economy.
- The water bodies in the site automatically work as rain water disposal points.

Threat:

- The lack of maintenance could ruin the existing scenery and the site's true potential.
- As the vast amount of land usually gets isolated as the sun goes down, security can be an issue.
- Environmental pollution can be detrimental to the site in future.

Chapter 03 | **Literature Review**

3.1 What is a Retreat?

3.1.1 Types of Retreat

3.2 What is Haven: Centre for Retreat - a sanctuary for peace and healing'?

3.2.1 Project Rationale

3.3 History of yoga

3.3.1 Yoga

3.4. Meditation

3.4.1 Silva Method

3.4.2 Technique and brain frequencies

3.4.3 Capabilities

3.5 Yoga and meditation in other religions

3.1 What is a Retreat?

A retreat can be defined as an escape, getaway or hideaway.

A place affording peace, quiet, privacy, or security.

A period of seclusion, retirement, or solitude.

A period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, or study: a religious retreat.

In modern times, a retreat is often used to advertise a recreational holiday. In this context, a retreat means to leave everyday business for a few days (weekend-retreat) up to weeks. The goal is to let go of daily stress and problems. Often retreats are offered as organised travels abroad.

3.1.1 Types of Retreat



There can be various types of retreats based on typology or the target group that it caters to. The most popular ones right now would be the religious and spiritual retreats and the yoga and wellness retreats. Apart from these, there are also military retreats, sports retreats, corporate retreats, nature retreats, silent retreats, personal/individual retreats, family retreats and so on.

3.2 What is 'Haven: Centre for Retreat – a sanctuary for peace and healing'?

Haven is a holistic, experiential retreat for the wellness of the mind, body and soul.



Haven is for those who want to feel a connection in their lives. Connection with their body as the living temple of self-expression and action, connection with their feelings as a place to experience one's own gentle power and personal strength, connection with the mind as our reflective pool of inspiration and guidance and, connection with the spirit being a truly uplifting experience of the living now.

Haven promotes a healthy and disciplined lifestyle, one that emphasises on the overall well-being of a person as an individual and a member of a community. Moreover, the visitors shall be able to learn many new things for it does not just strive to provide a place for relaxation but also a place for enlightening.

3.2.1 Project Rationale

Although people from all over the world can visit and stay at Haven, the project is primarily targeted for the people of Dhaka city. Dhaka has been ranked the second least liveable city in the world for the third consecutive year, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2015 Global Liveability Ranking. People in this city lead very stressful lives. In psychology, stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Small amounts of stress may be desired, beneficial, and even healthy. Positive stress helps improve athletic performance. It also plays a factor in motivation, adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress, however, may lead to bodily harm. Stress can increase the risk of strokes, heart attacks, ulcers, and mental disorders such as depression.

Humans experience stress, or perceive things as threatening, when they do not believe that their resources for coping with obstacles (stimuli, people, situations, etc.) are enough for what the circumstances demand. When we think the demands being placed on us exceed our ability to cope, we then perceive stress.

Researchers generally classify the different types of stressors (stress causing agent. condition or stimulus) into four categories:

- 1) Crises/Catastrophes
- 2) Major life events
- 3) Daily hassles/Microstressors
- 4) Ambient stressors



Figure 15: Sources of stress in Dhaka

Keeping personal problems aside, the inhabitants of Dhaka city have enough reasons to be stressed out externally yet there's hardly any outlet for them to de-stress within the city. And that is why, an establishment like Haven is not only needed but might just be a solution to many of our problems. It will encourage a lifestyle where one is motivated to heal himself and be more conscious of his mind, health and surroundings.

3.3 History of Yoga

Yoga (Sanskrit, Pāli: योग yōga) refers to traditional physical and mental disciplines originating in India. The word is associated with meditative practices in Buddhism and Hinduism. In Hinduism; it also refers to one of the six orthodox (āstika) schools of Hindu philosophy, and to the goal toward which that school directs its practices. In Jainism it refers to the sum total of all activities—mental, verbal and physical. Major branches of yoga in Hindu philosophy include Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Hatha Yoga. Raja Yoga, compiled in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and known simply as yoga in the context of Hindu philosophy, is part of the Samkhya tradition. Many other Hindu texts discuss aspects of yoga, including Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, the Shiva Samhita and various Tantras.

The Sanskrit word yoga has many meanings, and is derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, meaning "to control", "to yoke" or "to unite". Translations include "joining", "uniting", "union", "conjunction", and "means". Outside India, the term yoga is typically associated with Hatha Yoga and its asanas (postures) or as a form of exercise. Someone who practices yoga or follows the yoga philosophy is called a Yogi. Yoga was a practice to gather one's soul but the use of yoga has changed over time as it has more beneficial aspects in our life. Yoga is

now followed by many people and the practice is done even in the western countries. Meditation can also be a part of yoga which helps to cool down the body and gather our thoughts. As people have become more aware about living a healthy peaceful life as the stress level has increased, the practice of yoga has become more popular due to its many advantages. The Vedic Samhitas contain references to ascetics, while ascetic practices (tapas) are referenced in the Brāhmaṇas (900 to 500 BCE), early commentaries on the Vedas. Several seals discovered at Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3300–1700 B.C.E.) sites depict figures in positions resembling a common yoga or meditation pose, showing "a form of ritual discipline, suggesting a precursor of yoga", according to archaeologist Gregory Possehl. Some type of connection between the Indus Valley seals and later yoga and meditation practices is speculated upon by many scholars, though there is no conclusive evidence.

–You can become conscious of your nights and your sleep just as you are conscious of your days. It is a matter of inner development and discipline of consciousness." (The Mother, 2004). Yoga and meditation helps to confine our thoughts and gain control over our mind and body. Earlier it was a form of worship but now it is popular for its exercise. Regular practice can bring positive results but in order to gain the positive effect one must practice properly. This helps us to have control over us even in dreams and yes it is that powerful. –Mother" and –Sri Aurobindo" well-known figures in south India, Pondicherry, has started the proper practice there and together they have created ashrams, dining halls, clinics and place for people to meditate properly and gain patience, harmony, strength and courage to face their daily life. It is clearly stated in the book that discipline can cure one's problem and be the guide to a proper and better life. The presence of yoga and meditation has been discovered from a very early age of human existence and the use of it has spread worldwide. There are many books written by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on yoga and meditation and its practices. It requires peaceful surrounding and amidst nature where one can truly connect to its spiritual self.

3.3.1 Yoga

"It brings energy up your spine." (Author Timothy McCall, M.D., Count on Yoga: 38 Ways Yoga Keeps You Fit, 2014). Timothy came to know about the benefits of yoga in 2002 and he searched for the medical explanations behind it. He describes how yoga has cured his numbness in his hand and also increased his stamina, flexibility, strength, heartbeat, blood pressure, weight, brain, lymph nodes, mental thoughts, immune system and many more. Yoga helps to live a more healthy life and builds confidence. In this article he talks about how he got to know about yoga when he travelled to India and how it helped him. He

brought up the many beneficial aspects of yoga and the fact that even in western culture the practice of yoga plays an important role. Yoga is for everyone, for any age, culture, religion or gender.

3.4 Meditation

"Any instrument for holding or restraining." (Teacher and author Richard Rosen, Yantra: A tool for Meditation, 2014). The article describes how meditation cures distress, anxiety, depression, lack of confidence and many more. Meditation is a form of exercise or practice where one can confine their soul and calm themselves and be more gathered and confident and in peace. In present hectic life where people work for hours, meditation for an hour can work like a miracle. Even doctors now suggest their patients to perform meditation in order to release stress. It is a proper way of living a healthy life instead of taking pills and this brings a person closer to nature.

3.4.1 Silva Method

The Silva Method is the name given to a self-help program developed by José Silva. The Silva Method teaches students specialized guided imagery techniques intended to "rewire" their subconscious and negative programming, tap into their true potential and achieve their goals using a meditation technique and mental training program that is offered in seminars in over 129 countries around the world.

It claims to increase an individual's abilities and sense of personal well-being through relaxation and development of their higher brain functions. Proponents believe that it can improve a person's self-image, allow them to think in a clearer manner, and assist people in overcoming conditions such as nicotine addiction.

Their website says that the Silva Method research was investigated by Dr. J. Wilfrid Hahn of the Mind Science Foundation in California, who went on to endorse it, and that various research institutions, universities and scientists have studied and verified their research, including: Duke University, Trinity University, University of Texas, Wayland Baptist University, C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University and New York Canisius College.

Some, including Silva himself, believe that it can be used to develop paranormal abilities such as Intuition and ESP and that it can also allow you to tap into a higher consciousness.

The Silva Method website describes its curriculum as —a unique combination of Alpha and Theta level exercises, creative visualizations, habit control and positive programming methods, has been endorsed by various thought leaders and scientists. This includes personal growth icons like Jack Canfield, Dr. Wayne Dyer and Shakti Gawain, bestselling author Richard Bach, award-winning neuroscientist Mark Robert Waldman and oncology research pioneer Dr. O. Carl Simonton.”

The Silva Method is one of a number of therapeutic techniques sometimes grouped under the name Meditation.

3.4.2 Technique and Brain frequencies

The technique aims to reach and sustain a state of mental functioning, called alpha state, where brainwave frequency is seven to fourteen. Daydreaming and the transition to sleeping are alpha states.

José Silva, founder of the Silva Method, claimed to have developed a program that trained people to enter certain brain states of enhanced awareness. He also claimed to have developed several systematic mental processes to use while in these states allowing a person to mentally project with a specific intent. According to Silva, once the mind is projected, a person can allegedly view distant objects or locations and connect with higher intelligence for guidance. The information received by the projected mind is then said to be perceived as thoughts, images, feelings, smells, taste and sound by the mind. The information obtained in this manner can be acted upon to solve problems. It deals with the different frequencies of human brain.

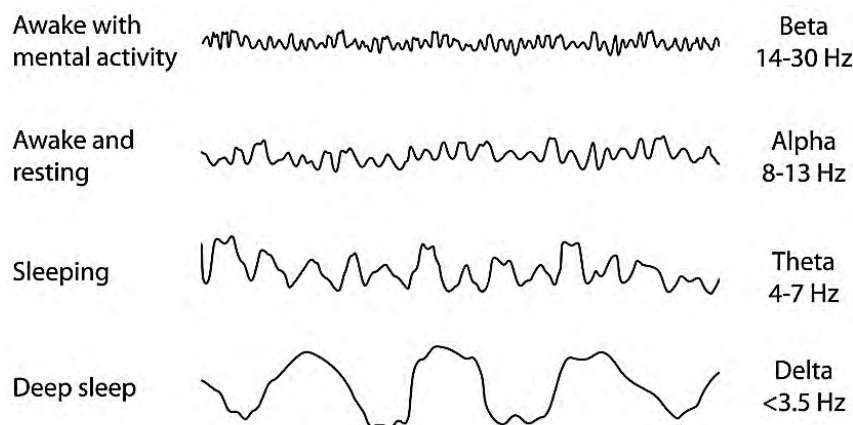


Figure 16: Different frequencies of the human brain as per state, Source: Google

Beta [14-30Hz]: concentration, arousal, alertness, cognition

Alpha [8-13.9Hz]: Relaxation, super learning, relaxed focus, light trance, increased Serotonin production

Theta [4-7.9Hz]: Dreaming sleep [REM sleep], increased production of Catecholamines (vital for learning and memory), increased creativity

Delta [0.1-3.9Hz]: Dreamless sleep, human growth hormone release, loss of body awareness

3.4.3 Capabilities

The Silva Method teaches people to listen to and control parts of the mind-body that many Westerners have not yet learned to access. In this way, it is similar to a few advanced yoga's. Silva also uses touch patterns to anchor mind states, in a manner similar to NLP, Anthony Robbins's teachings, and Japanese ninjitsu. Skills Silva teaches include:

- Skills that have not been scientifically verified
- Deep relaxation, including both body and mind
- Meditating immediately, with eyes closed or open
- Cure for insomnia--voluntary going-to-sleep in one minute
- Pain control--Silva practitioners are able to not mind intermediate pain, and can get cavities filled or receive colonoscopies without any anaesthetics
- Blood flow control, leading to primitive temperature control--"send heat" to hands or places in the body. At advanced levels, this can also be used to lessen blood flow to moderate cuts.
- Self-diagnosis of mental and emotional challenges
- Memory replay of past events (useful for finding dropped keys, etc.)
- Intuitive understanding of subconscious sides of self (useful for overcoming blockages)
- Intuitive understanding of subconscious sides of others
- Brainstorming and idea formation
- Energy level control
- Self-diagnosis of physical challenges
- Increasing healing rates in self, through visualization and laying-on of hands
- Increasing healing rates in others
- Increasing healing rates in others remotely

- Remote viewing
- Empathic Telepathy

3.5 Yoga and Meditation in other Religions

Islam: (Ian Mackinnon, south-east Asia correspondent, The guardian, Monday 24 November 2008). The development of Sufism was considerably influenced by Indian yogic practises, where they adapted both physical postures (asanas) and breath control (pranayama). The ancient Indian yogic text, Amritakunda, (Pool of Nectar) was translated into Arabic and Persian as early as the

11th century. A fatwa was passed, which is legally non-binding, against Muslims practicing yoga, saying it had elements of "Hindu spiritual teachings" and could lead to blasphemy and is therefore haraam. Muslim yoga teachers in Malaysia criticized the decision as "insulting". Sisters in Islam, a women's rights group in Malaysia, also expressed disappointment and said they would continue with their yoga classes. The fatwa states that yoga practiced only as physical exercise is permissible, but prohibits the chanting of religious mantras, and states that teachings such as uniting of a human with God is not consistent with Islamic philosophy. In a similar vein, the Council of Ulemas, an Islamic body in Indonesia, passed a fatwa banning yoga on the grounds that it contains "Hindu elements". These fatwas have, (in turn, been criticized by DarulUloomDeoband, a Deobandi Islamic seminary in India. In May of 2009, Turkey's head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, Ali Bardakoğlu), discounted Yoga as a commercial venture promoting extremism- comments made in the context of Yoga practice possibly competing with and eroding participation in Islam.

(Anonymous writer, A Muslim yogi's Affirmation, Friday, February 17, 2012). A female Muslim yogi wrote how much she is devoted to her religion as well as to yoga. She talked about respecting individual religion and also that yoga and meditation if a form of exercise and no difference in races or religion should be a factor in it. Though with change in time people have accepted the goodness of yoga and meditation and it's been practiced worldwide.

Buddhism: In Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism, it can refer to physical or meditative disciplines that enable mystical experience." (Barbara O'Brien and Ramesh Bjonas, Yoga, May 09, 2011). Barbara denotes that yoga was from the very beginning of Buddhism. Even Buddha was a yogi before he got enlightenment. So the practice of yoga was a part of Buddhism.

Christianity: In 1989, the Vatican declared that Eastern meditation practices such as Zen and yoga can "degenerate into a cult of the body." In spite of the Vatican statement, many Roman Catholics bring elements of Yoga, Buddhism, and Hinduism into their spiritual practices.

Hinduism: Yoga and meditation has been in the roots of Hinduism from the very beginning. People have been following the footsteps of their ancestors for generations and have achieved great results.

Chapter 04 | **Contextual Analysis**

4.1 Formulation of the Project

4.2 Site Rationale

4.3 Experience within the Site

4.1 Formulation of the Project

In modern terms, a retreat is often used to advertise a recreational holiday. In this context, retreat means to leave everyday business for a few days (weekend-retreat) up to weeks. The goal is to let go of daily stress and problems, which for some people, is easier when concentrating on physical activities such as yoga-practices, fitness sports or meditation. Often retreats are offered as organised travels abroad. Retreats are also good places to meet people with whom you share common interests in lifestyle.

The meaning of a spiritual retreat can be different for different religious communities. They are known to be an integral part of many Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Sufi (Islamic) communities. In Hinduism and Buddhism, meditative retreats are seen by some as integral for reconnection to one's self. Retreat, spiritual or not, is a common concept abroad that has also gained a lot of popularity in this part of the world as well. A haven, or rather an ashram, would traditionally, but not necessarily in contemporary times, be located far from human habitation, in forests or mountainous regions, amidst refreshing natural surroundings conducive to spiritual instruction and meditation. The residents regularly performed spiritual and physical exercises, such as the various forms of yoga. Other sacrifices and penances, such as yajnas were also performed. Many ashrams also served as gurukulas, residential schools for children under the guru-shishya tradition (Madan, 1990). Sometimes, the goal of a pilgrimage to the ashram was not tranquility, but instruction in some art, especially warfare. In the Ramayana, the protagonist princes of ancient Ayodhya, Rama and Lakshmana, go to Vishvamitra's ashram to protect his yajnas from being defiled by emissary-demons of Ravana. After they prove their mettle, the princes receive martial instruction from the sage, especially in the use of divine weapons. In the Mahabharata, Krishna, in his youth, goes to the ashram of Sandipani to gain knowledge of both intellectual and spiritual matters.

A visit to Haven is not just intended to provide peace but also enlightenment. Fitness, meditation and yoga are not just fundamental in maintaining our physical health, but they also provide us with a positive outlook on life. Hence, the retreat shall be an educational place for enthusiasts who seek to know more about these arts and practices. Although, they are not properly conducted in our country, there is a growing awareness and interest towards them. As this is something which is beneficial to people, the project can prove to be quite significant to society as it will promote a healthier and more disciplined lifestyle, one that not only emphasises on the physical health but also on the mental well-being of a person. One shall experience an

A concept like this is not yet seen anywhere in Bangladesh whereas it is already a practice in many developed countries. Resorts and getaways are available throughout the country but none that caters specifically to the nourishment of the mind, body and soul. Hence, I believe, this project could influence the nation positively and hopefully start a constructive trend.

4.2 Site Rationale

Although historically such retreats are known to be located very far from human settlement, my main target group for this project were the residents of Dhaka city. For this establishment to be a success, its location had to be strategic and well thought out. The site had to be embedded within nature but at the same time, it couldn't be too isolated from the city life. The aim of the retreat is to provide people with that small escape from their hectic urban lives, so it needed to be easily accessible yet not so far that it takes them too long to commute back and forth. Gazipur fulfils all of these requirements and hence was the selected site for the project. Just a little further north along Dhaka city and home to beautiful forests, rivers and lakes, it is definitely one of the attractions of the country and the ideal place for the proposed retreat.

4.3 Experience within the Site

People experience nature just as it is. When experiencing it, they are not guided by lines or any physical boundary. Rather they are manipulated by nature itself, and they travel or experience nature by moving through it. The movement pattern of a person who is experiencing and observing nature is also random and fluid. It is not one that follows any linear direction. The spaces hoped to achieve are also not meant to be limited, restricted and regularly guided, but rather spontaneous, developing from the need of the spaces and the experience to be provided. The retreat needs to be flexible and free flowing. Contextualizing the program of such an establishment in the site, it is highly demanded that the spaces flow through nature and celebrate it rather than define a new boundary itself. The spaces should be such that it intertwines with the nature, welcoming it as much as possible, rather than control it.

The site is such that it is dotted in trees and nearby to water bodies. It is thus high in biodiversity. Since the project is one that concerns healing, mental peace, nature and

conservation, I believe that the approach towards its architecture must be guided by the surrounding environment. Buddha, who was a Hindu prince, was believed to have attained wisdom through meditation under a Peepal tree sitting on a darbha or kusha mat. Hence, I believe, that trees and nature have particular significance to the essence I'm trying to instil in this ashram.

Chapter 05 | **Case Study**

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Local

5.2.1 Quantumom, Lama, Bandarban

5.3 International

5.3.1 Think Tank Retreat / RMA Architects, Valpoi, Goa, India

5.3.2 Windhover Contemplative Center / Aidlin Darling Design, Stanford University, Stanford, USA

5.3.3 Auroville, Pondicherry, India

5.1 Introduction

As there are no exactly similar establishments like this in the country, therefore in this chapter, different aspects of the project would be briefly analysed with a number of various local and international projects.

5.2 Local

5.2.1 Quantumom, Lama, Bandarban

Sometime in the 90s, during a tour of Bandarban, Gurujee Shahid El Bukhari Mahajataq came across the area that is now Quantumom. Back then, all there was were a few burnt hills with a smattering of weeds. Yet he was struck by the intensity of life force in the area, and felt the promise of the place. He acquired the land, first constructed the Dayn Ghor (meditation room), then the main bungalow. Later, he undertook initiatives to improve the lives of the local people. Shishukanon, a residential school for the deprived children of the region was established. Medical camps were organized. For the first time in their lives, local people met and received treatment from a properly trained medical doctor.

Shishukanon, basically a school in Lama, is a good example that demonstrates how community development and meditation and yoga can work side by side for the betterment of the people. This project has not only flourished and served the local people efficiently, but from time to time people from all over the city visit the place and together they work and meditate for inner peace and prosperity.



Figure 17: Shishukanon,

Source: <http://quantummethod.org/content/brief-history-quantumom>

5.3 International

5.3.1 Think Tank Retreat / RMA Architects, Valpoi, Goa, India

Located in the verdant environs of eastern Goa, the Think Tank Retreat is composed of eight living units and an alternate health centre. The ancillary programs of the health centre (massage rooms, a conference facility and kitchen) are conceived as independent boxes that are integrated on a common plinth under a large clay tile roof. The terraces of each of these separate boxes are also accessible and serve as useable covered spaces for informal meetings, yoga, and meditation.

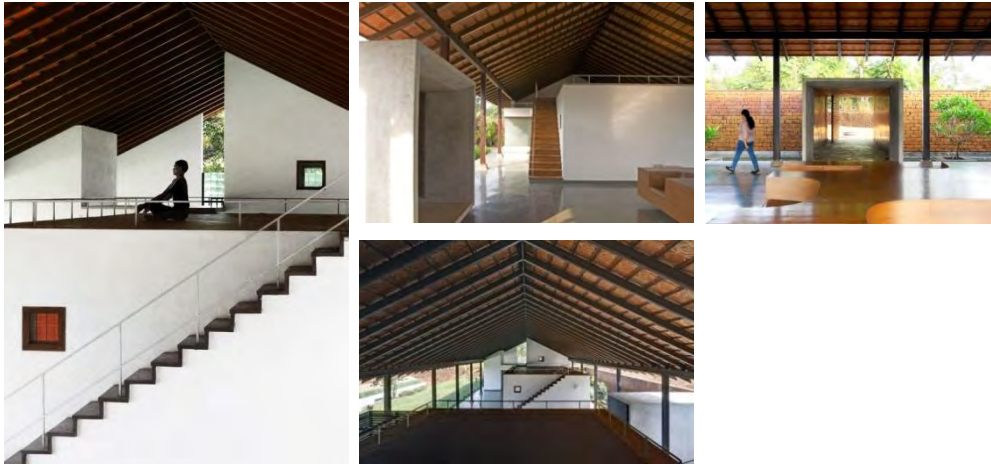


Figure 18: Think Tank Retreat,

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/376950/think-tank-retreat-rma-architects>

Natural cross ventilation, built in insulation through the double roof and concerns of the building weathering gracefully with minimal maintenance in the tropical climate of Goa were the central concerns in the design strategy. In addition the use of local materials for the primary building elements: laterite walls (quarried within a 5 km radius of the site) and the clay tiles (made locally) for the roof localize and extend the indigenous building traditions in the locality.

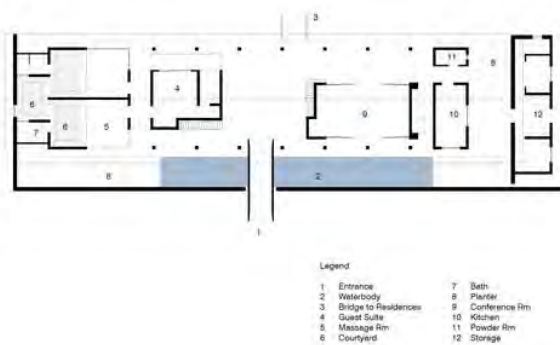


Figure 19: Plan, Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/376950/think-tank-retreat-rma-architects>

5.3.2 Windhover Contemplative Center / Aidlin Darling Design, Stanford University, Stanford, USA

Architect firm, Aidlin Darling Design has completed The Windhover Contemplative Center on the campus of Stanford University, which serves as a spiritual retreat for students, faculty, and staff. Designed to promote personal renewal and well-being, the one-story, 4,000



Figure 21: Exterior spaces,

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/608268/windhover-contemplative-center-aidlin-darlin-design>



Figure 20: Plan,

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/608268/windhover-contemplative-center-aidlin-darlin-design>
square-foot building recently opened its doors to the Stanford community. community.

Using internationally acclaimed artist Nathan Oliveira's meditative Windhover series as a vehicle, Aidlin Darling Design worked with fellow National Design Award winner Andrea Cochran Landscape Architecture to create a space where art, landscape, and architecture come together to replenish and invigorate the spirit. Combining the characteristics of a spiritual sanctuary, an art gallery, and a contemplative garden, the designers have created

a unique typology for contemplation and reflection that will benefit Stanford University for years to come.

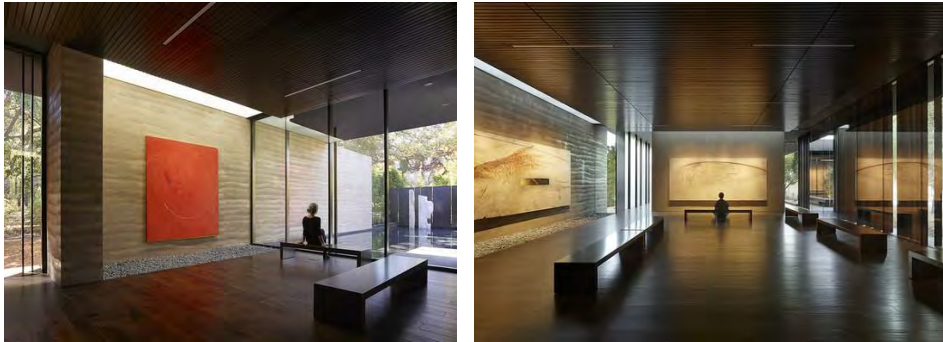


Figure 22: Interior spaces,

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/608268/windhover-contemplative-center-aidlin-darlin-design>

The Center is located in the heart of the campus, adjacent to a natural oak grove. The extended progression to the building's entry through a long, private garden sheltered from its surroundings by a line of tall bamboo, allows visitors to shed the outside world before entering. Within, the dichotomy created by the thick-rammed earth walls and dark wood surfaces with the lightness of the fully glazed east wall heighten the view to the oak glade beyond. Louvered skylights wash Oliveira's 15 to 30 foot-long paintings with natural light, providing the only light needed within the space throughout the daylight hours. Benches and cushions are strategically placed to allow visitors to quietly view both the paintings and the adjacent landscape simultaneously. In conjunction with landscape, water is used throughout as an aid for meditation; fountains within the building and the adjacent courtyard provide ambient sound, while a still reflecting pool and garden to the south reflect the surrounding trees. Exterior contemplation spaces are integrated into the use of the center, further intensifying the connection of nature, art and contemplation. These courtyards, coupled with the expansive glass wall to the east, allow visitors to view the paintings without accessing the building, effectively creating a sanctuary for the Stanford community day and night.

5.3.3 Auroville, Pondicherry, India

Auroville (City of Dawn) is an experimental township in Viluppuram district in the state of Tamil Nadu, near Pondicherry in South India. It was founded in 1968 by Mirra Alfassa (also known as "The Mother") and designed by architect Roger Anger. As stated in Alfassa's first public message about the township, "Auroville is meant to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity."



Figure 23: Exterior spaces, Source: <http://www.auroville.org/>

The concept of Auroville came to the Mother as early as the 1930s. In the mid-1960s, the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry proposed to Her that such a township should be started. She gave her blessings. The concept was then put before the Govt. of India, who gave their backing and took it to the General Assembly of UNESCO. In 1966 UNESCO passed a unanimous resolution commending it as a project of importance to the future of humanity, thereby giving their full encouragement.



Figure 24: Landscaping, Source: <http://www.auroville.org/>

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity – in diversity. Today Auroville is recognised as the first and only internationally endorsed ongoing experiment in human unity and transformation of consciousness, also concerned with - and practically researching into - sustainable living and the future cultural, environmental, social and spiritual needs of mankind.

Peace Area, City Zones & Green Belt

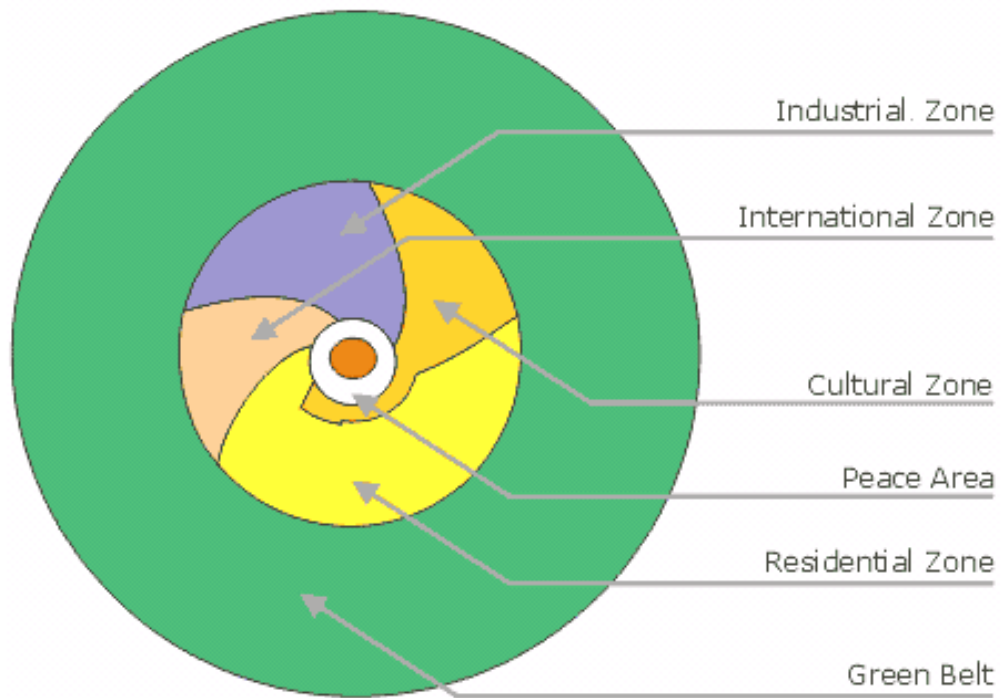


Figure 25: Zoning of Auroville, Source: <http://www.auroville.org/>

Auroville is divided into various zones and belts. It has schools, restaurants, residences, exhibition spaces, healing centres, health centres, shops, research institutes, workshops, libraries and so on.

Chapter 06 | **Programme and Development**

6.1 Rationale of the programme

6.1 Rationale of the programme

The basic understanding of the programmatic requirements of the project could be gathered from the literature review. There is no existing project of this nature in the country at present. Hence, the programme that was derived was the summation of the various findings across the globe from which the general requirements of a retreat could be gathered and modified to suit the context. Site specific functions were incorporated as well into the overall programmatic layout. For such a project to be successful, it needs to facilitate different categories of function that deal with healing, fitness and recreation, providing people with alternatives to choose as per their preference.

Thus, the programme has been arranged as diversely as possible. One should be able to explore and encounter a journey full of experiences as they traverse across Haven. This way, they can opt for whichever path is beneficial or appealing to them. Besides the highly functional spaces, there will also be general facilities such as a library, restaurant, cultural centre and so on. Should someone just prefer visiting the retreat for a better understanding of the place, he will have plenty of options in terms of activities to engage in. Similarly, should someone wish to stay and experience Haven in its entirety, arrangements shall be provided for that as well.

Programs	Area in square feet
Information	3,600
Restaurant	3,276
Juice Bar	300
Classrooms	3,200 x 2 = 6,400
Multipurpose Hall	12,000
Library	9,600
Cultural Centre	4,800

Research	8,000
Clinic	6,000
Therapy	8,000
Recovery Space	2,800
Accommodation	
Cottage Type A	$566 \times 24 = 13,584$
Cottage Type B	$482 \times 27 = 13,014$
Mentor's Residence	$10,324 - 3,136 = 7,188$
Staff Dormitory	$5,570 \times 2 = 11,140$
	44,926
Yoga Studios	
Vinyasa	2,430
Iyengar	2,430
Bikram	2,840
	7,700
Meditation Hall	9,900

Chapter 07 | **Conceptual Stage and Design Development**

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Concept Development

7.3 Organizational Principle for the Programme

7.4 Master plan Derivation

7.5 Final Design

7.1 Introduction

The concept and design were generated in parallel along with the site and programme analysis. After a thorough study of the existing literature review and the needs of the project, a core concept was deduced. The next natural step was to identify the zoning, keeping in mind the various contexts which were applicable along the process. A continuous back and forth procedure with various developments and alterations along the way led to the production of the final master plan.

7.2 Concept Development

For an individual to attain peace, there needs to be balance and harmony in the three aspects that are key to his proper functioning: the mind, the body and the spirit.



Figure 26: Mind-Body-Spirit diagram

However, as Aristotle said,

“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.”

Human beings are social animals. Our lives depend on other humans. Human infants are born unable to transport or care for themselves. Their survival depends on another human's efforts. We develop and learn about the world around us through the filter of other people. Our connection to others is key to not only our survival, but also to our happiness, well-being and success. Hence, it is simply not sufficient to focus on oneself. We must also cultivate the various relationships in our lives and nurture our place in and with the community around us.

Nature is an aspect of the world that has been underappreciated for far too long. Nature plays a vital role in our world and has given us so much. Yet we fail to reciprocate any of it. It's about time that we learnt to appreciate nature, care for it and preserve it not just for our future but for nature's sake.

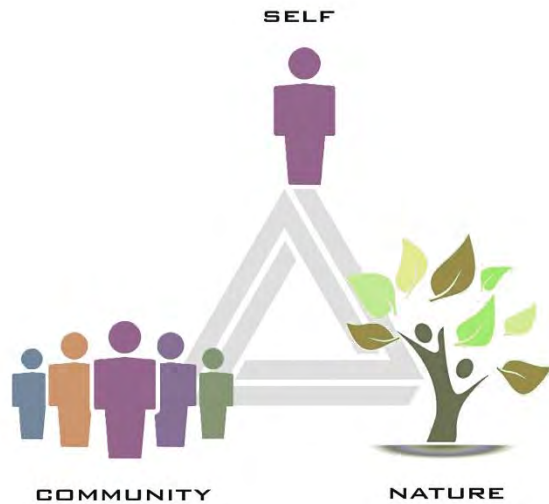


Figure 27: Elements of life

Hence, the idea was to design a place where one could be in tune with himself, the community around him and his surroundings. A happy and peaceful life can only be attained when there is balance and harmony within **self**, the **community** and **nature**, as depicted by the diagram below, showcasing the derivation of the final concept.



Figure 28: Concept generation

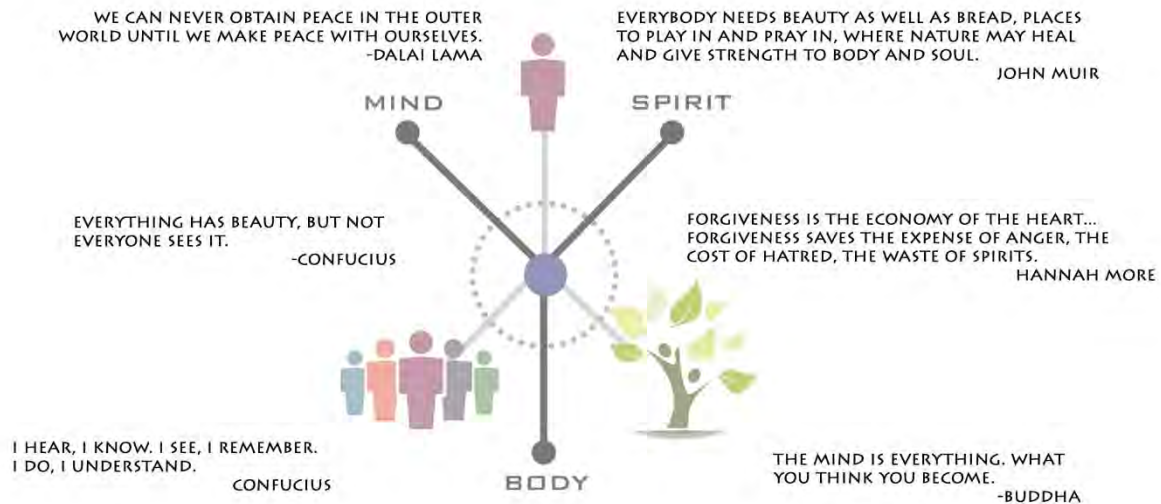


Figure 29: The concept

7.3 Organizational Principle for the Programme

For the concept to be realised, Haven needed to accommodate functions which would cater to an individual, to a community and to nature. These included activities involving fitness, recreation, community gardening, therapy, meditation and so on.



Figure 30: Individualistic functions



Figure 31: Tree of life

It was also essential to design intermediary spaces which would unite the three broader elements into a holistic universe and generate transitional functions so that the journey from one state to another was smooth and subtle.



Figure 32: Programme division

7.4 Master plan Derivation

The master plan was generated in a step by step process. Initially the zoning was identified keeping the site context and analysis in mind.

Two existing water bodies distinctly split the site into two zones.



Figure 33: a. Water body



b. Water body with vegetation

Evident from the topography diagram, a dense belt of trees with a high canopy is located centrally to the site, adjacent to the water body in the south. This belt ultimately divided the site into two halves.

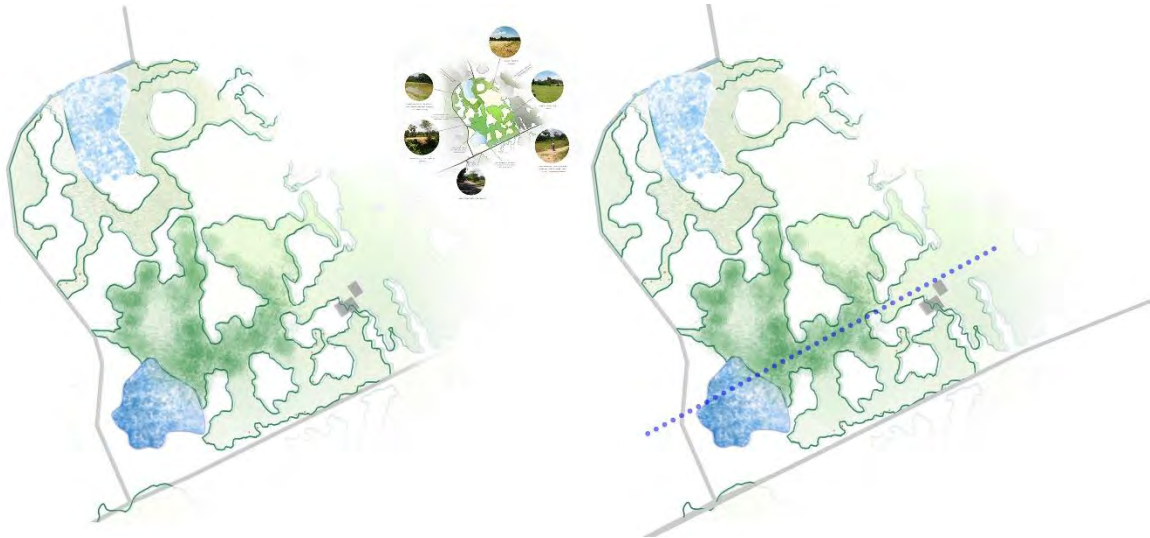


Figure 34: a. High canopied trees in the center

b. Division of the site

The bottom half is allocated for the public functions as it is close to the access road whereas the top half is allotted for the private functions as it is secluded from the main road and there is minimum sound penetration as deduced from the topography analysis. The belt of trees in the middle serves as a buffer space between the public and private zones.

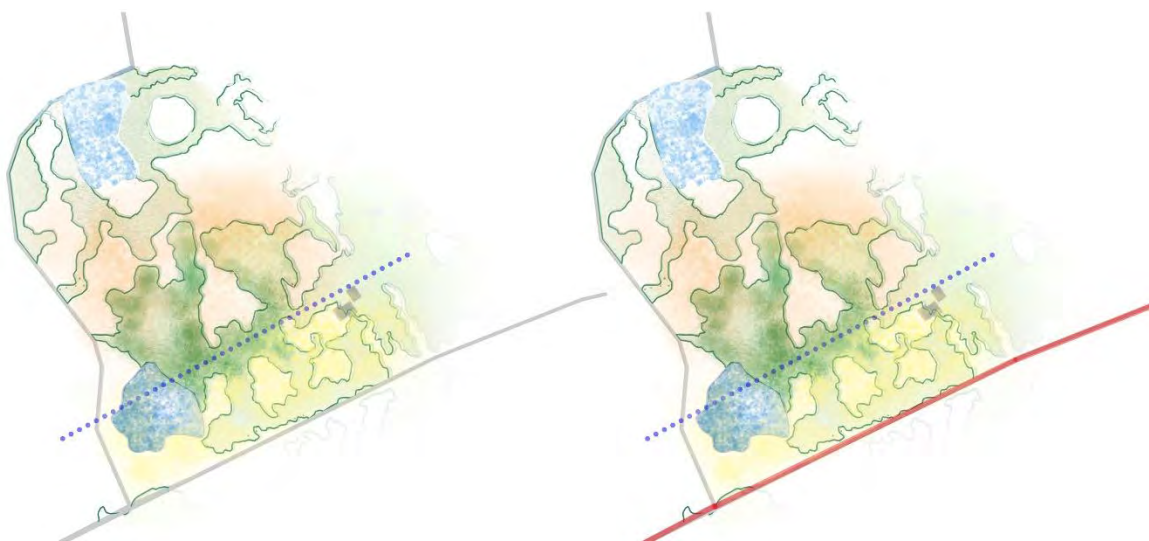


Figure 35: Allocation of public and private functional zoning

Public/community functions were designed in the spaces close to the access road and the water body on the south. The private zone constituted of functions relating to the self and nature as these required quiet, intimate and secluded spaces.

The experiential journey follows as such: Community > Self > Nature.

The functions were then connected via paved pathways, generated following the existing pattern of the site topography and the lines defining the solid-void relationship between the

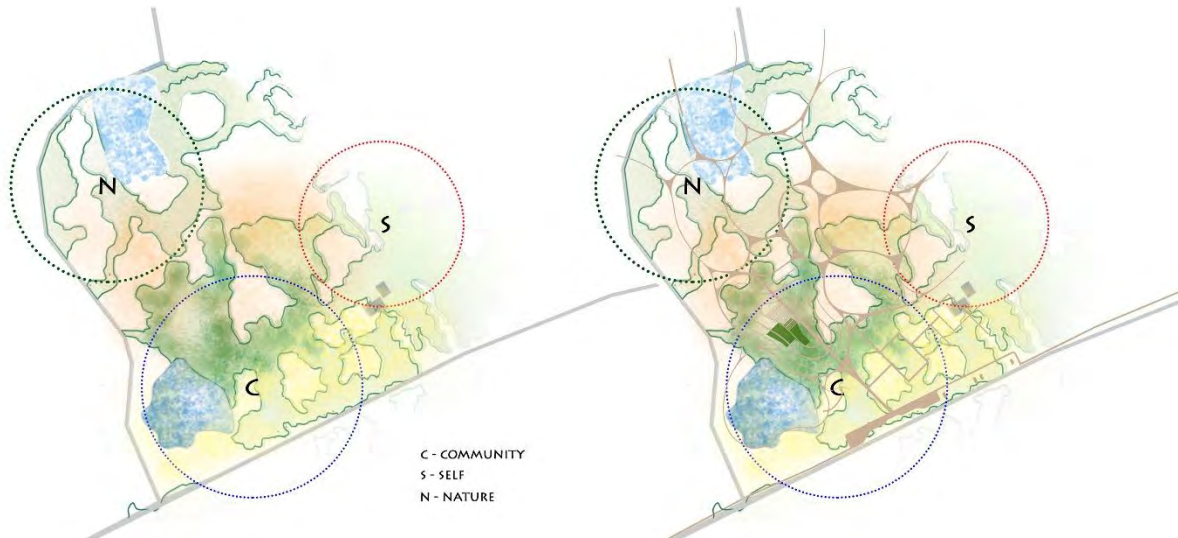


Figure 36: a. Function distribution
green (vegetation) and open spaces.

b. Connection between the functions

Soft paves were then added, connecting the paved pathways to the functions, diffusing into the existing landscape, merging the structures with nature.

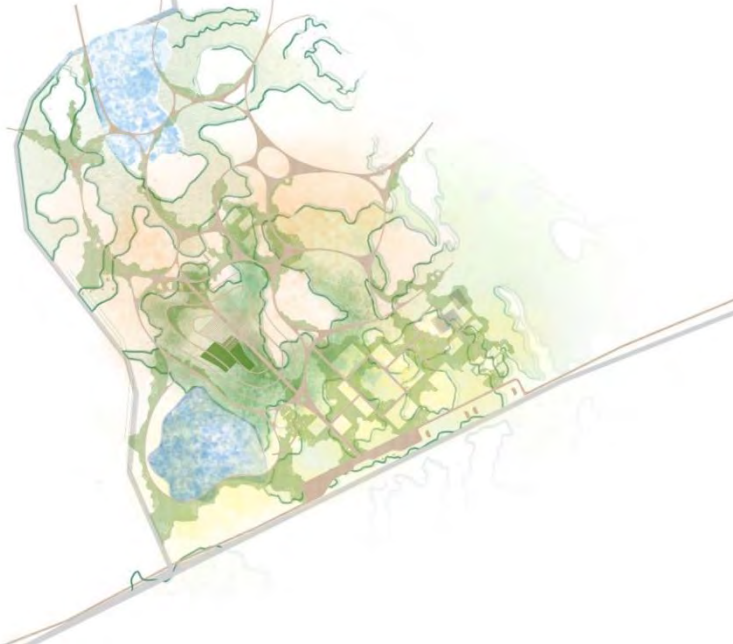
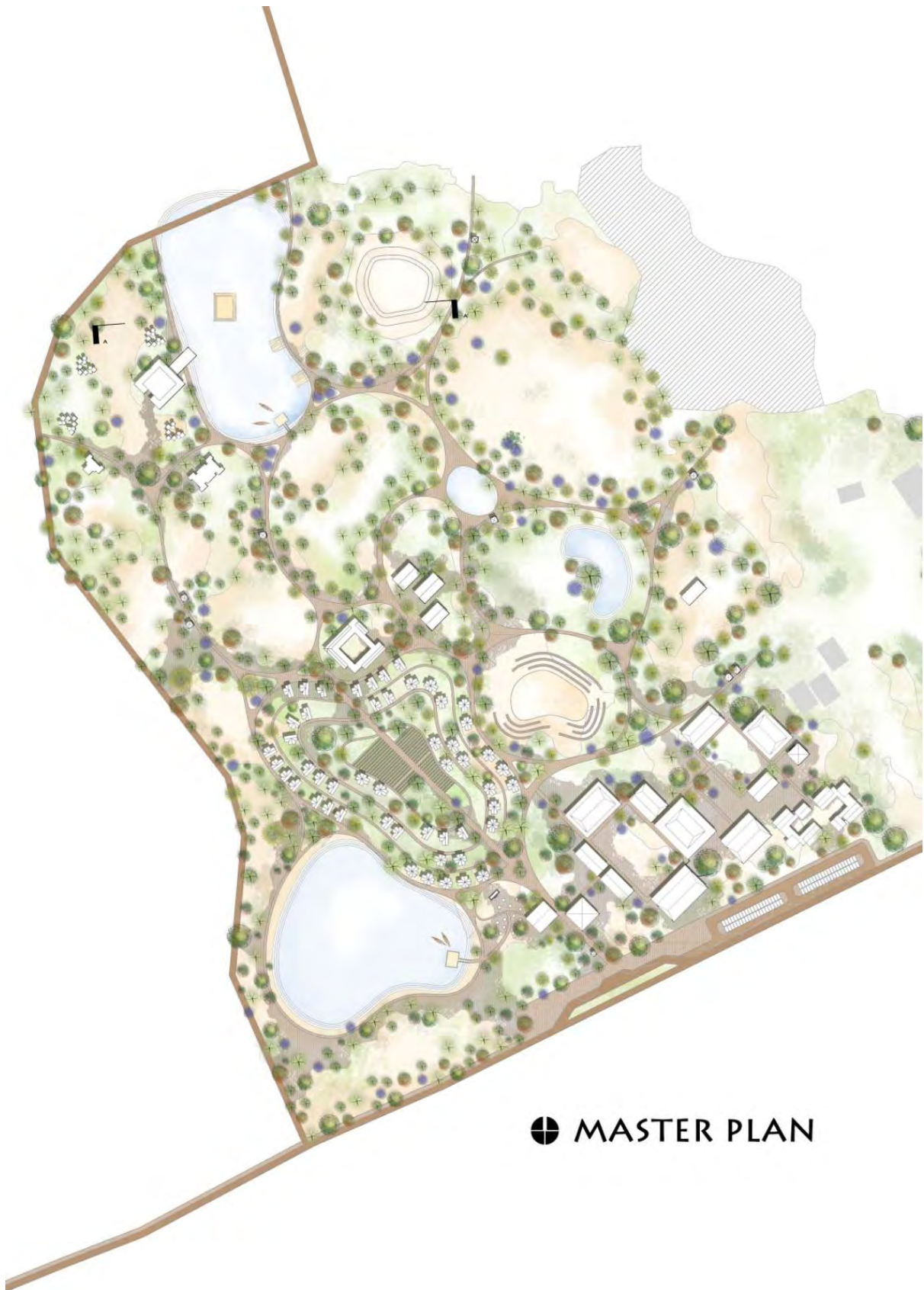


Figure 37: Connection between the landscape and functions

7.5 Final Design

The master plan below was the final result of the process described above. While the core functions were arranged in a compact composition, functions relating to meditation, yoga, basically individualistic and nature concerning activities, were deliberately kept at a significant distance from the main activity hub. They were placed as close to the nature as possible as they required peaceful and intimate settings to serve their respective purpose. Various trails and walkways have been provided throughout the site to create an experiential journey as one traversed across the retreat. Many of these paths terminated with small shaded, sitting areas to provide room for intimate gatherings or simple, quiet periods of isolation.



● MASTER PLAN

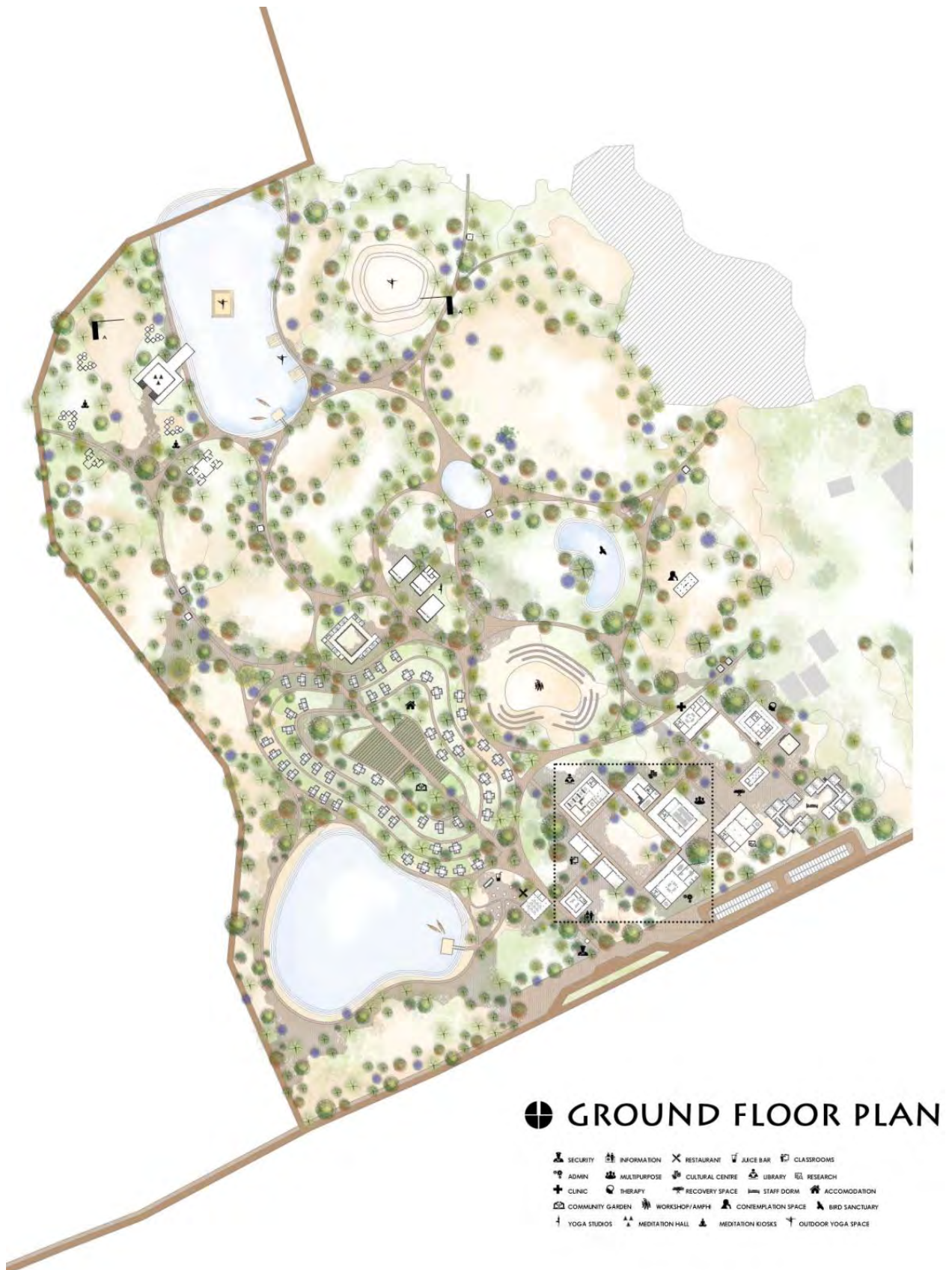


Figure 38: Plans

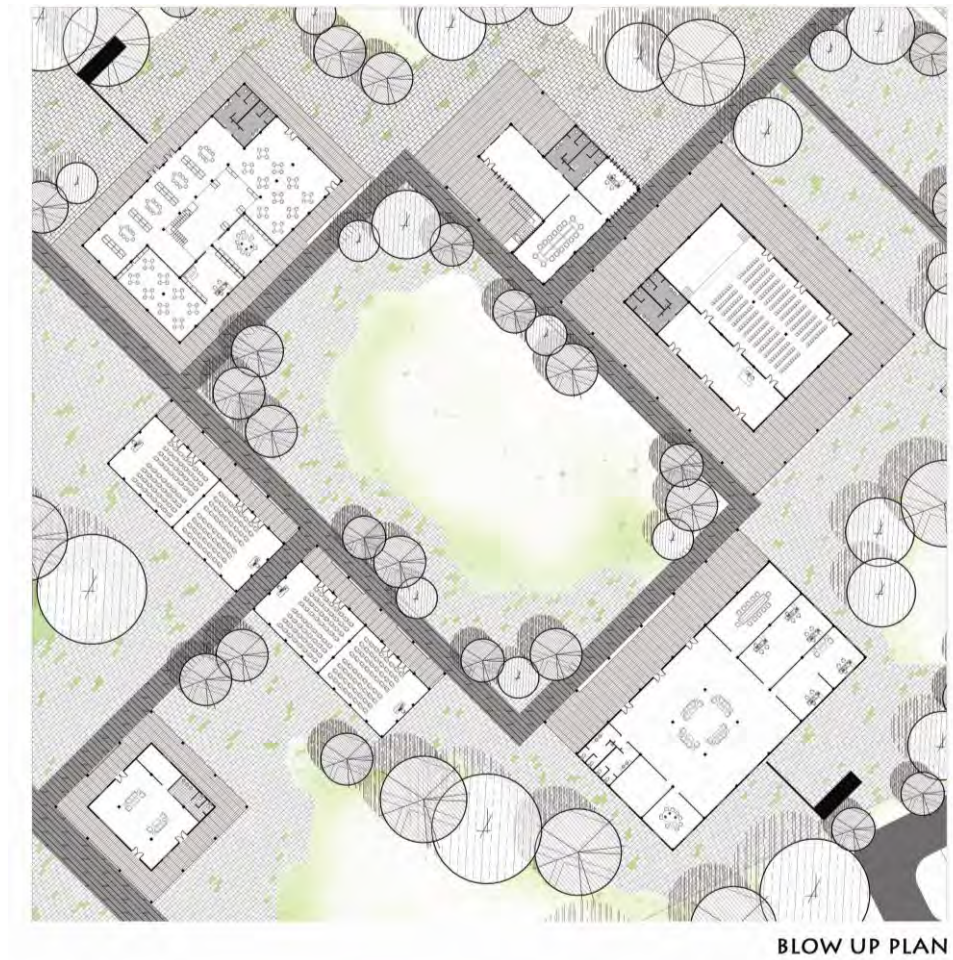


Figure 39: Blow up drawings



Figure 40: Section

The structures designed were inspired from the traditional architecture characterising rural Bangladesh, incorporating the usage of bamboo, wood, thatch, mud and so on as materials and mostly gable, hip and shed roofs. Climatic considerations were especially emphasized upon while designing the accommodations.

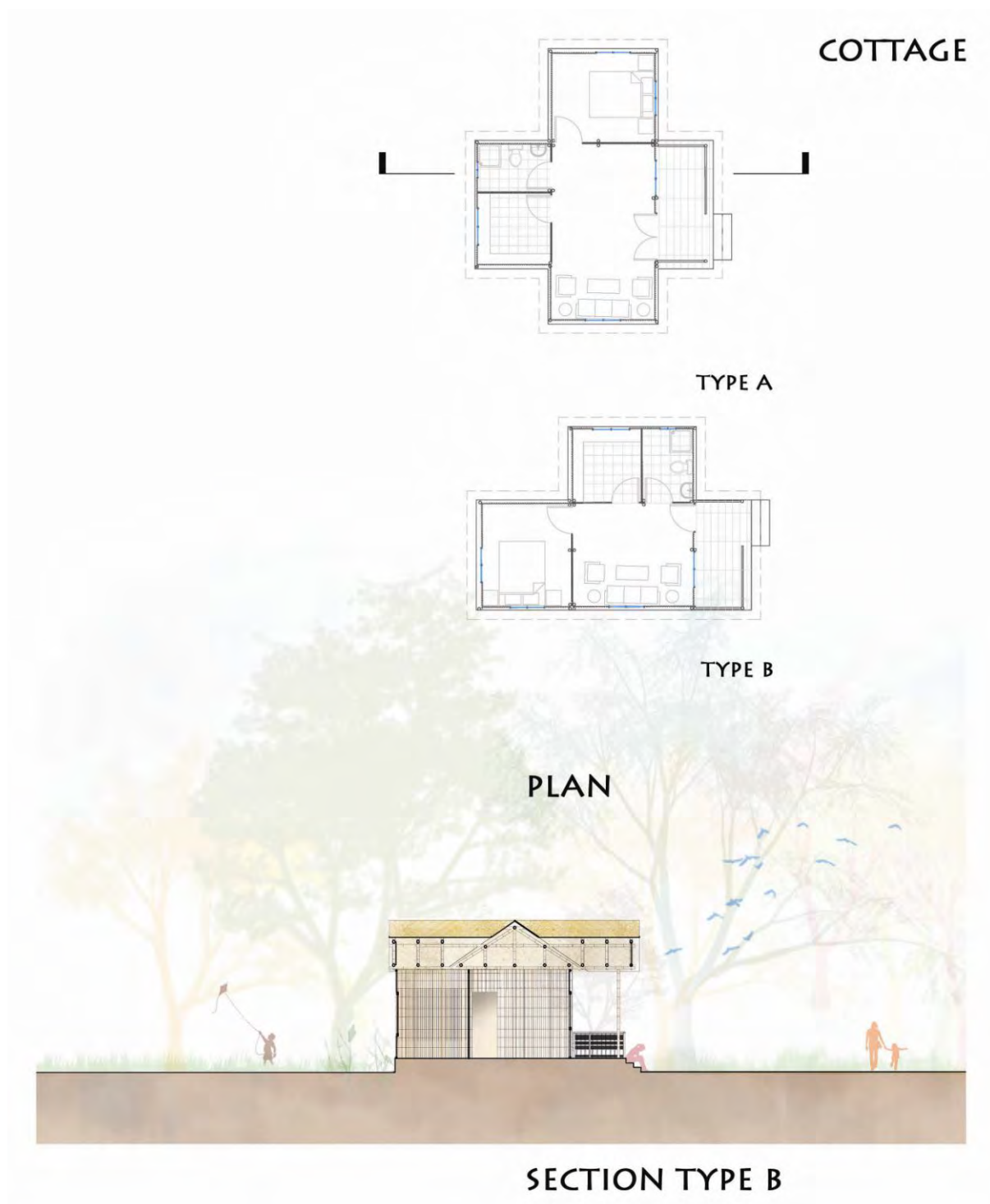


Figure 41: Cottage detail

The objective was to make Haven feel like a home away from home. The design was intended to create a feeling of familiarity one would associate with the villages in the countryside; hut-style houses, huge expanse of open land, fields and meadows, courtyards, dense forests, patches of land surrounded by vegetation, ponds and so on.



Figure 42: Dormitory detail

Local materials were prioritised over other building materials while keeping the structures to the bare minimum so that it did not seem foreign or out of place but rather complemented the nature and surroundings.

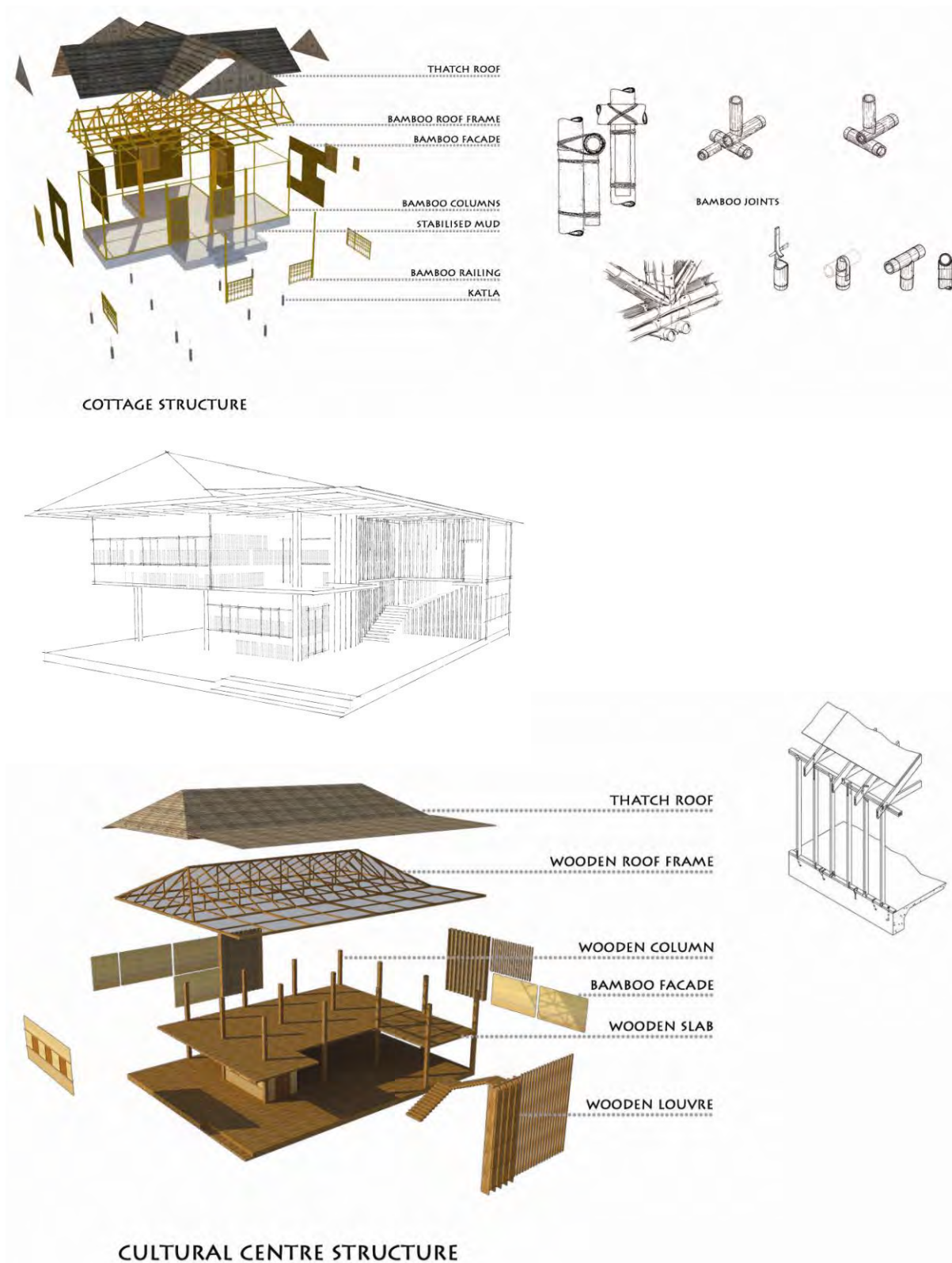


Figure 43: Structural detail

A conscious attempt was made to ensure that at no point did the design overpower the existing landscape but rather blended into it.



Figure 44: Renders and perspectives

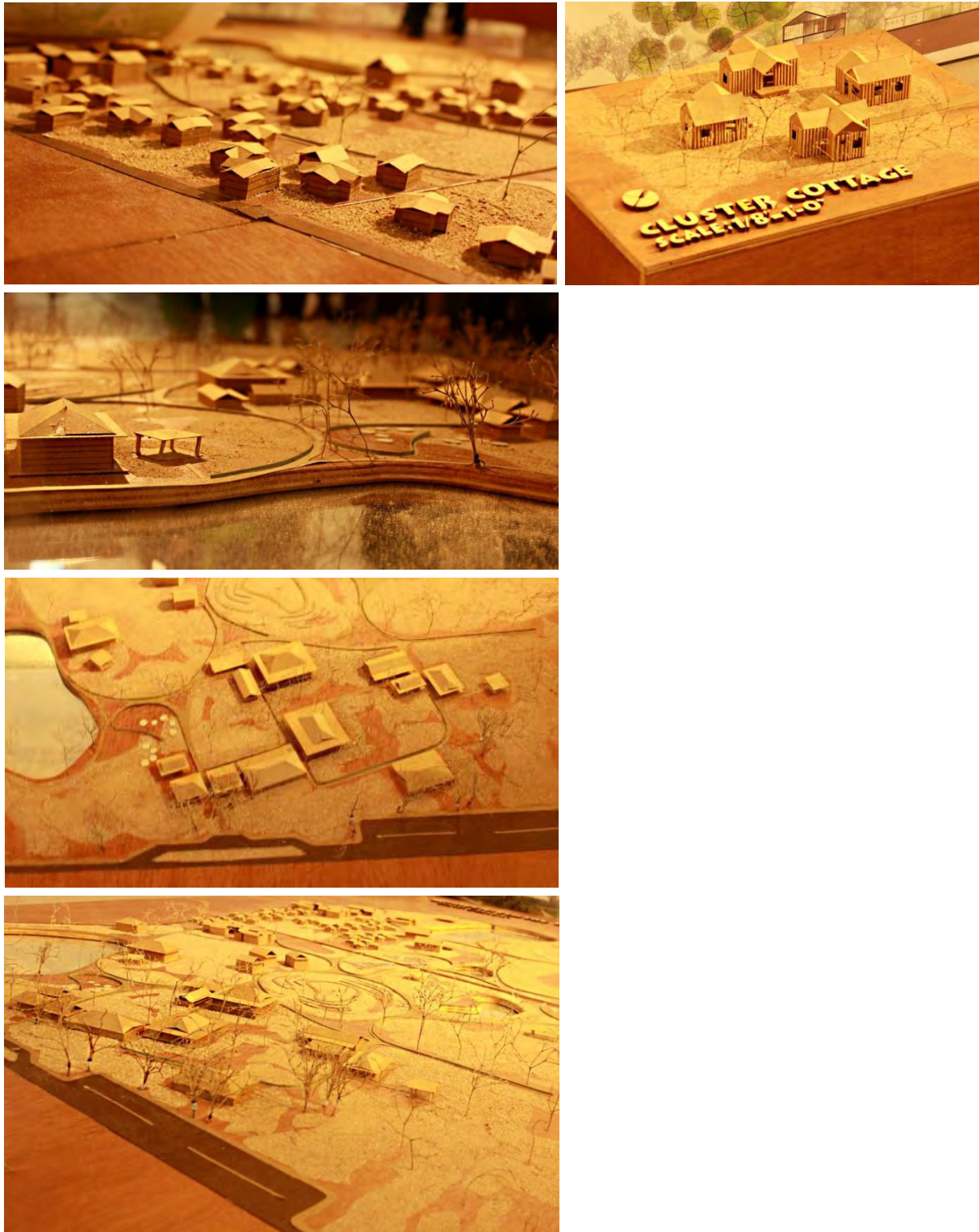


Figure 45: Model photographs, Source: Author

Conclusion

This project aims to establish a new idea, a new typology, not previously seen or heard of, in our country. The establishment is intended to be a place of relaxation while at the same time providing other facilities such as fitness, research, therapy and recreation. The core purpose of Haven is to bring about the realisation that there will always be problems and issues plaguing our lives but despite that, it is essential that we learn to remain optimistic in the midst of all the negativity. It is in our power to see the silver lining in every situation within life's multiple hardships. Furthermore, it was aimed to make people more aware and conscious of themselves, the people around them and their surroundings. The core foundation of Haven is to draw attention to the fact that we need to prioritize the healing of the mental health as much as physical health or at least prioritize it more than it is currently given. Hopefully I've been successful in accomplishing the goals set for Haven during its initial inception.

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