

REJUVENATING THE FLOWING SANCTITY OF PANATIRTHA
Enhancing The Natural and Cultural Tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur
Through Architectural and Planning Intervention

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.)

Department of Architecture
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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The thesis titled “Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity: Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur Through Architectural and Planning Intervention” submitted by Upama Das Nitu (18108023) of Summer, 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture on 10 September, 2023.

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Abstract

According to a popular adage, "*sava tirthe varvar, pana tirthe ekvar*," the same purity that can be obtained by bathing in other holy locations for periods of time can be obtained by bathing in "Panatirtha" only once. Therefore, the site holds a significance of great height for Hindu and Vaishnav followers. Sri Advaita Acharya, the 14th-century reformer of "Advaita Tattva; Non-Dualism" philosophy, was born in the holy site of Panatirtha, Tahirpur. Although the Panatirtha pilgrimage ceremony has been held on the banks of the Rakti River for over 500 years, with the belief that the seven sacred rivers (a reference to the Veda) have arrived together by the summoning of Advaita Acharya to fulfil his promise to his mother, the site has not yet been explored in terms of its future development. As devotees who travel to pray face obstacles, the spirituality of the place is eroding, and with it, the philosophy of Advaita Acharya, the rebirth of non-dualism is perishing. People are increasingly flocking to other spiritual sites in the area where better facilities have been established. Therefore, it is important to maintain spiritual areas and the underlying idea, while also improving areas where large numbers of people can congregate for rituals and incorporating these into regular user activities. Conservation and careful planning are required, as is the urgent search for untapped potential at the site. Beautiful, natural geology characterizes the area. Existing tourist attractions may be linked to the site, and the area might be transformed into a spiritual-based cultural tourism development area that could shine a light on the site all year long and preserve its ethos for future generations.

Keywords: Religion, Nature, Mythical, Tourism, Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism, Culture

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to the persona of Panatirtha, Sri Advaita Acharya, the guru himself. For the depth of his philosophy and wisdom has inspired me to take upon his subject of site as my study and I genuinely thrived to bring justice to the fact of rejuvenating his philosophy through my work.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Ethics Statement.....	v
Abstract/ Executive Summary	viii
Dedication (Optional)	viii
Acknowledgement	ix
Table of Contents	xix
List of Figures.....	xv
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.-4
1.1 Overview	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2 Project Brief	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3 Hypothesis.....	2
1.4 Problem Statement	3
1.5 Objective and Goals of the Project	3
Chapter 2 Literature Review	4-22
2.1 The concept and nature of religious tourism.....	4
2.2 Religious to Spiritual Tourism.....	6
2.3 Pilgrimage	6
2.3.1 Hindu tradition of Pilgrimage	6

2.3.2 Pilgrimage Tourism	8
2.4 Water and Religion	9
2.4.1 Hinduism.....	10
2.4.2 Islam.....	11
2.4.3 Buddhism	12
2.4.4 Christianity.....	12
2.5 Sree Sree Advaita Acharya	13
2.5.1 The reinvention of Advaita philosophy	13
2.5.2 Advaita Philosophy	15
2.5.3 Association with Bhaktiyoga and Gaudiya Vaishnavism.....	17
2.6 The Myths of Panatirtha.....	18
2.6.1 Myth 01: Pandavas and Lord Shiva	18
2.6.2 Myth 02: Origination of Panatirtha as Pilgrimage	19
2.7 Cultural History around Sunamgonj, Sylhet.....	20
2.8 Tourism in Sylhet, Bangladesh prospect	21
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	23
Chapter 4 Contextual Study	24-43
4.1 Site Location	24
4.2 Spiritual Factor.....	24
4.2.1 Existing location of pilgrim sites and significance of Panatirtha	25

4.2.2 Existing site condition (Before and after Baruni Snan of Panatirtha)	27
4.2.3 Vaishnava Events year round.....	30
4.2.4 Existing site activity trail: Mela.....	31
4.2.5 Existing site activity trail: Holy bathing of Panatirtha.....	31
4.3 Accessibility.....	32
4.3.1 Accessibility from Micro scale	32
4.3.2 Accessibility from Macro scale	34
4.3.3 Road- mapping of Tahirpur Upazila scenario.....	35
4.3.4 Scopes of future development.....	36
4.4 Socio- economic Condition.....	37
4.5 Amenities	38
4.6 Social Security	39
4.7 Climate Study.....	40
4.7.1 Chronology of the topography throughout the year.....	40
4.7.2 Precipitation	41
4.7.3 Precipitation	42
4.8 Potential Tourist Trail	42
Chapter 5 Data Collection.....	43-48
5.1 Demographic Data	43
5.2 Tourist Based Data.....	44
5.3 Panatirtha Based Data	46

Chapter 6 Case Study 49-60

6.1 Bishwa Ijtema49

 6.1.1 Background49

 6.1.2 Project Specification49

6.2 Varanasi, India53

 6.2.1 Background53

 6.2.2 Project Specification54

6.3 Dead Sea Development Zone.....55

 6.3.1 Background55

 6.3.2 Project Specification56

 6.3.3 Design Approach56

 6.3.4 Topographical Comprehension.....57

 6.3.5 Integrated Conceptualization for the Tamarisk Area.....58

 6.3.6 Eastern Shore detailed Conceptual Plan60

Chapter 7 Functional Analysis and Program Development 61-68

7.1 Rationale of the program: Neo- Contextualism61

 7.1.1 Why intervention is needed: Shift of philosophy62

 7.1.2 Connecting trails to derivation of potential users63

 7.1.3 Prediction of probable routes from character of sprawling63

7.2 Potential users: Target group factors65

7.3 Program Formulation	65
7.4 Functional Flow	67
7.5 Strategy	68
Chapter 8 Conceptual Stage and Design Development	68-86
8.1 Concept Derivation	68
8.2 Preliminary Design Development phase.....	71
8.3 Schematic Diagram Through Concept.....	72
8.4 Form Development	72
8.5 Design Intervention.....	73
8.5.1 Masterplan.....	73
8.5.2 Elevation	78
8.5.3 Sectional Perspectives and Sections	79
8.5.4 Space details in relation to philosophy	80
8.5.5 Visualization	83
8.6 Design intervention along the bazaar areas	86
Conclusion	87
References.....	88-90

List of Figures

Fig 01: Image of the City- Varansi, India	11
Fig 02: Advaita Acharya	14
Fig 03: Origination of Advaita Philosophy	16
Fig 04: Myth 01-Pandavas and Lord Shiva in Laur	18
Fig 05: Myth 02-Origination of Panatirtha as Pilgrimage	19
Fig 06: Folk-culture of Sunamgonj, at a glance	21
Fig 07: Site location	24
Fig 08: Existing location of significant Hindu pilgrimage	25
Fig 09: Existing condition of Advaita Bari	25
Fig 10: Demographic location of Hindus in Bangladesh	26
Fig 11: Tahirpur population census, 2017	26
Fig 12: Existing site condition (before after Baruni Snan)	27
Fig 13: Surrounding image during the Pantirtha	27
Fig 14: People moveability towards secondary spiritual site force: Iskcon Temple	28
Fig 15: Existing structures of Advaita Bari: diagrammatic	29
Fig 16: Site Surrounding	29
Fig 17: Vaishnava Calendar showing festivities year round	30
Fig 18: Panatirtha related occasion once a year	30
Fig 19: Existing activity trail of Mela during Panatirtha	31
Fig 20: Existing activity trail of holy bathing during Panatirtha	31
Fig 21: Demographic location of the majority target community: spiritual	32
Fig 22: Travel time from Zone 1 (from Fig 21)	32
Fig 23: Travel time from Zone 2 (from Fig 21)	33
Fig 24: Travel time from Zone 3 (from Fig 21)	33

Fig 25: Travel time from Dhaka (from Fig 21).....	34
Fig 26: Travel time from Sunamgonj Sadar -option by road.....	34
Fig 27: Travel time from Sunamgonj Sadar -option by road and water	35
Fig 28: Road mapping of Tahirpur Upazila.....	35
Fig 29: Roads that might have scope for future development	36
Fig 30: Landuse change around Taherpur after flash flood (2017)	37
Fig 31: Landuse of Tahirpur (2020	37
Fig 32: Income Source of Tahirpur.....	37
Fig 33: Flash flood effect (before and after 2017).....	38
Fig 34: Maximum pull factor towards the site from the nearby urban points	38
Fig 35:Security Mapping	39
Fig 36: Media showing the crime scene around Tahirpur	39
Fig 37: Chronology of the topography throughout the year	40
Fig 38: Water mapping and Haor water body character	41
Fig 39: Monthly precipitation of Tahirpur.....	41
Fig 40: Monthly Temperature of Tahirpur.....	42
Fig 41: Tourist points around the site (establishing probable tourism trail).....	42
Fig 42: Bishwa Ijtema Parking plan (2019).....	50
Fig 43: Authorized Masterplan Bishwa Ijtema (2023)	50
Fig 44: Before & After Site comparison Diagram of Bishwa Ijtema (satellite view)	51
Fig 45: Demographic & strategical map (Source: Akash Kumar Das; Context BD)	51
Fig 46: Connection problem of surrounding during Bishwa Ijtema	52
Fig 47: Module of Ijtema tent	52
Fig 48: Image of the city Varansi, India	53

Fig 49: Varanasi Development (Source: Kumari. S 2014)	54
Fig 50: Faces of Varanasi	55
Fig 51: Faces of Pantirtha	55
Fig 52: Dead Sea Development zone site	56
Fig 53: Overall concept (Source: Sasaki associates)	57
Fig 54: Natural Hydrology of the site (Sasaki Associates).....	58
Fig 55: Proposed landscape systems and connectivity (Source: Sasaki Associates).....	59
Fig 56: Detailed concept of the Sweimeh village linkage (Source: Archdaily)	59
Fig 57: Linkages to the sea showing public accessibility (source: Sasaki Associates)	60
Fig 58: Analytical diagram proposing schematic planning	61
Fig 59: Shift of philosophy: comparative study of a) past, b)present, c)future	62
Fig 60: Trails connected to the Pantirtha site (T1, T2, T3).....	63
Fig 61: Prediction of probable routes from neighborhood from character of sprawling	64
Fig 62: Probable routes connecting neighborhood to site.....	64
Fig 63: Potential user target group.....	65
Fig 64: Multiuse of space as option	67
Fig 65: Bubble Diagram.....	67
Fig 66: Strategy.....	68
Fig 67: Concept part 01: Journey through space and time.....	69
Fig 68: Concept part 02: Nogor-Kirtan- Time lapse.....	70
Fig 69: Preliminary design development phase	71
Fig 70: Schematic plan.....	72
Fig 71: Form Development following concept.....	72
Fig 72: Shiva Temple Philosophy: Following Duality	80

Fig 73: Advaita complex: Following Non-duality.....	81
Fig 74: Pancha Tattva Temple: Following Non duality.....	82
Fig 75: Jaali details: Following Non duality.....	82
Fig 76: Axonometric View of the project.....	83
Fig 77: View from the spiritual plaza	83
Fig 78: View from the Shiva Temple	84
Fig 79: View from the spiritual plaza	84
Fig 80: View from the Kirtan Prangan towards Advaita complex	85
Fig 81: View towards Advaita Complex	85
Fig 82: Design intervention along the bazaar areas	86

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The significance of religious mythology lies in the fact that it is through architecture that religious legends and myths are given physical form and evoke the deepest level of emotional participation from followers. Creating a physical space for worship in the hopes of having a direct encounter with the holy is one way of giving form to the ephemeral. Since this has been done by humans for so long, it is now considered accepted practice. In respect to that, 'Panatirtha' is a sacred site in Bangladesh's north-east, near the Bangladesh-India border, in the Tahirpur Upazila of Sunamganj District. It is a pilgrimage for the Hindu and Vaishnava community. Annually, during the Bangla month of Chaitra, which often falls in either March or April, the region of Panatirtha organizes a significant religious gathering known as "Baruni Snan." The exact commencement of the event is uncertain, however, historical records and testimonies from residents of Nabagram suggest that its occurrence may be traced back to approximately 1440 AD. Thousands of people from different parts of the country, even from India, Sri Lanka and Nepal take a holy plunge with full confidence on the occasion with the beginning of the holy tithi, which is known as 'Madhu Krishna Trayadashi' (the next trayadashi after Gaura Purnima).

Cultural and Historical Significance:

Panatirtha also remembers the ancient Laur kingdom. Its capital, Nabagram, was situated in the same location as Panatirtha. The kingdom that bears the imprints of civilization for millennia is now almost forgotten. Laur was known for being a knowledge-generating hotspot. This kingdom gave birth to a lot of well-known people. Sufi Saint Pir Shah Arefin, who lived near Panatirtha and preached Islam, was a popular figure in the area. His footprints can still be seen in some of the region's steep locations. Muslims congregate here for a religious celebration called "Uros" in honor

of Pir Shah Arefin. On this occasion, a large fair is held. This fair feature agricultural products, food, and handicrafts that have become increasingly scarce as a result of expanding urbanization. Thousands of people from both religions congregate here at the same time to take part in both ceremonies, which reflect the peaceful coexistence of the communities and highlight the cultural importance of the place.

Natural Tourism Significance:

Although with time, there had been various ecological and political effect over the site as it is located 4.5 km from the India- Meghalaya border. The area is endowed with mesmerizing natural beauty, and connected with eight official attraction points of Tahirpur, which draws a large number of visitors. The site has maximum scopes to utilize the surrounding tourism trail (located by the Indo-Bangladesh border) to convert the present situation towards an area and infrastructure development centered through religious tourism and to convert the tourism opportunities into economy.

1.2 Project Brief

Project Name: Rejuvenating the Flowing Sancity of Panatirtha: Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur through Architectural and Planning Intervention

Project Location: Sri Advaita bari and Rakti riverfront

Site area: 276,445 sqft. Including Advaita bari and adjacent temporary fair area.

1.3 Hypothesis

A spiritual and social complex will serve as a focal point for the local community and attract visitors from all over the world following the Tahirpur Upazila's existing folk culture and established natural tourism route.

1.4 Problem Statement

- **Shift of Philosophy:** The current scenario affects the sense of spirituality of the pilgrims of Panatirtha and visitors due to the existing site condition whereas there is a living demand and scope for providing a quality space for them. The spirituality of the area is deteriorating as devotees who travel to pray encounter difficulties, and with it, the philosophy of Advaita Acharya, the rebirth of non-dualism. Better infrastructure at competing spiritual centers in the area is drawing more visitors.
- **Social issues:** The site suffers due to crime occurrence near the Indo-Bangladesh border which needs social safety around the site throughout the year.



1.5 Objectives and Goals of the Project

The primary objective of this study is to fully explore the site, including its historical background and current architectural features, while considering its social, cultural, geological, and tourism-related dimensions. Additionally, the study aims to develop a strategic plan for the site's future, ensuring its versatile utilization throughout the year to commemorate the site's underlying principles.

- **Promoting tourism as a means to increase economic growth and tax income**
The objective is to establish accommodations in close proximity to the temple complex,

facilitating tourist access to adjacent historical attractions. In order to enhance the experience of travelers, it is imperative to provide additional amenities such as a tourist information center, restroom facilities, a food court, gift shops, and similar offerings.

- **Incorporate daily user's interest by reviving the complex**

Providing more venues for locals and visitors to connect, such as melas or art markets, and making services accessible to tourists and students, will increase revenue year-round. Young scholars and enthusiasts will be drawn to the area as a result of increased publicity, leading to thorough documentation of the site and its justifiable rise to prominence in both domestic and international consciousness.

- **Restore the Advaita philosophy of the place and make space for the "Baruni-Snan" festival and ceremonies.**

Most people in the country, even many Hindus, are ignorant of the country's gem of a pilgrimage site, and the rich history it entails. Therefore, tourists can learn more about the place of interest they are visiting by touring a research/ cultural center (such as a museum).

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews and discusses the relevant literature to offer a theoretical background for the project. The definitions, concerns, trends, and fundamentals of tourist potential that enhance the spiritual character of Panatirtha, Tahirpur, are discussed.

2.1 The concept and nature of religious tourism

Defining religious tourism entails articulating the connection between language and meaning. Tourism for religious purposes is a subset of pilgrimage travel. There is no way to separate it from the pilgrimage experience. Visiting churches and cathedrals are examples of cultural tourism, as

are stays in monasteries. It's also connected to preserving ancient religious sites. The sites where the faithful go to pray or make pilgrimages are known as shrines. There are some profound connections to be made between religious travel and tourism. Migration and visits to ancient sacred sites are intertwined with religious beliefs. In order to fulfill their spiritual and religious needs, many people make the journey to these holy sites. Pilgrimages, tours of religious sites, and large-scale assemblies for religious events are the most common forms of religious tourism (Vukonic 1990, 100).

Many sacred locations are today recognized as important cultural landmarks. Travelers' beliefs and convictions are what draw them to experience a new culture through religious tourism (Liutikas, 2014). Regular folks go there not just because of the spiritual or religious significance of the place, but also for sightseeing and recreation (Hughes et al., 2013). Their motivation for going on this trip is to fulfill their desires and to learn about and experience new things that will enrich their values (Liutikas, 2014). Pilgrimages are a significant part of many religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. Religious groups from all over the world travel to these locations to worship.

Religious tourism includes social and group travel. "Religious tourism" involves visits to sacred sites by groups of similar religions. Family holidays are more popular than friend getaways (Morinis, 1984). Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism give "religious tourism" a particular meaning. It's stated that 20 million worshippers visit 150 sacred sites annually (Bhardwaj 1973). Over 300 million people participate in religious tourism annually, according to the WTO. 600 million individuals visit religious sites annually. The Asia-Pacific area is a hub for religious tourism, cultural events, and pilgrimage locations.

2.2 Religious tourism to spiritual tourism

The emerging market of spiritual tourism requires travel to become a significant activity when a person crosses a border in search of the meaning of divine presence in self and life (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). Spiritual tourism involves more than religious trips like pilgrimages. Spiritual travelers want to enrich their lives and feel on the correct path (Melchers, 2006). The majority of tourists are inherently attracted to and find inspiration in their religious perspectives and principles. However, spiritual tourism exclusively seeks for and engages with spiritual encounters that are detached from religious contexts. Spiritual tourism refers to a form of religious travel that has the potential to significantly impact individuals' lives. "Spirituality like trust, faith, values or marketing development and integration with health and experience," Mukherjee S. (2020) writes, "has been noted the growth is rising and sustainable in nature." With this Spiritual Tourism approach, the travel industry may tap into a larger pool of potential customers from all over the world by adopting these tactics in line with current demand. By prioritizing the incorporation of Spirituality into tourism, this method will contribute to the development of the sector in India.

2.3 Pilgrimage

2.3.1 Hindu tradition of pilgrimage

Hinduism, believed to have originated in 5000 BCE, is widely regarded as the most ancient religion that continues to be observed in contemporary times. Approximately 13% of the global population adheres to this particular religious belief system, rendering it the third largest in terms of followership, trailing after Christianity and Islam. Singh (2006) explains that Hinduism is a polytheistic religion because its adherents believe that many gods and goddesses are responsible for different aspects of the universe and human existence. To the extent that its followers recognize

that all religions lead to the same ultimate goal, Hinduism is a religion that welcomes and celebrates those of all faiths. In contrast to other major world faiths, Hinduism does not have a central figure such as a messiah, guru, or founding prophet. In contrast, Hindus believe that the universe and all knowledge about it were fashioned at the same time by the Creator. The Vedas are holy writings and epic narratives that teach life's lessons. Seers, or Rishi, got them from the Creator. There is no ruling organization or one person whose word is final when reading religious texts. Everyone finds their own route to piety and enlightenment. Every year, a substantial number of individuals adhering to the Hindu faith, hailing from various global locations, embark on journeys to India with the purpose of engaging in the festivities, undertaking pilgrimages, and participating in religious purifications (Kaur, 1982, 1985; Singh, 2004). Each year, a significant number of non-Muslim individuals travel to India with the purpose of studying its historical background and architectural heritage. The Mahabharata, an epic dating back to the fifth century BCE, which includes the Bhagavad Gita, states in verse 13.111.18 that Hindu pilgrimage destinations are blessed due to the strength of their land, the efficacy of their water, and sage visits (Bhardwaj 1973; Sharpley and Sundaram 2005). Pilgrims seek 'fruits,' or a change in themselves or their circumstances, at these sacred sites (Sax 1991:13). According to Singh (1995: 97), the process of sacralization, ritualization, and establishing a profound connection between individuals results in the transformation of specific locations into "sacred places" or "sacred landscapes," where the human spirit and the spirit of nature are perpetually intertwined. Pilgrimage, also known as Tirtha-yatra, holds significant meaning within the Hindu faith. The act of traversing the sacred landscape has a transformative effect on individuals. From a spiritual perspective, embarking on a journey serves as a means of fostering a connection between individuals and the divine. The comprehensive nature of the landscape, along with its religious and symbolic geographical

elements, contributes to the formation of a "faiths cape." This faith scape encompasses both symbolic and tangible cognitive components, facilitating individuals in their quest to establish a sense of belonging and purpose within the world. The act of pilgrimage, encompassing the process of travel, various rituals, and communal engagement, constitutes a ritualistic practice that yields profoundly transformative outcomes. Step one. "Tirtha-yatra" characterizes it nicely as a Hindu pilgrimage. In Hinduism, a pilgrim may be reborn. Hindus consider pilgrimage the holiest religious deed. Hindu pilgrimages have three phases: initiation, liminality, and re-aggregation (the homecoming). Faith development and the urge to travel are both motivated by people's need for serenity and spiritual fulfillment (Singh 2005).

According to the Mahabharata (XIII.108.16–18), specific regions on earth possess varying degrees of sanctity, similar to the differing degrees of purity observed in different parts of the human body. This sanctity may be attributed to factors such as geographical location, the presence of pristine water bodies, or the relationship with or habitation of those regarded as saints.

2.3.2 Pilgrimage Tourism

There is a relationship between pilgrimage and vacationing. The correlation between "tourists," "religion," and the "religious" sites that tourists visit has been overlooked for far too long. To what end do those who travel to sacred sites hope to gain insight? How can they be sure that issues of religion, spirituality, and tourism will be addressed throughout their trip? Travelers who have had meaningful spiritual or religious experiences are of particular interest. Those who travel in search of inner growth are known as "spiritual tourists."

Mass tourism is often compared to the traditional trip structure. According to the vast majority of social and anthropological commitments to tourism, trips are perhaps the quickest kind of tourism. The Sanskrit word tirtha, which means "journey place," captures the essence of a destination that

is central to a specific kind of trip. Since the 1950s, when the journey's foundation was modernized, the number of participants has skyrocketed from the hundreds to the millions. Travel today can be compared to tourism in that both involve getting away from one's normal routine for a different purpose, but tourism is unlikely to be as closely tied to a person's religious or spiritual beliefs in the future as it was in the past.

The destination of a pilgrimage or tourist trip need not be a religious center for either to be understood as a quest for cultural fulfillment. Indeed, it is worth noting that historical pilgrimage sites represent a broader spectrum beyond religious destinations, encompassing cultural, artistic, and ecological locations. Traveling to historical sites that are significant to one's own culture can feel like a spiritual journey.

While it's true that spiritual tourism has its roots in religion, this field has expanded far beyond the bounds of organized faith to meet the needs of people all over the world. The term "spiritual tourism," as defined by Melchers (2006), encompasses more than just visits to places of worship.

2.4 Water and Religion

There are essentially two reasons why water is so important to the beliefs and rituals of so many different faiths. As a first step, water cleans. Water can be used to distantly or deeply clean a man, and it can also be used to purge items for specific purposes. In addition, water is one of the four basic necessities of existence. While it's true that life cannot exist without water, it's also true that water can crush and also create. Just as we have no power over God or other divine beings, we have no power over water. Water's significance to our cultures and beliefs is reflected in a wide variety of religions and convictions, yet both of these features are essential to understanding water.

2.4.1 Hinduism

Water is held in high regard in Hinduism, and its purifying properties help to explain its special place in the religion. Hinduism encompasses the belief that all streams and rivers hold sacred significance, with particular emphasis placed on the Yamuna, Ganges, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Kaveri, and Sindhu. A pilgrimage is a sacred ritual for Hindus. Holy spots are often near streams, coasts, beaches, and mountains. Land-water junctions, whether a single river or a three-river system, are sacrosanct.

The Kumbha Mela is a significant Hindu pilgrimage that takes place in the cities of Hardwar, Nasik, Prayaga, and Ujjain. The locations mentioned herein denote the areas where Amrita, a divine elixir, descended from the heavens amidst a colossal conflict. The Ganges is the holiest river. The dying is given a taste of its waters during love rituals (puja). Individuals who engage in the act of bathing in the Ganges or depositing a physical component of their being, such as hair or bone, on the left bank of the river exhibit an increased probability of attaining Svarga, which is recognized as the celestial realm of Indra. The dispersion of the stream worldwide from Vishnu's toe is facilitated by Shiva's mane.

Water is often near funeral homes and cemeteries. At funerals, water is occasionally poured into an earthen pot. As the deceased's child travels around the funeral fire with the pot, the trickling water prevents the ghost from reentering the ground. After the fire fractures the corpse's skull, the mourners cool off in the stream. Following a period of three days, the remains are ceremoniously released into a sacred body of water. The collection of ashes often occurs on the third day subsequent to the cremation process, and afterwards, on the tenth day or thereafter, they are ceremoniously immersed into a sacred river. The Hindu practice of bathing first thing in the morning is a sacred ritual. Sadhus (Hindu saints who renounce the world in search of Brahman)

may take great care to maintain their physical appearance as part of their daily rituals. In Hinduism, water is considered to be the ultimate goal/end of any object or materialistic being and considered the purest form of existence.

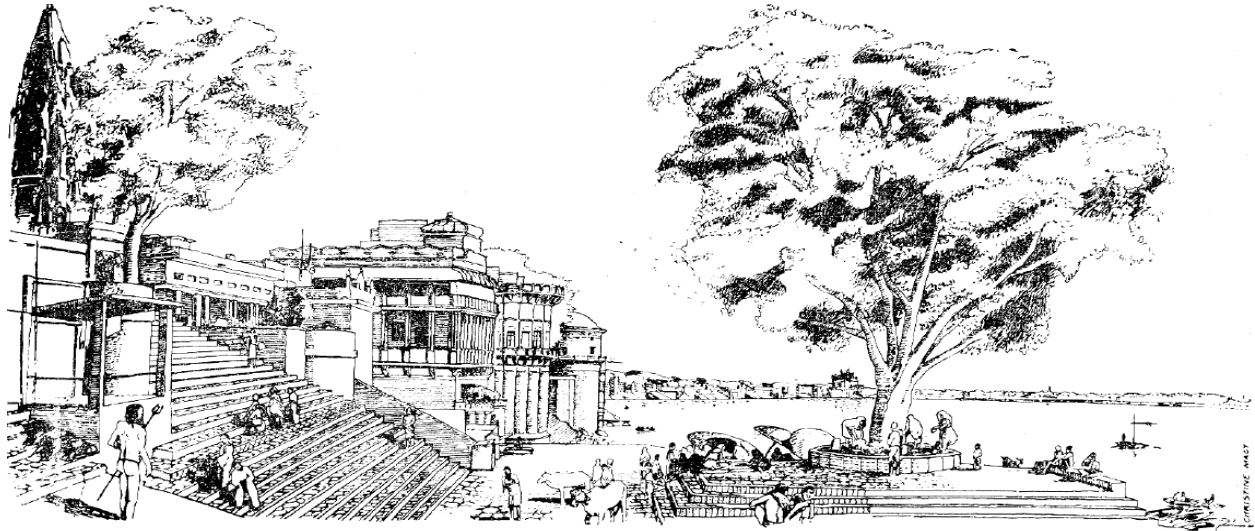


Fig 01: Image of the City- Varansi, India

2.4.2 Islam

Water is essential in Islam because it purifies and improves things. Before a Muslim can communicate with God, they must be ritually pure. A mosque must have facilities for washing the face and hands. There are three distinct methods for cleaning. First, ghusl, the major ablution, is when you wash your entire body with pure water and declare your intention to perform it. Muslims must perform ghusl after sexual activity, making them ritually very unclean. Ghusl is also recommended prior to Friday prayer, the two most significant holidays, and while holding the sacred Quran. Prior to burial, ghusl must be performed for the deceased. Wudu is the second ablution, also known as the minor ablution. It is done to get rid of minor, routine impurities that happen every day. This must be done prior to each of the five daily meditations. It consists of washing the face with pure water, rubbing the cranium with water, washing the hands and arms to the elbows, and washing the feet to the ankles. This stems from Quran 5:7/8, which states, "O you

who believe, when you are getting ready to pray, wash your faces and hands up to your elbows; rub your head and feet up to your ankles." The Sunna provides much more detail on this topic. Every mosque has flowing water for wudu. The third kind of cleansing is done when there is no water around. In this instance, pure sand could be used.

2.4.3 Buddhism

During Buddhist funerals, a dish that can hold water is placed in front of the ministers as well as the deceased person. The friars engage in conversation while the space becomes increasingly occupied and exceeds its capacity. It is sometimes stated that just as rainwater replenishes rivers and causes them to exceed their normal capacity, the offerings made in this context are intended to reach and benefit the deceased individuals.

2.4.4 Christianity

The majority of Christian sacred sites incorporate a ritualistic practice that commences with the utilization of water. The biblical narratives describing the Exodus from Egypt and the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River serve as foundational accounts for the concept of immersion. Following his healing, Jesus commanded his followers to wash in preparation for worshipping the Trinity (Matthew 28:19-20). Within Christendom, different groups have vastly different views on the significance of baptism. The concept of submersion serves as a metaphorical representation of the process by which individuals' distance themselves from sinful behaviors that hinder their connection with the divine. Beyond the confines of the Catholic Church, a prevailing consensus exists among the majority that the act of receiving forgiveness for a transgression does not confer complete innocence upon an individual. The Baptism of Christ signifies an individual's expression of faith and trust in Christ, serving as a symbol of embracing sinners into the Church. However, Catholics believe that immersion genuinely removes original sin, therefore

sanctification is more than symbolic. Water is valuable because it cleans, saturates (as God saturates those who immerse themselves in Him), and is necessary for our survival. In early Christian baptism by immersion, the candidate stayed submerged as more water was poured over their heads and shoulders. The word "submersion" originally related to this technique, but now it usually means immersing one's body in water, as in Baptist and Orthodox prayer. Modern Western worship rituals include three times submersion and sprinkle of water over the head. Christians also value Jesus' "living water" image. In the biblical passage of John 4:1–42, Jesus bestows upon a Samaritan woman what he refers to as "living water," a metaphorical representation of a spiritual gift that ensures her eternal satisfaction and everlasting life through her connection with him.

2.5 Sree Sree Advaita Acharya

In his supplications to the Spiritual Masters, Sri Krishnadasa Kaviraia Goswami describes Sri Advaita Acharya as an incarnation of the Lord (advaita acharya prabhura amsa-avatara.. - Caitanya Caritamrta, (Adi 1.39). As Kavi Karnapur describes in Sri Gaura Gannodesha dipika, Sada shiva, who had previously appeared as an incarnation (one empowered by the Lord), has now descended as Sri Advaita Acharya. Sri Advaita personified both Sada shiva and Lord Mahavishnu in this apparel. According to Kavi Karnapura, Advaita Acharya's father, Kuvera pandita, was actually an incarnation of the demigod Kuvera, a close companion of Shiva. Kuvera Misra served as a courtier for Divya Singh. His mother, Nabhadevi was a spiritual woman who had a great influence over his life.

2.5.1 The reinvention of Advaita Philosophy:

Advaita Acharya was born in Nabagram, Laud (present-day Tahirpur, Sunamganj District, Bangladesh) and spent most of his adult life in Shantipur, Nadia. His birthname was Kamalaksha Mishra (eyes like lotus- depicted the origin of Vishnu). Pursuing material goals depressed

Advaita Acharya since, in his view, they contributed to the breakdown and unhappiness of society as a whole. During his early life, he reinvented the whole concept of Non-dualism: Advaita Tattva with the wisdom and guidance of his spiritual master, Madhavendra Puri, after which he took the name of Advaita Acharya. He thought to reincarnate the belief in one supreme soul: Paramatma (derived from the philosophy of Adi Shankara Acharya) is the solution to decapitate differences among people and thus be the solution to overcome the spiritual chaos during 14th century; the initial stage of Islam preaching in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh.

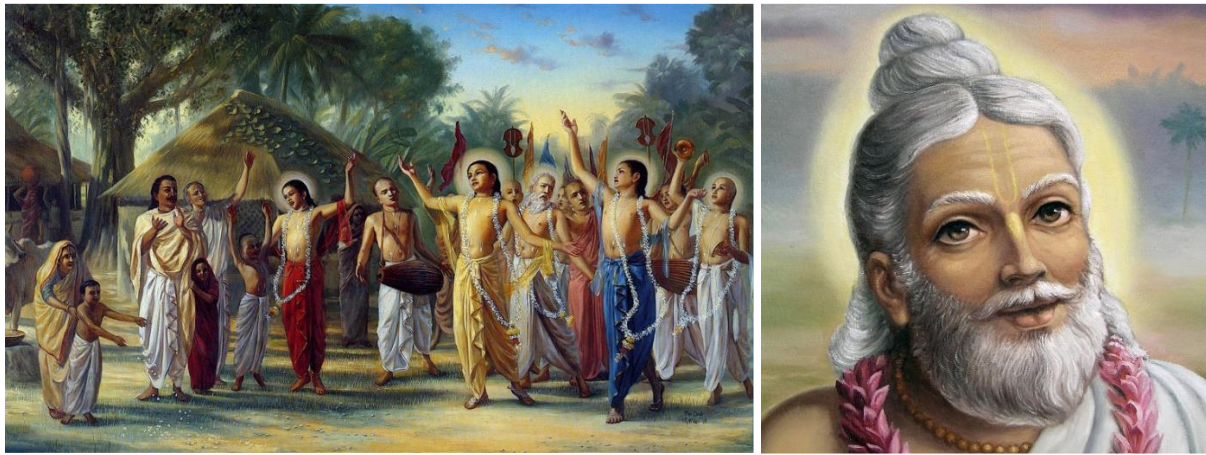


Fig 02: Advaita Acharya

The purest and oldest form of religion from which the evolution of Hinduism and other beliefs took turn is Sanatan Religion. The term "Sanatan Dharma" is derived from Sanskrit and conveys the concept of an "eternal religion" or "eternal law." Alternatively, it is possible to interpret this phrase as "a steadfast and enduring system" or "a time-honored and persistent governance." Sanatana Dharma signified in worshipping the Supreme Soul: Paramatta without any shape and form, also defined as Brahman. With time, the idea of idol worship initiated to instill fear among people with a presence of a sign or symbol. Sri Sankara, a prominent proponent of Advaita Vedanta, is often regarded as having effectively demonstrated the principles of non-dualistic

idealism through his extensive treatises and literary contributions, despite his relatively brief lifespan of 32 years. The theory put forward by Sri Shakara Acharya emerged in the late 7th century, drawing upon the Sanatana Dharma belief in the existence of a formless Brahman. During the 14th century, Sri Advaita Acharya saw and critically reconsidered this concept.

2.5.2 Advaita Philosophy:

Non-dualism, also known as Advaita Vedanta, transcends mere conceptualization and holds significance not only for adherents but also within the realm of scholarly discourse. This phenomenon represents a particular lifestyle. The non-dualistic perspective, as preached by the ascetic Sri Sankara Acharya, who is said to have resided in Kerala, India, from 688 to 722 A.D., posits that the corporeal individual self, known as Atman, is indistinguishable from the incorporeal and latent Brahman, also referred to as the Supreme self. According to Murthy's (1959) scholarly work, the fundamental principles of the school that support this thesis are as follows:

1. The concept of the Real, also known as Brahman, is characterized by its unity and its inherent qualities of consciousness and happiness.
2. The concept of the Real is manifested in the realm of multiplicity, mostly due to its illusory character known as maya.
3. According to the author (p. 3), there exists a complete absence of distinction between Brahman and the particular soul (jiva).

Walter (1988) argues that the pursuit of happiness is indicative of a deeper need to know oneself and realize one's potential. Similarly, the wish to avoid pain is really just the wish to avoid the 'non-happiness' that we see as alien to our very selves. When our enjoyment, which we believe is ours by right, is taken from us, that is when we suffer. (p. 155).

The Upanishads, the last sections of the Veda, are the source material for Advaita Vedanta, a non-dualistic philosophy (Murthy, 1959). According to Murthy (1959, p. xvii), the term 'Veda' originates from the etymological root 'vid,' denoting the concept of knowledge. This nomenclature has persisted as the designation for the Hindu scriptures over many historical periods.

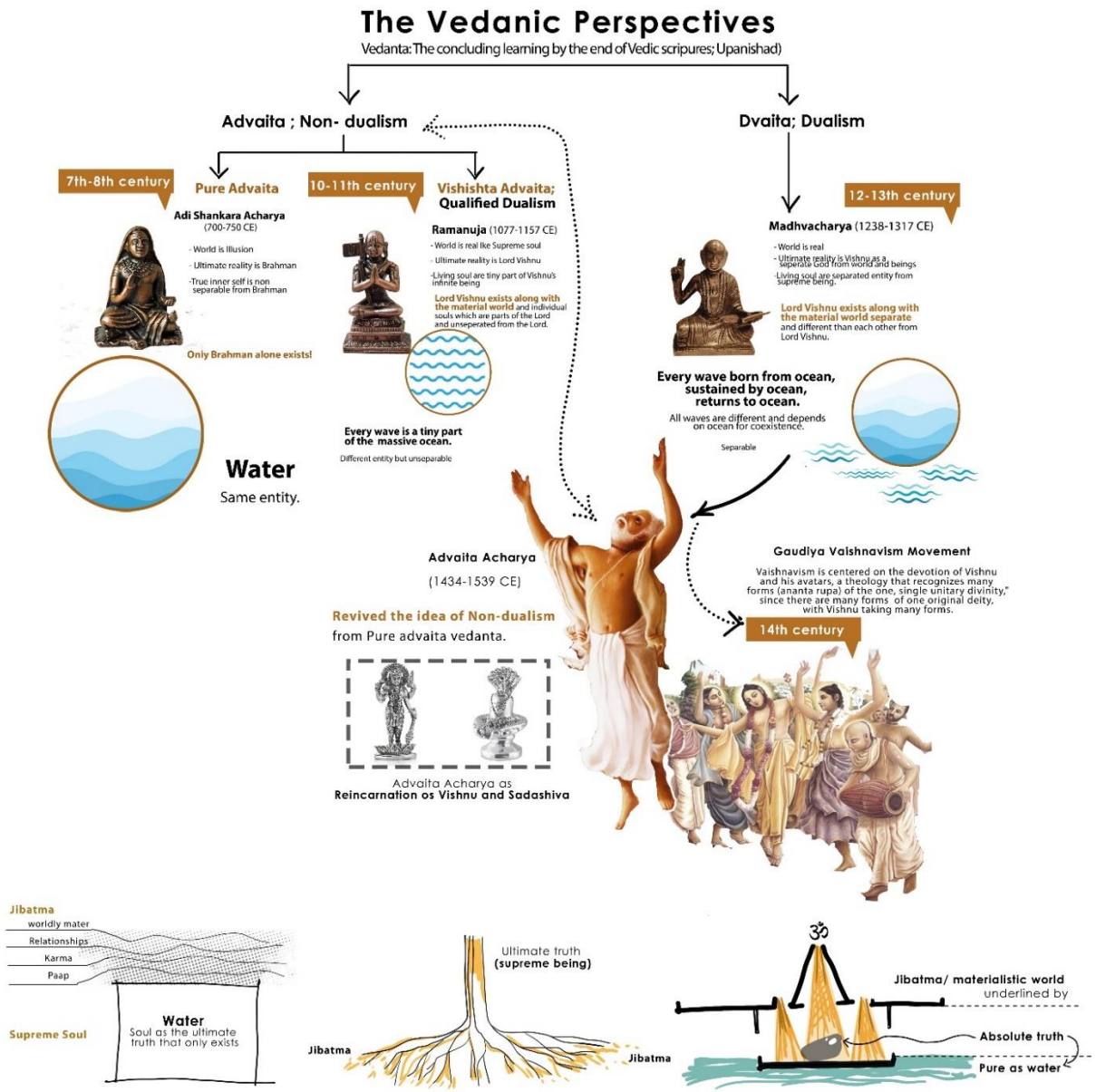


Fig 03: Origination of Advaita Philosophy

The term "Vedanta" is derived from the combination of two Sanskrit terms, namely "Veda" and "antha." "Veda" refers to the sacred texts of ancient Indian wisdom, often translated as "revealed texts," while "antha" signifies the concluding or final section. The term in question may be conceptualized as "the ultimate essence of ancient scriptures that were revealed" (Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 2000, p. 172) or "the culmination of the Vedas, specifically referring to the Upanishads" (A Dictionary of Advaita Vedanta, 2003, p. 235). Advaita Vedanta's proponents and adherents argue that the philosophical tradition deserves more than a dry academic examination. According to Advaita Vedanta, Brahman, which is considered the Ultimate Self, possesses the qualities of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sat represents pure being, Chit represents pure intelligence or consciousness, and Ananda represents pure bliss. Additionally, Advaita Vedanta posits that Atman, the ontological self, is identical to Brahman and so lacks any inherent distinction. Moreover, Advaita Vedanta advocates a conceptually non-dualistic perspective wherein the individual self, commonly referred to as Atman, is believed to embody the Supreme self, known as Brahman, within the human physical form. Furthermore, the state of being, known as Brahman, is characterized by its non-dual nature. The subject matter possesses existential qualities. Non-relational and grounded in personal experience. The concepts of "self" (Atman) and "being" (Brahman) are considered to be synonymous. It re-establishes the Vedic thesis that Brahman, the substrate, cannot be localized or identified in the space-time-cause continuum. According to proponents of the non-dual theory, the true essence of Brahman is obscured by a deceptive force or energy called Maya.

2.5.3 Association with Bhaktiyoga and Gaudiya Vaishnavism:

In later life, Advaita Acharya reasoned his theory in a way society liked because truth was hard to grasp. He thought the only way to restore humanity to spiritual bliss was to pray for his Supreme

Lord Krishna to become an Avatar. Advaita Acharya, disguised as Shaligram Shila, cried out to him and presented him Ganges water and Tulasi leaves in reverence. His wishes were answered when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born 13 months later under a total lunar eclipse. In Chaitanya's initial proclamation of his divine nature, Advaita Acharya expressed, "namo brahmanya devya go-brhmaa hitya ca jagaddhitya kya govindya namo nama". Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born via Sri Advaita's efforts.

Historical documents describe his association with Hare Krishna propagators Chaitanya and Nityananda. When Chaitanya initially begged for charity at Advaita Acharya's home, Krishna said, "Wherever you are is Vrindavan." This club reads his biography and remembers him on his birthday. This started Gaudiya Vaishnavism Pratha with four spiritual leaders as Panchatattva. Panchatattva—the Five Truths—are Sri Krishna Caitanya, Prabhu Nityananda, Sri Advaita, Gadadhara, and Srivasa. Advaita Acharya wrote Yogabashta-Bhaishta and Geeta Bhaishya.

2.6 The Myths of Panatirtha

2.6.1 Myth 01: Pandavas and Lord Shiva:



Fig 04: Myth 01-Pandavas and Lord Shiva in Laur

A tale from Mahabharata (a holy scripture of the Hindus) have been associated with this specific site for years stating the Pandavas washed their weapon by the sacred Rakti River during their

exile. During that time, the Pandavas worshipped Lord Shiva and established a temple on Lord's name. Due to the boon and blessing of Lor Shiva, the Pandavas won the Kurukshetra war.

2.6.2 Myth 02: Origination of Panatirtha as Pilgrimage:

Another tale depicts this location as the birthplace of Sree Advaita Acharya, who is, according to Hinduism, considered to be the incarnation of the Supreme Lord. Advaita Acharya's mother, Nabhadevi, had a desire to bathe in the Ganges. Her son Kamalaksha appeared to her in a dream as the four-armed form of the Hindu god Vishnu. When she looked up and saw the Almighty Lord standing there, she instantly began praying to him in praise. So that Laura would not have to go far to take a holy dip in the Ganges, Sri Advaita promised His mother that He would bring all the holy rivers to her. After some initial reluctance, she told her son about her dream after He insisted, she share it with her. Advaita, at the tender age of seven, vowed once more to bring Laura all the holy tirthas to satisfy the wishes of His loving mother. Sri Advaita entered into a trance and called on sacred rivers. On Madhu-Krishna-Travodasi (Mahavaruni), He had them stay at Laura so His mother might bathe in them. Ganges, Yamuna, Narmada, Kaveri, Saraswati, Godavari, etc. converged on the Laura mountains. The next morning, Advaita Acharya accompanied His mother to see the miracle. As Advaita recited the Supreme Lord's titles and blew His conch shell, holy



Fig 05: Myth 02-Origination of Panatirtha as Pilgrimage

torrents flowed down the mountains. Red, blue, white, and yellow. Sri Kamalaksha toured His mother's rivers. Advaita acharya's vow (Pana in Bengali) sent holy waters to this place, therefore it got known as 'Panatirtha' Advaita's power created Jadukata, which the villagers named (where "Jadu" is the Bengali word for "magic"). Then Nabhadevi cleansed herself in the holy waters. This event marks the initiation of the tithi of Modhu Krishna Trayadashi where the Panatirtha Snan takes place. The river adjacent to the site has been given the name 'Jadukata', also known as Rakti River based on this tale. On the Jadukata, the Advaita Bari temple is magnificent. This hallowed location allows us to reflect on the game's past.

2.7 Cultural History around Sunamgonj, Sylhet

The region of Greater Sylhet exhibits distinct cultural, economic, and linguistic characteristics in comparison to the rest of Bangladesh. This difference can be attributed to its historical association with Assam and Surma Valley State during the British Raj, as well as its prolonged integration into bigger administrative entities throughout its recent past. Sylhet is a land of rich culture and history; it's known as the land of saints and tomb. Sylhet was a key commerce hub for the Bengali and Assamese kingdoms of Harikela and Kamarupa, according to historians. First-millennium Buddhism was popular. The Mahabharata has Duryodhana, a Kauravas prince, married in Habiganj, Sylhet. Arjuna's attempt to release his horse brought him to the Purana's Jaintia. Two of Sati, a manifestation of Durga, fell to Earth here. Shri Shail and Jayanti are Shakti Peethas, where Sati's neck and palm rested. The 7th-century Gour Kingdom fought many battles. It became Gour (Sylhet) and Brahmachal (South Sylhet/Moulvibazar). Laur, Jagannathpur, and Jaintia and Twipra were among the lesser kingdoms in the area.

Folk traditions such as the Haljatra, Gormar dance, Dhamail, and Suryabrata songs all have their roots in the Sunamgonj region, making it seem like the original home of these traditions. Local

folktales include (but are not limited to) Bijbas Brata, Banalaksmi Brata, Khirabas Brata, Firal, etc. To mark the arrival of the monsoon, the area is also filled with the music of Radharaman Dutt, Hason Raja, and pala gan. The culture of the Haor region is the only thing that keeps the people from drifting apart due to the region's terrain, which requires them to labor for six months during the summer and relax for the other six months during the monsoon.



Fig 06: Folk-culture of Sunamgonj, at a glance

2.8 Tourism in Sylhet, Bangladesh prospect

For many developing nations, tourism is the primary means of generating both export revenue and domestic labor force expansion. This is something you do on vacation, when you have the luxury of spending time and money as you like. The primary motivation for most participants in travel is revitalization (Ghosh, 2001).

According to Rahman et al. (2010), Bangladesh possesses a captivating natural environment and an abundance of historical and cultural sites that hold potential for attracting a greater number of tourists. The nation possesses picturesque coasts and beaches, significant historical and religious landmarks, majestic mountains and islands, lush forests and jungles, and a scenic agricultural landscape adorned with numerous lakes and fields. Over time, Bangladesh has built a prosperous economy by catering to tourists with a market that offers something truly special. The research showed that tourism-related income and the annual number of visitors had both increased during the past decade. On the other hand, the current rate of expansion falls short of expectations. Findings show that most international visitors to Bangladesh are here on vacation. Researchers in this study considered tourism enterprises to be a potential new career option. The research provides some encouraging words for the expansion of the Bangladeshi tourism industry within the framework of the new vocationalism.

The tourism business in Bangladesh is booming, especially in the Sylhet region. The region is renowned for its extensive tea plantations, lush tropical forests, varied tribal communities, cascading waterfalls, pristine lakes nestled amidst verdant hills, haors, and the revered shrines of Hazrat Shahjala (R.) and Hazarat Shahparan (R.). The location of the area under discussion is situated in the northeastern region of Bangladesh. These days, however, the region is best known for its business boom, as it is one of the richest in Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

An extensive literature review was conducted for the study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather information. Using a qualitative approach is necessary to uncover the reasons the perspective of the local and tourists about the site potentiality. Key Informant Interviews (KII) was conducted at the Baruni- Snan visitors (held on March 19, 2023), and semi-structured interviews was conducted to investigate the if there are chances of RCR (Returning Customer Rate). The TG (Target Group) is based onto the following three categories based on the RCR.

1. First, the local community of Tahirpur and adjacent upazilas including Sunamgonj sadar who presumably visits the site for religious occasions throughout the year.
2. A second category is Baruni- Snan pilgrims visiting once a year.
3. The third category included the tourists who travels through the existing natural tourism trail of Tahirpur comprising Barek Tila, Niladri Lake, Shimul Bagan etc. located 2-3 km from the site.

Selecting responses that came up repeatedly in multiple interviews helps narrow the search to the most important or most often occurring issues. Quantitative research was conducted following an extensive questionnaire targeting the same TG. The information comes from both official and unofficial sources. Famous people's travel blogs were a gold mine of information. The situation was analyzed through a combination of internet surveys, conversations with relevant people (Purohits, Moharaj, Pilgrims, tourists, and locals), and on-site observation.

4. Contextual Study

4.1 Site Location

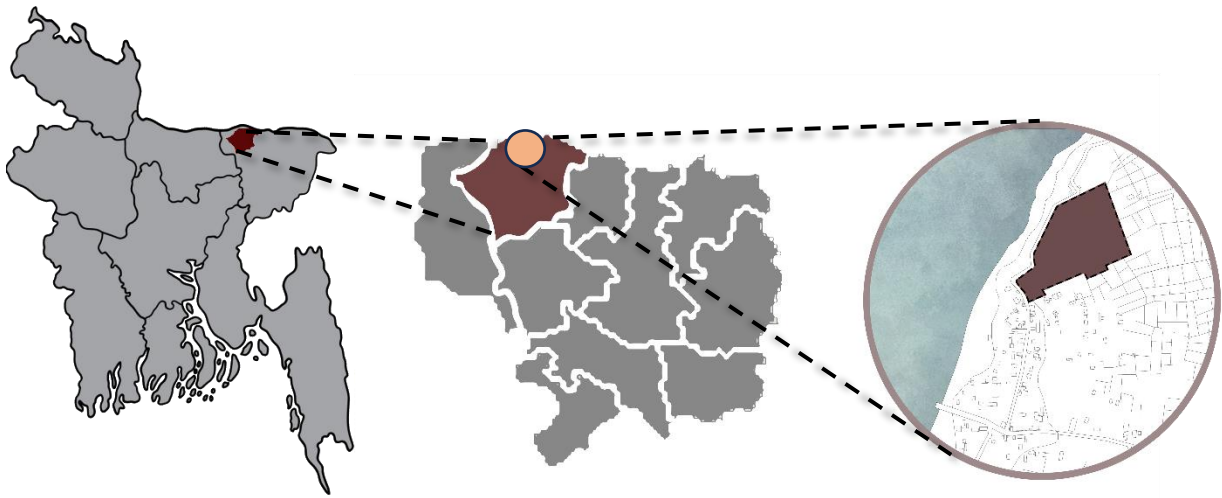


Fig 07: Site location

The area is part of the Sunamgonj district in the Sylhet division, namely the Tahirpur upazila. Alongside the preexisting Advaita Bari temple, Shiva Temple, and temporary fair ground, the site spans a distance of 0.41 kilometers along the east bank of the Rakti River. The site's proximity to the Meghalaya Border, which is only 5.5 km away, and the abundance of natural tourist attractions in the immediate area works as a potential factor.

4.2 Spiritual Factor

Despite its popularity and the number of pilgrims that attend each year, Panatirtha is not as well-known as the other pilgrimage sites in Bangladesh. Many people from the wider Sylhet and Sunamgonj area travel here to rejoice with the Hindu and Vaishnav community once or twice a year.

4.2.1 Existing location of pilgrim sites and significance of Panatirtha

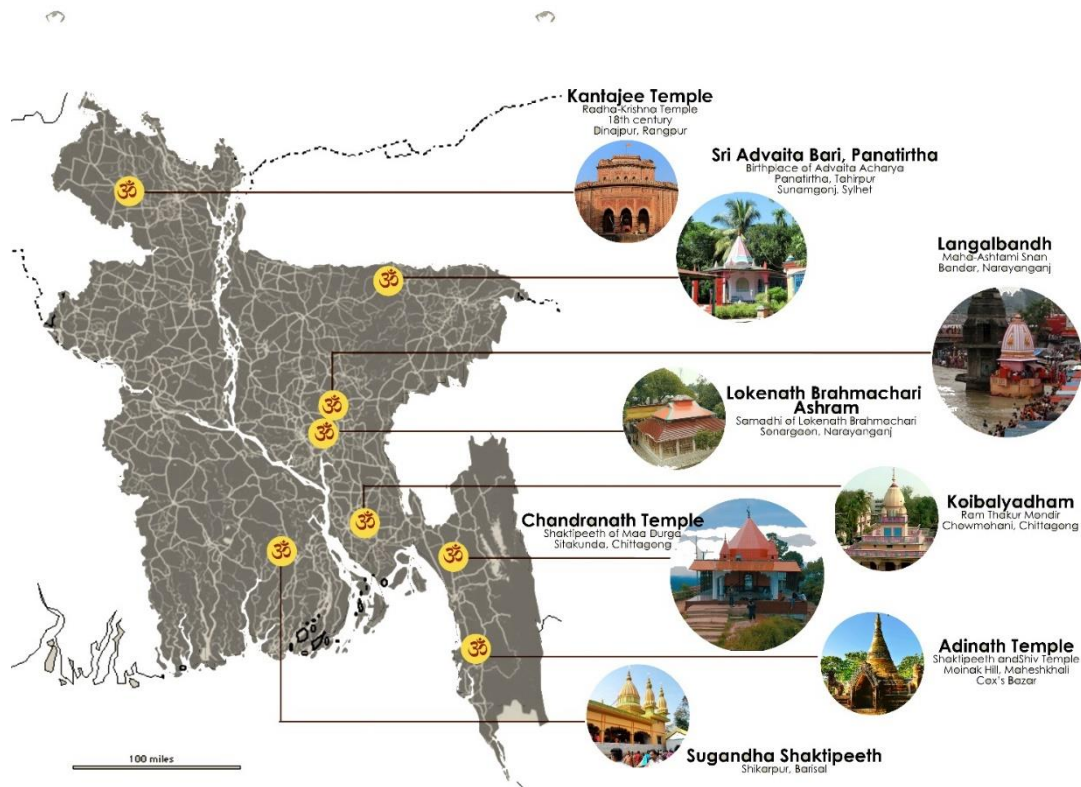


Fig 08: Existing location of significant Hindu pilgrimage



There are many important pilgrimages for the Hindu religion. Among them, the most important and most visited one is Sitakunda in Chittagong tract.

Fig 09: Existing condition of Advaita Bari

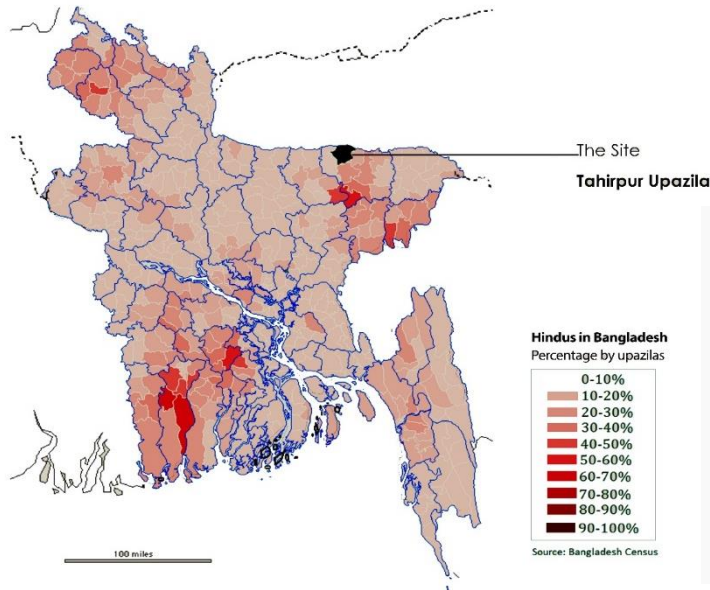


Fig 10: Demographic location of Hindus in Bangladesh

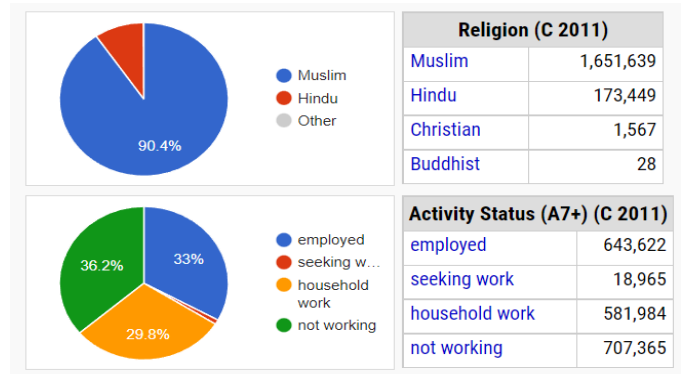


Fig 11: Tahirpur population census, 2017

In addition, the population census in Tahirpur provides information on the number of possible visitors, users, and stakeholders for the site, which can be applied to future research analysis from a religious and cultural point of view.

4.2.2 Existing site condition (Before and after Baruni Snan of Panatirtha)



Throughout the year



During Panatirtha: Barunir Snan



Fig 12: Existing site condition (before after Baruni Snan)

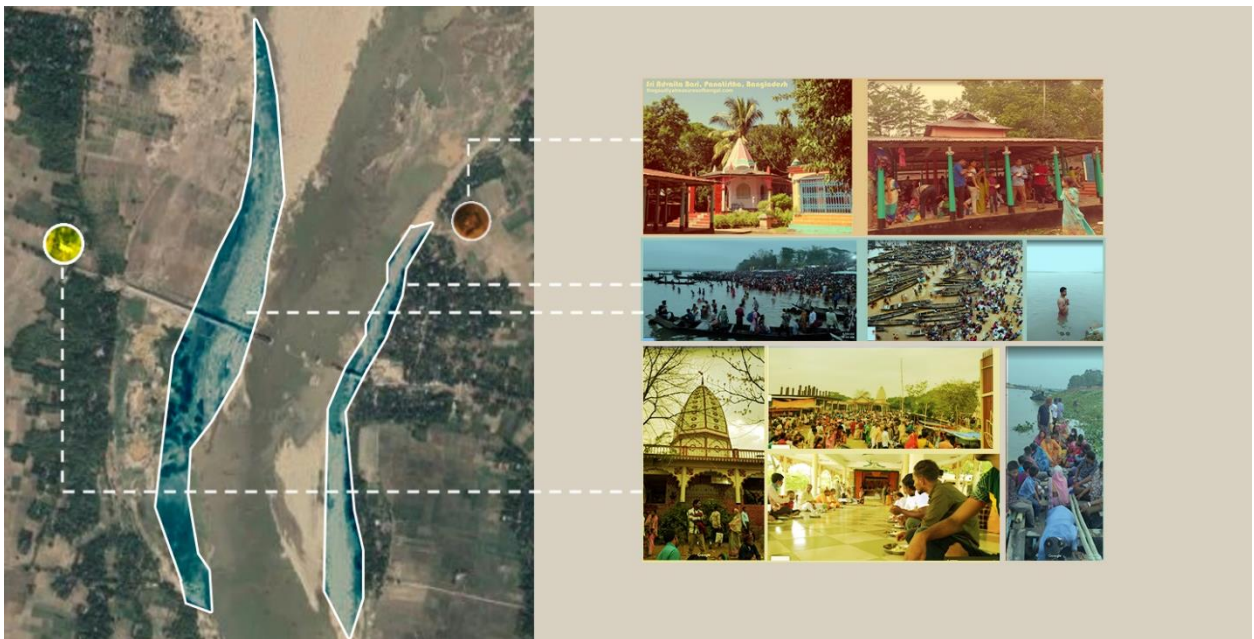


Fig 13: Surrounding image during the Pantirtha



Fig 14: People moveability towards secondary spiritual site force: Iskcon Temple

During the Panatirtha event, there is a noticeable contrast in the appearance of the region spanning from Advaita Bari to Iskcon Temple, encompassing the area between the eastern and western banks of the Rakti River, as compared to the remainder of the year. The Iskcon temple has a significant influence on the site, irrespective of the nature of the pilgrimage taking place. This transition redirects the focus from the philosophy originating point to the Iskcon temple due to its better amenities.

During the Panatirtha event, both banks of the river are celebrated joyously, with particular emphasis on the water's edge. Individuals from various regions around the nation are flocking to the vicinity in large numbers. The Panatirtha location exhibits a predominantly vacant state and experiences limited utilization during non-seasonal periods. On the other hand, Iskcon temple serves as a year-round gathering place for individuals adhering to the Vaishnav and Hindu faiths.

The majority of structures at Advaita Bari are of a semipermanent nature, exclusively accessible for utilization during the Panatirtha festival. The permanent structures consist of temples and other amenities. Existing permanent structures includes:

- Shiva Temple
- Advaita Bari Temple
- Pancha Tatta Temple
- Govinda Temple (under construction)
- WASA service office

Existing semi-permanent structures includes:

- Accommodation area
- Kirtan Prangan
- Kitchen

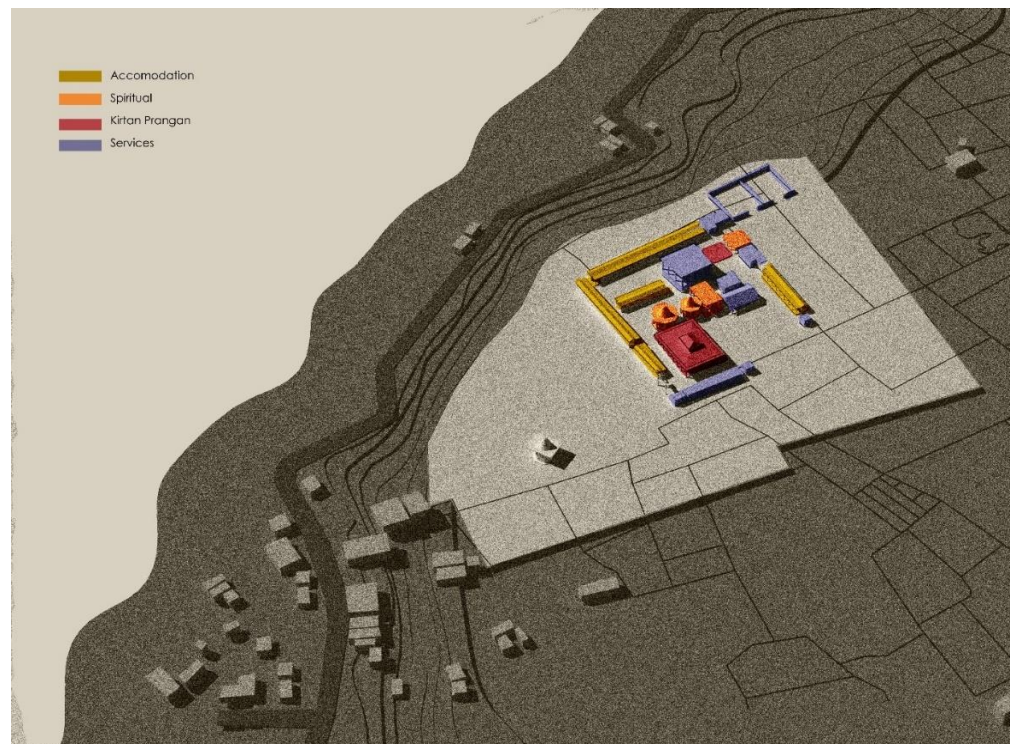


Fig 15: Existing structures of Advaita Bari: diagrammatic

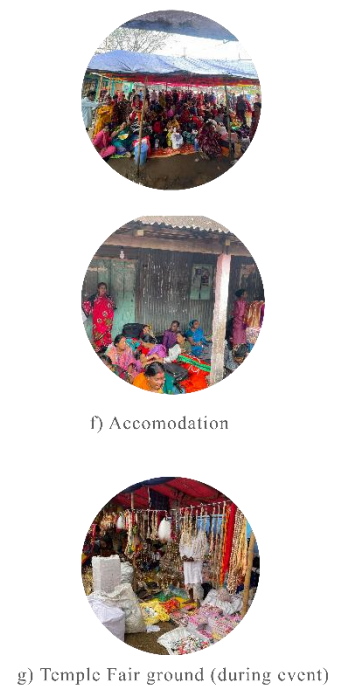


Fig 16: Site surrounding:

4.2.3 Vaishnava Events year round

Figure 17 depicts the various opportunities for commemorating the Panatirtha location throughout the year, in addition to the Baruni-Snan event and the appearance day of Advaita Acharya. It is noteworthy that the two dates mentioned in Figure 18 fall between the months of January and March, in accordance with the specific tithi as per the lunar calendar.

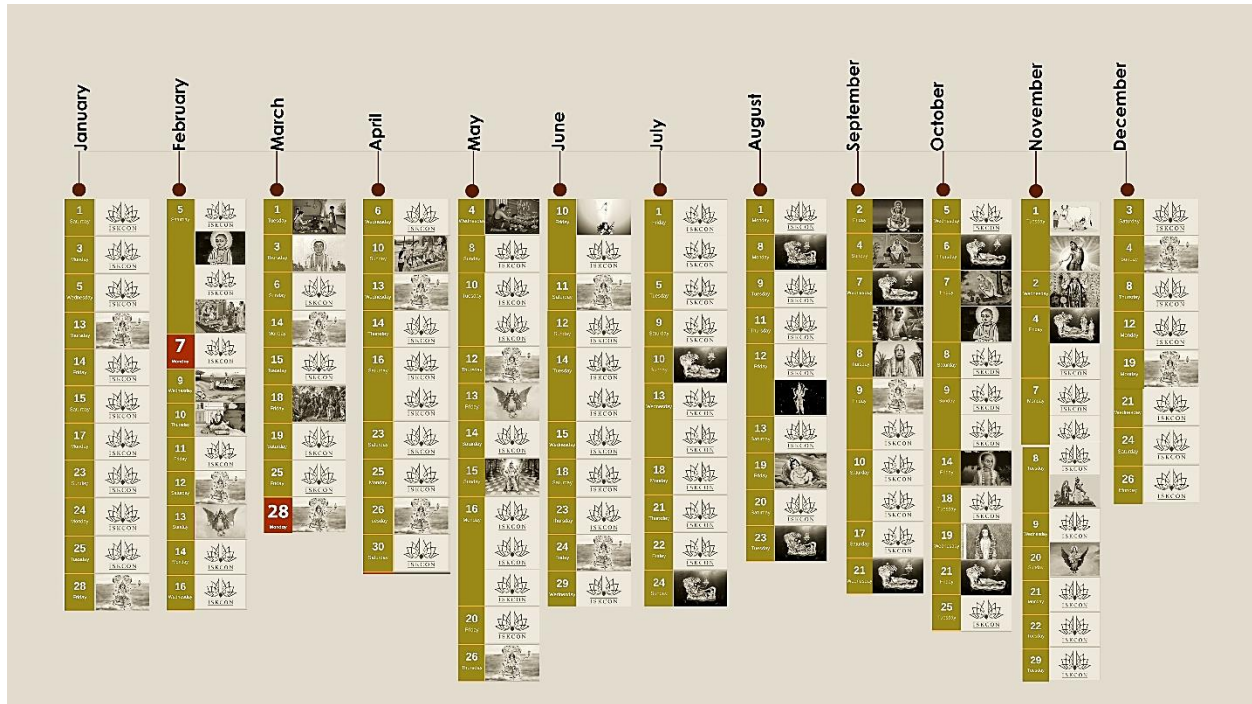


Fig 17: Vaishnava Calendar showing festivities year round



Fig 18: Panatirtha related occasion once a year

4.2.4 Existing site activity trail: Mela



Fig 19: Existing activity trail of Mela during Panatirtha

4.2.5 Existing site activity trail: Holy bathing of Panatirtha

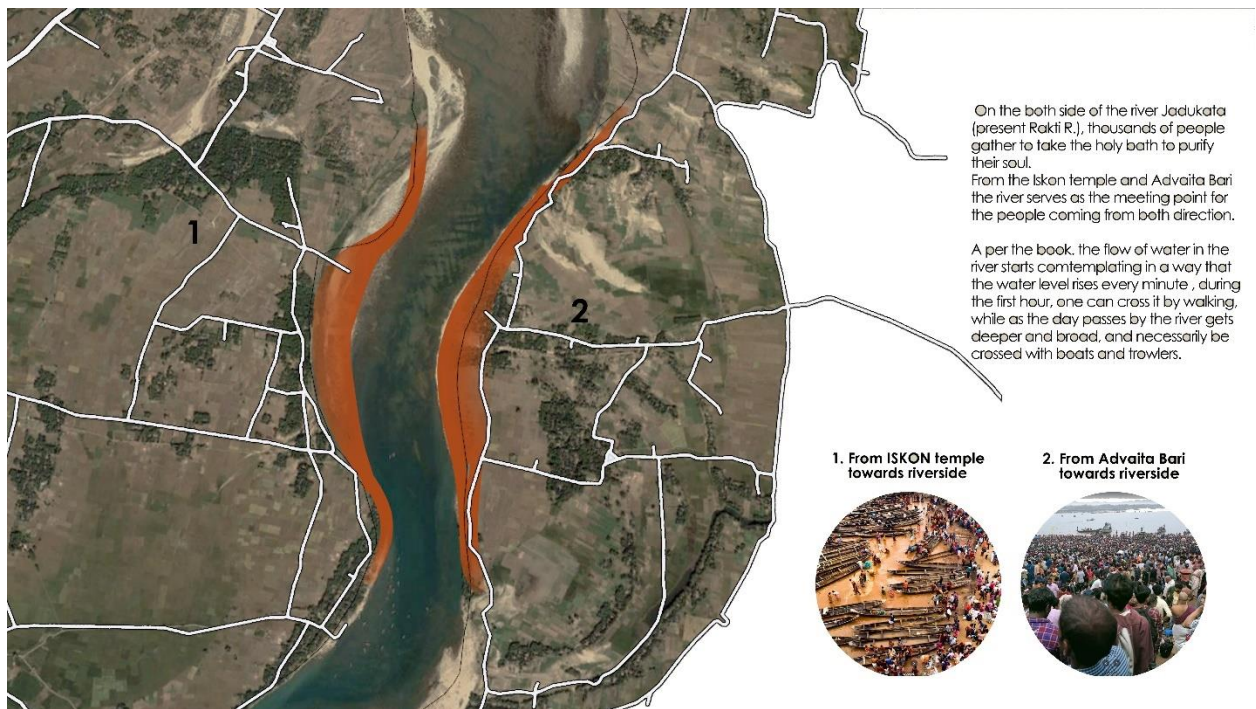


Fig 20: Existing activity trail of holy bathing during Panatirtha

4.3 Accessibility

4.3.1 Accessibility from Micro scale

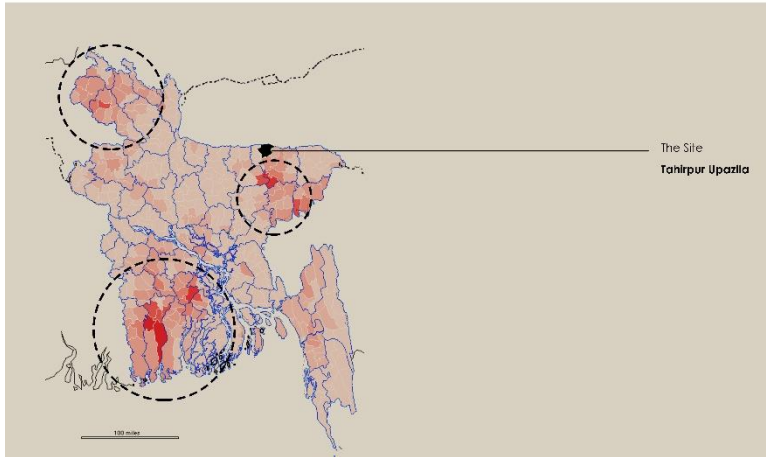


Fig 21: Demographic location of the majority target community: spiritual

The Hindu-Vaishnav community, as seen in Figure 10, has been geographically identified, enabling the identification of the routes leading to the Panatirtha site. This will facilitate the interpretation and study of vehicular parking and other program formulations during the following phases of design development.

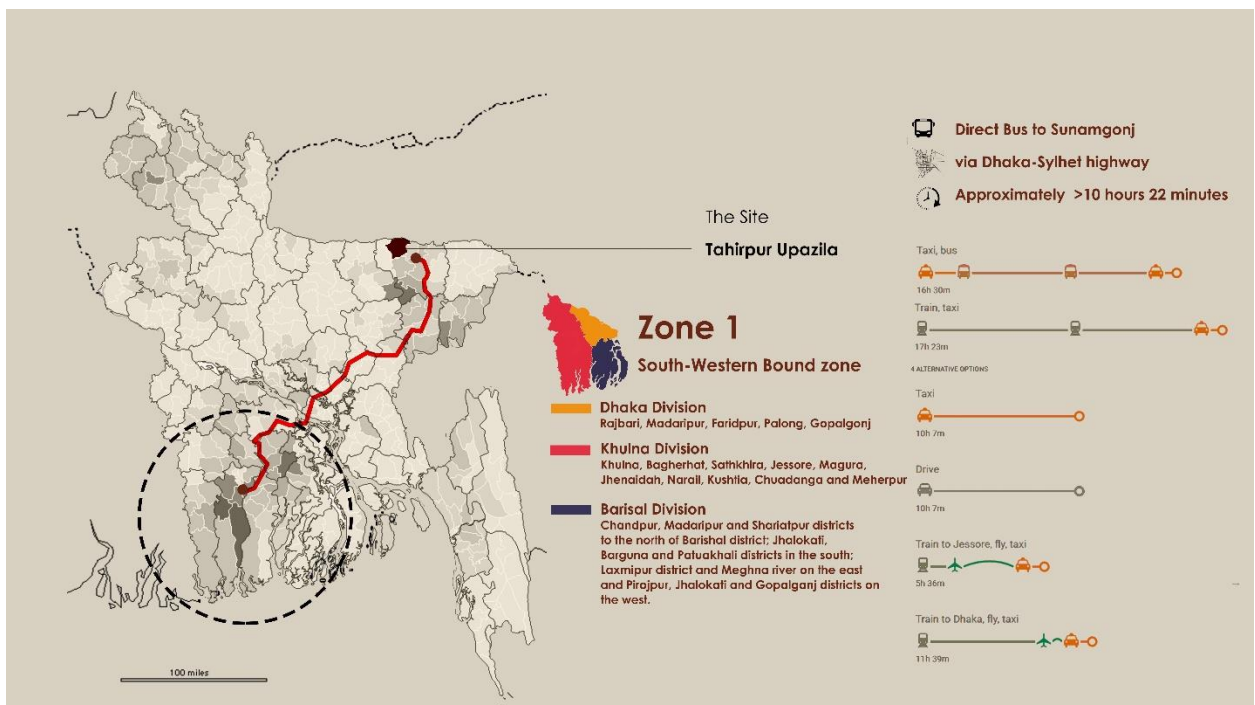


Fig 22: Travel time from Zone 1 (from Fig 21)

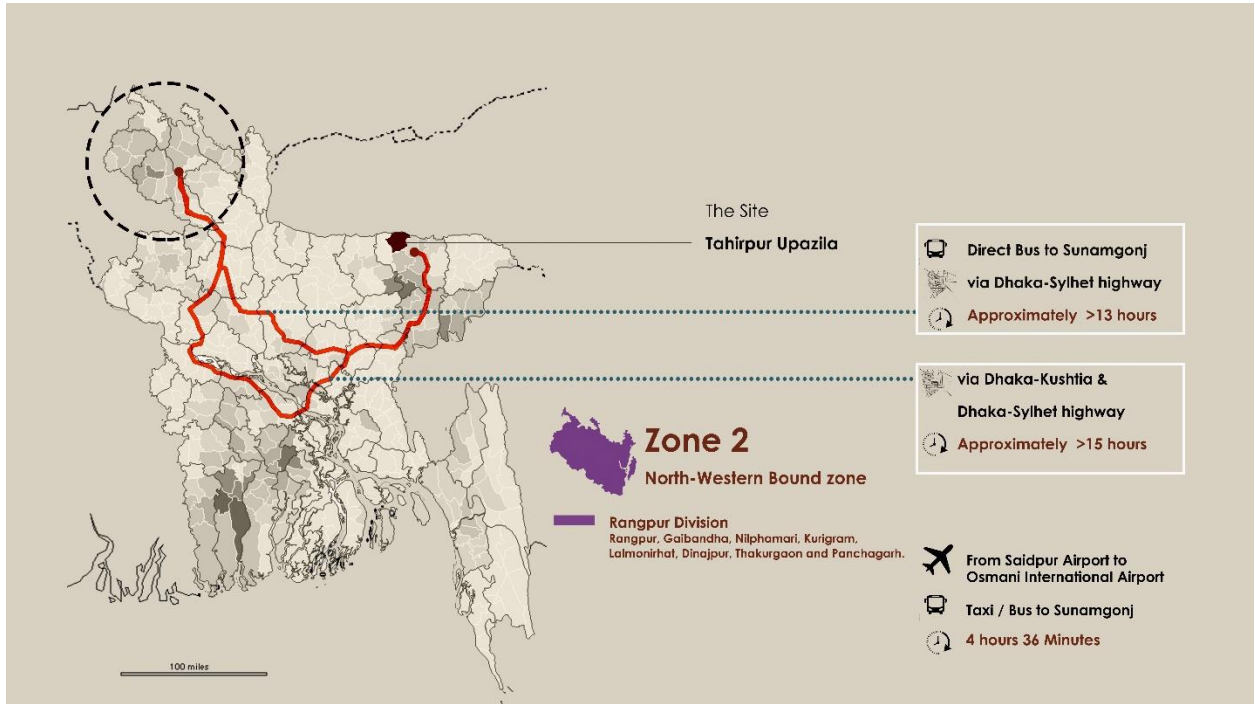


Fig 23: Travel time from Zone 2 (from Fig 21)

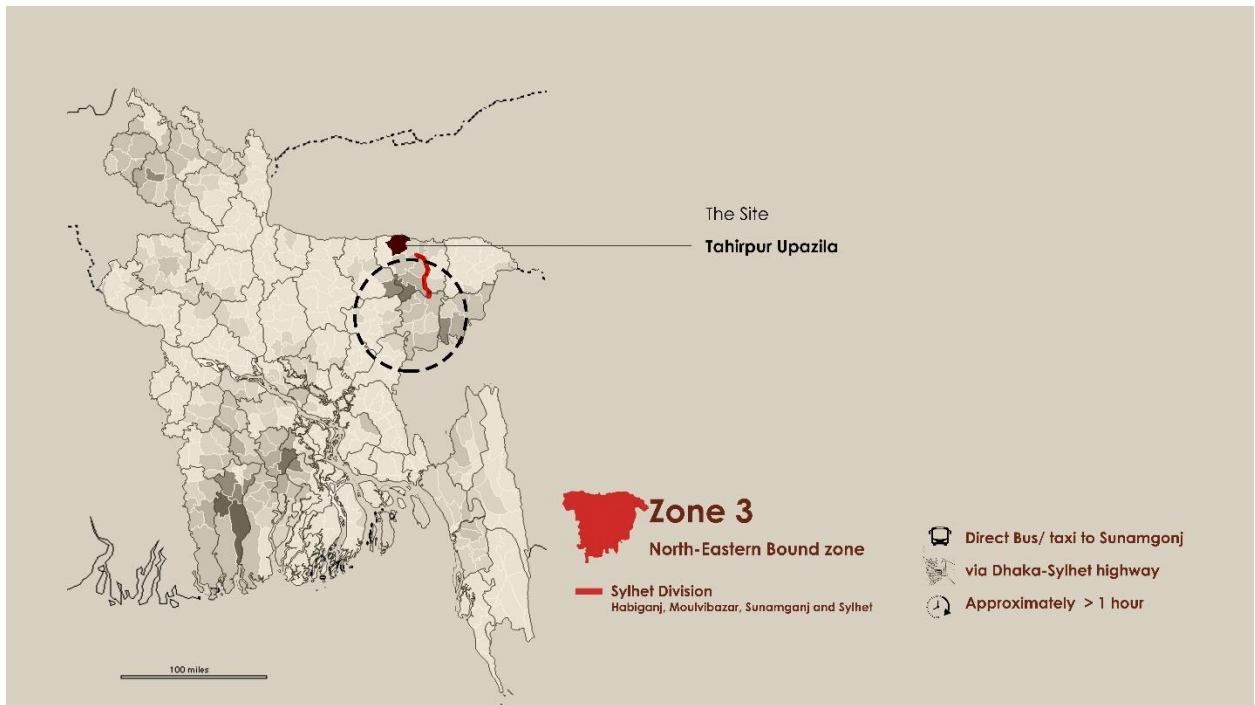


Fig 24: Travel time from Zone 3 (from Fig 21)

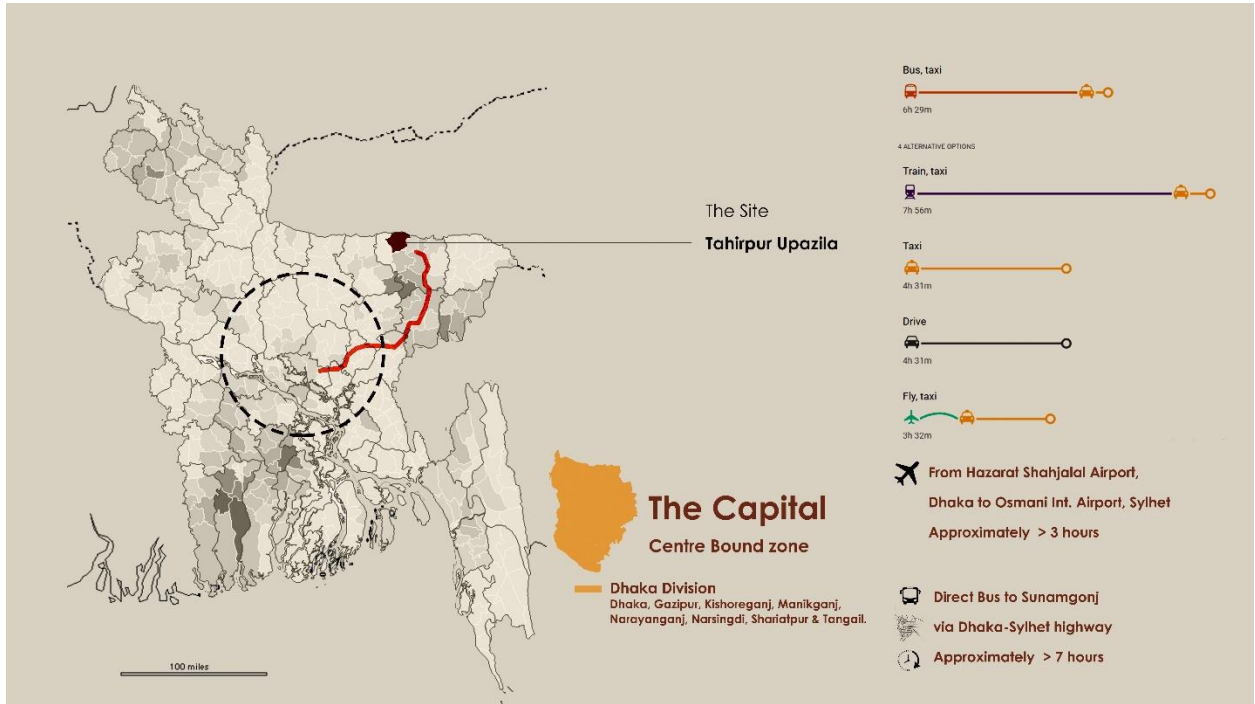


Fig 25: Travel time from Dhaka (from Fig 21)

4.3.2 Accessibility from Macro scale

The main urban point in the closest site proximity is Sunamgonj Sadar. The accessibility mapping below shows the travel distance to reach the site from Sunamgonj Sadar.

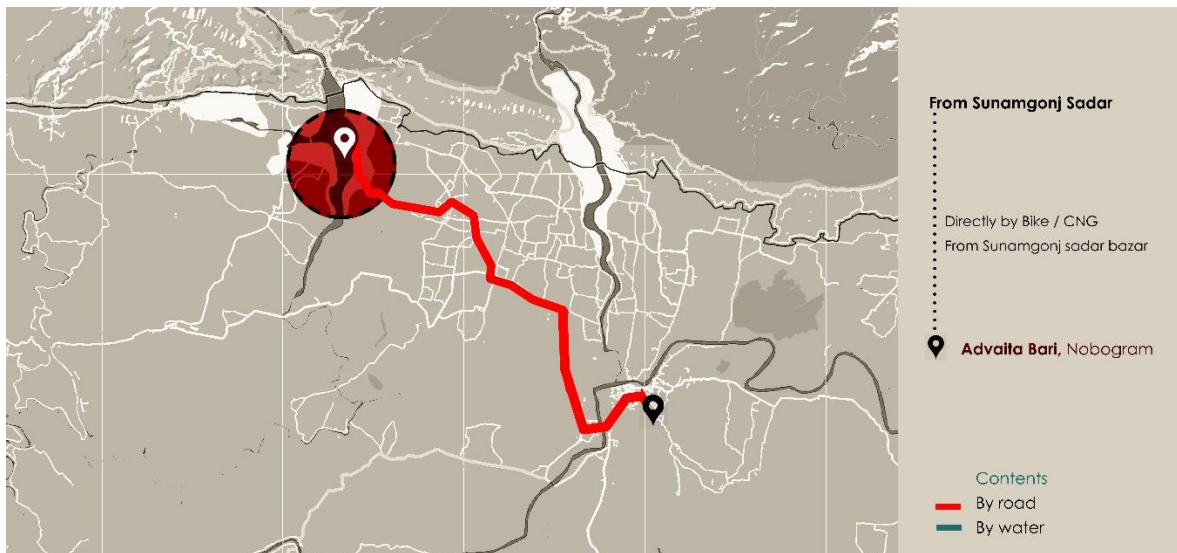


Fig 26: Travel time from Sunamgonj Sadar -option by road

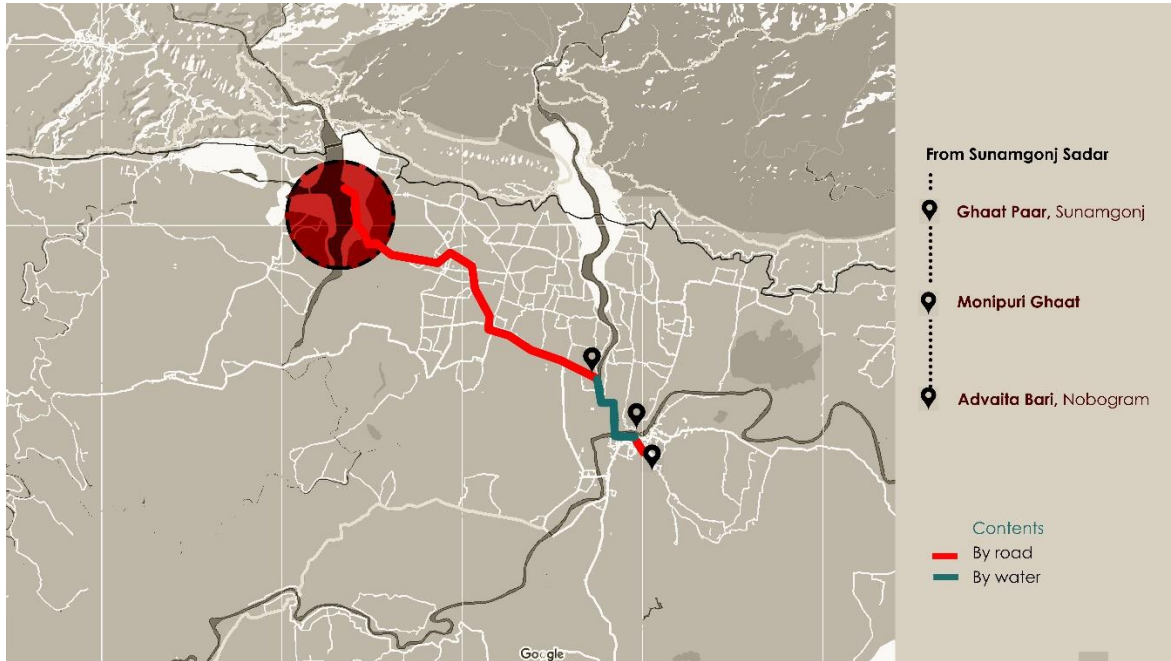


Fig 27: Travel time from Sunamgonj Sadar -option by road and water

4.3.3 Road- mapping of Tahirpur Upazila scenario

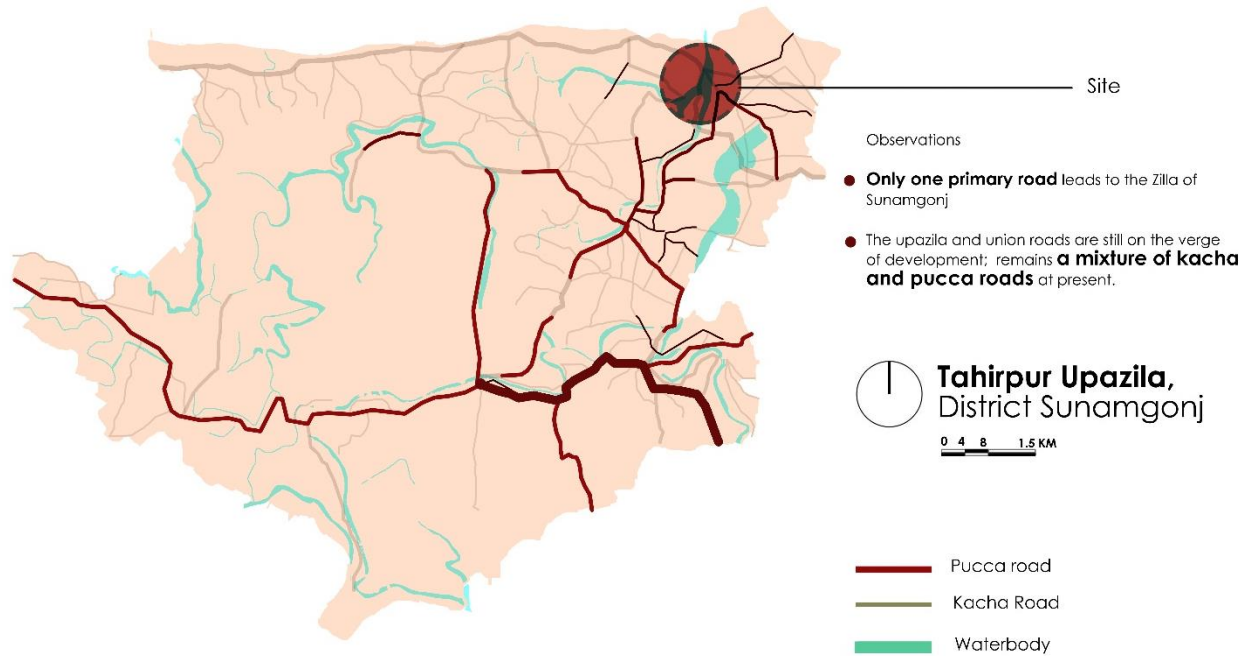


Fig 28: Road mapping of Tahirpur Upazila

The data indicates that the sole established main route connects the cities of Sylhet and Sunamgonj.

The remaining highways serve as secondary transportation routes, facilitating the connection

between upazilas and unions. The routes leading to Uttar Badaghat upazila, where the site is situated, predominantly consist of unpaved roads. There is no singular transportation route that provides direct access to the site.

4.3.4 Scopes of future development

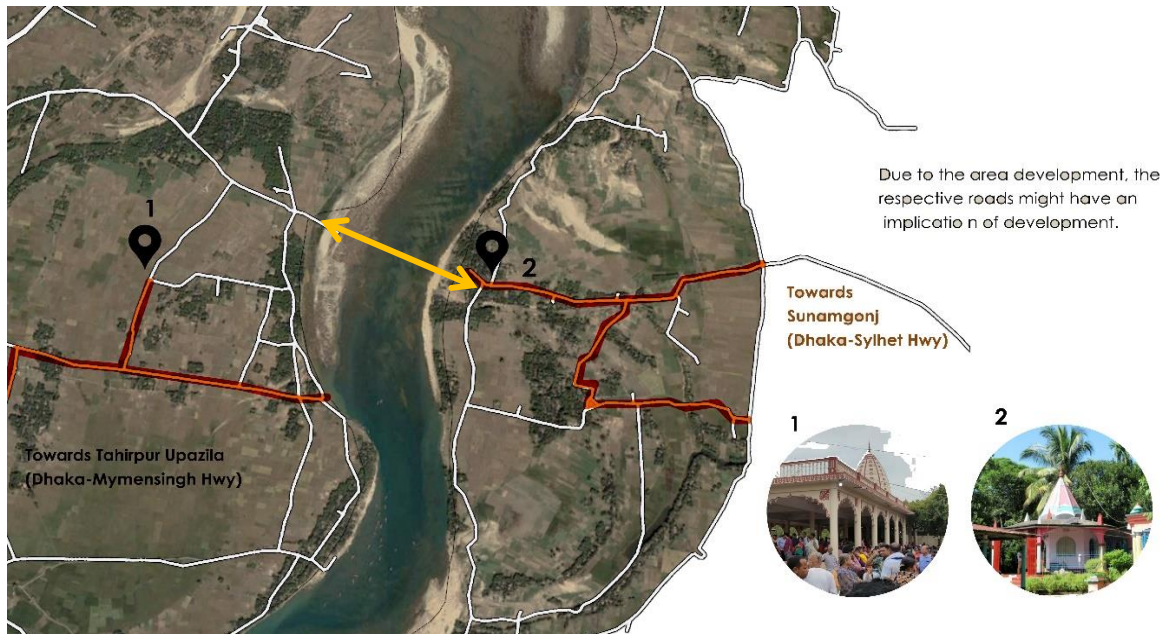


Fig 29: Roads that might have scope for future development

Based on the scenario of area and road development on the western bank of the Rakti River, it is possible to make a prediction regarding the potential roads for future development if intervention occurs at the site. This intervention would involve converting the existing non-paved roads into well-constructed paved routes, as well as constructing a bridge to connect both sides of the river. The prediction is based on the social influence of Iskcon in the area. According to the provided information, it has been said that the construction of the bridge will be finalized by the year 2024.

4.4 Socio- economic Condition

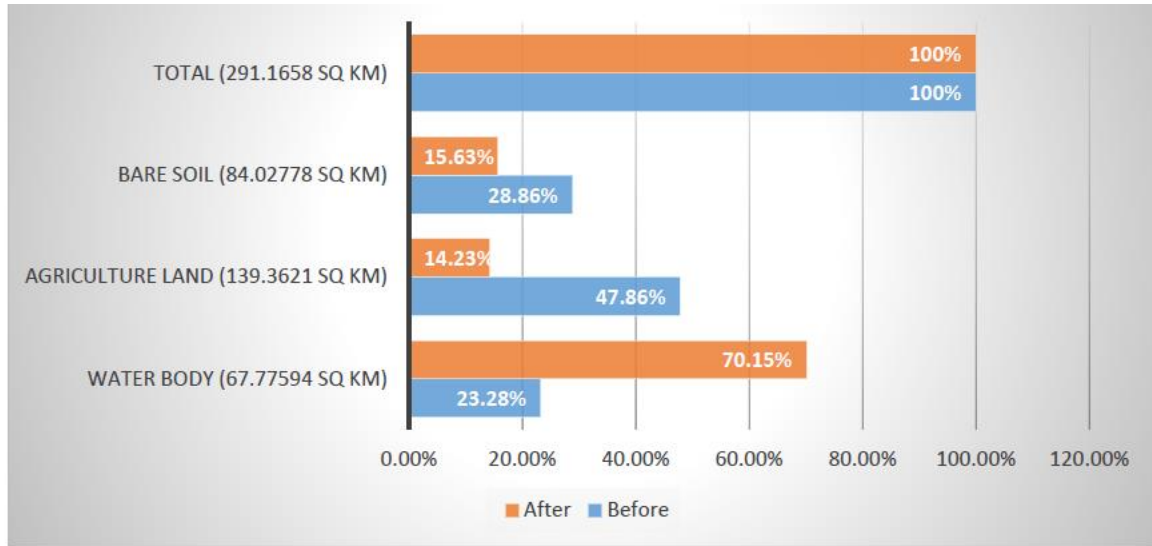


Fig 30: Landuse change around Tahirpur after flash flood (2017)

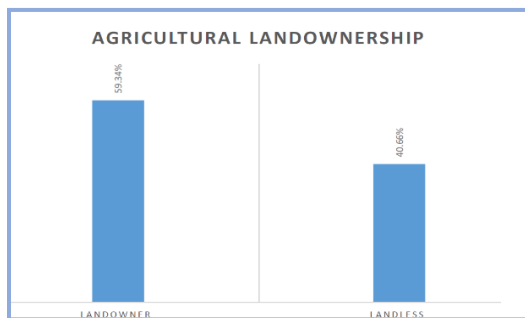


Fig 31: Landuse of Tahirpur (2020)

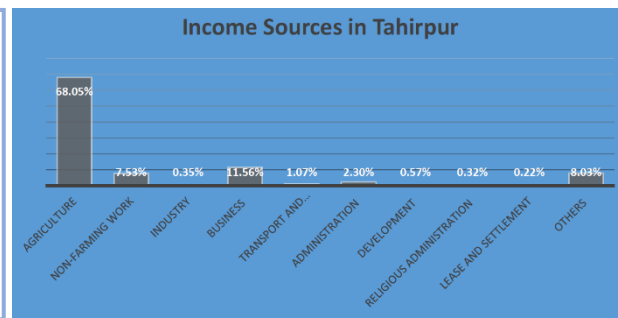


Fig 32: Income Source of Tahirpur

The data presented in Figure 24 illustrates the transformation of land use in Sunamgonj as a result of climate influences. The social aspect indicates that people began to migrate in search of better employment and a better future. Simultaneously, the alteration in land use signifies the reduction of agricultural land, which is then repurposed for future development endeavors such as tourism planning and commercial plots. According to the data presented in Figure 26, the predominant source of revenue for the local community was agriculture, accounting for 68.05% of the total. However, there has been a noticeable emergence of demand for non-agricultural employment opportunities, particularly in the fields of commerce, tourism, and labor.

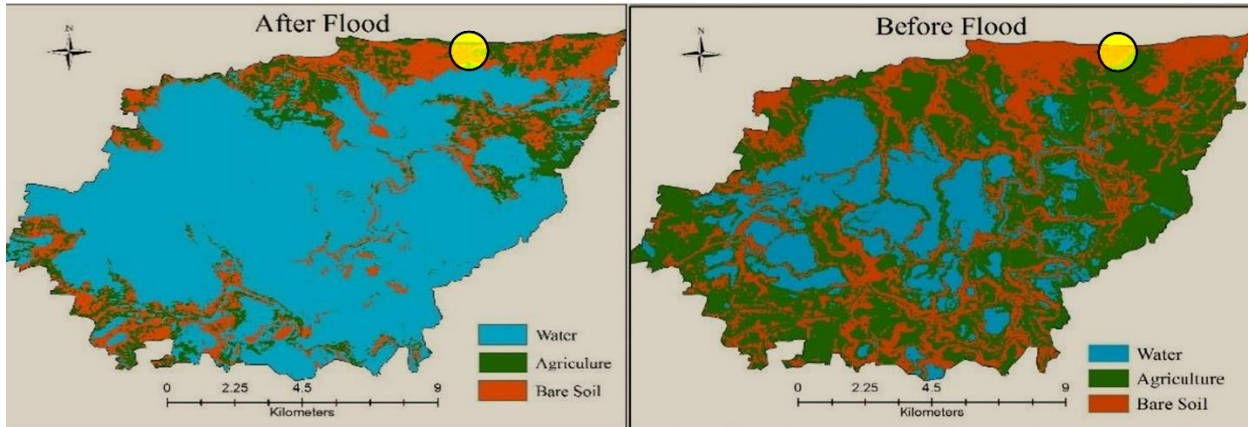


Fig 33: Flash flood effect (before and after 2017)

4.5 Amenities

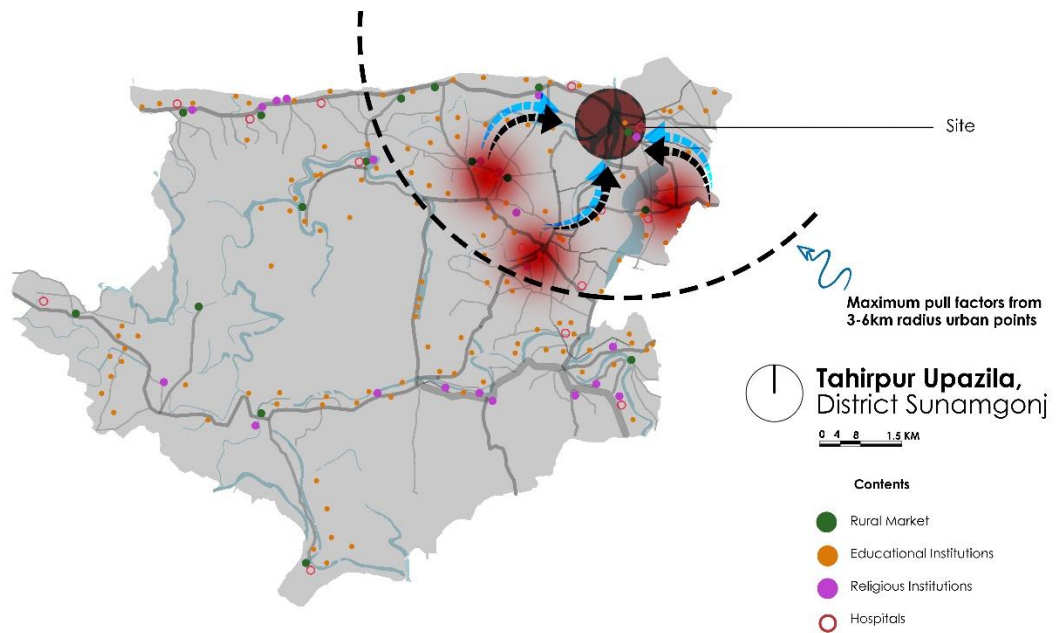


Fig 34: Maximum pull factor towards the site from the nearby urban points (3-6km radius)

The site has a maximum pull factor within a range of 3-6 kilometers, owing to the close vicinity of rural markets, schools, and religious institutions. In close proximity, there is a lack of a communal space that serves as a cultural hub for the local community. During the Panatirtha festival, the site undergoes a transformation into a shared area where many faiths coexist, serving as a cultural hub for their respective practices and beliefs.

4.6 Social Security

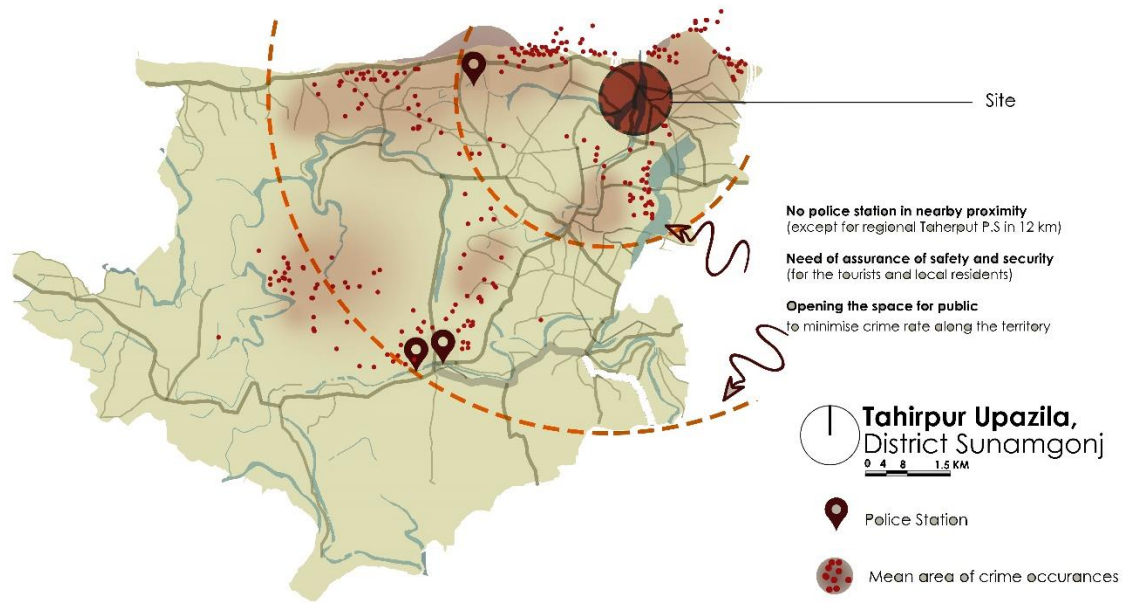


Fig 35: Security mapping

Based on the provided map, it can be inferred that the absence of a nearby police station and lack of ongoing area development contribute to the persistent lack of safety in the surrounding vicinity. Consequently, this location has emerged as a focal point for a high frequency of social criminal activities.



Fig 36: Media showing the crime scene around Tahirpur

4.7 Climate Study

4.7.1 Chronology of the topography throughout the year

The climatological data indicates that during the monsoon season, there is a noticeable movement of water from Cherrapunji and Meghalaya towards the southern slope along the course of the Rakti river. The river maintains a shallow canal-like appearance throughout the year due to the presence of sedimented bed and its sloping nature. The river originates from Wahm Blei in the state of Meghalaya.

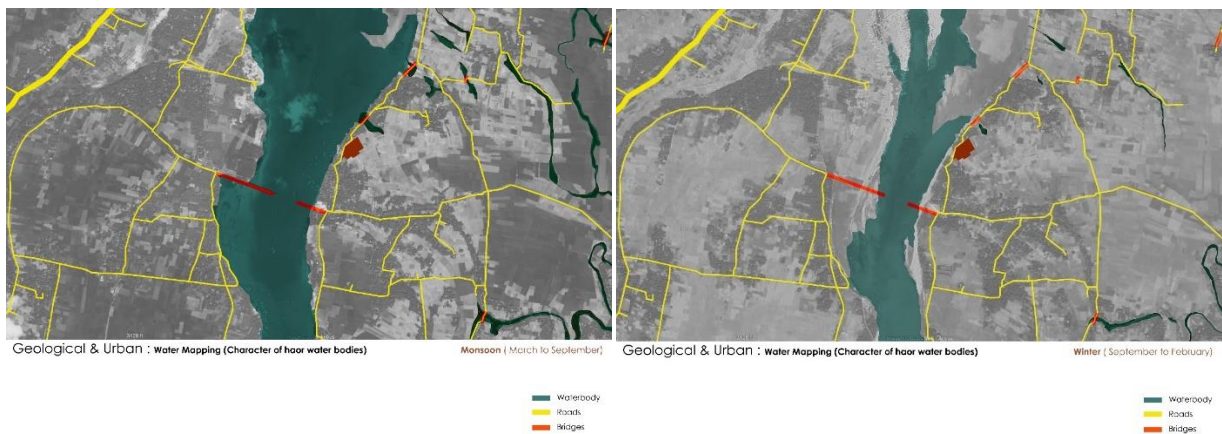


Fig 37: Chronology of the topography throughout the year
a) Monsoon: March to September b) Winter: September to February

The location exhibits a pronounced influence on flash flood occurrences, resulting in a substantial increase in water levels of around 3200mm during the transition from winter to monsoon season. The local community has a preference for utilizing boats as the primary means of transportation during the monsoon season. The landscape transforms into wetlands and submerged islands in the winter.

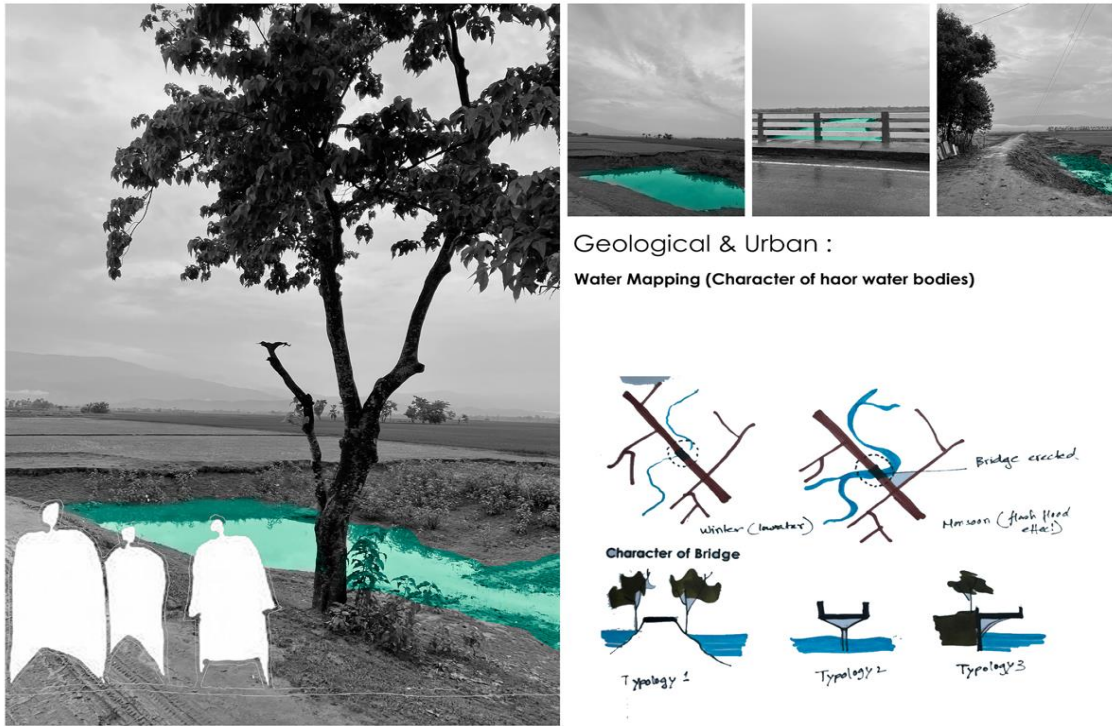


Fig 38: Water mapping and Haor water body character

4.7.2 Precipitation

The region of Tahirpur experiences the highest levels of precipitation throughout the period from May to September, also referred to as the monsoon season.

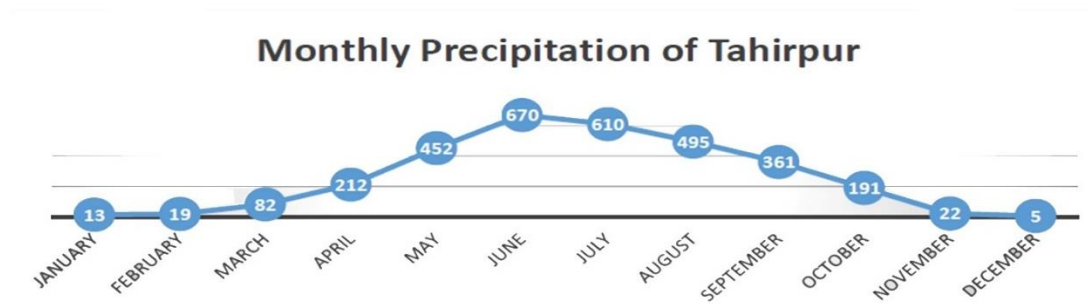


Fig 39: Monthly precipitation of Tahirpur

4.7.3 Monthly Temperature of Tahirpur

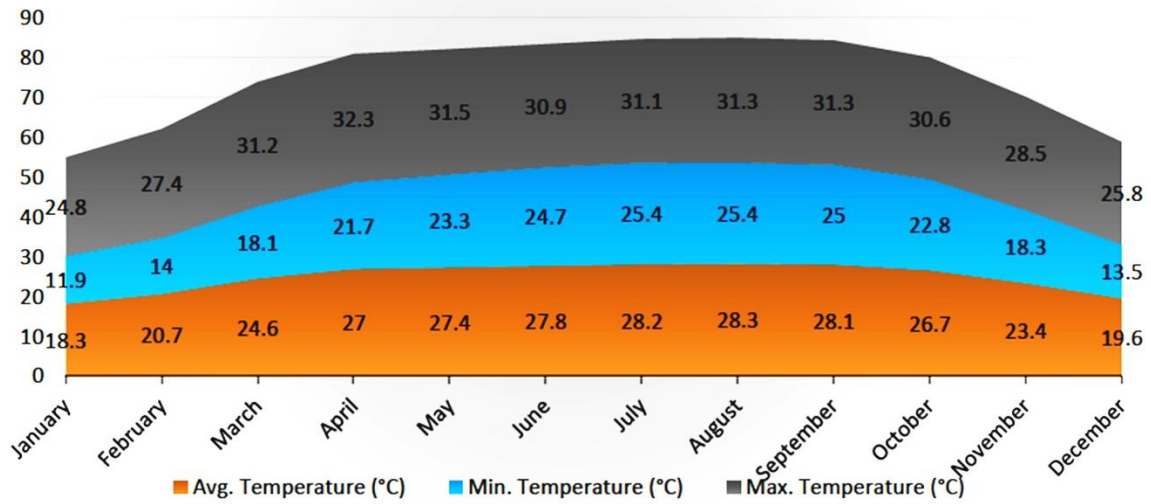


Fig 40: Monthly Temperature of Tahirpur

4.8 Potential Tourist Trail



Fig 41: Tourist points around the site (establishing probable tourism trail)

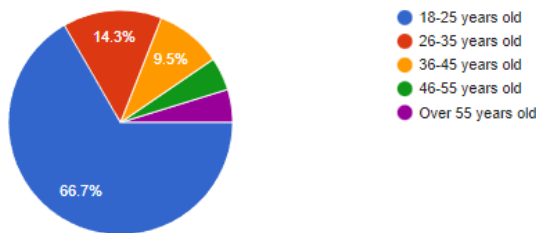
The strategic location of the Panatirtha site gives it a big advantage. It is located at a place where eight official tourist spots along an established tourist route can be reached easily. This path also goes west from Tahirpur and connects the Niladri lake to the Taguar Haor. The information given will help figure out who could be impacted by this site every now and then.

5.Data Collection:

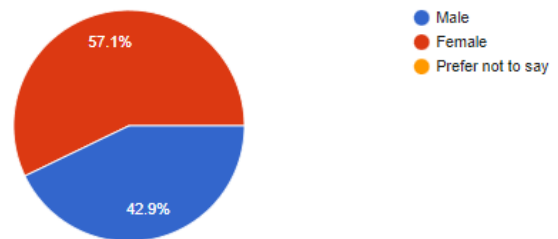
The data obtained from a survey consisting of 160 samples, of which 145 samples were deemed suitable for analysis. The survey conducted in this study contributed to the development of the program formulation for future design interventions.

5.1 Demographic Data:

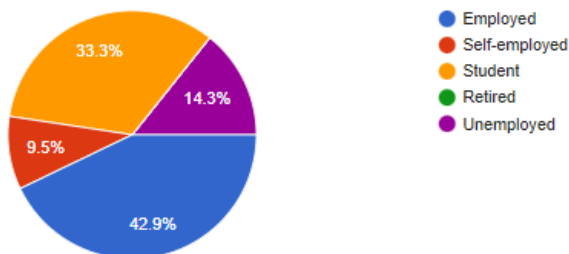
- Age Range



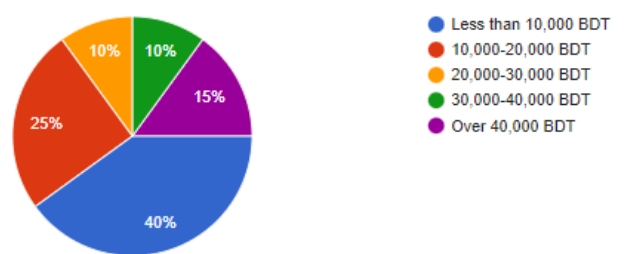
- Gender



- Employment

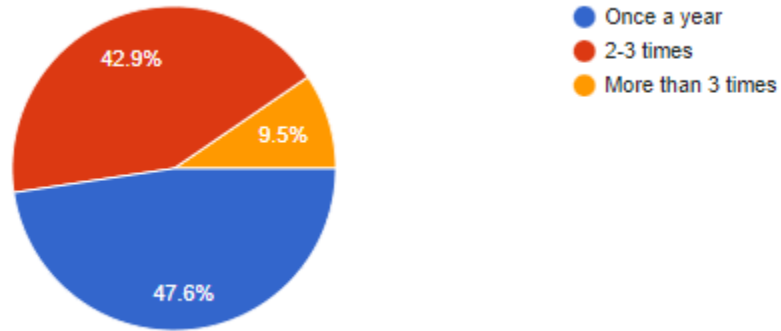


- Monthly income level in Bangladeshi Taka (BDT)

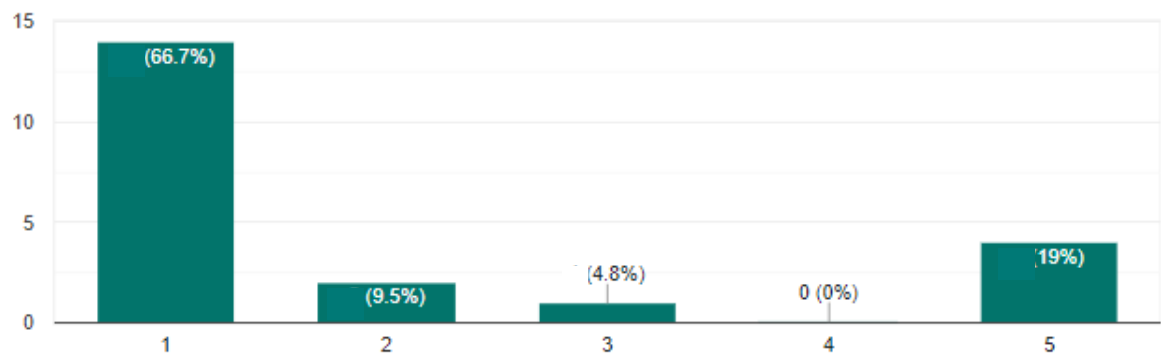


5.1 Tourist Based Data:

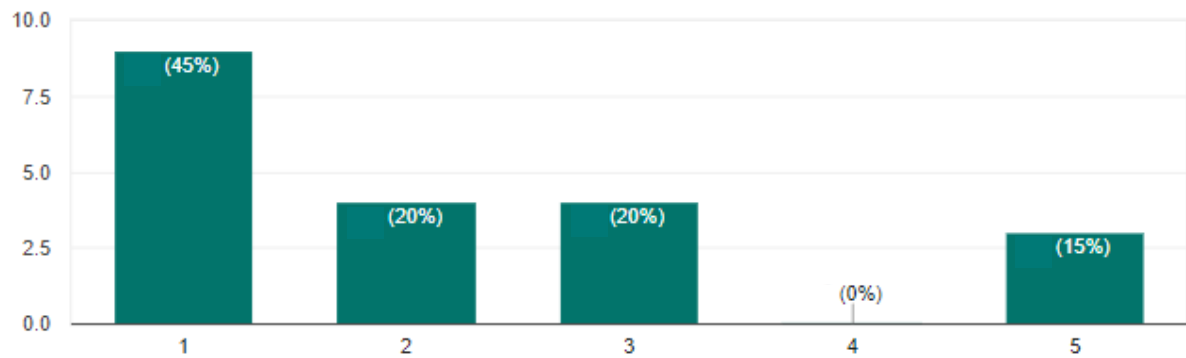
- Frequency of travelling domestically for holidays or other purposes



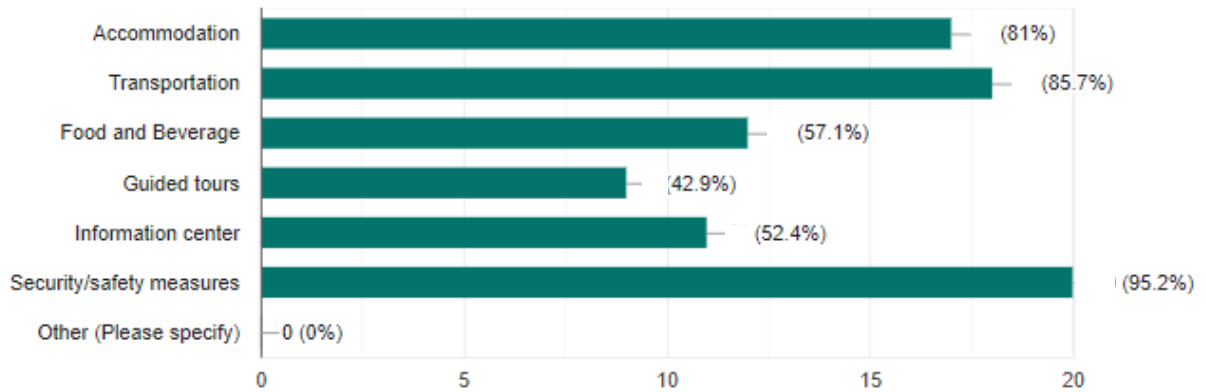
How important is the security and safety of a tourist destination for you?



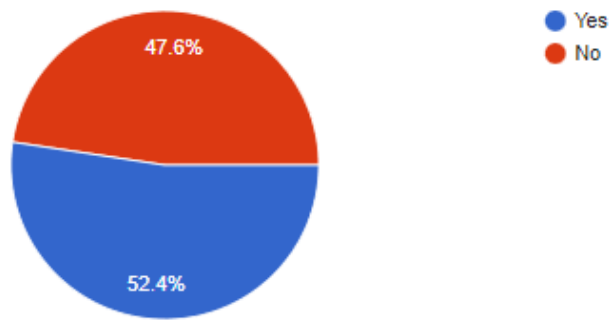
- How important is the availability of accommodation options for you when you travel to a new place?



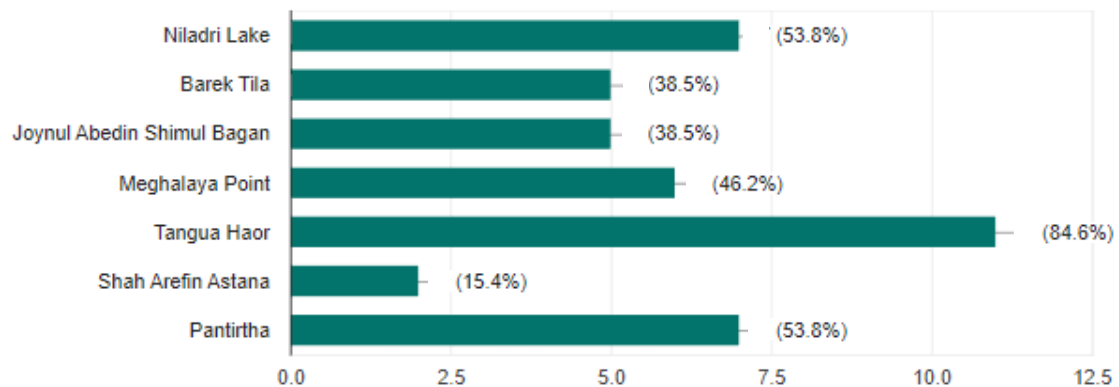
- What are your expectations for the tourism infrastructure in Bangladesh?



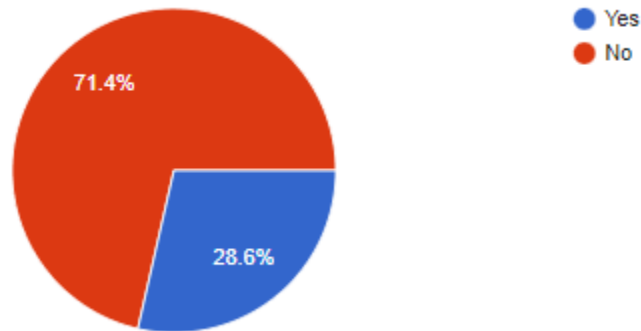
- Have you travelled to Sunamgonj Before?



- If yes, which attraction points in Sunamgonj did you heard of/visit/ willing to visit?

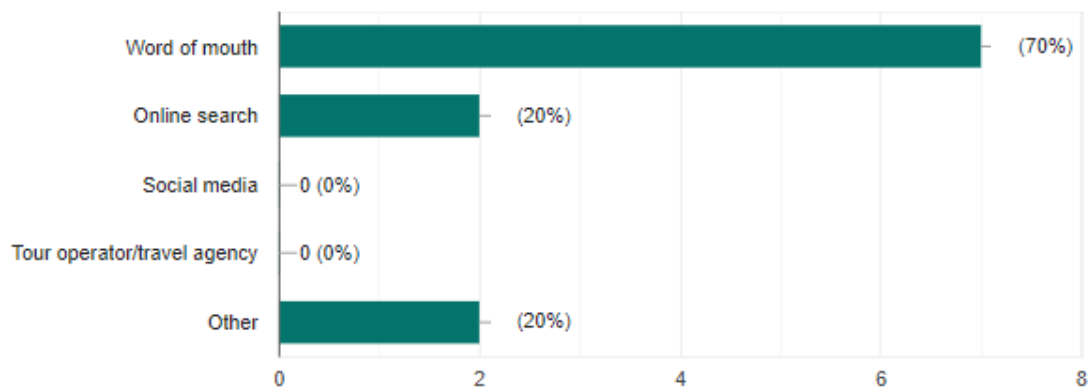


- If yes, Have you travelled to Pantirtha?

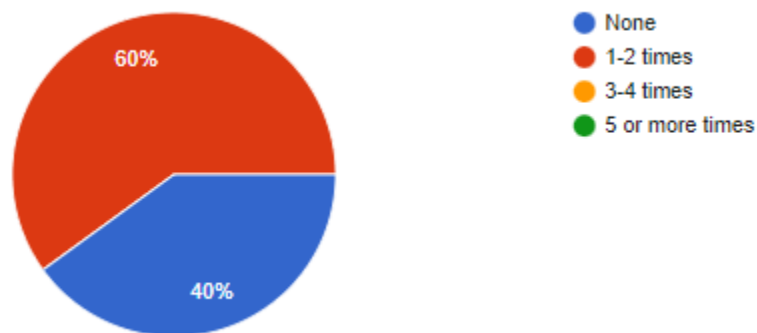


5.3 Panatirtha Based Data

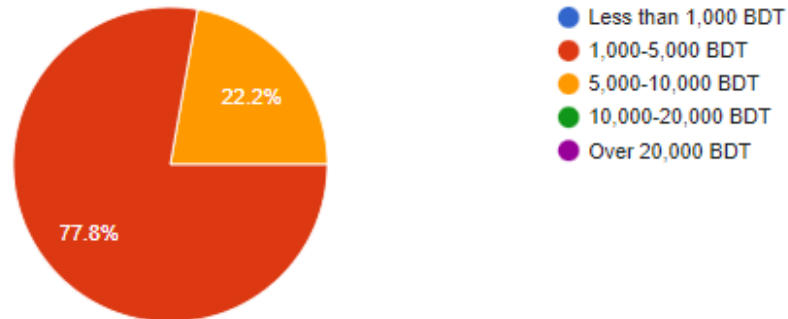
- How did you learn about Panatirtha?



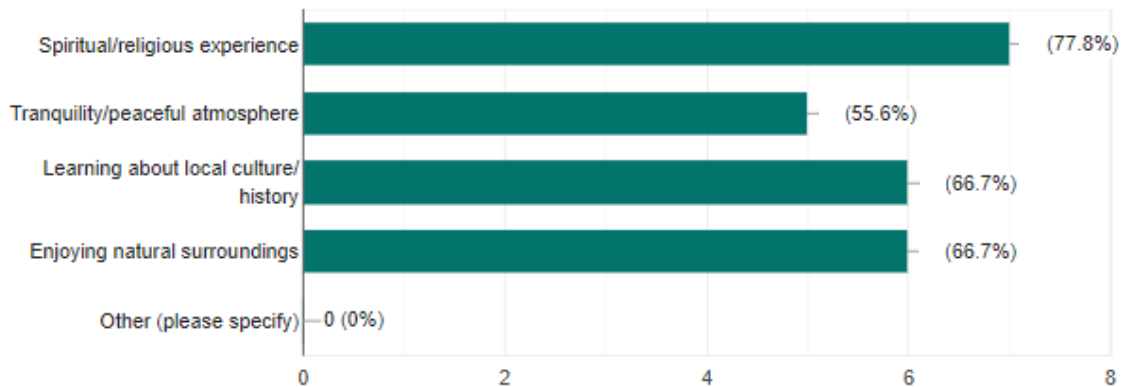
- How many times have you visited Panatirtha in the past year?



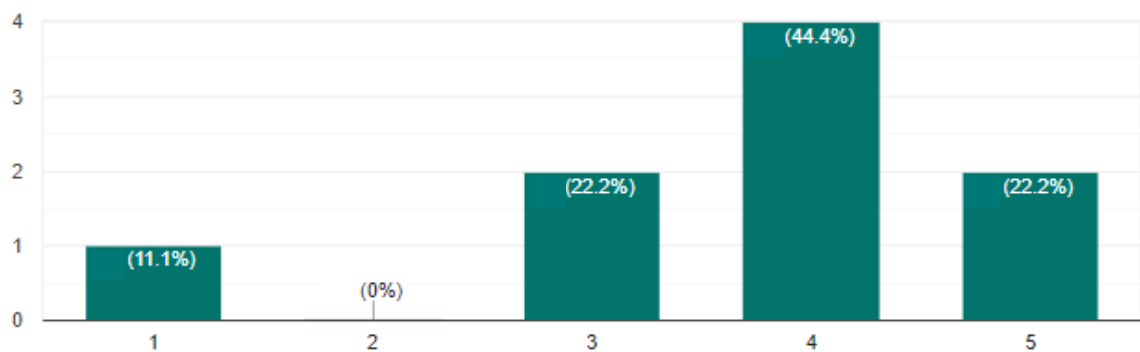
- How much did you spend on your last visit to Panatirtha, including transportation, lodging, food, and other expenses?



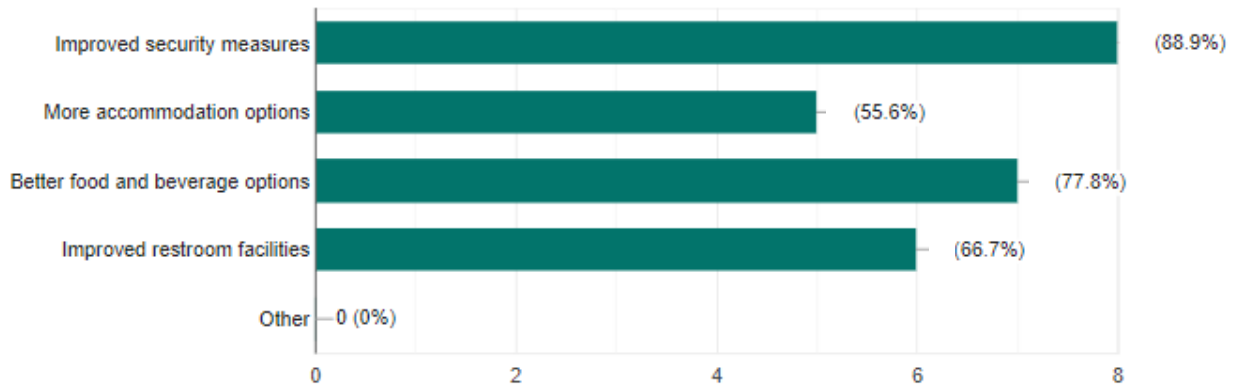
- What are your expectations when you visit Panatirtha?



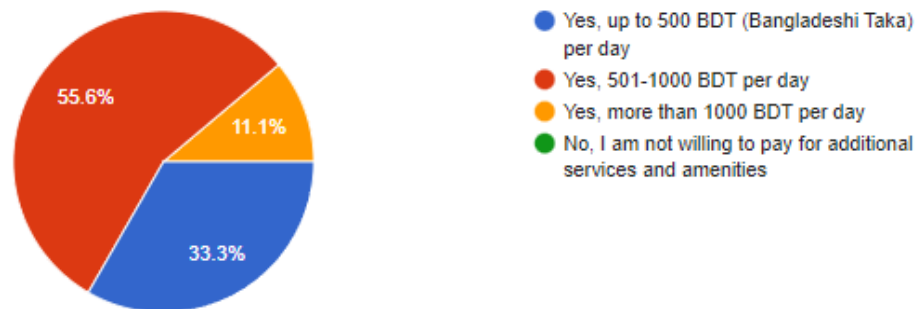
- How satisfied were you with the existing facilities at Panatirtha (e.g., security, accommodation, food and beverage options)?



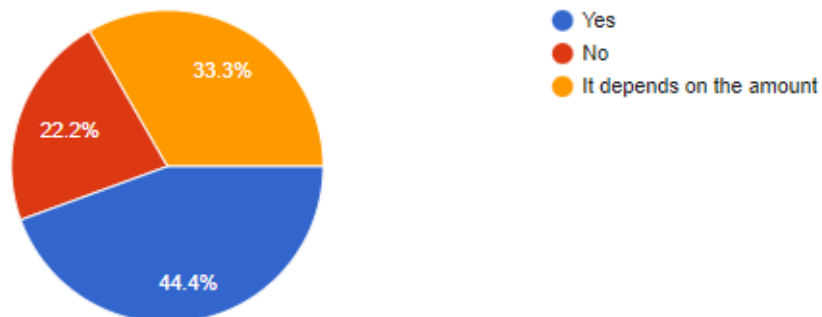
- What improvements would you like to see in the facilities at Panatirtha?



- Are you willing to pay for additional services and amenities at Panatirtha? If yes, how much would you be willing to pay?



- Would you be willing to pay an entrance fee or donation to help maintain and improve the facilities at Panatirtha?



6. Case study

6.1 Bishwa Ijtema

6.1.1 Background

Every year, Muslims from all over the world congregate in Tongi, on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the Bishwa Ijtema (Bengali: বিশ্বা ইজতেমা, meaning Global Congregation). It's one of the world's largest nonviolent gatherings. Devotees who attend the Ijtema pray together over the course of three days while hearing to scholars recite and explain passages from the Holy Quran. Dhaka is notably short in suitable space that creates and celebrates public activity among the hustle and bustle of the overpopulated metropolis. A large portion of North Dhaka can be found in the neighborhoods of Uttara and Tongi. Turag River serves as a connection to the rest of the country's extensive and intricate river system in the delta. The vast expanse of land known as Ijtema maidan, which sits on the banks of the Turag River and hosts the second largest Islamic gathering after Hajj. Bishwa Ijtema, which occurs once a year, keeps the area busy for all of 30 days. The remaining 335 days see very little, if any, use. While still serving its periodic function during Ijtema time, this project reimagines Ijtema maidan as a year-round multipurpose public space. This wide open space and the riverbank could make up for the lack of leisure space in the surrounding neighborhood. It has the potential to become integrated into city life, where ancillary public programs can be utilized in addition to Ijtema celebrations.

6.1.2 Project Specification:

Title: Bishwa Ijtema Maidan

Location: Turag River Bank, Tongi

Organisation: Tablighi Jamaat, a Deobandi movement



Fig 42: Bishwa Ijtema Parking plan (2019)

To accommodate pedestrians and visitors, the primary thoroughfare of Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway would be blocked to vehicles during the 2019 event, as shown in the image above. This causes problems for traffic all around the country. Temporary parking for cars and buses is concentrated to the north of the site.

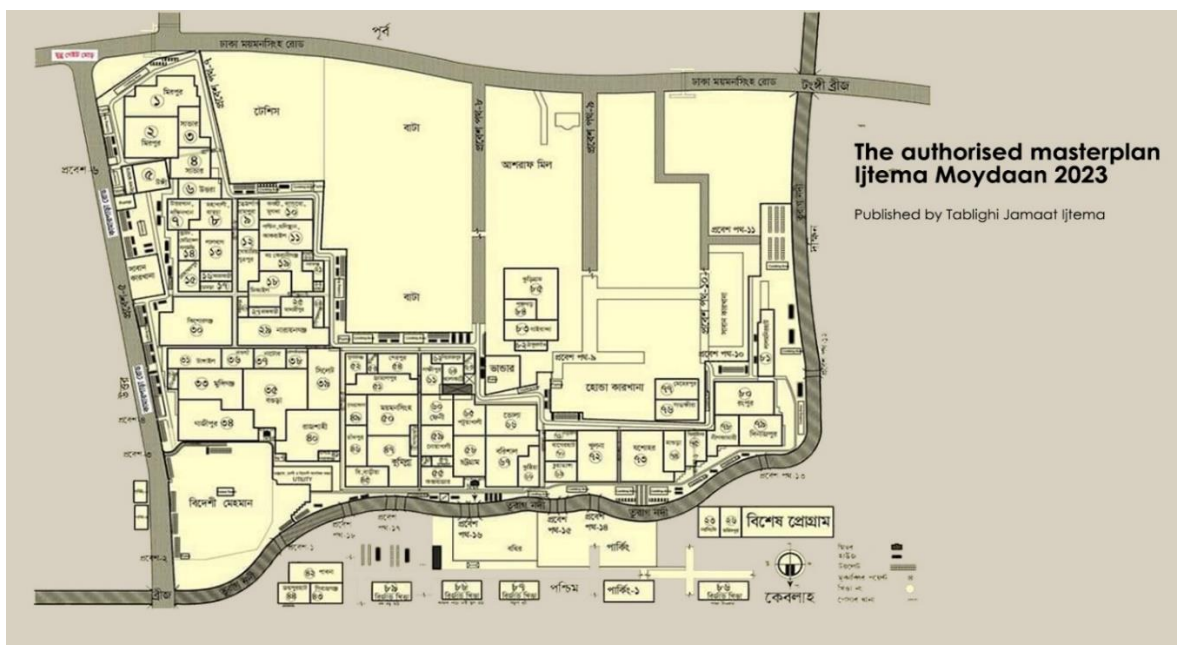


Fig 43: Authorized Masterplan Bishwa Ijtema (2023)

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
 Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur

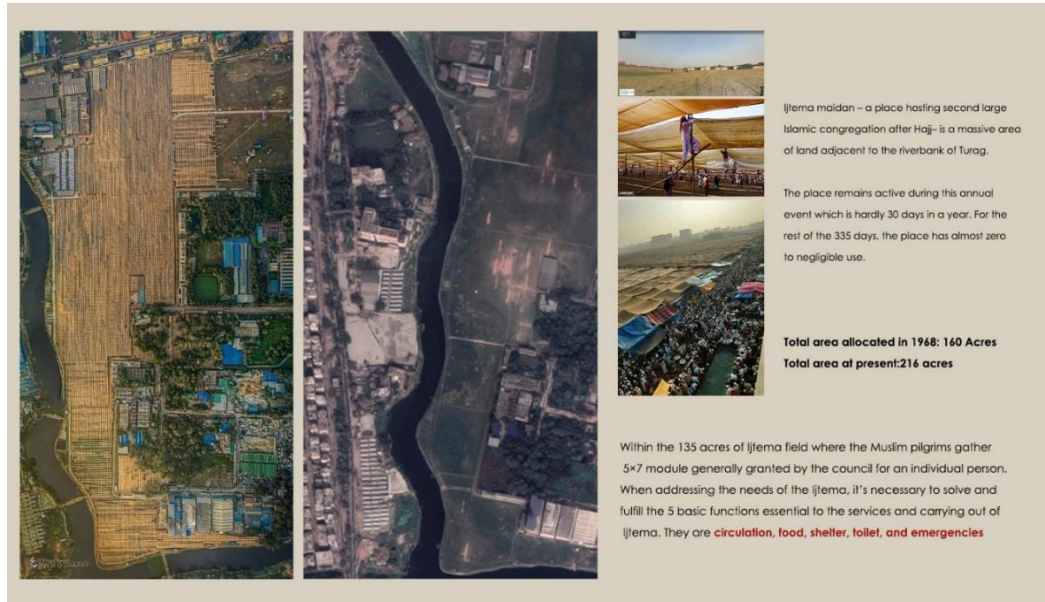


Fig 44: Before & After Site comparison Diagram of Bishwa Ijtema (satellite view)

The accompanying diagram depicts the dramatic transformation that the site undergoes every Bishwa Ijtema. The Dhaka suburb of Tongi, where the congregation is located, is more than five square kilometers in size. A massive tent has been pitched in the area thanks to funding from the government of Bangladesh. The maidan field is empty and lifeless outside of the days of the festival.

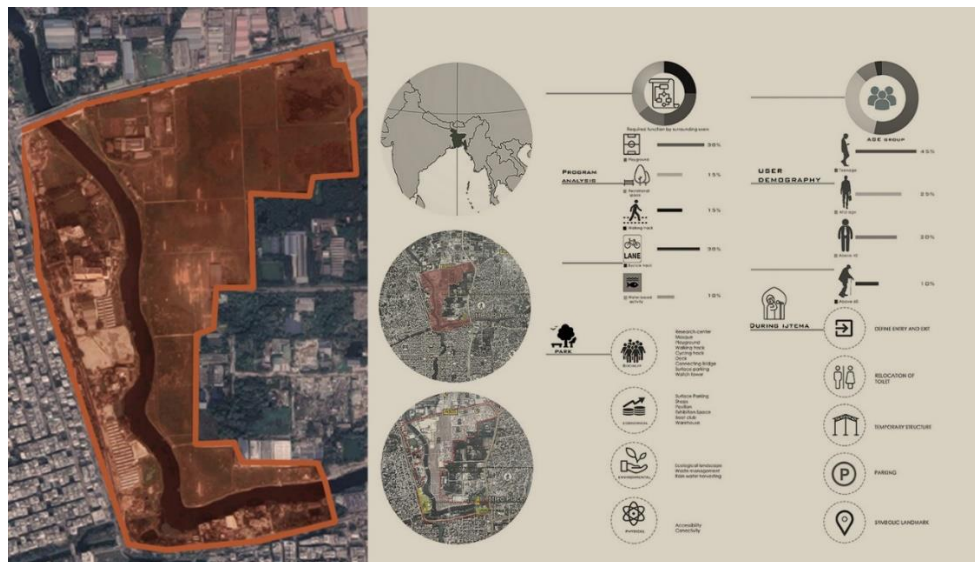


Fig 45: Demographic & strategic map (Source: Akash Kumar Das; Context BD)

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
 Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur

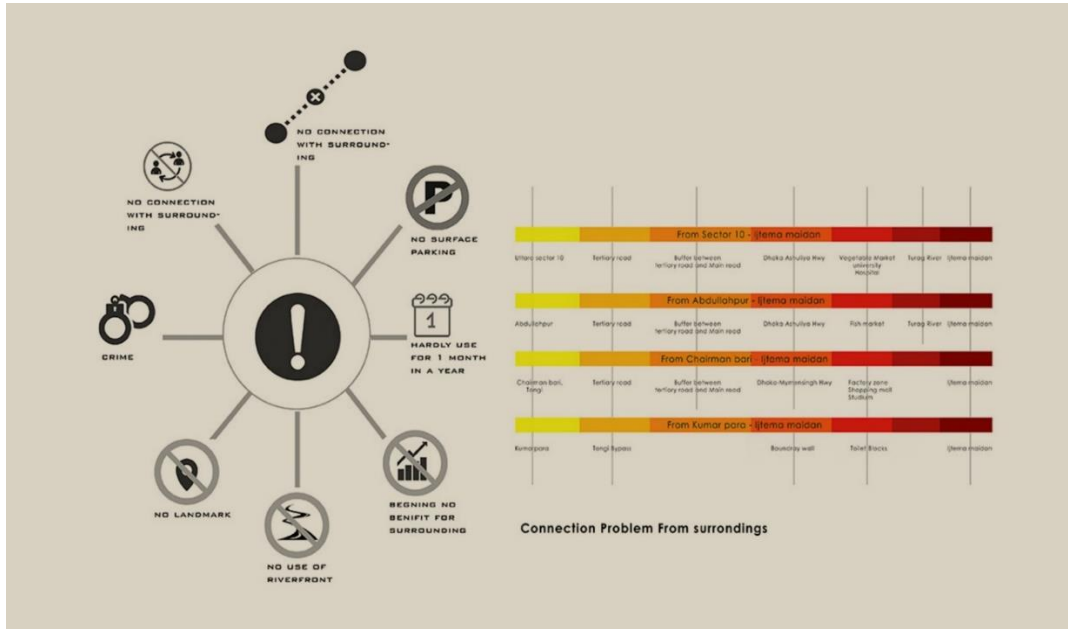


Fig 46: Connection problem of surrounding during Bishwa Ijtema (Source: Akash Kumar Das; Context BD)

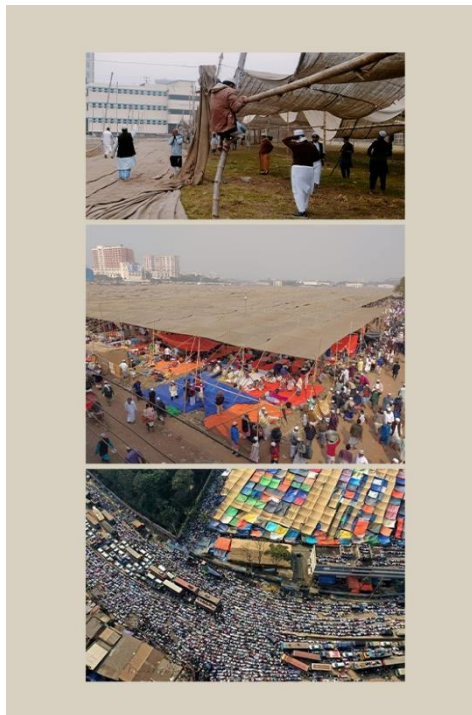


Fig 47: Module of Ijtima tent (Source: Akash Kumar Das; Context BD)

The figure above depicts the temporary accommodation settlements for the devotees with 5' X 7' modular tent.

6.2 Varanasi, India

6.2.1 Background

Mark Twain wrote of Varanasi, "Varanasi is older than history, older than tradition, even older than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together." Located in north India on the banks of the Ganges, Varanasi (sometimes spelt Benares) is also known as Kashi. This is the most sacred of India's seven holy cities. A person's soul is believed to be saved at death in this city. More than 3000 years of human history have been recorded in this city. The area around the ghats is always bustling with activity because of the large number of tourists and devotees who visit the site. Many cultural, commercial, and religious events take place on ghats. The city's landscape is shaped like Lord Shiva's trident, which comprises of three hills. These are considered holy centers. The civilization revolves around these three mounds. The region expands radially at first, then becomes a natural grid. The Mughal era and the 18th century saw significant growth in Varanasi. During colonial times, the city was planned to follow the contours of the riverbank. Varanasi has gained a sense of history, glitz, and maturity through the years. Varanasi's 5-kilometer stretch of riverfront features 84 ghats. Varanasi's new plan calls for the city to be divided up into zones based on how they will be used. (Kumari.S., 2014)

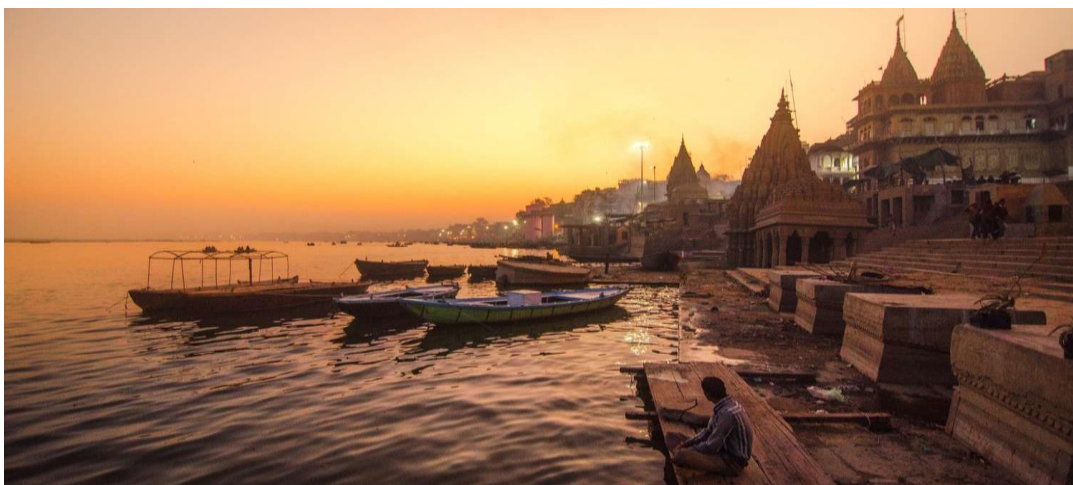


Fig 48: Image of the city Varansi, India

6.2.2 Project Specification:

Title: Spiritual Hub of Varanasi, 11th Century

Location: Uttar Pradesh, India

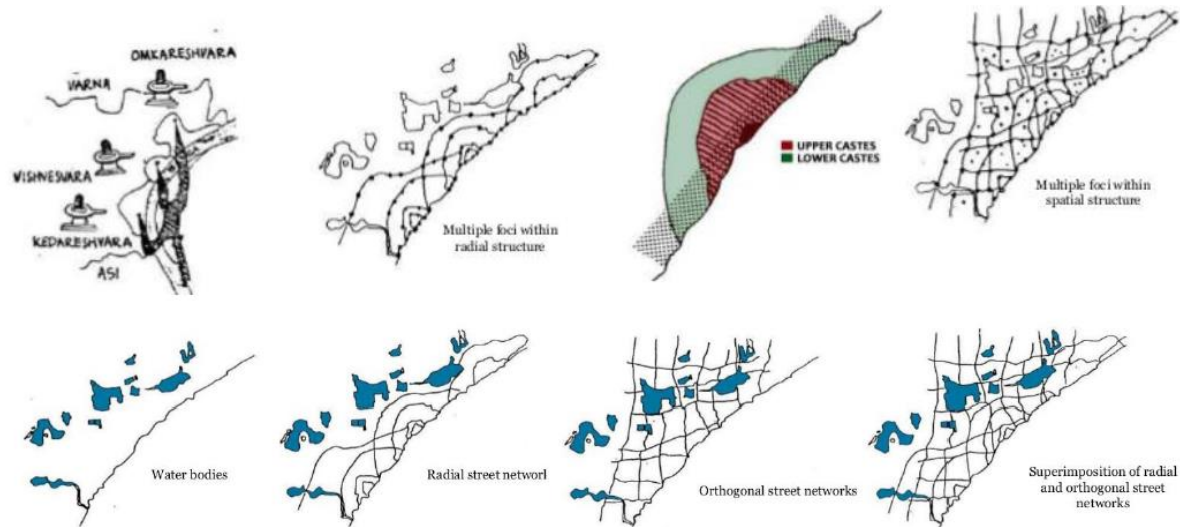


Fig 49: Varanasi Development (Source: Kumari. S 2014)

The primary lesson to be learned from the Varanasi project is the initial associations made by international tourists upon encountering this city, which predominantly revolve around religious practices, the prominent ghats beside the Ganga River, and the concept of sanctity. The act of rowing down the Ganga River and observing the picturesque ghats, particularly during the early hours of the day, offers unparalleled and distinctive encounters within the context of global travel. The cultural phenomenon known as Banaras Pana is renowned for its distinct characteristic of "self-identifiability".

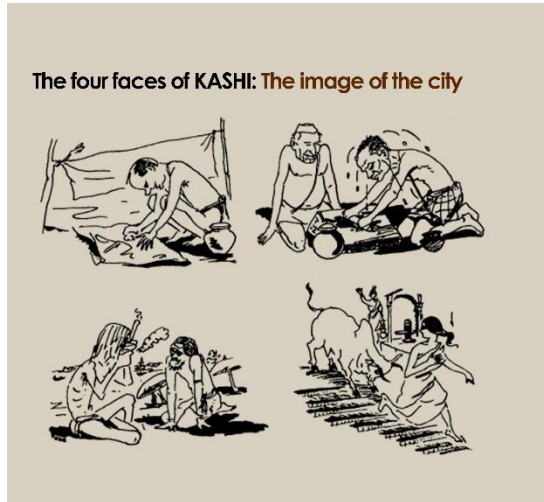


Fig 50: Faces of Varanasi

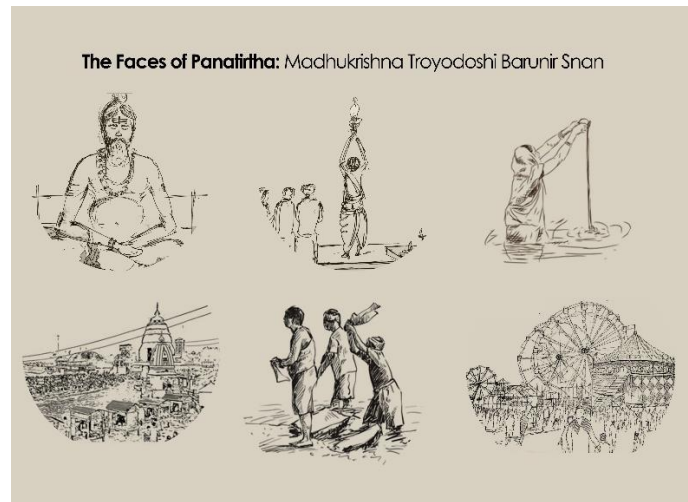


Fig 51: Faces of Pantirtha

Pantirtha has a separate developing image of its own considering the philosophical pattern of cultural behaviors, although it has negligible relationship with Varanasi in terms of architectural planning perspective. Varanasi “is free from the ubiquitous “other worldly” elements, and it emphasizes the cultivation of excellence in “this worldly” life. It is because of its disregard for the diacritical marks of the religion that it can accommodate a much wider varieties of people who are otherwise separated from one another by religion, caste, language, or region. This “reality culture” of Kashi also overlooks many of the traditional social values which are bred in the bones of narrow sectarianism, and it presents a certain style of life which is abhorrent to both orthodox Hindus and Muslim” (Saraswati 1975: 52-53)

6.3 Dead Sea Development Zone:

6.3.1 Background

The Dead Sea in Jordan is the site of this undertaking. Sweimeh Village serves as the hub of this 40-square-kilometer area that stretches along the Dead Sea's northern and eastern shores. It's an objective and a strategy for developing a competitive, prosperous, and long-term tourist economy.

The concept strikes a good balance between building up and protecting the area. The steep Wadi lines and the surrounding Tamarisk grove provide the area with its distinctive character and serve as important ecological assets.



Fig 52: Dead Sea Development zone site

6.3.2 Project Specifications

Project Title: Dead Sea Development Zone Masterplan

Location: Dead Sea, Jordan

Services: Planning and Urban design, Architecture and landscape design

Client: Jordan development zones company

Architects: Sasaki Associates

6.3.3 Design Approach

In order to determine what property was available for strategic interventions, the master planners first determined what land was privately owned, what land was saved, and what land was eventually useable. The public lands were located in a prime location, close to the northern coast and the bypass route. The private lands of Sweimeh are divided into two primary development regions, with the village of Sweimeh located in between them. Sweimeh is transported to the Dead Sea in this manner. The proposed public beach is located at the end of the bypass road that has

been extended to the Dead Sea's activity zone. The proposed ecological park, a Tamarisk thicket adjacent to the coast, would feature a public beach. The shoreline immediately in front of the wadis is largely taken up by preexisting private properties, including seaside resorts and private beaches. To break up the monotony and provide the public access to that area as well, an activity zone has been established. The shore's nodes of activity provide vantage points of the water, too, bringing the ocean to the attention of the general people.

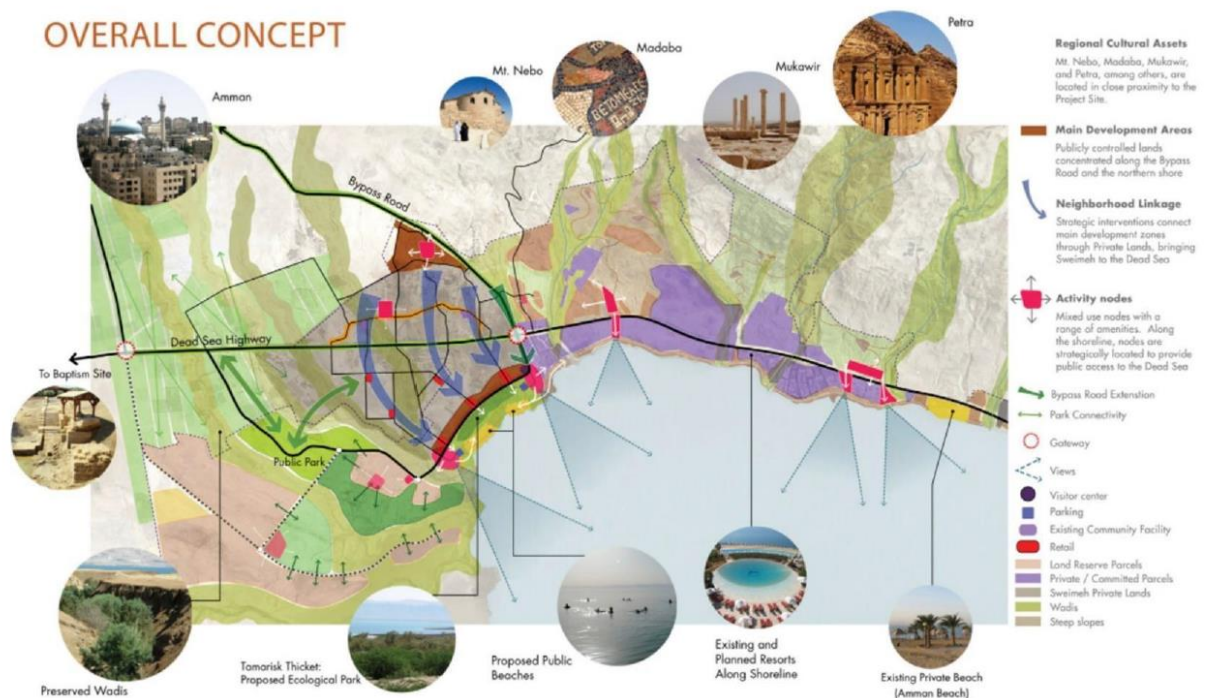


Fig 53: Overall concept (Source: Sasaki associates)

6.3.4 Topographical comprehension

Dead Sea nature is unique and complex. Jordan and other alluvial rivers feed the northern half of the sea. The eastern Dead Sea quickly transforms from beach to stony bluff with sharp wadis. Thus, landscape knowledge is essential before design or preservation. The landscape system was designed to preserve it. The event locations were carefully selected to ensure that they would not obstruct any waterways.

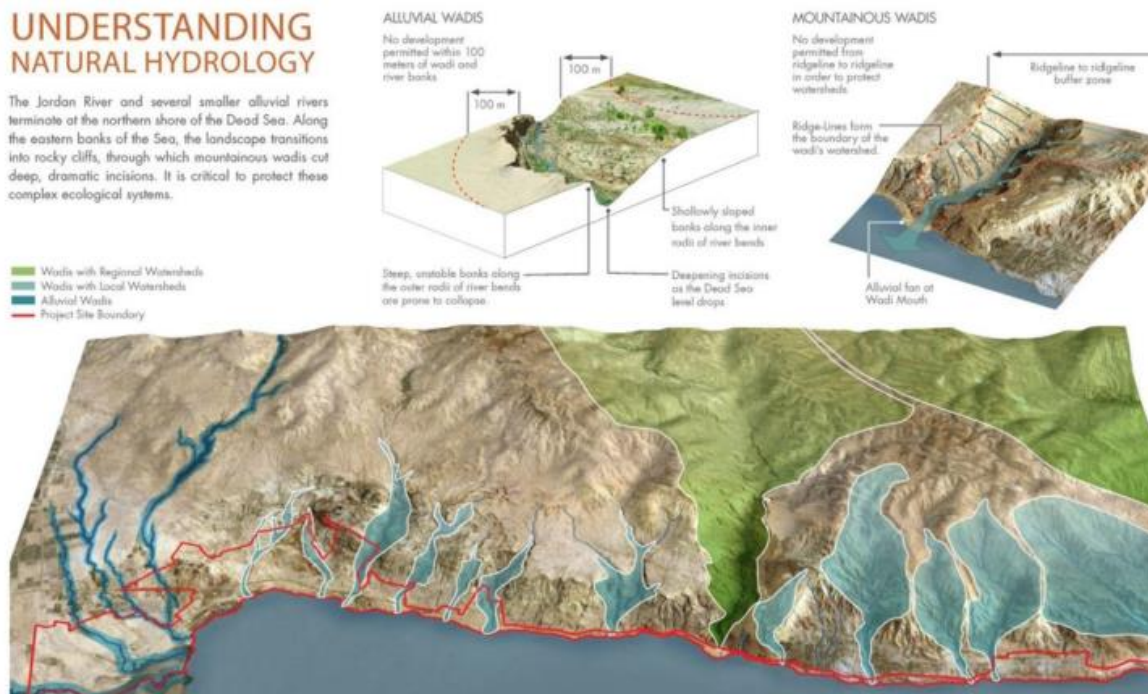


Fig 54: Natural Hydrology of the site (Sasaki Associates)

6.3.5 Integrated Conceptualization for the Tamarisk Area

As things now stand, it is clear that the settlement of Sweimeh is not directly connected to the Dead Sea. Neighbourhood linkages have been brought through the private lands of the village towards the dead sea, as shown in the detailed conceptual plan for the tamarisk region and the Sweimeh village, making the sea more permeable and open to the public. To better connect the highway's entrance with the undeveloped territory separating the commercial and tamarisk zones, the bypass route has been extended.

Along the spine of mixed use that links the Sweimeh village's community facilities, many mixed-use nodes have been established. The village's mixed-use character has been shifted towards the Dead Sea, opening up communication between the two.

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
 Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur

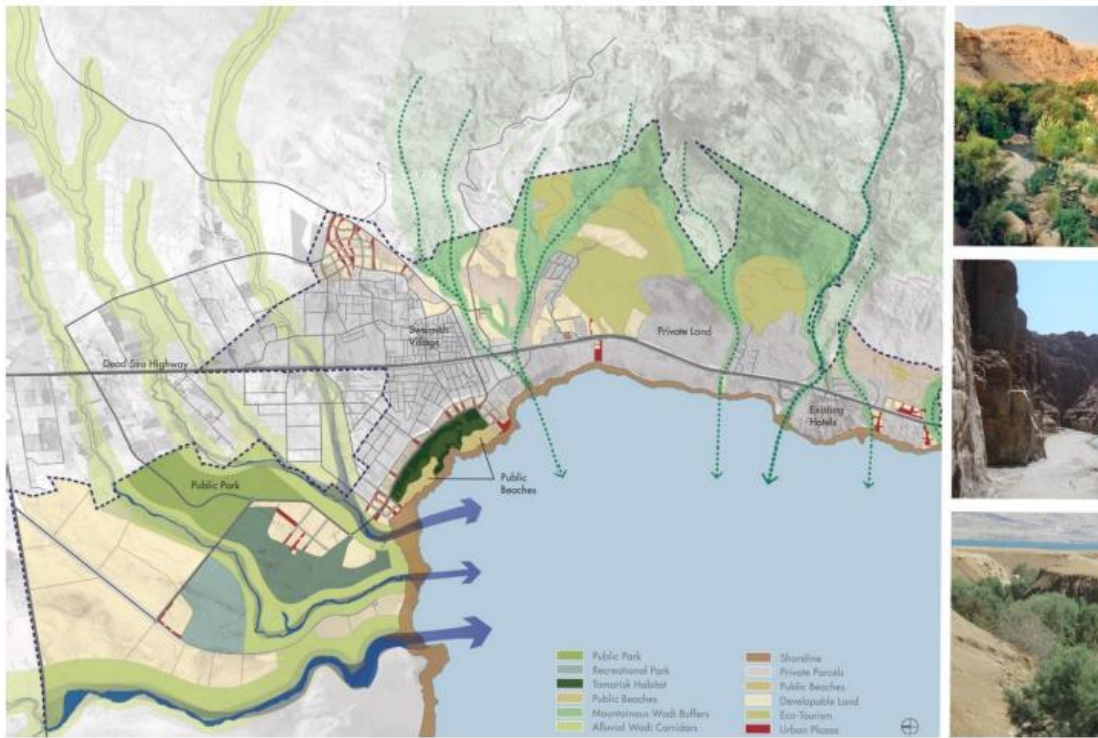


Fig 55: Proposed landscape systems and connectivity (Source: Sasaki Associates)



Fig 56: Detailed concept of the Sweimeh village linkage (Source: Archdaily)

6.3.6 Eastern Shore detailed Conceptual Plan

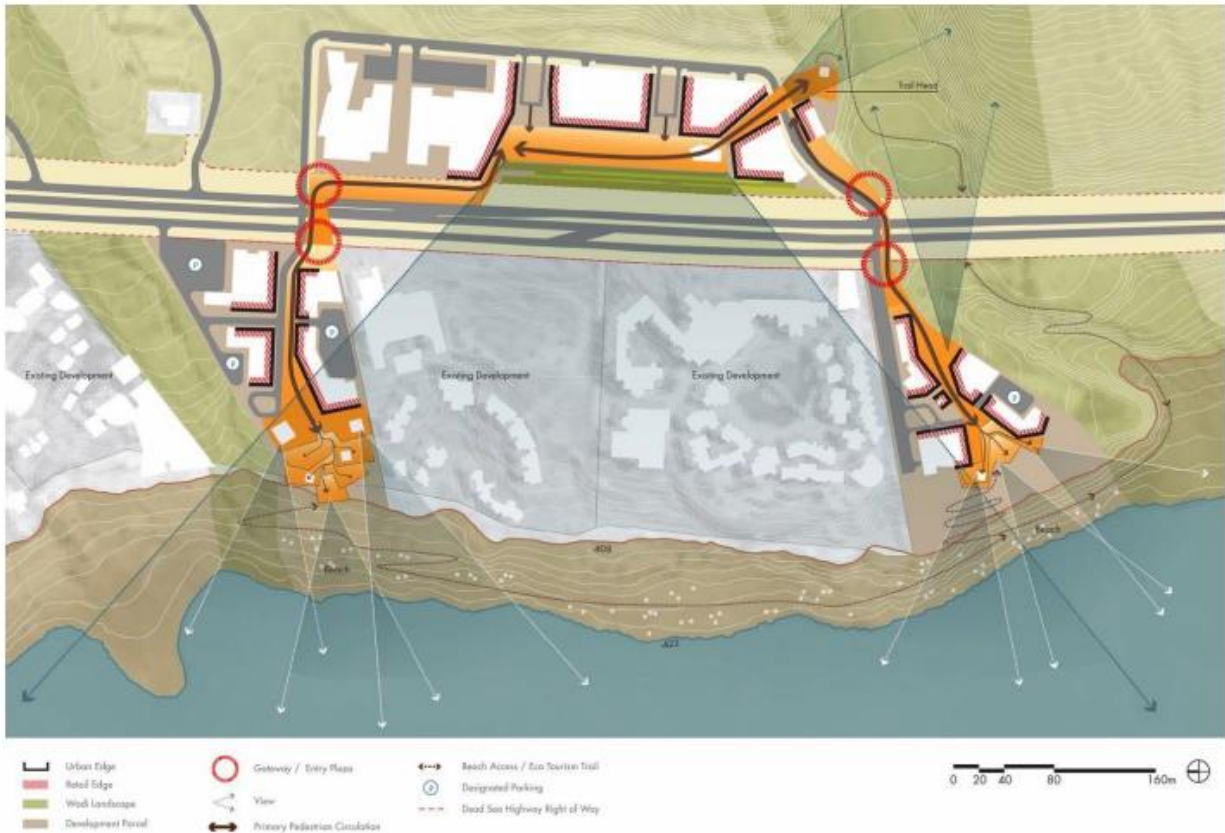


Fig 57: Linkages to the sea showing public accessibility (source: Sasaki Associates)

Beyond the Wadi cliffs on the eastern coast of the Dead Sea are privately owned resorts and beaches. Strategic actions to open up public sea access across privately owned areas are depicted in the figure below.

Most of the development, including a boutique hotel, shops, apartments, and a public plaza, will take place on the eastern side of the highway, on the upper plateau. Having these uses extend somewhat beyond the boundaries of the current development on each side has increased beach access. Cascading terraces with cafes and kiosks line the waterfront on the Wadi side. What was once private property (the east coastline of the dead sea) is now open to the public, allowing visitors an up-close experience of the Wadi cliff edge and breathtaking views of the sea below.

7. Functional Analysis and Program Development

7.1 Rationale of the program: Neo- Contextualism

The site's Programmatic Requirements were compiled following exhaustive research into two possible future states for the site following the philosophy of Neo- contextualism. There are two distinct tourist seasons in Bengal: the Hindu pilgrimage season in the Bengali month of Falgun for Baruni Snan on Madhu Krishna Trayodashi, and the rest of the year, when the focus is on ecotourism for the tourists, and local community to observe regular cultural/ religious festivities. Based on the present circumstances, a comprehensive strategy has been developed (Fig: 52) considering the shared characteristics of the two riverbanks spanning from Advaita Bari to Iskon Temple. It is evident that upon the completion of the bridge in 2024, there will be significant changes in the means by which individuals can approach the site. Consequently, the prominence of the Advaita bari location may diminish in comparison to other sites, as it lacks comparable convenience.

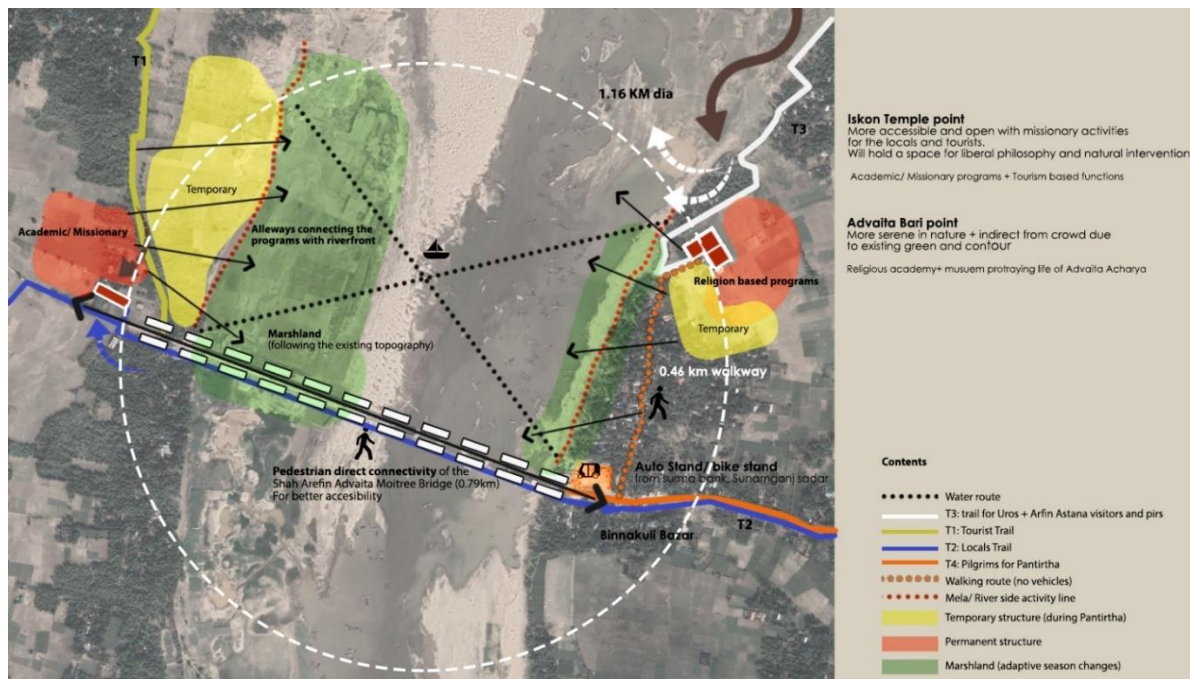
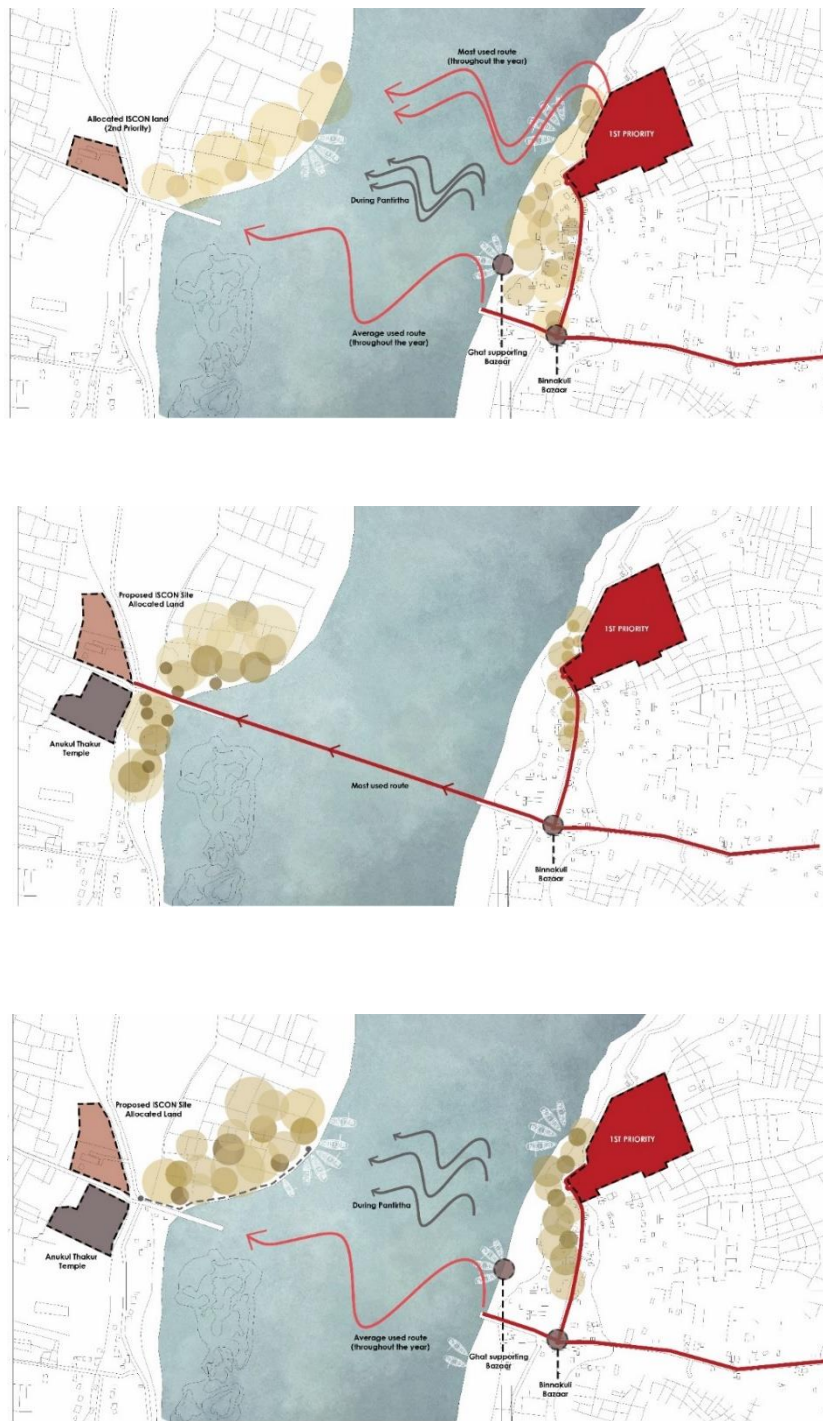


Fig 58: Analytical diagram proposing schematic planning

7.1.1 Why intervention is needed: Shift of philosophy



a) Past: Before 2017

The Iskcon temple site featured a single temple construction. The mobility and migration of pilgrims endured along both sides of the river. Advaita Bari had significance and held greater priority because to its historical association with the foundation of philosophy.

b) Present: 2017 till date

The site of the Iskcon temple has been expanded by the allotment of land by the government authority. Thus, the facilities and future development plan to construct dorms and learning centers are introduced and are in process. The moveability of people shifted towards Iskcon more than Advaita Bari. At the same time, another land had been allocated for Anukul Thakur temple, making the west bank work as a spiritual hub: a living competition for the site.

c) Future:

After the anticipated completion of the bridge in 2024, it is expected that there will be increased accessibility for individuals to travel straight from Binnakuli Bazar to the Iskcon temple due to its strategic placement at the node. The Advaita Bari may potentially compromise its philosophical principles due to the allure of superior amenities offered by alternative locations.

Fig 59: Shift of philosophy: comparative study of a) past, b)present, c)future

7.1.2 Connecting trails to derivation of potential users

The resulting T1, T2, and T3 have been obtained based on the accessibility mapping discussed in section 4.3 and the potential tourist trail outlined in section 4.8. The target groups and user stakeholders have been identified as a result. The potential user group derived are: pilgrims and monks, tourist and local community.

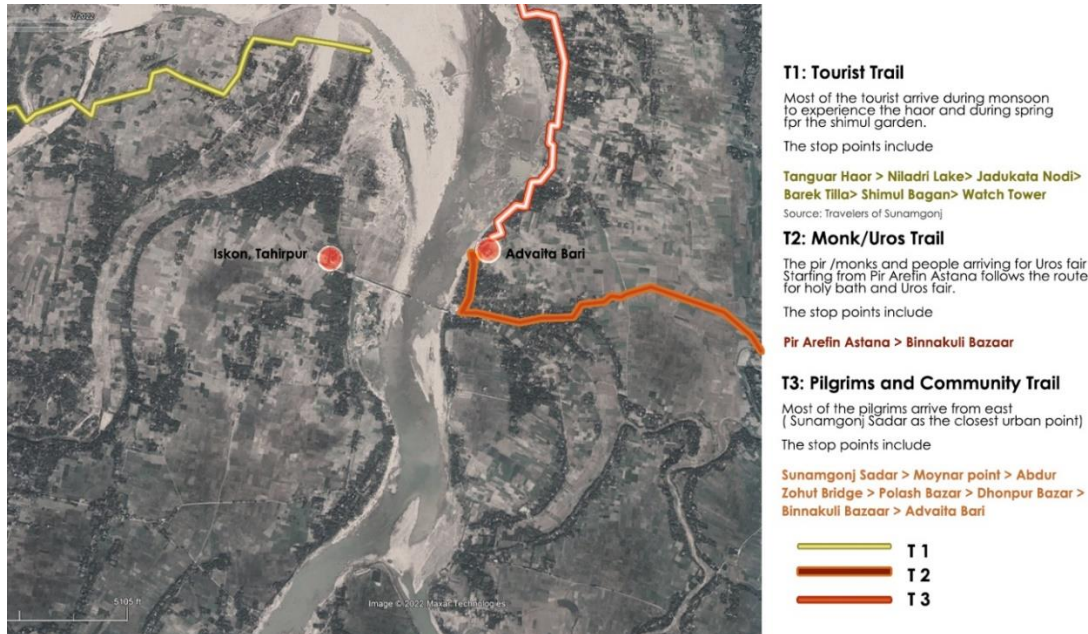


Fig 60: Trails connected to the Pantirtha site (T1, T2, T3)

7.1.3 Prediction of probable routes from character of sprawling (2017-2023)

Since 2017, there has been a noticeable decrease in the amount of agricultural land, specifically in relation to section 4.4. This reduction is attributed to the increasing demand for land to accommodate homesteads and other forms of land use. This trend is evident through the observed phenomenon of urban sprawl during the past five years. This denotes the potential pathways that can be interconnected throughout the property, extending from the community to the river. The location may serve as the neighborhood's space median.

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
 Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur

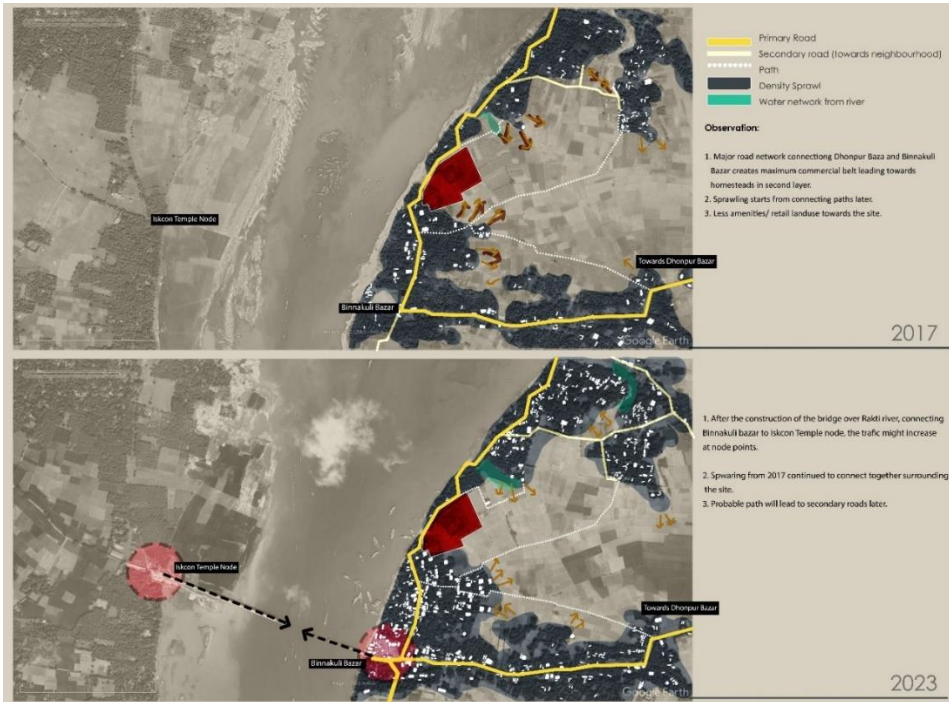


Fig 61: Prediction of probable routes from neighborhood from character of sprawling



Fig 62: Probable routes connecting neighborhood to site

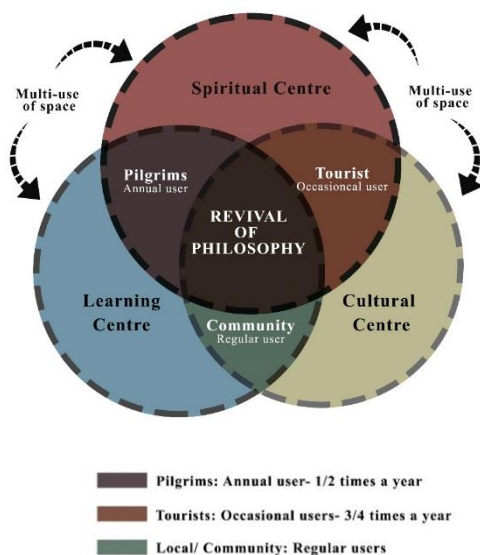
7.2 Potential users: Target group factors

The connecting trail, T1, T2, T3 (Fig: 54) has identified a specific target group of potential users. This group is deemed suitable for revitalizing the concept of the trail system throughout the year by accommodating various requirements and demands through the multi-use of space.



Fig 63: Potential user target group

7.3 Program Formulation



The objective of the program formulation is to rejuvenate the space consistently throughout the year. The implementation of an on-site route within the neighborhood will have a significant effect on the local community, as it will provide them with regular access to and interaction with the site. Tourists and pilgrims represent both sporadic and regular users. The utilization of space in cultural and learning centers would be flexible and cater to the specific requirements of annual users.

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur

Program Formulation			
Programs	Qty	Sqft per Qty	Area
Spiritual Centre			
Shiva Temple + Mandapa	1	6221	6221
Advaita Complex	1		
Panchatattva Complex + Prasad Prangan	1	6049	6049
Vishnu Temple	1	387	387
Visual Stores	5	180	900
Storage + locker	1	785	785
Kirtan Prangan	1	2712	2712
Cultural Centre/ Recreation			
Restaurant	1	3992	3992
Storage supporting restaurant	2	688	1376
Exhibition Space	2	2131	4262
Museum	1	9830	9830
Souvenir shop	2	1265	2530
Book Store	1	688	688
Visual stores	11	150	1650
Book café	1	688	688
Storage	1	688	688
Toilet (Male 3 + Female 3+ diff 1)	1	731	731
Learning Centre			
Library	1	3164	3164
Publication Room	1	1205	1205
Training Centre	3	688	2064
Classrooms	4	602	2408
Students Locker			
Storage	1	368	368
Toilet (Male 3 + Female 3+ diff 1)	1	731	731
Accomodation			
Guest			
Dorm (male)-per capacity avg - 05	4	378	1512
Family room	13	215	2795
Dorm (female)-per capacity avg-08	3	979	2937
Common Area	2	1022	2044
Toilet (5 toilet + 4 shower space)	2	512	1024
Cafeteria	1	3013	3013
Kitchen	1	1350	1350
Services	1	1350	1350
Priest + Scholars			
Common Area	1	572	572
Meditation Centre	1	1614	1614
Storage	1	495	495
Kitchen	1	839	839
Head Monk	1	296	296
Monk	2	204	408
Dorm (per capacity avg- 10)	1	992	992
Toilet (3 toilet + 4 shower space)	2	215	430
Dining Space	1	473	473
Backend Facilities			
Office (Management)	3	129	387
Security	1	172	172
Storage	1	32	32
Toilet	1	119	119
Staff Accomodation			
Female (staff- 6)	1	430	430
Male (staff-8)	1	538	538
Storage	1	40	40
Toilet (2 toilet 2 shower space)	2	208	416
Common Area	1	278	278
Services	1	964	964
Total Area			78,949
Existing area of land			276,445 sq ft

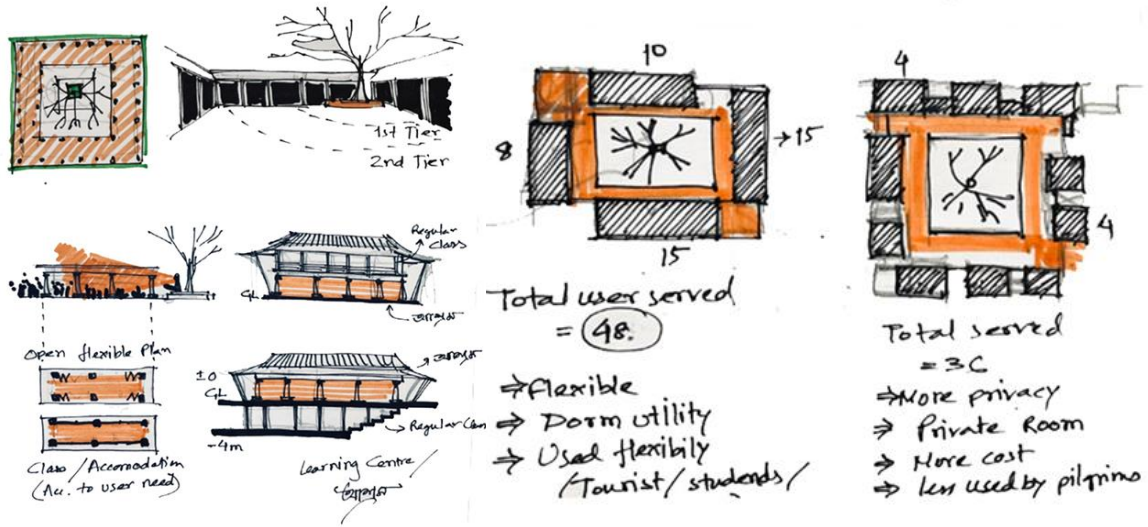


Fig 64: Multiuse of space as option

7.4 Functional Flow

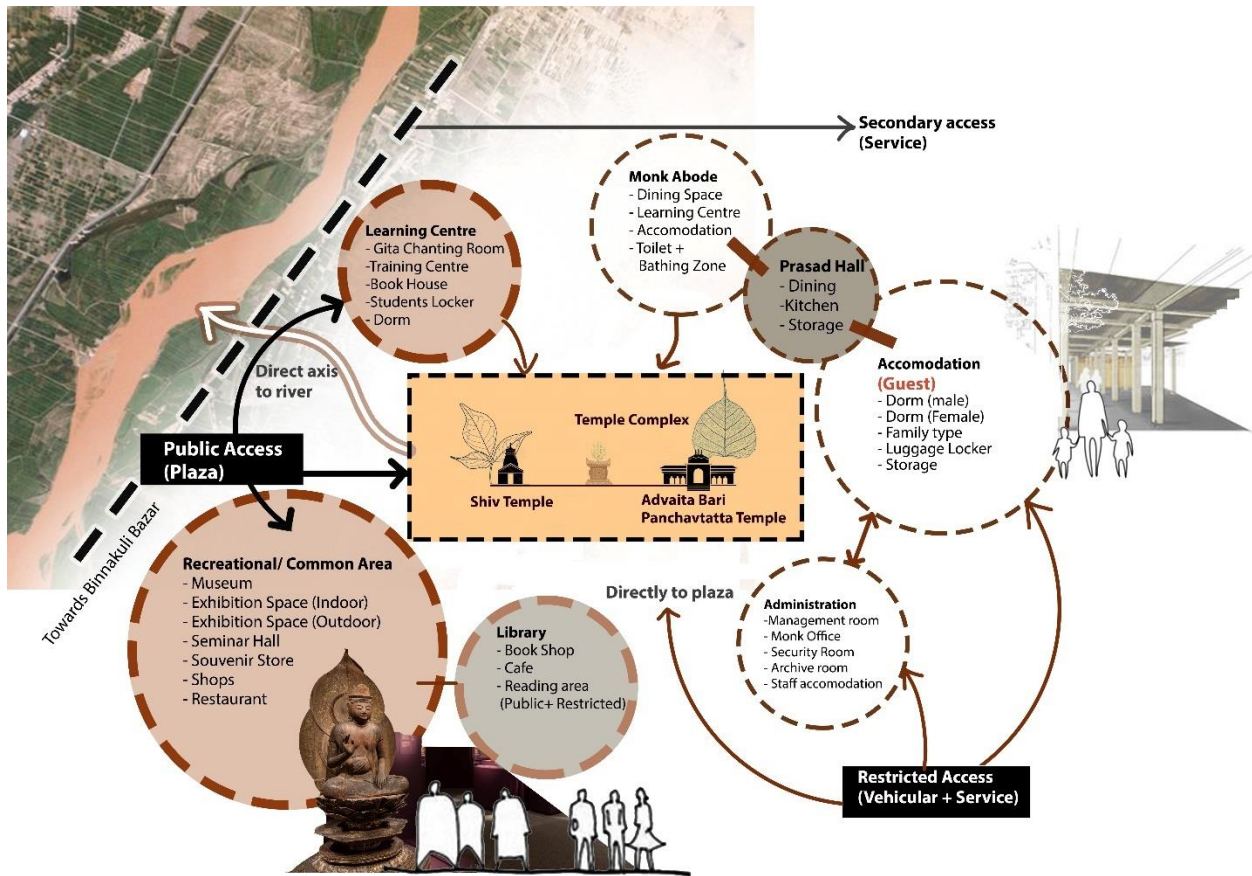


Fig 65: Bubble Diagram

With the Bel tree representing the Shiv Temple, the Tulsi tree representing Madhava for the Kirtan Prangan, and the Banyan tree for Vishnu (since Advaita Acharya is an avatar of Vishnu), the complex is organized around these three main features.

7.5 Strategy

Strategy 1: River to Complex Axis

Elevated Road to ensure River > Temple Axis
(since the existing road remains +4.5 m approx higher than the temple level.)



Strategy 2: Treat the level for riverfront landscape development

Enhance the social eye
Connect the tourist point to point with river routes
Sustainable treatment for river bank :
River bank remains partially soakable. Level rises by + 2.5 m during monsoon.
Stepped soakable marshland landscape with semi-aquatic plants which can be used through out the year.

Floating ghat connecting the water network from complex.



Strategy 3: Multipurpose use of space

Space planning to be done in a way so the same space can have multiple use.

I.e. Classrooms > Temporary accomodation during Panatirtha lithi.
Open exhibit Courtyard > Kirtaan



Fig 66: Strategy

8. Conceptual Stage and Design Development

8.1 Concept derivation

The concept has been derived respecting to the myth of the space and Advaita philosophy to bring back the old essence of the space. The concept generates the statement: Walk back in time.

The conceptual idea has two parts.

Part 01: Journey through space and time.

The first myth of the Mahabharata has been observed to have occurred earlier in the chronology, therefore leading to the elevation of the significance of the Shiva temple. The second myth of Panatirtha, which pertains to water, is introduced in a subsequent phase as a spatial encounter. Additionally, it encompasses the notion that the merging of sacred rivers originating from hills has resulted in layered formations. The underlying intention was to establish a hierarchical arrangement of functionalities and spatial configurations.

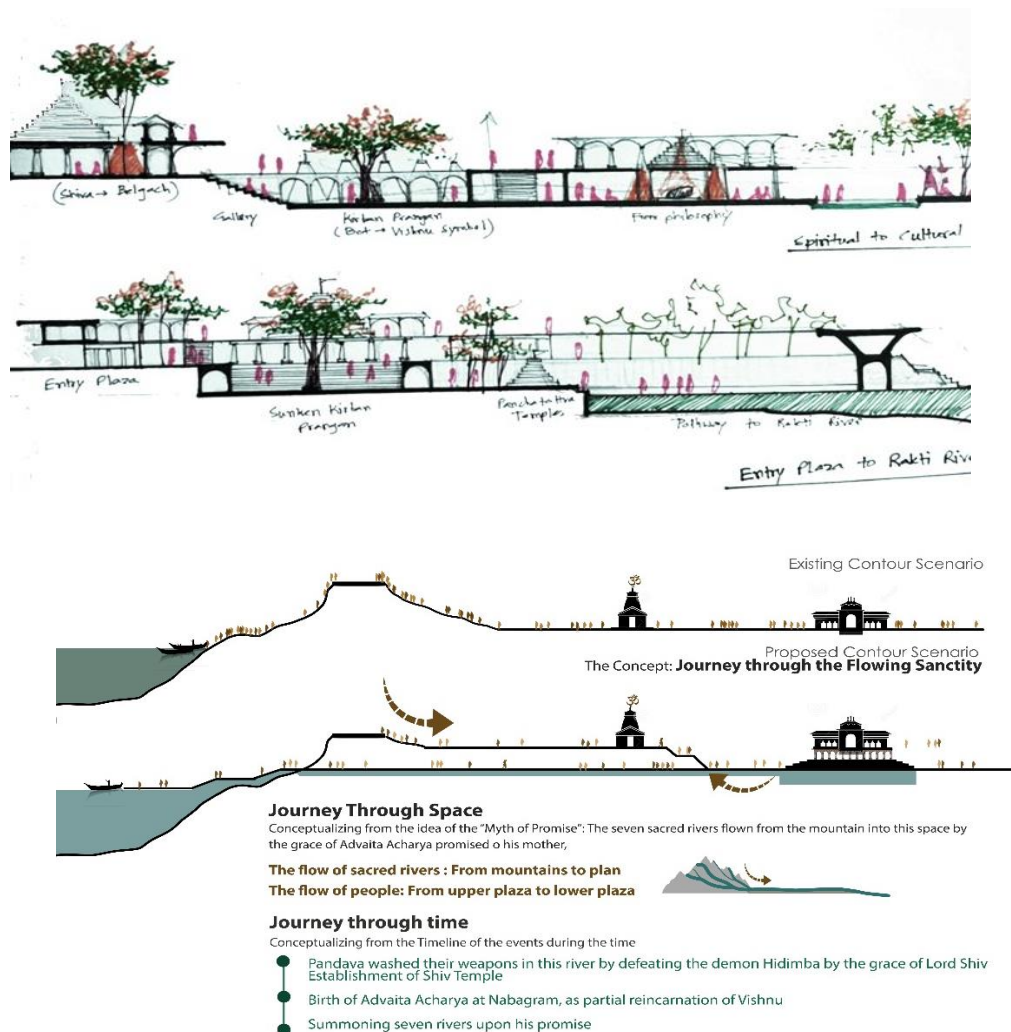


Fig 67: Concept part 01: Journey through space and time

Part 02: Nogar Kirtan- Time relapse

During the period of Advaita Acharya's existence, he dedicated himself to imparting wisdom and conveying his message to the community. During that period, the ideology was passed on to the masses through the utilization of kirtan and spiritual mystical music. At the moment, the program has been designed in a manner that encourages individuals to congregate at Advaita Acharya's place of birth in order to collectively commemorate the origins of the idea. This is the manner in which individuals will return back to the philosophy. Advaita Vedanta believed that all is one.

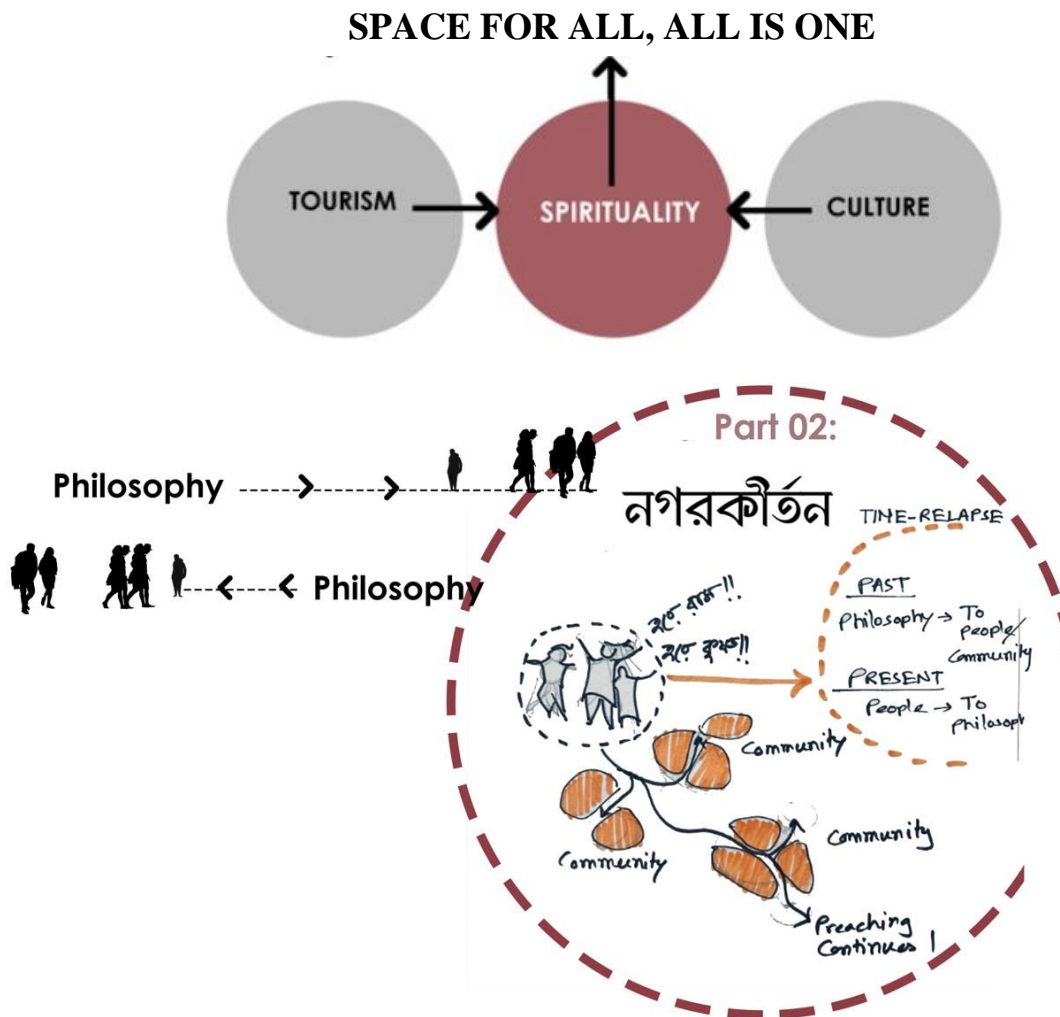
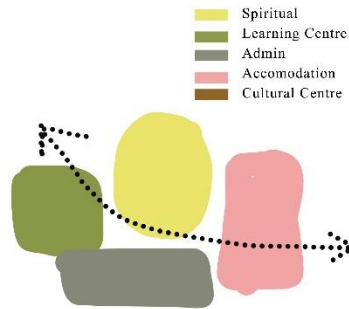


Fig 68: Concept part 02: Nogar-Kirtan- Time lapse

8.2 Preliminary design Development phase

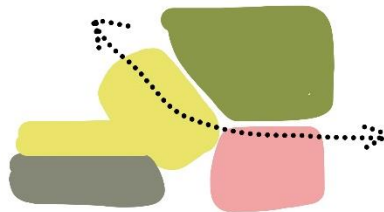
a) Development phase 01

No cultural center was considered. The spiritual center and other amenities were strategically positioned in two distinct orientations.



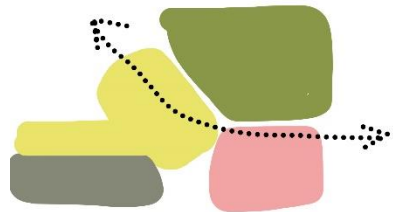
b) Development phase 02

The allocation of accommodation area was interchanged, resulting in a significant portion being designated for spiritual purposes and a fairground.



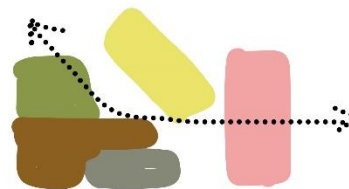
c) Development phase 03

An attempt to establish permeability and openness in the form was undertaken.



d) Development phase 04

The consideration of the cultural center and learning spaces as multi-use facilities was undertaken. The cultural mass was situated at a higher elevation.



e) Development phase 05

The simplification and interlocking of mass were further enhanced based on the progress made in the previous phase.

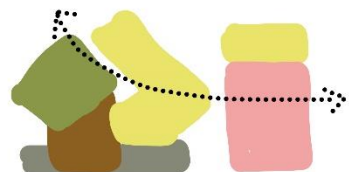


Fig 69: Preliminary design development phase

8.3 Schematic Diagram Through Concept

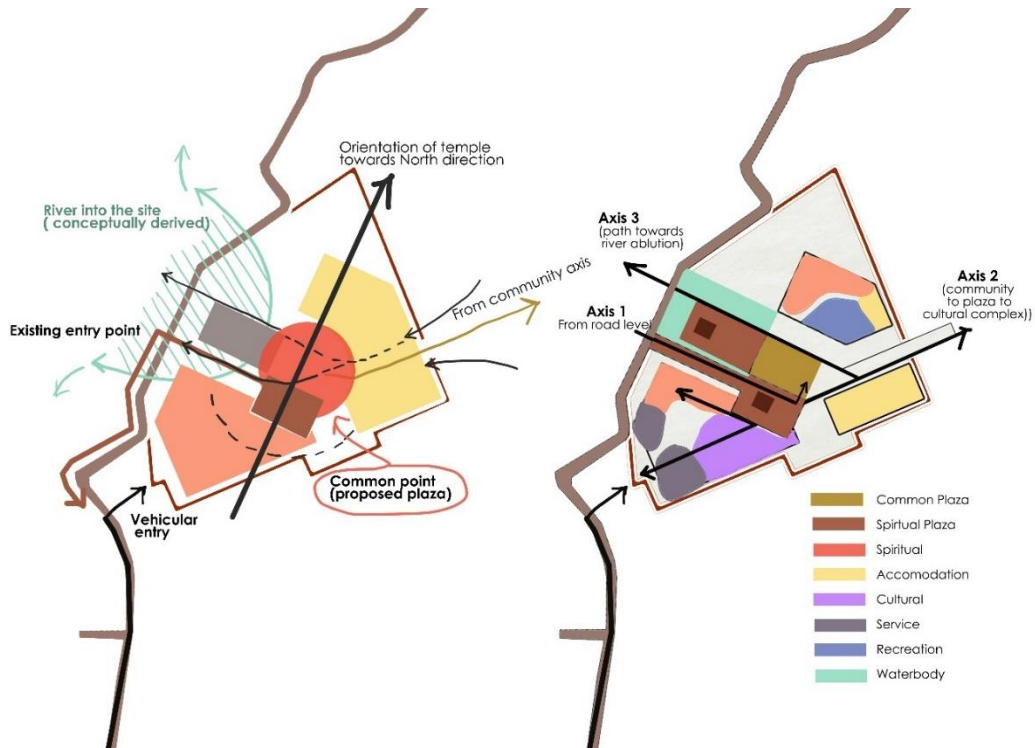


Fig 70: Schematic plan

8.4 Form Development

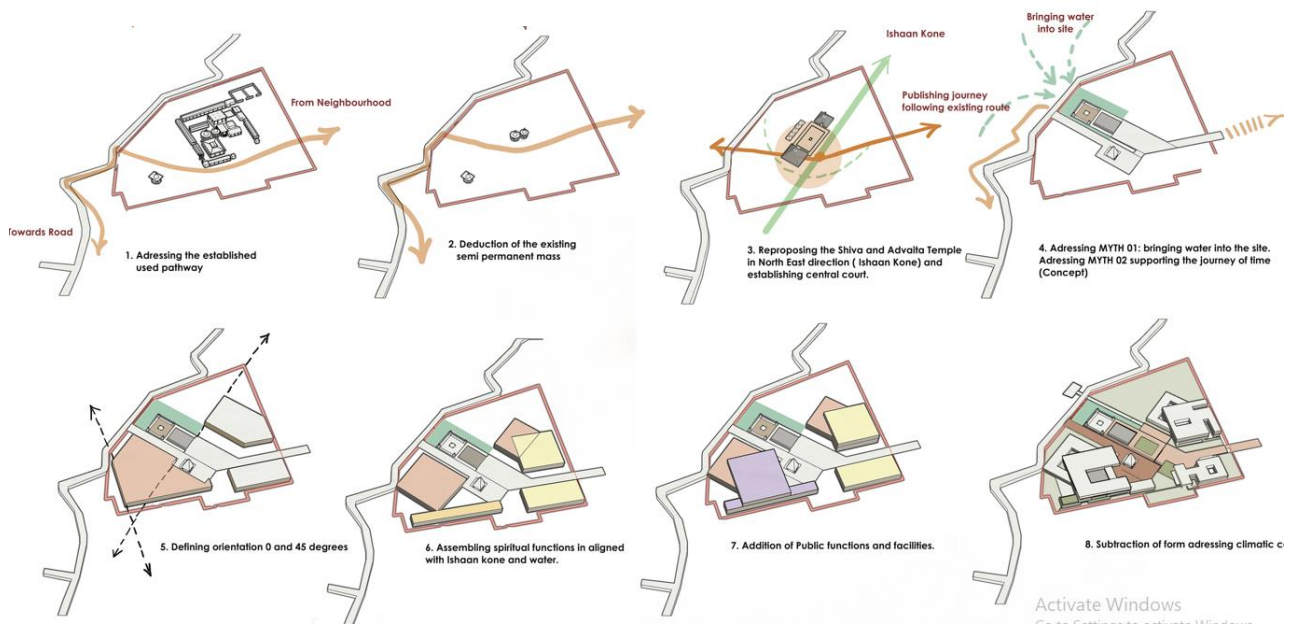


Fig 71: Form Development following concept

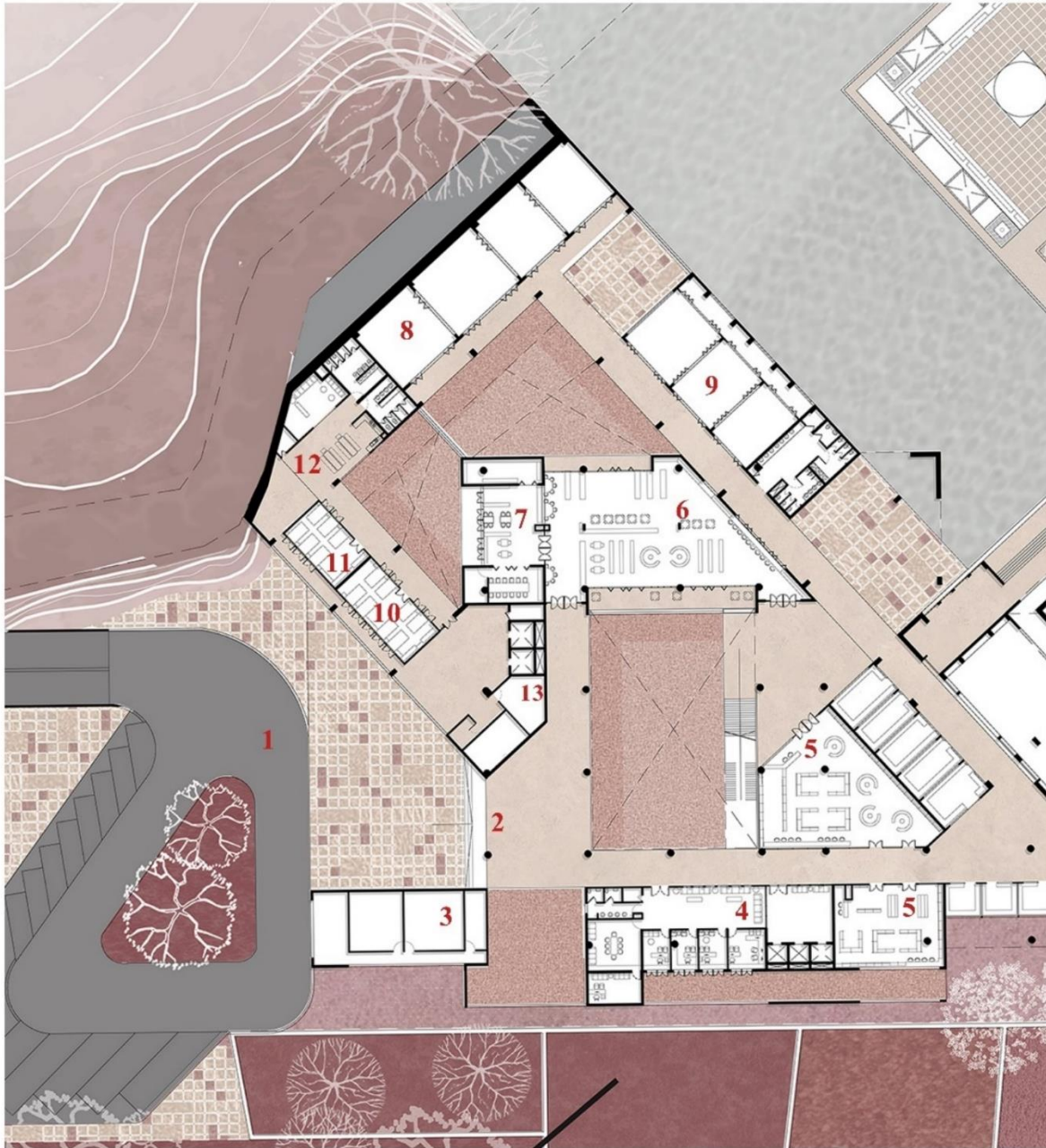
8.5 Design Intervention

8.5.1 Masterplan



The road elevation is 4.5 meters above the site, a characteristic that has been identified as advantageous. The primary access point originates from the road level and proceeds via the initial level of the edifices, guiding the progression towards the ground level where the spiritual court is situated. The placement of the cultural centre on the top plaza has been carefully executed so as to ensure minimal disruption to the spiritual centre.

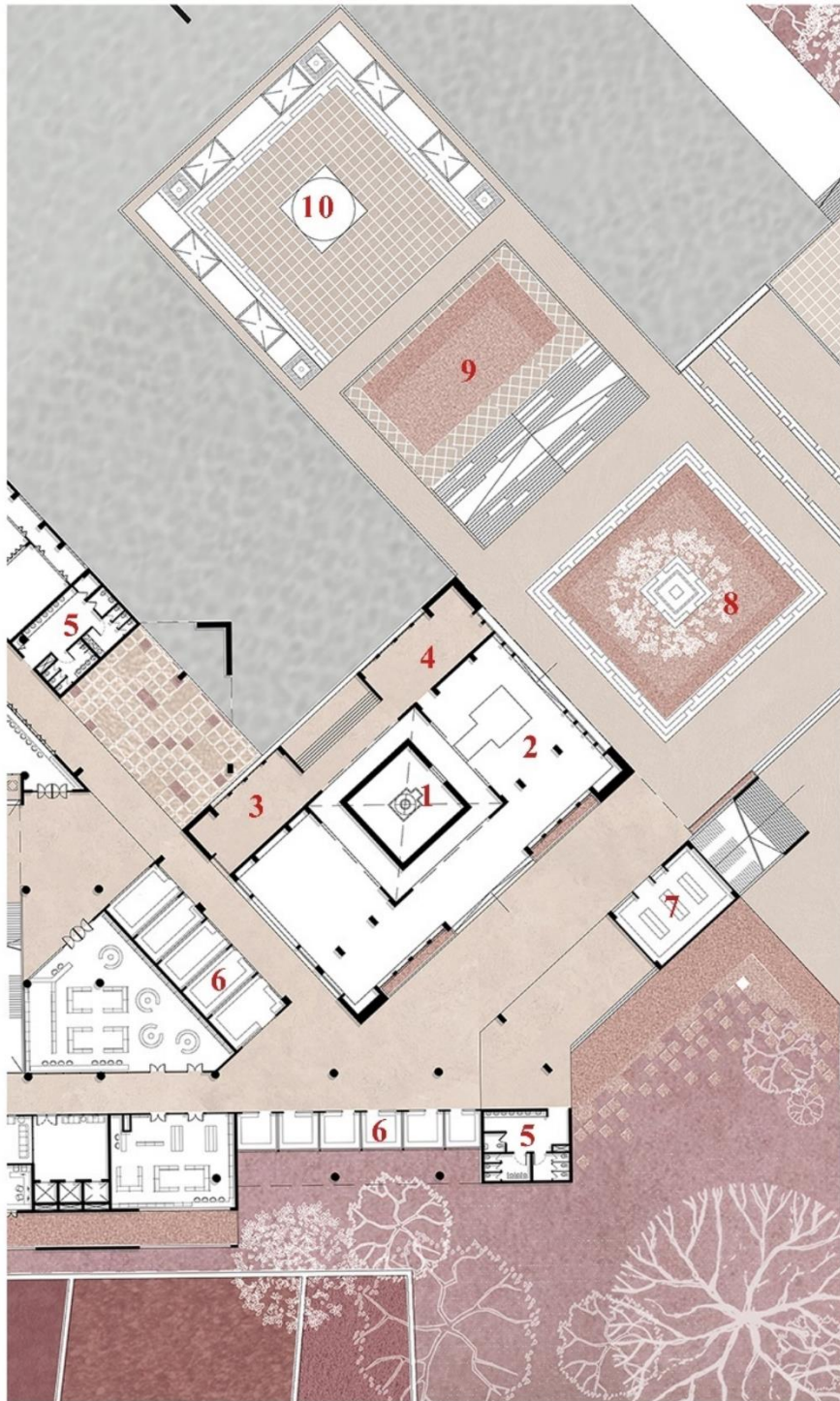
Masterplan Blow-up 01



- 1. Vehicular Drop-Off
- 2. Secondary entry in -4500 m
- 3. Services
- 4. Administration
- 5. Souvenir Store
- 6. Library
- 7. Publication house
- 8. Classrooms
- 9. Training rooms
- 10. Staff dorm (M)
- 11. Staff dorm (F)
- 12. Common area + Amenities
- 13. Storage (restaurant)



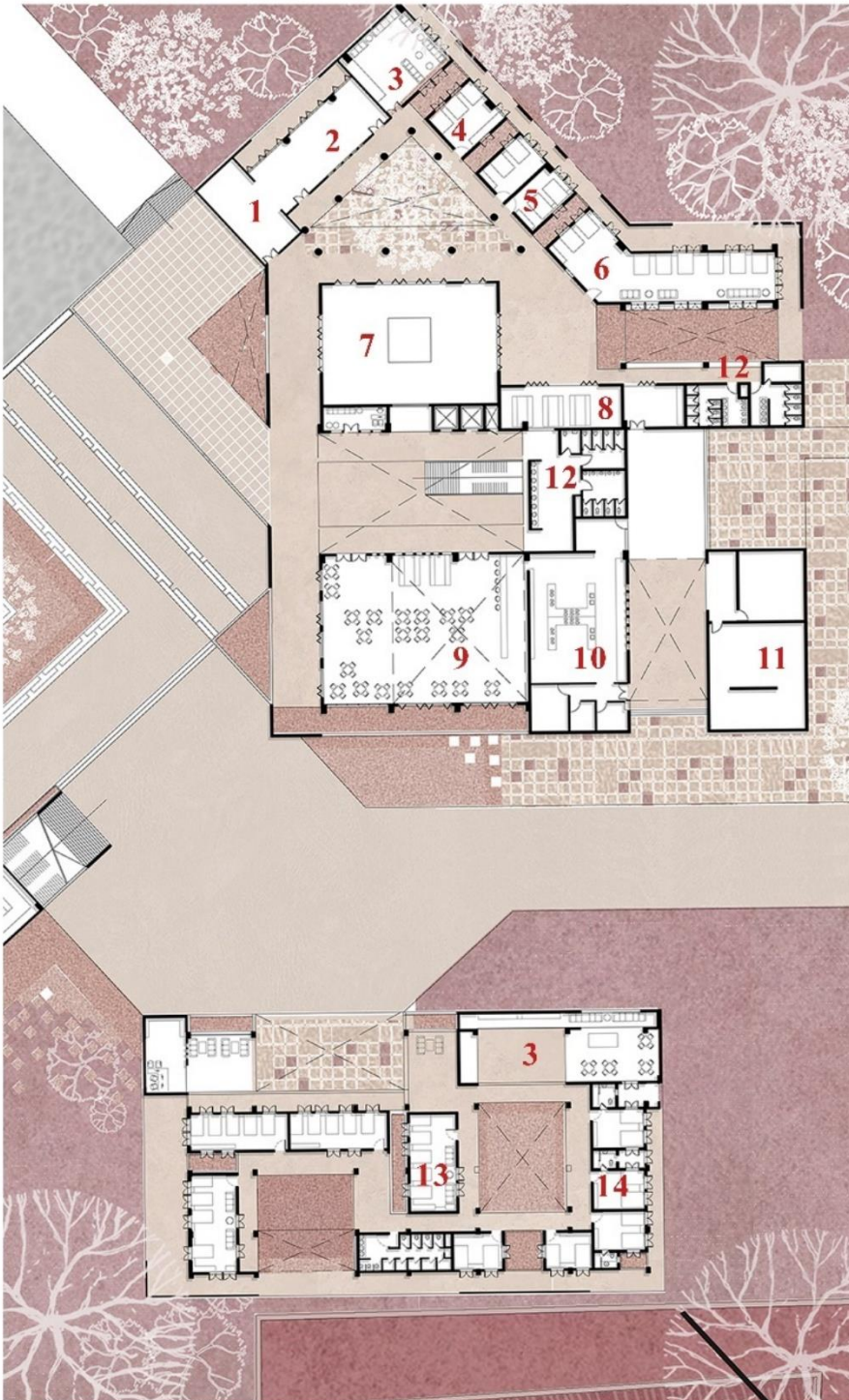
Masterplan Blow-up 02



1. Shiva Temple
2. Mandapa
3. Temple supporting amnities
4. Ghat
5. Toilet
6. Visual stores
7. Storage (shoes/belongings)
8. Central court
9. Kirtan Prangan (at -8000m)
10. Advaita Acharya complex

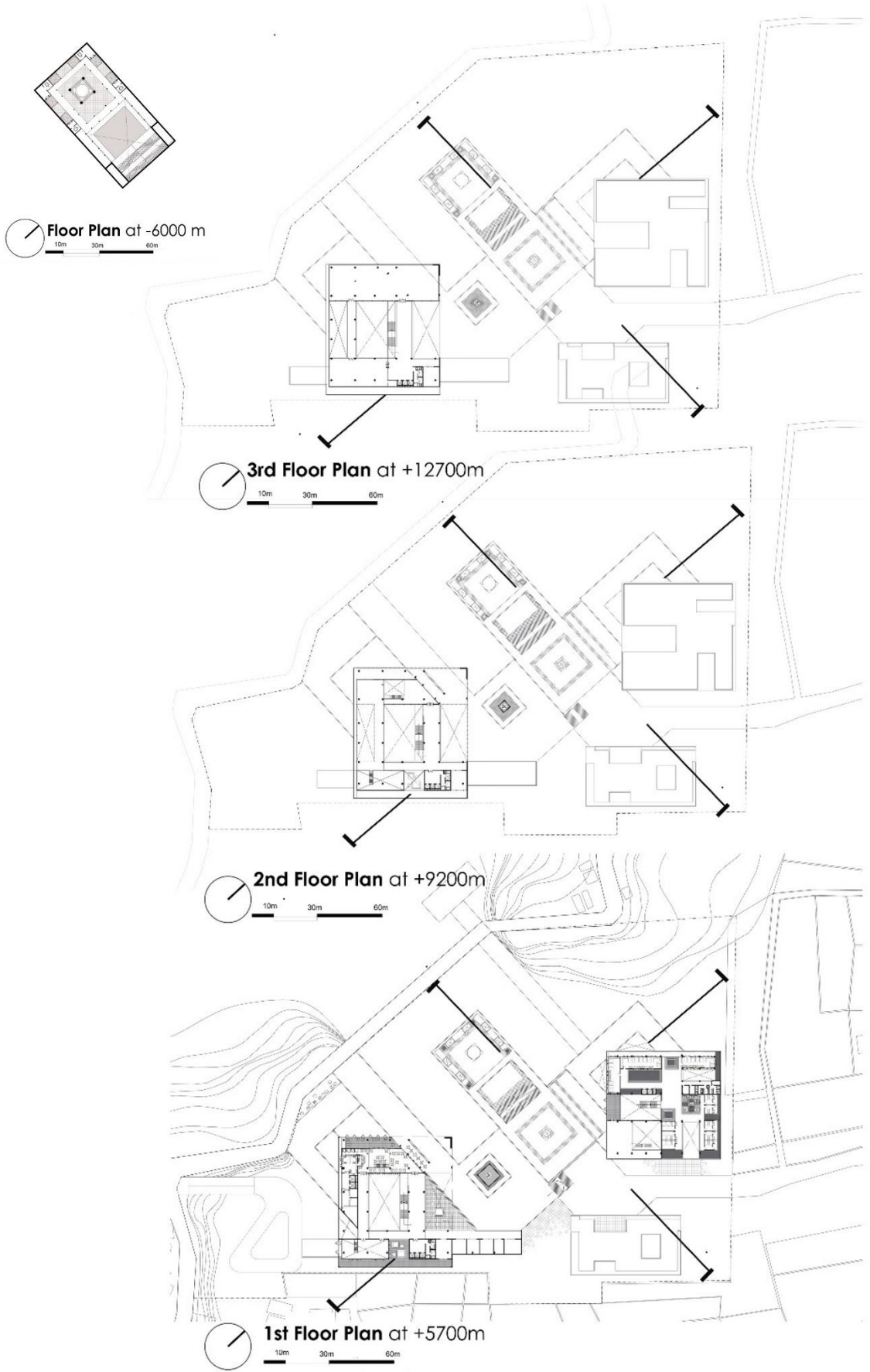


Masterplan Blow-up 03



- 1. Storage
- 2. Kitchen (Spiritual)
- 3. Common Area
- 4. High priest accomodation
- 5. Priest accomodation
- 6. Scholar dorm
- 7. Meditation Centre
- 8. ining space
- 9. Cafeteria
- 10. Kitchen + storage
- 11. Service
- 12. Toilet
- 13. Accomodation (dorm)-M
- 14. Family type accomodation

Rejuvenating the Flowing Sanctity of Panatirtha
Enhancing the natural and cultural tourism of Panatirtha, Tahirpur



8.5.2 Elevation

The elevation has been enhanced through the implementation of interlocking forms that incorporate a diverse range of materials. The cultural center and other public facilities are represented by the use of concrete, while the spiritual amenities and temples are reflected by the utilization of red brick, which conveys a sense of earthiness and antiquity.



South East Elevation



North East Elevation

8.5.3 Sectional perspectives and section



Section BB



Section AA

8.5.4 Space details in relation to philosophy

a) Shiva Temple Philosophy: Following Duality

The concept of duality posits the existence of distinct soul identities for both the Lord and other living beings. The attainment of redemption is achieved via the experience of multiple births. The aforementioned births are marked by the concepts of "paap" and "punya". The steps within the shikhara of the Shiva temple are representative of the metaphorical difficulties associated with sin. As the magnitude of sins diminishes and their severity increases, one draws nearer to salvation.

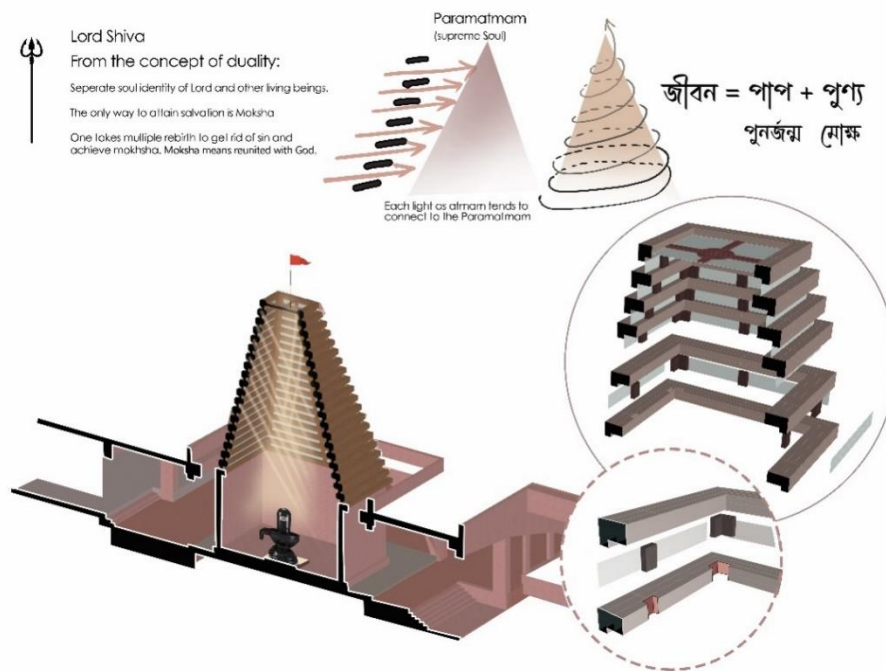


Fig 72: Shiva Temple Philosophy: Following Duality

b) Advaita complex: Following Non-duality

Advaita Acharya is seen as an incarnation of Vishnu within the context of Hindu theology. Additionally, according to the principles of Advaita Vedanta, it posits that all material existence is an illusory manifestation of the Supreme being known as Paramatma. Consequently, it can be inferred that Advaita Acharya is perceived as a manifestation or illusion of the Lord himself. The individual exists in a state resembling a shell, embodying the inherent purity and sanctity associated with the divine essence of Paramatma.

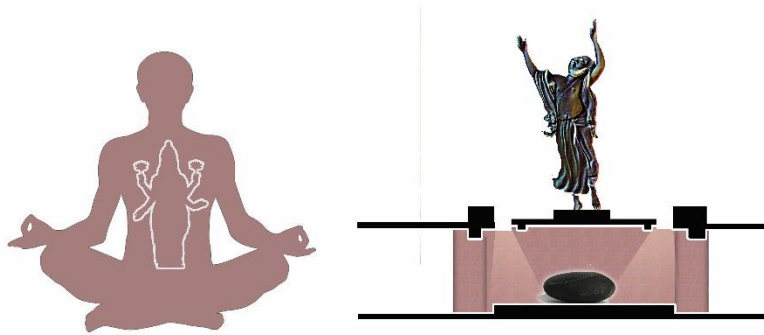


Fig 73: Advaita complex: Following Non-duality

c) Pancha Tattva Temple: Following Non duality

The shikhara of the Panchatattva temple lacks steps and instead ascends directly towards the ultimate objective, symbolizing the non-dualistic belief system that rejects the notion of reincarnation. Instead, the primary aim is to attain the realization and understanding of Brahman (Paramatma).

Panchattatva Temple
 From the concept of non-duality:
 Same soul identity of Lord and other living beings.
 The only way to attain salvation is wisdom of Supreme soul

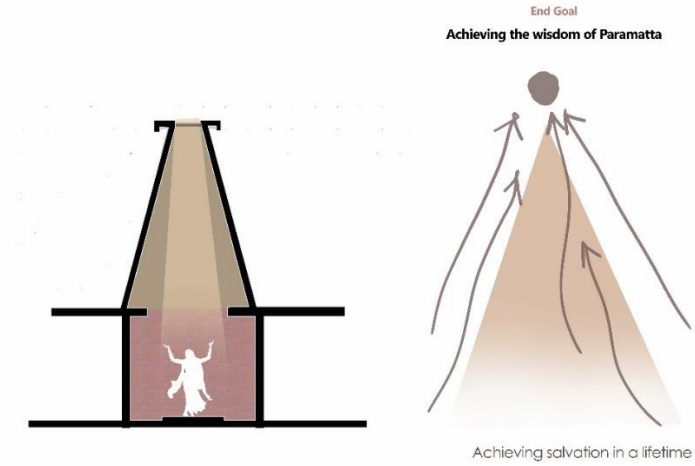


Fig 74: Pancha Tattva Temple: Following Non duality

d) The details of jaali: Following Non dualism

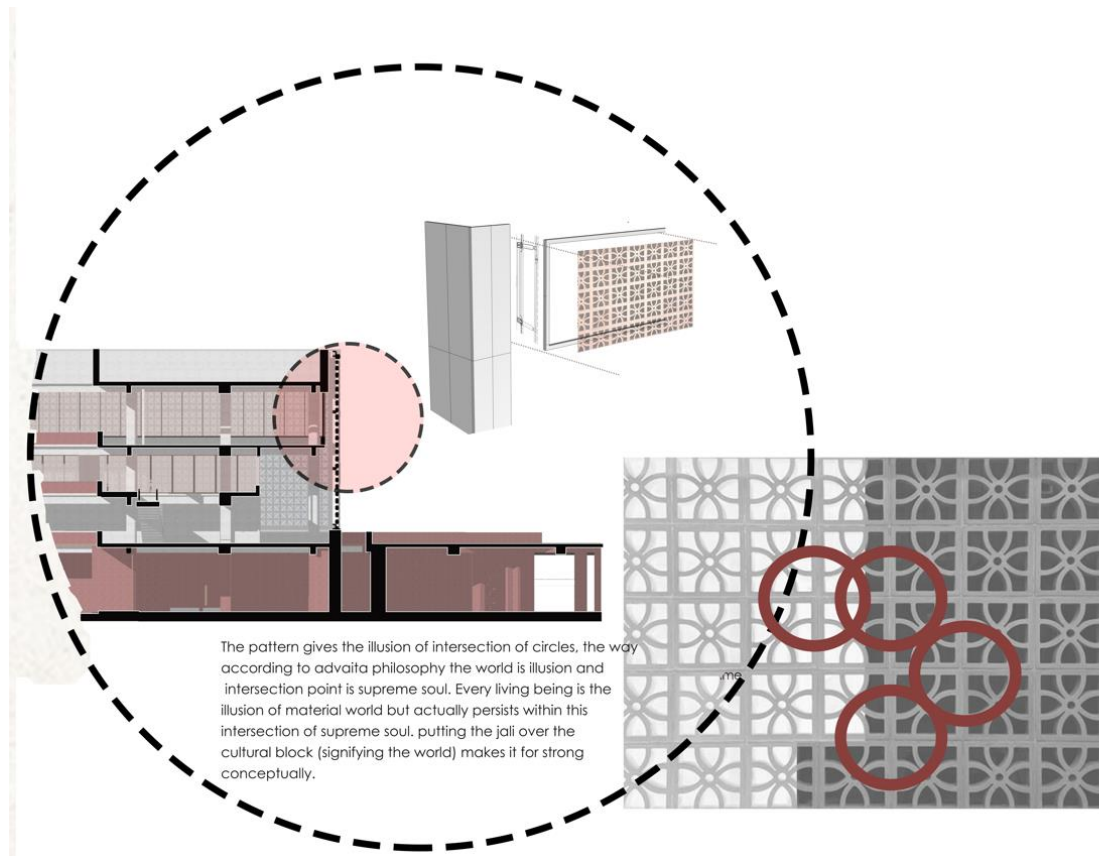


Fig 75: Jaali details: Following Non duality

8.5.5 Visualization

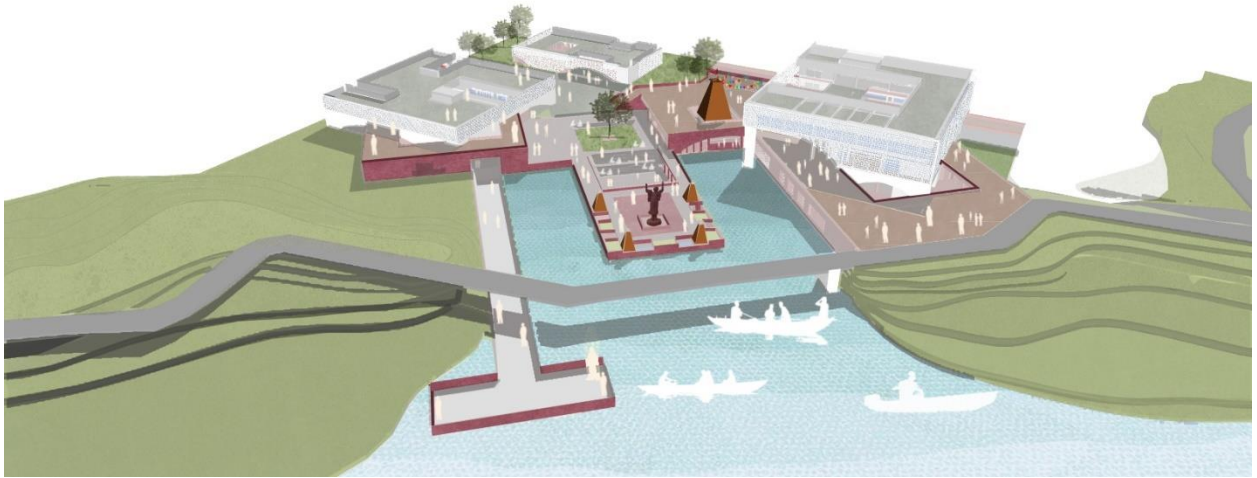


Fig 76: Axonometric View of the project

3D perspectives in eye level



Fig 77: View from the spiritual plaza

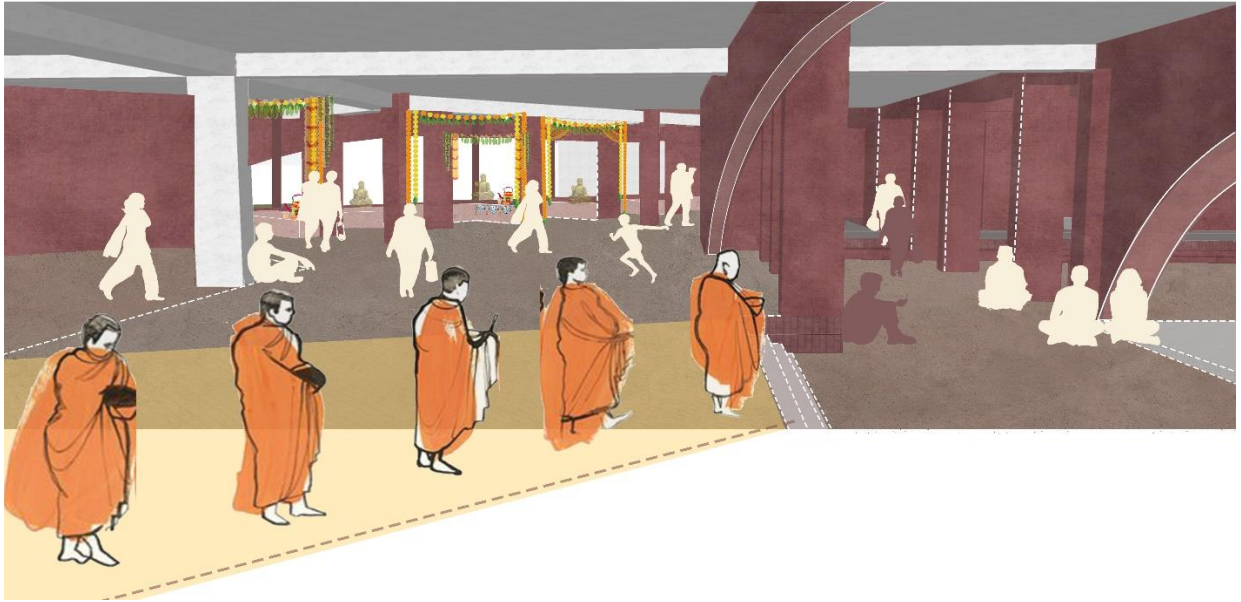


Fig 78: View from the Shiva Temple



Fig 79: View from the spiritual plaza



Fig 80: View from the Kirtan Prangan towards Advaita complex



Fig 81: View towards Advaita Complex

8.6 Design intervention along the bazaar areas

Existing Surrounding: Road-side shop level activity and formation

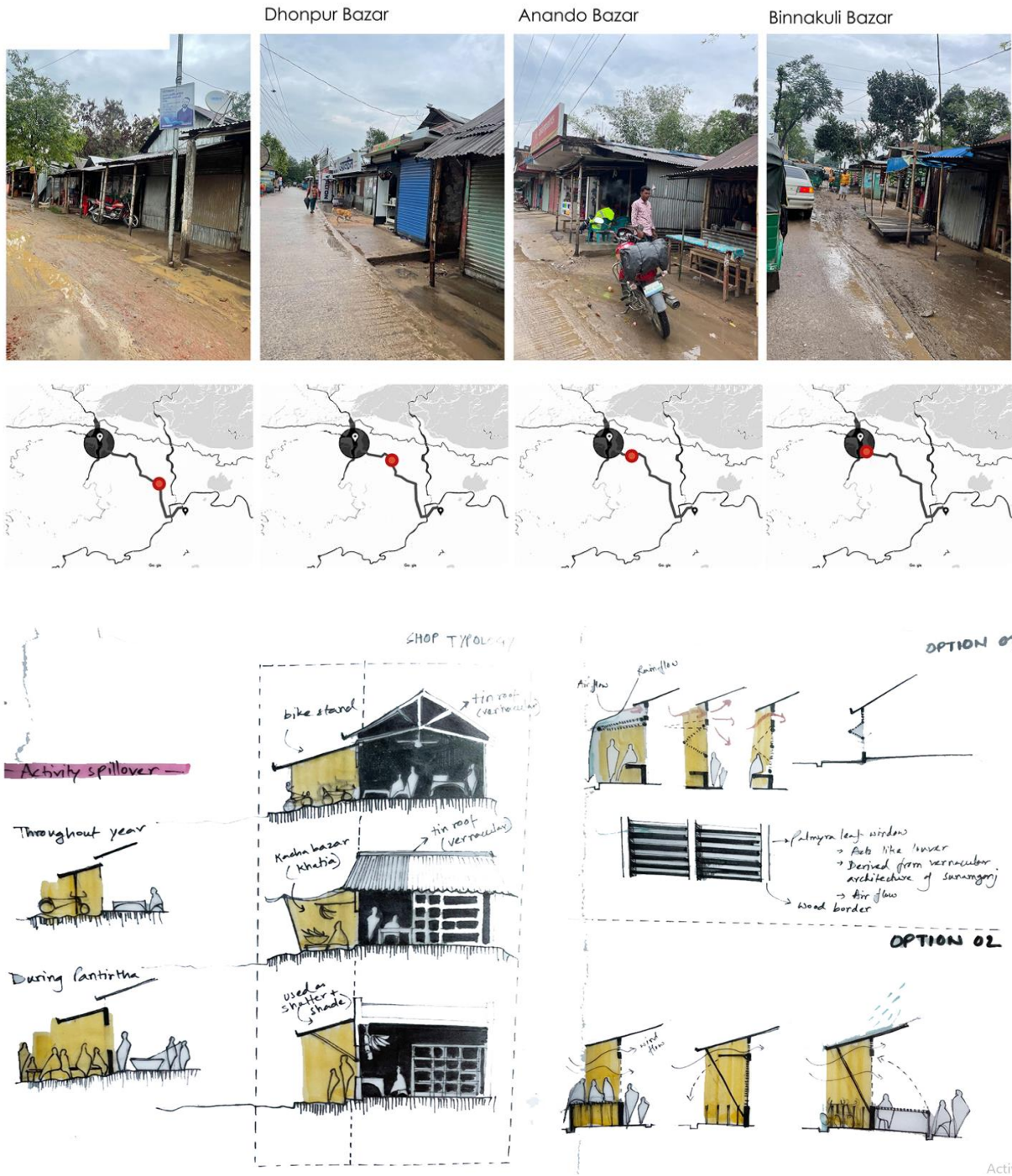


Fig 82: Design intervention along the bazaar areas

Conclusion

This intervention aims to revitalize and commemorate the enduring significance of Advaita Acharya's philosophy, mitigating the risk of its potential loss through time. Given the site's year-round use, it has the capacity to address various parts of challenges beyond a single use. By effectively using this advantage, it becomes feasible to ensure and resolve further issues. The potential outcomes resulting from this intervention may lead to an improvement in quality of life and a decrease in crime rates. According to the beliefs of Advaita Acharya, it is postulated that every individual soul possesses inherent purity. Furthermore, it is advocated that individuals who have committed sins should be allowed an opportunity to repent and seek redemption. This project aims to provide a solution in line with these principles, ultimately aiming to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Tahirpur, Sunamgonj.

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