WALKING THE FAITHSCAPES OF VARANASI, INDIA
PILGRIMAGE OF THE PANCHKROSHI YATRA

BY

SALONI CHAWLA

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Landscape Architecture in Landscape Architecture
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2018

Urbana, Illinois

Advisers:
Professor D. Fairchild Ruggles, Chair
Dr. Aneesha Dharwadker
Assistant Professor Jessica Birkenholtz
ABSTRACT

Sacred landscapes in India play a pivotal role in the celebration of religious traditions and the mythological stories associated with them. A pilgrimage is an act of journeying to the sacred landscapes primarily for religious reasons and spiritual benefits but is not limited to them. Pilgrimages have various types of paths like circular, linear, spiral, converging at a central point, etc. Circular pilgrimage like the Panchkroshi in Varanasi, India, ends at the same point it started, thus forming an endless loop. The Panchkroshi Pilgrimage is about circumambulating around the holy territory, along a 25-mile long route, protected by 108 shrines of Hindu gods and goddesses. There are a number of goals identified for performing a pilgrimage, with the most important being the attainment of divine salvation. The act of achieving these goals is to walk through the sacred landscapes of the pilgrimage. However, with rapid urbanization and lack of preservation, these heritage landscapes have suffered degradation. The pilgrimage path has become fragmented, breaking the continuity and flow of movement. The pilgrimage route has become a palimpsest of urban residential, commercial zones, state and national highways with no designated pathway for pilgrims to walk on.

My master’s in landscape architecture has contributed immensely towards the sensitivity I feel for the environment. The landscapes of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage create an experience for the pilgrims when they walk on the route and my education helps in understanding the experience and re-envisioning it suitable for pilgrims’ convenience. With a formal academic training in landscape architecture, I could craft an appropriate proposal for this project and work through it from research, site study, conceptual design to detailed design and proposals. In this project, I study the landscapes of the pilgrimage route of Panchkroshi that references to the
mandala, a sacred circle whose design symbolizes Varanasi, the cosmic center of Hinduism. Pilgrims complete the pilgrimage in five days, once every three years, in the intercalary month, halting each night at the five main temple destinations respectively and visiting only the major shrines during the one-day version of the walk. Residents in the temple site neighborhoods play a significant role in this pilgrimage too as they receive the pilgrims in huge number during pilgrimage. Pilgrimage practice creates a relationship between them. Through this project, I aim to revive a sacred landscape that acts as a medium for the ultimate goals of the journey: salvation, self-fulfillment, collective experience, humility, or any of the other extensive reasons pilgrims undertake this process. The design goal is to reconnect the existing fragmented pilgrimage route and mark its legibility through a sustainable design approach to heritage cultural conservation. This goal is achieved through the development of a tree- and plant-lined continuous walking route connecting all the shrines. The village and community engagement program for the maintenance of water, trees, food and amenities for the pilgrims cultivates the healthy exchange of resources and generate sustainable environment enjoyed by the local as well as pilgrim communities. Way-finding legibility, rest portals, and sanitation are the core elements of this program.

**Keywords:** Panchkroshi, Yatra, Mandala, Moksha, Kund, Ganga, Circumambulation, Hindu, Sacred, Pilgrimage, Temple, Spiritual, Landscape Architecture, Landscape Design, Faithscape, Varanasi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisors, Professor D. Fairchild Ruggles, Professor Jessica Birkenholtz, and Designer-in-Residence Aneesha Dharwadker for supporting me during my work on this project. I would also like to thank Professors Amita Sinha and Elen Deming for being a part of the team in the beginning, during research phase of the project. DeDe has been a perfect blend of an advisor, someone who is smart, sharp, keen with a solid research background in cultural landscapes. Aneesha has been a source of excellent design criticism and innovative ideas. Jessica has been consistently mentored me from the beginning, strengthening my understanding of Hindu pilgrimages. Her knowledge about Hindu pilgrimages, gods and goddesses is quite strong and deep and worth commendable. I have worked with Amita on a design studio as well and she holds a rich experience in research and design of cultural landscapes of India that has always helped me. She inspired me to take up the project of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage and even accompanied me to site visit during our stay in Varanasi for which I am very grateful to her. Elen was the perfect mentor who guided me diligently through my processes and methodology of various stages of this project from proposal composition through research, initial concepts and so on.

I am extremely grateful for the support that Professor Katherine Kraszewska has extended towards me in all phases of my grad school life. She was an excellent supervisor when I was her Teaching Assistant and she has always provided me the best of suggestions regarding my career and academic choices. I thank Professor Conor O’Shea for helping me improve my design skills and instilling interest towards water as an element in a landscape. He has helped me immensely on the professional front and in building a strong student profile. I sincerely thank Professor
Mary Pat McGuire for she guided me in my first Landscape Design studio. The foundation of my education in Landscape Architecture was strengthened through her important contribution. Professor David Hays introduced me to art history and contemporary landscape. Being a design studio instructor, he helped me get past my inhibitions and restrictions towards creativity and let it flow free.

I would like to thank Prof Rana P. B. Singh. Books and journal articles about pilgrimage in general and the Panchkroshi pilgrimage had been my primary source of literature. Meetings and discussions with him enriched my interest and understanding of this pilgrimage with his deep involvement in the project. I also thank Mr. Subhash Yadav, chief officer of Architectural Survey of India, Varanasi office. He brought forward an insight from a pilgrim’s perspective and we did brainstorming that generated a few quite interesting ideas for the pilgrimage route design. My gratitude extends to Advocate Tripurari Shankar in Varanasi whose personal library was a source of a couple of books on the Panchkroshi and Sanskrit manuscripts of *Kashikhandha*.

Carol Emmerling Dinovo, as the academic advisor of the department of Landscape Architecture had been a wonderful support to me right from the time I joined the program up until she retired. She counseled me very well whenever I struggled finding my way in my academic curriculum. She advised me with wonderful intellect that always helped me make the right choice academically. Lori Davis, the current academic advisor is equally sensible and hardworking in providing all the help and guidance as she can and have contributed in making my journey in the master’s program pretty smooth. I thank them both deeply.

My friends Heena and Mamata who graduated from the same program before me were a huge support system. They didn’t just help me with advices regarding my academic curriculum, but they also inspired me to have a deep passion for Landscape Architecture and an affinity
towards nature. My friends Punit, Kapil, Akshiti and Sai have been a family here in US, constantly being there in difficult as well as pleasant times. I sincerely thank all of them. Soham, a dear friend has always believed in me the most and encouraged me to pursue my passion for Cultural Landscape Architecture. His support means a lot to me and I am grateful to him. I thank my friend Naina, from India, who has always provided me emotional support over distance in all the ventures of my life. My friends John and Diane have been a wonderful addition to my life. They have been there for me whenever I needed them, no matter what. I am thankful to them.

A constant pillar of strength is what my parents have been in my life. Without their extensive support, I wouldn’t have achieved whatever I have today. They have loved me unconditionally and maintained their faith in me. Their encouragement and love always drives me to work for excellence and I can never thank them enough. My brother has been my best friend and I always knew that I can rely on him for his advices and support. I love him a lot and thank him dearly.
Dedicated to my teachers, parents and a friend who deeply believed in my passion
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PILGRIMAGE .........................................................1

CHAPTER 2: VARANASI MANDALA AND CIRCUMAMBULATION .......................5

CHAPTER 3: THE PANCHKROSHI YATRA ..............................................................11

CHAPTER 4: SHRINES AND DESTINATION TEMPLES .......................................17

CHAPTER 5: CURRENT URBAN CONDITIONS OF THE PILGRIMAGE
ROUTE ......................................................................................................................25

CHAPTER 6: CULTURALLY DIVERSE PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCES ..................33

CHAPTER 7: SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TOWARDS PILGRIMAGE
ROUTE DESIGN ........................................................................................................44

CHAPTER 8: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF DESTINATION TEMPLE SITES ..........62

CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM .....................................66

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION .................................................................................68

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................69

APPENDIX A: ETHNOGRAPHY, FIELD STUDY INTERVIEWS ............................72

APPENDIX B: IRB CERTIFICATE ...........................................................................85
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO PILGRIMAGE

A pilgrimage is like a text that can be read by journeying on its physical geography (Haberman et al. 1994). Pilgrimage can be defined in many ways, and it is difficult to define it in a single universally accepted notion. One important definition of pilgrimage is as a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion (Sykes et al. 1982). It can be explained as an act consisting of three elements, a holy place, the attraction of individuals to this place and a specific aim of attaining spiritual or material benefit (Brandon et al. 1970). The term “pilgrimage” can also be used in the sense of a trek to a local sanctuary that allows even a small-scale transition from the worldly realm to the experience of the sacred (Crim et al. 1981). The aim of this chapter is to explain the difference between a pilgrimage and any other journey and to introduce the idea of the the Panchkroshi pilgrimage, explaining what makes it unique. Pilgrimage and landscape share a deep connection. A pilgrimage happens by journeying in the outdoor environment. The type of destinations varies but traveling is an essential element of the entire process. Landscape defines the designed and natural elements of the outdoor environment. Hence, it is difficult to think of pilgrimage without reflecting on the landscape.

Pilgrimages occur across distances. Pilgrimage involves the physical movement of people geographically from one place to another; however, the concern here is to identify the scale of movement that differentiates a pilgrimage from a regular journey. Going on a pilgrimage involves a movement away from the local, familiar environment (Turner and Turner et al. 1978). The exclusion of local journeys from the definition of pilgrimage is consistent with the meanings of “procession” or “circumambulation.” “Procession” indicates movement of groups of people along a prescribed route for religious purposes, while “Circumambulation” refers to movement
around a sacred object or area. In the case of the Panchkroshi yatra (where yatra means sacred journey), the distance of circumambulation is about 52 miles around the city of Varanasi, thus taking the form of a circular journey.

The purpose of pilgrimage can be varied: religious, self-awakening, answering the need for clarification of a quest, commitment towards mastery or even secular reasons such as athletic challenge (Lubov et al. 2017). Usually, there is a desire for the pursuit of a “fruit” that might be personal when a pilgrim performs a pilgrimage. Religious beliefs in pilgrimage promise rewards such as salvation, transformation of life situations, prosperity, fulfilment of a wish, self-evolution, etc. A pilgrimage becomes the source of cultural knowledge and traditions through the historical and mythological events associated with the journey. When a pilgrim undertakes an oath to complete a pilgrimage, culture is experienced through the bodily practices of walking and immersing oneself into stories, faith, rituals and determination of self-control to complete the vow (Haberman et al. 1994). “Neither observers nor travelers themselves can differentiate motives that are primarily religious from a multitude of other reasons for making a journey to a place where pilgrims congregate” (Stoddard et al. 1997). The purpose of pilgrimage values religion but it is not limited to that. Pilgrims can have personal reasons that emerge out of curiosity or desire of travel, recreation or sense of fulfilment, and religion might play a part in those reasons but necessarily be the entire reason. Religious motivation of pilgrimage can be further divided: requesting a favor from the divine, offering thanks to the divine, fulfilling a religious or personal vow, expressing penitence, to meet an obligation that might be traditional or cultural and to gain merit.

In a pilgrimage, the movement normally must be to a destination that is regarded as sacred, but there are not any objective ways to define the sanctity of a destination site. The holy
texts and literature identify some places as sacred. In case of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage, the entire ritual of pilgrimage along with the shrines to visit in the journey are listed in holy Sanskrit scripts, *Kashi Khanda* and *Kashi Mahatmya*. These were texts written in Sanskrit in around 12th century, that glorified the city of Varanasi. They narrated the details and legends surrounding numerous holy pilgrimages. Another subjective means to identify sanctity can be through survey of opinions of groups of large population (Bhardwaj et al. 1973). Stories, rituals and traditions of pilgrimage are passed on from generations and people follow these traditions, keeping the pilgrimage practice active.

Pilgrimage routes are either circular or non-circular. Circular routes do not necessarily have a perfect circle shape, but they consist of a closed traverse in which one concludes at the physical place where one began. Circular pilgrimages have certain characteristics of circumambulation but unlike circumambulation, the sacred areas may not all literally be encircled. The Panchkroshi pilgrimage is an example of a circular pilgrimage that consists of circumambulating around the sacred territory as a whole, visiting a number of shrines on the way but not circumambulating the shrines themselves (Stoddard et al. 1997). In a non-circular route, however, the focus is more on destination than the route. Several branches of routes converge to a core destination and as they approach the goal, they might be channeled into a single pathway that maybe lined with sacred waystations (Turner and Turner et al. 1978). An example of non-circular pilgrimage is the Camino de Santiago that stretches from southern France to the northwest corner of Spain.

In addition to the spatial character of pilgrimage, there is a temporal dimension as well. The temporal element refers to the number of events that occur in a certain repetition within a specific unit of time pertaining to the pilgrimage. They can occur frequently within ten months,
annually or rarely. The Panchkroshi pilgrimage happens annually in the month of February as well as once every three years in the intercalary month.

The Panchkroshi pilgrimage is significant in Hinduism for its specific attributes, as classified above. “Hindu pilgrimage may be studied as a remarkable and ancient institution sustaining a system of linked centers that helps bind together the incredibly diverse people of the Indian subcontinent” (Gold et al. 1988). The core concepts of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage, values, current conditions and design proposals to restore its faithscape are explained in the next chapters.
CHAPTER 2: VARANASI MANDALA AND CIRCUMAMBULATION

A significant concept for pilgrimage is the mandala. Carl Jung wrote, “The Mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the wholeness of the self” (Jung et al. 1980). A Sanskrit word that literally means a circle or a ring having an enclosure of a space, the mandala is understood as the symbol of the cosmos in Hinduism. The spatial manifestation that refers to the manifestation of cosmos and human beings, in Hinduism is the mandala. In ancient times, it incorporated as ideal city according to cosmological arrangement of space, called sacred space. It serves as a means of communication with the gods and the divine power that led to the tradition of pilgrimage in Hinduism with the motive of religious benefit and salvation from transmigration (Singh et al. 2002). In a Hindu pilgrimage, the mandala plays a significant role as it delineates the sacred space by forming a guarding boundary around it where all the gods and goddesses reside and along which the pilgrim will trace his or her steps. “The goal of the mandala is to serve as a tool in our spiritual journey as it symbolizes cosmic and psychic order” (Venefica et al. 2005). The circular design of the mandala suggests that life is never ending, and it reminds us of our relationship to infinity, extending beyond and within our bodies and minds (http://www.mandalaproject.org/What/Main.html). Its practical function is to demarcate and encircle a space that marks a certain territory or identity.
Varanasi is one of the most sacred cities for Hinduism. The sacred region of Varanasi is considered as the mandala as it is the microcosmic representation of the entire cosmos. The Panchkroshi pilgrimage defines the boundary of this mandala translated into the physical geography of the city. The aim of this chapter is to elaborate the meaning and essence of the mandala in the Panchkroshi pilgrimage and how is the mandala vitalized by the performance of pilgrimage.

On a cosmic level, the mandala is a symbol that represents the universe, in the external sense, as a diagram of universe and in the internal sense, as a guiding light to cognitive and physical practices of the devotee. It is represented metaphysically through charts with geometric patterns. At human level, the mandala is a microcosmic representation that recreates the macrocosmic universe (Mehra et al. 1997). The space enclosed within the mandala is as
significant as its outer ring enclosure. The enclosure is sacred in that it is a space reserved for spiritual awakening. The sacred zone is demarcated as separate from the profane through the mandala by means of the circular boundary, and thus the mandala creates a zone of meaningful existence that is separate from the chaos of the mundane world.

Figure 2.2: Varanasi mandala originally from *Kashikhanda*
Source: Gutschow, 2006
Varanasi is located on the western bank of the Ganga river that is both a waterbody and a goddess. The city is one of the oldest in the world, its earliest existence traced back to sixth century B.C. The mythologies regard Varanasi as the city of Shiva founded at the dawn of creation (Mehra et al. 1992). Vishwanath temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva exists in the central core of city’s sacred region and the entire territory is mapped in a series of concentric sacred zones. “Varanasi, with its gods dwelling in their sacred shrines along the holy river, the sacred pilgrimage paths as well as the cyclic patterns of religious festivities at auspicious times at different sacred sites, is based upon the mandala” (Singh et al. 1992).

Varanasi descends along its eastern side to the Ganga river with long flights of steps along the river’s western bank. The city has a network of temples and shrines, ashrams and pavilions stretching out along the river for over three miles. The temples on the outer periphery are so located that they create the mandala guarding the holy center of the city through the Panchkroshi pilgrimage. The city has a series of concentric sacred zones that mirror the symbolic structure of the mandala. The mandala’s boundary becomes a pilgrimage whose path is re-traced by pilgrims in specific order and specific time as described in holy scripts like Kashi Mahatmya. While it is bounded on the east by the Ganga river, the sacred zone of Varanasi is bounded on the north by the river Varana in north and in the south by the river Asi.

The mandala is conceptualized as a series of concentric rings. The first level of the cosmic territory of Varanasi is referred to as Chaurasikosha Yatra that marks the sacred region by creating a circular mandala with a radius of about eleven miles from the central core of Varanasi where Lord Shiva’s shrine is located. This sacred zone extends far beyond the city itself into the countryside to its west. This entire sacred zone is called Kashi, the ancient name of the city. The next sacred zone of the city is between river Varana in the north and river Asi in the
south and represents roughly the urban city as seen today. These rivers flow into the Ganga river. The diametrical distance of this mandala is about 11 miles, and the pilgrimage at the periphery of this mandala is called the Panchkroshi Yatra. Avimukta represents the next inner sacred circle of the city and refers to the myth of this ancient zone never forsaken by Lord Shiva where he resides permanently. The smallest unit in this series of concentric circles of sacred geography is called Antargriha, the inner sanctum or the innermost zone in the core of the city, which contains the temple of Lord Shiva with the linga called Vishwanath temple. The central shrine of Shiva is called linga. In Sanskrit, linga means mark or symbol, or phallus or the male sexual organ. It has a connotation of the light of enlightenment. Pilgrimages are performed at all the boundaries of these concentric zones. As one approaches the center, these spheres are charged with increasing spiritual intensities in the form of shrines and images of Hindu deities (Mehra et al. 1997).
Temple are “places of dwelling” that are located specifically. The entire sacred landscape is marked with numerous sacred spots containing shrines marked with pilgrimage paths. Pilgrims circumambulate each path, returning to the place where they started, in the specific order, thus demarcating a circle enclosing the sacred space (Singh et al. 1993).
Figure 2.3: Circuits of pilgrimage in Varanasi
Source: Singh, 2002
CHAPTER 3: THE PANCHKROSHI YATRA

The pilgrimage of Panchkroshi in Varanasi has been popular since the sixteenth century. The rituals and practices associated with the pilgrimage are explained in *Kashi Mahatmya*, an ancient script that was written in Sanskrit language in 12\textsuperscript{th} century to eulogize glory of the city, its culture and its traditions. The text was written by highly regarded Sanskrit scholars to glorify the religious centers and to provide a guide to pilgrims seeking to perform pilgrimage to such sites. During the period of Mughal rule, sixteenth century witnessed reconstruction and new development towards Hindu temples by rulers like Humayun and Akbar, there were many shrines and temples, destroyed by the Mughal ruler Humayun in seventeenth century during his political conquests in the Varanasi territory. His intolerance towards Hindu religion further contributed to the act of temple demolition (Alam et al. 2017). However, the eighteenth century was a strong Hindu revival period when many shrines were recovered, and replicas were created of the ones that were destroyed (Singh et al. 2002). In that period, the current route was accepted as the outer limit of Varanasi’s sacred zone. By the nineteenth century, the pilgrimage of Panchkroshi had become a popular practice where the devotional path was developed on the peripheral extent of the city creating and enclosed the sacred zone, the mandala. This zone was protected by the pilgrim path and pilgrimage practices that addressed 108 shrines of Hindu gods and goddesses along this path.

The total diametrical distance of the mandala refers to the name Panchkroshi, from *panch*, which means five, and *krosh*, which is an ancient Hindu unit of measurement approximately equal to eleven miles. The entire pilgrimage route covers a distance of 55.2 miles,
consisting of five parts, each part comprising a distance of five krosha, or eleven miles (Singh et al. 1993).

We have already seen that the mandala is ideally a circular form. The Panchkroshi Yatra is a closed circular pilgrimage that creates the sacred territory of Kashi Mandala (where Kashi refers to Varanasi) (Singh et al. 2002). “The sacred space includes spaces that can be entered physically, as the outer geography of a holy land, imaginatively as the inner geography of the body in Tantric yoga, or visually as the space of the mandala” (Brereton et al. 1986). Sacred spaces facilitate communication between human and the divine through a divine hierarchy that leads to the development of the tradition of pilgrimage in Hinduism. As the sacred space is the translated manifestation of the whole cosmos, it becomes a microcosm where human meets the divine. Delimiting the sacred zone with a pilgrimage creates a distinct region outside of the designated territory that is considered impious space (Singh et al. 1993).
Just as space is significant, so also is time. “The idea of sacred time in Hinduism led to a perception not of time as an abstraction of our temporal being but of our temporal being as an expression of time” (Sproul et al. 1986). As pilgrimage in Hinduism is an act of auspiciousness, people have designated certain time periods as more merit-giving whereas some that should be avoided for performing rituals. The Panchkroshi yatra is performed in specific periods when, as per mythologies, divine beings performed religious activities (Singh et al. 1991). Thus, devotees are hope to sight divinities and their activities as well as mark their own presence. We have already seen that the Panchkroshi pilgrimage is performed annually as well as in the intercalary month once every three years. The most auspicious and popular time of pilgrimage is the intercalary month of the leap year, also called malamasa in Hindi, which usually falls in between
July to September. The season usually is the transition of summer to monsoons in India. When the solar and lunar calendar coincide at the end of each year, there is a difference in the number of days between them and that adds up to a duration of a month after every three years. Because it is an extra month, it is considered polluted or inauspicious (mala in Hindi means “dirty” or “polluted”). Hence the act of pilgrimage brings purity to the otherwise polluted time, as well as the highest form of merit to the extra month.

The annual occurrence of pilgrimage happens in February on the event of Maha Shivratri. The celebration of Lord Shiva’s wedding anniversary with the goddess Parvati, the day also marks Shiva’s victory over his enemies. Vishweshwanath, one of the most sacred shrines of Lord Shiva, is located in the central zone of Kashi mandala, and this sacred place as well as the city of Varanasi as a whole is regarded as the abode of Shiva.
There are 108 sacred shrines associated with this pilgrimage, 36 of which are situated on the banks of the Ganga river. The Ganga river has a significant role in pilgrimage practice as well as in the sacred landscapes of the holy city because the Ganga river is worshipped as river goddess and the pilgrimage begins by pilgrim taking a bath in the holy water. The pilgrim then performs rituals in the riverbank temples of Dhundiraja, Dandapani, Kala Bhairava, Annapoorna and Vishweshwanath, deities of the Hindu religion, followed by an oath-taking ceremony to complete the journey. There are five major temple destination sites where pilgrims halt for the
night during their long walk. When performed in the intercalary month, it takes about five days for pilgrims to complete the circuit. They rest at a destination temple site each night and then move on to the next one the next day. Each day the journey begins with waking up before sunrise, taking bath in the water tank at the temple, worshipping the shrine, and beginning to walk. By evening, they have reached the next temple site where they collectively get together and sing religious songs, cook food together, rest, meditate and pray. Beginning each day with bathing signifies purification of body and mind which prepares pilgrims for the ongoing journey. They walk barefoot to complete the pilgrimage. While marching, they pray to Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Parvati by chanting in unison:

“Hara Hara! Mahadeva Shambho!

Kashi Vishwanath Gange

Mata Parvati Sange.”

The concluding ritual of the pilgrimage is the return to the Manikarnika ghat after completing the circle, bathing again in the Ganga river, and worshipping at the Vishweshwanath temple. The pilgrim reflects back on his or her journey, experiences, and the effects on his or her physical and emotional being. The Manikarnika Ghat, a part of the bank of the Ganga river, marks the beginning and ending point of the pilgrimage after its completion. The landscape is a matrix of stepped riverfront with landings lined by historic structures and temples, streetscape through fluctuating urban conditions of the city and temple shrines, big or small at irregular intervals, by the side of the roads. There is an enormous scope of landscape design for the route that exclusively focuses on pilgrimage walking experience but is well integrated with the surrounding urban setting of the city.
CHAPTER 4: SHRINES AND DESTINATION TEMPLES

The pilgrimage begins at Manikarnika Ghat by immersing in the Ganga river in the early morning, followed by the oath ceremony that is guided by a local priest. Pilgrims visit the temple of Siddhi Vinayak at Manikarnika Ghat and worship, and from there they begin their walk to the next shrine.

Kardameshwar temple is the first major rest stop along the pilgrimage circuit. The main shrine in here is the lingam of Lord Shiva which was installed by a sage named Kardam, in 10th century A.D. from which the name Kardameshwar was inspired. Kardameshwar temple exhibits a perfect example of successive layers of growth right from its sixth-century origins. Fragments of the temple still contain carved images of divine dancers, musicians, snakes and mythical beasts, dating back to the sixth century. This temple escaped Mughal destruction for the most part, and a lot of additions and modifications were made to the surviving site in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Singh et al. 2002). The site consists of the shrine, central water tank, circumambulatory pathways around the temple, fair grounds, lodges for pilgrims and narrow street crossings with platforms for rest and leisure.
The next major destination site where pilgrims halt for the night stay is Bhimchandi temple. The patron deity of this site is the goddess Bhimchandi. The architecture of this site is similar to Kardameshwar with its hierarchy of temple, water tank, open fields, rest lodges and spaces of interaction.
Figure 4.3: Base map of Bhimchandi

Figure 4.4: Location map of Bhimchandi

Rameshwar is the third major destination temple after Kardameshwar and Bhimchandi. The temple in Ramweshwar is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is a replica of the Ramweshwar temple in Ramweshwaram, Tamil Nadu. As water plays a significant role in all the major sites, here the river Varuna fulfils the requirement of a water body in place of a water tank. The river Varuna has a bank with stepped edge that facilitates pilgrims’ and residents’ interaction with water for bathing, laundering clothes, washing utensils, worshipping, etc. The site also has an arched entry
gateway that marks the moment of the pilgrims’ arrival to the sacred land. The temple site stands amidst vast stretches of farm fields that segregates the site from the city.

Shivpur temple is where pilgrims rest on the fourth evening of their journey. Established in the temple here five Shiva lingams in gradually decreasing size. The temple also has smaller shrines of the gods Ganesha, Vishnu, sage Narada, Kal Bhairava and goddess Annapoorna (Singh et al. 2002). As per mythology and folk tradition, the temple was found by the five Pandavas brothers, heroes of the Sanskrit epic Mahabharata. The brothers set up this temple in the period of their exile with their common wife Draupadi, and there are sculptural images of
Shivpur is located at the area that used to be outer periphery of the city but which is highly populated now with expanding urbanization in recent decades. It has a dense character, unlike the other pilgrim waystations that are situated in open areas. It becomes uncomfortable for pilgrims to halt here when urban crowds fill up all the space around temple and there is no flexibility to rest, communicate, gather and celebrate that an open space provides. To avoid this, some of the pilgrims prefer to pass the night at Tarana, a neighborhood about four km from Shivpur (Singh et al. 2002). The Shivpur temple site’s landscape vocabulary does not resemble that of other sites and it lacks pockets of open space. The shrine is located along a busy urban street with a well in the compound and a small rain-fed pond that provides water for domestic and worshipping purposes. There are a few rest lodges, though not adequate to accommodate the vast number of pilgrims. The ongoing traffic and the hustle of city and its dwellers interfere immensely with the serene ambience of the temple.

Figure 4.7: Base map of Shivpur
The fifth major site where pilgrims stop for the night is Kapildhara temple, whose patron deity is Lord Shiva. It is customary to take an evening bath in the water tank in Kapildhara. The *Kashikhandha* states that this temple was built by the sage Kapila and his temple stands right beside the main shrine (Tripathi et al. 1991). The setting is interesting with a central water tank and a flight of steps that lead up from the tank to the temple shrine on a raised level. View of the entire temple site from the temple is impressive. There is a circumambulatory path around the tank with smaller temples containing shrines of other gods and goddesses. There are about ten resting lodges in Kapildhara. There is a small village adjacent to the temple site, but a boundary wall separates the temple complex from the nearby settlement. From this waystation, pilgrims either take a boat to return to Manikarnika ghat or walk along the riverbank starting from Kapildhara.
The pilgrimage concludes when pilgrims finally reach back to Manikarnika ghat after visiting all the shrines of Kashi Mandala. According to the Kashikhanda, the water pool in Manikarnika ghat is sacred as a resort of the divine Lord Vishnu and “a man who takes a holy bath there does not enter the densely entangled cycle of worldly existence” (Tripathi et al. 1997). After taking a bath in the water pool and the Ganga river, pilgrims proceed to an open colonnaded structure, called ‘pavilion of liberation’ where they spend some time worshipping Lord Vishnu and Lord Ganesh. They sit and reflect on their journey, remembering all the divine
shrines they visited and worshipped during their entire journey (Singh et al. 2002). Finally, they visit Vishweshwara temple to thank Lord Shiva for blessing them so they could complete their journey and oath.

Figure 4.1: Water tank at Manikarnika Ghat
Source: Gutschow, 2006

Figure 4.12: Smaller shrines along the route
CHAPTER 5: CURRENT URBAN CONDITIONS OF THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTE

The urban fabric of the city of Varanasi has been evolving in past years. The city’s size has grown considerably, and as of 2015, it encompassed an area of 84.55 km². In 2011 it had a population of 1,435,113 (Singh et al. 2016), but there is an additional influx of 60,000 people during festive seasons that includes the pilgrimage period. As the city has grown, population, business and administrative functions have extended beyond its municipal limits. Further improvements on the Grand Trunk Road are expected to take place which is a national highway into a superhighway, the future expansion has a potential to happen on all the surrounding sides of the city. A network of state and national highways has developed that is causing fast paced urbanization. Consequently, the Panchkroshi pilgrimage route is no more the outer boundary of the city.

The pilgrimage route requires restoration and preservation in many respects including road conditions, water tank and built structures like temples and resting lodges. The last pilgrimage, performed in August and 2015, received more than 45,000 pilgrims (Singh et al. 2016). This number has been increasing in the past few years which builds up more pressure on the deteriorating condition of the pilgrimage infrastructure.

The large number of pilgrims has a negative impact on the river as well. Spiritually, the Ganga river holds a very special place in Hinduism and in the city of Varanasi where daily morning and evening worship rituals are performed on an elaborate scale. During monsoons, the river floods and a sizable number of the ghats’ stairs and even some structures on the riverbank are submerged in water, but that does not discourage the holy spirit within the worshippers. Because in the Panchkroshi pilgrimage the Ganga river is of primal importance, the whole pilgrimage begins and ends by taking a bath in the river and performing some rituals. Thus,
during monsoon, the pilgrims simply shift their ritual practice higher up the stairs and continue to worship the river.

Environmentally, however, the Ganga river is in a grave state with high pollution levels. The water quality deteriorates day by day due to domestic and industrial influents. Pollution threatens humans as well as more than 130 fish species, 83 amphibian species and the endangered Ganga river dolphin (Dwivedi et al. 2016). Hindu cremation practices also contribute to the pollution: Manikarnika ghat is the prime location for cremation of dead bodies and the ashes are discharged into the river water. When extremely poor people cannot afford the cost of cremation, they may dump dead bodies directly into the river, causing further pollution as body is decomposed into the river. Yet, at the same time, Manikarnika ghat is also the location where pilgrims take a dip in river for pilgrimage, and so cleanliness is of critical importance. Unfortunately, the water is no longer hygienic enough for bathing or using for domestic purposes. It needs restoration so that the water is returned to its healthy state and can support domestic and religious activities as well as thriving biodiversity.

As stated above, urban development and growth of national and state highways have created a mesh of increased population, transportation, and traffic. The pilgrimage route does not have a designated walking pathway for pilgrims; rather, they have to walk on the sides of roads that have ongoing vehicular traffic. This poses a risk on them as there are chances of accidents, especially given that and they walk in large groups that interrupt traffic often. The network of highways has also fragmented the route at several locations. One part of a state highway directly coincides with the walking route that leads to pilgrims walking along a highway, a detrimental experience during what is supposed to be a spiritual journey.
With urbanization, parts of city have grown more as compared to others evolving into dense urban areas. Fragments of the city near destination temples Shivpur and Kardameshwar are no longer outer periphery of the city. In fact, they have integrated with developed regions of the city so well that the only landscape one experiences through these parts of pilgrimage are concrete buildings. These conditions interrupt with pilgrims’ experiences of walking on the pilgrimage route and cause discomfort to them.

Figure 5.1: Overlay of pilgrimage route with highways

Due to urbanization and growth of the city, there are only 40 temples that exist in the route of pilgrimage, out of a total of 108. The identification of existing temples was a result of multiple site visits to the pilgrimage.
In addition to human-caused pollution, water management of drains and tanks is another major issue that requires attention. The streets on which people walk during pilgrimage are poorly drained. During monsoons, these streets are flooded with water and pilgrims are compelled to walk in water. There are water tanks in the destination temple sites as well as along the way near other shrines on the route. These water tanks, however, are not maintained by municipalities or any other government or private organization. Due to continuing use of them by residents and pilgrims for domestic purposes, their water quality has become degraded. Stagnant water becomes a brooding site for mosquitoes that might spread diseases. Pilgrims need to bathe in these tanks during their pilgrimage, but the conditions are not healthy. Remediation is needed.
Another issue that affects the pilgrim experience is the way that the route is marked. There is a strong need for wayfinding as signage or a definite route indicator that explicitly shows the path to all shrines. The only current signage occurs at a few sites that date back to the eighteenth century, where are a few signs engraved in stone. With increased urbanization, the growing city has enveloped a lot of built fabric of the pilgrimage so that the path is increasingly obscured. There isn’t a definite path that directs pilgrims to temples in the sequence they should be followed. Those pilgrims who walk in groups led by priests, are guided through all the rituals of the pilgrimage and find their way on the correct route. However, new pilgrims without a leader or a priest tend to lose their way or get deviated in the wrong direction. This was explained to me personally by one of the residents I interviewed near Shivpur. In addition to this, there are a lot of pilgrims who are not literate, so they can’t read textual signs of the route. Thus they need visual symbology rooted in the pilgrimage that will lead them further on their journey.
Clear wayfinding strategies can not only make the pilgrimage route more accessible to all the pilgrims, but also enhance the experience of their journey, indicating what they have traveled and what lies ahead, and providing them an intellectual insight about pilgrimage.

Related to signage is the issue of night time illumination. Pilgrims prefer to walk in the night or quite early morning to avoid vehicular traffic and to escape the hot sun in the daytime. But they face difficulty doing so as streets are not equipped with proper lighting. It is inconvenient and even dangerous for them to walk in the pitch dark. Hence, streets and walking route need to be sufficiently well lit for pilgrims to be able to walk at any time they prefer.

Apart from five major rest stops where pilgrims halt for the night, there are no rest stops along the route where pilgrims can relax while walking, and this is a hardship for them. For most
of the part of the route that goes through farm fields or dense area of the city, there are no trees for shade that can provide some respite from the sun. The destination stops are approximately ten miles apart and pilgrims must walk on long stretches without being able to take breaks. While physically fit people might not face troubles doing that, the major population of pilgrims are families consisting of people from all age groups—including old people and children—for whom long walks may be difficult. As pilgrimage is supposed to be done barefoot—not walking or riding a vehicle—it is laborious.

Figure 5.5: Pilgrims resting on their way
Source: Gutschow, 2006
To solve such problems, a sustainable approach can be adopted towards pilgrimage route design. The design elements for temple sites and a unified pilgrimage route are explained in detail in the next chapters.
CHAPTER 6: CULTURALLY DIVERSE PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCES

Critical to the project of this thesis on Hindu pilgrimage is an understanding of the ideologies of these particular pilgrims. What drives these pilgrims to walk on the long journeys and how does their motivation help them find their way and complete their pilgrimage? What are the tactile relationships between pilgrims and their environment, and what role does landscape play as a mediator? How rigid or flexible are pilgrimage practices across various cultures? My work on this specific Indian pilgrimage site sparked a deeper interest in further understanding pilgrimage on a larger scale in other religions and other places as well, so as to identify contrasts and similarities between Western and Indian pilgrimages. While exploring some of the most important pilgrimages of the world, my purpose was to understand and personally experience the variations in pilgrimage among diverse cultures, various objectives of pilgrimage and traveling experience in different landscape environments. This was to add depth and breadth to my understanding on pilgrimage so that being a designer, I offer proposals that are the result of thorough research, experience and brainstorming. The ones that intrigued me the most is El Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain, connected to a network of routes from all over Europe as well as Footsteps of St. Paul, the Apostle in Greece. To be able to experience these other forms of pilgrimage personally, I applied for a Ryerson Travel Fellowship from the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
The Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James) is one of the most popular Christian pilgrimages and attracts pilgrims from all over the world. While a lot of people do it ritualistically for the forgiveness of their sins and the sense of oneness with God, for these and others it also provides a slower pace of life by taking them away from the materialistic pleasures of the world and instead experiencing raw, natural landscapes, less intervened by humans. The Camino consist of a large network of ancient pilgrim routes stretching across Europe and coming together at the tomb of St. James (or Santiago in Spanish) in Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain. Along the route, I learned more about the history of pilgrimage through other pilgrims I met, owners of hostels where I stayed and priests of the churches where I paid visits. During the medieval period, it was one of the 3 most important pilgrimages undertaken, to Jerusalem, to Rome and to Santiago de Compostela. According to Christian history, when the Apostles divided the world into missionary zones, the Iberian Peninsula came to St. James. He spent years preaching there before returning to Jerusalem. After Jesus’s resurrection, James
became leader of the church in Jerusalem. After traveling to Spain, when he returned, he was martyred in the year 44 AD. After his martyrdom, his body was carried by his followers and put into a boat that crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and landed near Finsisterre at Padron, in northern Spain. The local queen got him buried along with two of his dead disciples at the site of a marble tomb. In 9th century, Pelagius, a hermit had a vision where a field of stars led him to the tomb with three bodies. This was reported to the local bishop Theodomir, who informed this to the king of Asturias, Alphonso II. The king declared Santiago to be the patron saint of Spain or of what would eventually become Spain. A small village called Campus de Ia Stella and a monastery were established at the site. Pilgrims started traveling to the tomb and miracles started to be attributed to the site. Later, there was a church built on the site of the tomb and the city of Santiago de Compostela grew around the church. Pilgrims started visiting the shrine and by the eleventh century, it had grown into a popular pilgrimage site receiving half million pilgrims a year (Erickson et al. 2018).

I began my journey from Sarria (Spain) in the Galician region and walked for a total of 110 kilometers in six days, stopping at a new destination site each evening, eventually reaching Santiago de Compostela. Although I am not a Christian, my reasons to explore this pilgrimage were nonetheless spiritual and to satisfy my curiosity about Christian pilgrimages. I wanted to experience similarities or contrasts between pilgrimages in India and Europe.

I was surprised to encounter several reasons for which people had come to walk the Camino. Though religious beliefs encouraging to undertake pilgrimage was an expected answer, a lot of people had come to reflect on their inner self by walking in those breathtaking landscapes by themselves. They said that doing so pushed them out of their comfort zone, provided them the time to really examine their life and attain a deeper awareness about themselves. There were a
couple of groups that were walking the pilgrimage simply as an interesting hike. There was a small section of pilgrims that wanted to make a petition to their god by walking on this pilgrimage.

Unlike the circular the Panchkroshi pilgrimage, this one is linear, culminating at Santiago de Compostela. There are multiple routes through Spain as well as other countries like France, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, Italy, etc. Pilgrims even have an option of choosing the route with landscapes that interest them the most, passing by the sea, through mountains or country villages. Pilgrims could begin from wherever they wished and take as many days as they want to walk, and only the last 100 km of the route is mandatory for fulfillment of the pilgrimage. This flexibility in a pilgrimage was quite different from Indian pilgrimages.

The landscape has a deep effect on pilgrims’ walking experience. I encountered unique landscapes along my route—from rolling hills to walking along a river, through forests, farm fields—that diversified my walking experience. Physically, I felt closer to nature, being away from the busy city life. Small cathedrals along the way were set in beautiful locations with plenty of trees and rest areas where pilgrims would stop by and collect stamps from the priest. The stamp collection is a proof that a pilgrim at least walked the last 100 km stretch of the pilgrimage. That helps pilgrims attain the certificate of participation in the pilgrimage. The openness of space around me made me a lot more aware of myself and my movements than how I would feel walking in a city. I met a few fellow pilgrims who had similar experiences.

Also unlike at Varanasi, there is no specific time to perform this pilgrimage. Pilgrims can start whenever and from wherever they want unless they cover the last 100-km stretch. The only crucial factor for the time of pilgrimage is climate conditions because in January and February, it gets cold and hence is quite difficult for pilgrims to walk such long distance.
From the experiences of pilgrimage in Europe as well as India, I realized that the meaning of pilgrimage is something each pilgrim derives on his or her own. Some pilgrimages have rigid set of rituals to complete the pilgrimage, but pilgrims have the freedom to choose what they achieve from the journey and how the entire experience will affect them. Some pilgrims proceed with deep-rooted faith and search for communication with divine, while others have the objective of a more generic spiritual experience that will help them evolve emotionally, and yet others just seek recreation or an experience out of their comfort zone.

Figure 6.2: Route of pilgrimage
Figure 6.3: Pictures of journey
Figure 6.4: Route of pilgrimage

Figure 6.5: Sketch of Meteora monastery
The next pilgrimage venture was to follow the footsteps of St. Paul in Greece. The apostle Paul is a remarkable personality for the Christian religion. Though he didn’t belong to Jesus’ 12 Disciples cycle, he spread the word of Christianity more than anybody else and for this reason he was named "Equal-to-the-Apostles" and “Apostle of the Nations.” His route in Greece passes through all places where the Apostle preached. The inspiration for me to undertake this pilgrimage was for three reasons. First, it is a religious pilgrimage that is less flexible than the pilgrimage in Spain, so it was different than what I experienced in Spain. Second, the pilgrimage sprawls all over Greece and the destination stops are spread at far distances that aren’t walkable from one another. Hence this was a unique experience in terms of tracing the journey of a saint across a country. This pilgrimage not only addresses the religious pilgrims, but those too who have a keen interest in history. Greek architectural history has always been the subject of my fascination and this pilgrimage provided an opportunity to satisfy that.

The pilgrimage began in Thessaloniki where the ramparts of the city, the triumphal Arch of Galerius and Via Egnatia are exposed layers of history in the urbanized city today. There was a synagogue near the port where Apostle Paul spent time. Because of his preaching, people were inspired to follow Christianity and a church was established in the city. East of the place where Vlatedes Monastery stands, used to be a spring. The spring in that location had become popular as ‘Apostle Paul’s Holy Water’ and a church now stands at that location that was constructed after the liberation of Thessaloniki.

Philippi was the next destination stop and it is significant as there were a group of women who had gathered upon Apostle Paul’s arrival in the town and they were the first in Europe to hear him preach. Among them was a woman named Lydia, who was baptized by St. Paul and became the first Christian convert in Europe, sowing the seeds of Christianity. Kavala had a port
where from where he had entered Europe. Apostle Paul had a dream that a tall Macedonian man begged him to come to Macedonia and help them that inspired him to travel to Greece and arrive the country at Kavala (Clark et al. 1917).

Meteora, the next destination, has monasteries perched on top of huge rocks. They are an exquisite example of Byzantine art. This part of the pilgrimage required to hike up the rock mountains, but the landscape setting was breathtaking.

The final destination of the pilgrimage, Athens is called cradle of western civilization. When Apostle Paul walked around the city, he preached death of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection in Synagogues and markets that impressed some epicureans and stoic philosophers (Macduff et el. 1855). In fact, he was taken to the high court (Areopagus) to preach formally. Acropolis and Mars hill is from where St. Paul addressed the Athenians. The ruins still exhibit architecture marvel of Greeks and blend of traditional Greek culture into its modern evolution was fascinating. St. Paul spent about two years in the Agora and Acropolis of Corinth which was a few miles from Athens. The site to visit in Corinth is the church that Corinthians built in the honor of Apostle Paul.
The experience of the pilgrimage of St. Paul was distinct and very different from my prior encounters of pilgrimage. It opened my perspective to a new and a larger scale of pilgrimage. The essence of this pilgrimage was more about the destinations than journey. At each stop, the cultural and architectural values of the site were still intact, although the actual fabric was in the ruins, and this was impactful.
From my travel to pilgrimages in Europe, I had a newer perspective towards a pilgrimage. Though I don’t follow Christianity, that wasn’t an obstacle in receiving the best experience of journeying to these sacred sites. From walking to destinations to traveling farther pilgrimage sites, from being accompanied by a group of pilgrims to visiting sites just by my own, it added a variety to my spiritual experience. I felt a connection to these sites through the landscapes I walked in. I believe that pilgrimage experience cannot be confined to the relationship with a particular religion. Fellow pilgrims were from different faiths and some were doing it to know themselves better. With my conversations to such pilgrims and my own experiences, I did feel spirituality and a sense of connectedness to the place.
CHAPTER 7: SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TOWARDS PILGRIMAGE ROUTE DESIGN

The design proposals for the project follow a sustainable approach that aims to offer convenience and an enriched experience of walking in sacred landscape to the pilgrims. These strategies are cost effective, environmentally friendly and help in preserving the resources of the place. The proposed design reconnects the pathway, creates water management systems, and institutes consistent planting design--these interventions ultimately enhance walking comfort and improve wayfinding.

![Figure 7.1: Pilgrimage experience](image)

7.1 PATHWAY CONNECTIVITY

Currently, there is no specific pathway for pilgrims to follow. The road along which they walk for completing the pilgrimage is fragmented as it gets interrupted by highways, heavy traffic, dense urban settlement, and other factors. Therefore, the design proposal for reconnection
consists of a clearly marked pathway alongside the road that allows pilgrims to walk on it without interruptions. The pathway design has a pattern of abstracted red arrows that point in the direction of the next shrine in the circuit’s sequence. Red is the chosen color because it holds a sacred value in Hinduism as well as has a bold aesthetic that help pilgrims identify correct directions. The asphalt pathway’s design becomes an easily identifiable guiding factor that helps pilgrims move forward without losing their way. The pathway’s width changes as per space availability and the urban condition of specific locations, but, importantly, it retains its continuity. The path is bordered by a channel and a line of trees, which create a linear system of water management discussed ahead.
Figure 7.2: Pilgrimage route pavement design
7.2 WATER MANAGEMENT AND PLANTING

In the monsoons, the streets become clogged with water due to poor drainage, which creates problems for pilgrims on foot. The first step towards water management is to create a tree-lined channel along the pathway, where the trees and plants are planted in the channel. Due to its depth of about 2-3 feet, this channel collects excess storm water flow, recharging groundwater and preventing the accumulation of water on the streets. The trees also act as a buffer between the pilgrims’ pathway and the streets, providing protection and privacy from busy vehicular traffic. The continuous tree line along the pilgrimage path also acts as a marker of the pilgrimage route. The width of the channel varies as per space availability in different urban conditions and it has a variety of trees. The excess storm water flowing into the channel helps water the bordering plants and trees.
The selection of trees for the tree channel has been based on factors like water requirements, space availability and the volume of the tree canopy. Trees and plants selected for this purpose are Bougainvillea (Bougainvillea glabra), Champa (Magnolia champaca), Ashoka (Saraca asoca), Neem (Azadirachta indica), Gulmohar (Delonix regia) and Amaltas (Cassia fistula). The planting masterplan indicates a tree line with varying colors, each of which represents a different variety of trees and plants forming a continuous line along the pilgrimage path. These trees have varying seasonal conditions and their flowering season will render the pathway aesthetically pleasing with pink, yellow, red and white flowers. Trees also provide shade for the pilgrims, creating better walking conditions. They bind the fragments of disconnected pathway together.
Figure 7.5: Selection of trees for tree line

Figure 7.6: Seasonal variation of trees and plants
Figure 7.7: Planting Design Master Plan
Figure 7.8: Pilgrimage route along highway

Figure 7.9: Pilgrimage route through rural area
Figure 7.10: Pilgrimage route through urban area
Zoning was analyzed along the walking pathway to identify walking conditions carefully. After researching the zoning along the pilgrimage route carefully, I have identified five walking conditions, namely, farm fields, rural settlement, urban settlement, highway and entry to the temple site. The first consists of farm fields. The proposed pathway along farm fields is open and wide with a continuous and thriving tree line along it, and this condition exists for the most part of the route.
Trees like Gulmohar, Amaltas, Neem are ideally planted in this condition as they get plenty of space to develop well.

![Route through farm field](image1)

Figure 7.12: Route through farm field

![Section of route through farm field](image2)

Figure 7.13: Section of route through farm field

The second is rural settlement where the pathway crosses through a small village. There are a few small buildings with flexible open spaces, and the pathway is continuous but the tree line is not as continuous as in the farm fields condition. This rural condition exists near the second temple site, Bhimchandi. Instead of trees, small plants mentioned in plant palette, like Champa and Ashoka, do not require a lot of space and can be easily planted in such conditions.
The third condition is urban settlement. This condition is quite interesting and challenging spatially because of the dense urban formations through which the pilgrimage route passes. Although the walking path here gets narrow due to the tight spaces along the street, it provides a unique experience to the pilgrims because of the changes in volume of space around their bodies. These varying spaces allow pilgrims to have a differential sense of openness and closeness around them. Due to less space, small shrubs of bougainvillea carry the continuity of green line through the highly urbanized spaces.
The fourth condition is the highway, which exists in the northern part of pilgrimage circuit where a long portion of the route coincides with a state highway. There is space along the highway’s sides where the pilgrimage route is developed. Along with the tree channel, there is a buffer ditch with shrubs and grasses, and these extended buffer areas will protect pilgrims from any accident hazards on the highway. Trees are not as continuous as farm fields but tall trees like Gulmohar and Amaltas will perform well in providing shade.
The temple site entry constitutes the fifth condition. At Kardameshwar temple, the entrance is marked by a water tank and a small village community surrounding the temple campus. At Bhimchandi temple, the complex is surrounded by a village community, but it is walled and has an entrance gateway to the temple premises. At Rameshwar temple, the site is open and somewhat secluded from the village community. It has an arched gateway that emphasizes the entry to temple campus. The Shivpur temple is a part of the urban settlement and hard to differentiate as a sacred space from nearby residential and commercial settlements. The Kapildhara temple site is secluded from village settlement. Surrounded by forest, pilgrims feel
that they are entering a sacred zone even though it does not have a formal gateway structure.

Planting design at each temple site varies as per space availability.

Figure 7.20: Route at entry of Kardameshwar

Figure 7.21: Section of route at entry of Kardameshwar

7.4 WAYFINDING

Wayfinding is a significant element in design proposals as it is a prime requirement for comfort of pilgrims. Navigation of the route is difficult in present conditions as there are extremely few signs and a lot of times, pilgrims deviate from actual path and start walking on the wrong one. Lighting design is an equally important aspect of wayfinding. Wayfinding is achieved through following strategies:
The trees in the tree channel are surrounded by grates designed in the form of the mandala, and are equipped with solar light strips. The mandala design reinforces the essence of the pilgrimage concept into physical design. It makes pilgrims aware of the mandala that they create while walking on the route. Solar lights light up the pathway, allowing pilgrims to walk in the night or early morning when its dark and cool. The mandala tree grate integrates symbology with design.

The Panchkroshi map is made into a sign that consists of a simplified outline of the route engraved into a stone slab with temple sites as markers on the route. It is installed in key places to help pilgrims locate their position on the entire pilgrimage, the distance they have covered and the distance they have yet to cover. Solar light strips light up the distance covered during night time or when dark. The sign’s slab is supported by two poles that have solar lights installed at the top, that also helps to light the pathway. The poles used are of well-seasoned bamboo reinforced with concrete to make them sturdy.
In Hinduism, there is a tradition of tying sacred thread around a tree, pole or any other sacred structure as a ritual of wish making while worshipping the god. For this purpose, bamboo poles painted red and reinforced with concrete are grouped together at each temple site entry. Provisioned with solar lights at the top, these poles are a marker of temple site entry, allow pilgrims to carry on the sacred ritual. As they reach the destination temple site, they tie the thread around these poles and ask for a wish/wishes from the gods.
These design strategies are developed to address the design problems of pilgrimage route and destination temple sites. They not only serve the utilitarian purpose, but they also create opportunities for pilgrims for experiencing the essence of journey as per their expectations. Each pilgrim walks on this pilgrimage with a purpose and a well-developed path with preserved sacred landscapes allows him or her to become immersed in the surrounding environment. The pilgrims enliven the sacred landscapes and act as a medium where pilgrims can delve deep into rich experience of journey with a comfortable and engaging walking activity.
CHAPTER 8: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF DESTINATION TEMPLE SITES

In the earlier phase of my research and work in this project, I was also looking at site developments of the five temple destination sites where pilgrims stop over each night during their journey. The site design consisted of preservation of three main elements of the site, the shrine, rest lodges and water tank and restoring them back to their original condition. Further, development of community gardens and spaces for fair, toilet and bathing services provision are proposed along with utilizing open grounds for accommodating pilgrims by provisioning deployable structures that allow them to rest and sleep.

Though, in the later stage, my focus shifted on walking experience and route conditions for which I prepared detailed drawings and illustrations, the destination site development was developed at a very conceptual level. I studied the temple sites carefully, identifying zones that need to be conserved and areas with flexibility allowing temporary arrangements for pilgrims’ activities and accommodations.
Figure 8.1: Kardameshwar Site Design

Figure 8.2: Bhimchandi Site Design
Figure 8.3: Rameshwar Site Design

Figure 8.4: Shivpur Site Design
CHAPTER 9: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Panchkroshi pilgrimage consists of various participants: pilgrims, residents and priests. Pilgrimage affects not only the lives of pilgrims undertaking this sacred journey but the residents who live in neighborhoods near the temples as well as the priests who receive these pilgrims in temples and guide them through the process. There is a relationship formed between pilgrims and residents because of their interaction during pilgrimage period. During my conversations with residents, pilgrims and priests, it became evident that they understand their specific roles in pilgrimage and respect the relationship among themselves (See Appendix A).

When walking on this journey, pilgrims walk with the minimum baggage. They don’t carry much food and limit themselves to whatever things are required for their journey. When the pilgrims when reach temple sites, there are fair gatherings arranged by state government with the aid of resident community local to such sites. After my interaction with residents in such sites, I came to know that residents have a positive attitude towards pilgrims. They welcome them whole-heartedly and participate in celebrations with them. As the lodges at the destination sites are not adequate to accommodate a huge number of pilgrims, residents in such situations come forward and help pilgrims in setting up tents on open grounds near temple complex. In this way the residents support the mission of the pilgrims (See Appendix A).

A community development program that encourages and strengthens the relationship between pilgrims and residents is crucial for creating an amicable environment during pilgrimage as well as improving economic conditions for residents. Such a program can enhance the organized exchange of tangible as well as intangible resources and improve the welfare of the pilgrims. Pilgrims, upon arrival to destination sites, require food and lodging amenities as well as
resources for cooking, worshipping and meditating in groups. Residents can provide these resources and receive payment. This saves pilgrims the trouble of having to carry a lot of goods and at the same time boosts the economic conditions of residents. This would lead to residents’ participation in pilgrimage celebrations and help them receive rewards for their efforts.

Residents can also participate in forming an organization that takes care of maintenance and design implementation of the route, including the care of trees and plants, pathway, structural installations and so on. They can be divided into groups and assigned responsibility for areas near their respective neighborhoods. Local and state government participate in assigning security forces to maintain order and prevent chaos during pilgrimage events, but the government can also take initiative for development and maintenance of a comfortable pilgrimage route as well. Even pilgrims can be encouraged to donate funds towards preservation of heritage structures, sustenance of developed pilgrim route, tree line along the route, lighting and storm water services as it preserves their sacred heritage. Pilgrims receive intangible rewards in the form of “merit of benefit” through such charity (Lochtefeld et al. 2010). In sum, a community development program coupled with implementation of sustainable design strategies is promising for reclaiming the sacred landscapes of Panchkroshi.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Growing up in the city of Varanasi, I have always experienced the holy aura of the city. Before entering the landscape architecture program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I had participated in the Panchkroshi pilgrimage as a pilgrim but I had not yet come to understand the role of landscape in pilgrimage. My research began with understanding this pilgrimage, shrines, practices and participants in this pilgrimage. It continued with documenting the fragments of the path connecting these shrines and re-envisioning a well-connected pilgrimage path with engaging landscapes that contribute to reclaiming the tradition, practices of this pilgrimage and celebrate the walking experience of pilgrims. The full potential of landscape in this pilgrimage, if realized, can offer wonderful opportunities in terms of experiences of pilgrims. Landscape in this pilgrimage acts as a spiritual medium to experience divine. It has a healing mechanism for fragmented traditions, as a suitable future. From religious, spiritual, recreational to purely utilitarian, these design solutions cater to the needs of a vast audience. To restore the faithscape of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage is what I envision for this project.

I conclude with the words of Professor Rana P. B. Singh from Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi: “A place speaks. A place talks. A place communicates. A place is a growing organism, a form of being. A place is an interrelated community, playing between man and the cosmos.”
BIBLIOGRAPHY


69


Website and online accessed references

“Kashi Mahatmya”, Web. 11 March 2017
http://www.shivshankar.in/kashi-mahatmya/

“History of the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela”, Web. January 2018
https://www.spiritualtravels.info/articles-2/europe-2/introduction/history-of-the-pilgrimage-to-santiago-de-compostela/

“Time scale changes in the water quality of the river Ganga river, India and estimation of suitability for exotic and hardy fishes”

“Urban Planning of the Heritage City of Varanasi (India) and its role in Regional Development”, Web. 2016
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237737685_Urban_Planning_of_the_Heritage_City_of_Varanasi_India_and_its_role_in_Regional_Development

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12132-008-9037-6

“The Significance of Mahashivratri”, Web. 03 November 2017

“The Route that Apostle Paul followed in Greece”, Web. 07 June 2016

“History of the Camino”, Web. 16 April 2018
http://www.americanpilgrims.org/history
APPENDIX A: ETHNOGRAPHY, FIELD STUDY INTERVIEWS

The following is the compilation of the conversation I had with priests at temple sites of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage, residents of neighborhood of temple sites and a few pilgrims. This information helped me understand the current physical condition of pilgrimage route, pilgrims’ expectations of the route and the extent of their awareness about the religious or spiritual background of the pilgrimage.

A.1 INTERVIEW WITH PRIEST

Figure A.1: Priest Anoop Tiwari

According to Anoop Tiwari, an 85-year old priest at Rameshwar, the purpose of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage is for the sake of “Worship, meditation, religious duty, salvation, desire.” He suggests that the number of pilgrims have increased over the past years. They are mostly from nearby rural areas of the adjacent states apart from U.P. such as Bihar, Jharkhand, etc. They travel annually on Shivratri and in the month of February, but also come once in three years in the intercalary month as well. He also noted that they keep coming in small batches all-round the year.
Tiwari stated that the route of travel for walking pilgrims is the route described in the holy texts such as the *Kashikhandha*. He further noted that pilgrims driving through, however, did not necessarily follow the actual route, as their purpose is to visit main shrines and not experience the entire journey. They complete the pilgrimage in a day.

Tiwari commented that though the routes lack signage, the villagers and the local people guide and support the pilgrims in the entire manner they can. But still, there is a dependency on the local people and the absence of signage makes it difficult to figure out the designated route. New pilgrims have to depend on old pilgrims as they are not aware of the routes, rituals and procedures. He suggested that a description about rituals and the temples and sites would help these people figure out the importance of the place by them and carry on specific activities. An important rule that goes unnoticed is that while walking, you can’t even spit on the right side. Even the toilet complexes are on the left side. The smaller shrines along the way are not considered important hence they are in dilapidated condition. The government doesn’t help either. He further suggested that there should be more resting lodges, toilets and bathrooms, and an improvement in the conditions of open fields. Experiences of devotion, happiness and dedication is what should be offered to pilgrims walking on the pilgrimage path.
A.2 INTERVIEW WITH PILGRIM

According to 28-year-old Sheru, a resident of Rameshwar village, he is also an ardent pilgrim of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage who walks to free himself from sins and get his wishes fulfilled. On *Shivratri*, he prefers to travel on pilgrimage through his motorbike and complete the pilgrimage within a day. He experiences “excitement, devotion and respect towards the Gods.” He also likes to help his fellow pilgrims in whatever ways he can. He speculates that in *Shivratri*, majority of pilgrims are young boys on their motorbikes. During the month of July-August every year, there is a group of pilgrims that walk up north of India to the holy site of *Badrinath*, a *Shiva* shrine. Going through the Panchkroshi pilgrimage and completing the circumambulation is a part of their larger itinerary. Most of the pilgrims walk in the intercalary month, consisting of more women than men and the routes of vehicular traffic are diverted wherever they intersect with pilgrimage route. During pilgrimage, he skips a few shrines like Lolark Kund, Durgakund, Adi Keshav. He has experienced help from the local community especially in cleaning the rest lodges, helping pilgrims prepare food, provide milk and take care of women with young children.
and their needs. He states that they also support group worshipping and singing religious songs with the pilgrims.
A.3 INTERVIEW WITH PRIEST

45-year-old priest Ram Kumar Mishra from Manikarnika Ghat helps pilgrims in rituals and oath taking, guiding and navigating them through the pilgrimage route. He describes, “the pilgrims take 3 dips in the Ganga river, take the oath, have bath in water tank and worship at Siddhi Vinayak temple, the first shrine on Manikarnika as a beginning ritual of their journey.” He believes that humans perform sins consciously or subconsciously and the pilgrimage is to free themselves from the sins. According to him, even the gods performed the Panchkroshi pilgrimage. People of all age do it, from children to old people. For the type of pilgrims, he states that in the intercalary month, majority of people from nearby rural areas participate. There is also some urban population, foreign tourists and occasionally people from other states like Bihar, Maharashtra, Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh participate too. He experiences the crowds becoming difficult to handle during Shivratri. There is a lack of signages for pilgrims to find temples after undertaking the bathe and oath that creates chaos on the ghats during peak times. He suggests that portals for people taking bath are necessary. There should be structures
for priests helping them with rituals during oath taking. Signages for people heading up to
shrines on the pilgrimage is a prime requirement as a lot of pilgrims get confused if they aren’t
guided by any priest. He takes pride in being a part of priest community for this several
generations and extreme spirituality.
A.4 INTERVIEW WITH PRIEST

Figure A.4: Priest Kripa Shankar Dwivedi

56-year-old priest Kripa Shankar Dwivedi belongs to the location of Adikeshava Ghat. He states that through this pilgrimage, the prime objective is to achieve salvation. He helps pilgrims in worship rituals and participates in community activities near temple. As per him, pilgrims now prefer to take boat along the river instead of walking along the river bank. He is disappointed in pilgrims of the Panchkroshi pilgrimage who rarely come to Adikeshava temple and they prefer to reach back to Manikarnika ghat after worshipping at Kapildhara and Jau Vinayak temple. There are days when not even one-person visits Adikeshava temple, even though it’s the oldest temple in Kashi, even older than Kashi Vishwanath temple. He also specifies that there is a lack of amenities such as toilets, resting spaces, resources for food or drinking water, shade areas, etc.

He feels pure devotion and joy serving the gods in temple. He also feels sad about the fact that Adikeshava temple is religiously important in Varanasi and a significant part of the Panchkroshi but not much pilgrims come here anymore.
A.5 INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL RESIDENT

Ram Shankar, 45 and Vibhuti Mishra, 49 are residents of neighborhood near Kapildhara temple. They participate as pilgrims during the pilgrimage events. They walk on the pilgrimage as it is an inherited tradition from ancestors. They actively indulge in worshipping, community get together, singing religious songs, helping other pilgrims with food and other amenities during pilgrimage. They are disappointed in temporary arrangements, usually provided during the intercalary month that are not enough for such enormous number of pilgrims. Water in the water tanks is never cleaned and there are activities like bathing, washing clothes that have degraded its quality. There is an entrance gateway that was supposed to be built right at the beginning of the narrow road that leads to Kapildhara temple, but it’s not even halfway done and is left as it is. There were some repairs going on in the temple which, as of now, have been stopped. Even the rest lodges don’t have proper clean staying spaces and there is an inadequacy of toilets. The big crowd, however, in the intercalary month keeps them enthusiastic and energized. They feel
elated with intense devotion. Though they also get demoralized with the current conditions of the walking paths and the staying arrangements.
A.6 INTERVIEW WITH PRIEST

80-year-old priest Radhey Shyam Giri is a priest in Kapildhara temple. He has been visiting the temple since his childhood when his grandfather used to be a priest in the temple (almost 7-8 generations). He feels there is sheer ignorance towards the conditions of the temples in the Panchkroshi pilgrimage. The work would begin for a few days and would again stop. The government and the officials allotted for the work keep half of the funds with themselves and invest a small part of it in repair work. Water tank’s water is in a pitiful condition. The water used to be clean and the environment serene, in his childhood. Apart from this, there are no shade structures around the temple for people to sit and rest for a while. From his experience, he says, “It’s exhausting for pilgrims who walk all the way to the temple and then struggle for a place to rest. Few of the rest lodges have been turned into cow sheds and one or two have been acquired by private owners who intend to develop it commercially. Water tank used to receive water from the Ganga river years ago when there wasn’t much development around the temple.
and it was all green area. Now it just has stagnant water getting dirty day by day.” As per him, pilgrims have only increased over the years. Though they suffer a lot due to inadequacies listed above. They come not only from other states of India, but also from other parts of the world. He feels that pilgrims don’t care about rituals and worshipping the shrines. They come here for selfish reasons like getting rid of their sins and salvation.
51-year-old Pankaj Giri, who lives near Adikeshava ghat also participates in the Panchkroshi pilgrimage. He feels that Adikeshava ghat temple site lacks basic facilities like toilets, resting spaces and even pavements at places where there is just bare mud. As per him, residents of his community are welcoming towards pilgrims and wish to see them walk other than the period of intercalary month. Though he admits that pilgrims face difficulty as there are no toilets and resting spaces and he feels the river bank near temple should have a boat docking point so that pilgrims can easily access boats and reach other shrines on the river bank and Manikarnika ghat from there on. The locals and priest let the pilgrims use toilets at his home and help them get resources for food with the best of his ability, he still feels this alone can’t suffice to their needs and the place must be developed. He also mentioned that since this area has good greenery, it holds a good potential to develop resting gardens here.
30-year-old Sanjay Yadav, resident of Pandeypur neighborhood along the pilgrimage route, explains that as a resident, he feels that it is difficult to manage the large crowd during intercalary month when there are thousands of pilgrims throughout the month but halting at Saarang Taalab (lake) is difficult due to scarcity of amenities. Water in the lake has not been cleaned for years. There is a lot of silt deposition that has covered all the steps leading to the lake. There is just one rest house that is dilapidated due to which pilgrims, whenever they visit, have to sleep in open grounds around temples that might be uncomfortable for women and kids. As a resident, he said the community tries to help but they also have limited resources. He undertakes the pilgrimage to get free from all the sins committed consciously or sub consciously. He understands the concept of the mandala well but feels that due to conditions getting deteriorated, the mandala needs to be protected.
APPENDIX B: IRB CERTIFICATE

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See the Transcript Report for more course information, including those of optional (supplemental) course elements.

- Name: Sarah C. Lawrence (ID: 55447230)
- Email: sclawrn@illinois.edu
- Institution Affiliation: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (ID: 4385)
- Institution Unit: Department of Landscape Architecture
- Phone: 2179049897

- Curriculum Group: Additional URUC Training
- Course Learner Group: Defining Research with Human Subjects - SIBR
- Stage: Stage 1 - Basic Course

- Report ID: 19192566
- Completion Date: 05/10/2016
- Expiration Date: 05/10/2019
- Minimum Passing: 80
- Reported Score*: 80

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY

Defining Research with Human Subjects - SIBR (ID: 490)

DATE COMPLETED

05/10/2016

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subcribing institution identified above or have been a paid independent learner.

CITI Program
Email: citi-support@umich.edu
Phone: 313-243-7970
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative at the University of Miami
COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT REPORT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most recent CTI completion, including quizzes or optional supplemental elements of the course. See the below for details. See separate Relevance Report for the potential relevance for the course. See below for more.

- Name: Salami Chachula (ID: 554673)
- Email: salami66@illinois.edu
- Institution Affiliation: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (ID: 446)
- Institution Unit: Department of Landscape Architecture
- Phone: 2179043821

- Curriculum Group: Additional UIUC Training
- Course Learner Group: Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR
- Stage: Stage 1 - Basic Course

- Report ID: 19420656
- Report Date: 05/10/2016
- Current Score**: 80

** REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES **

Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR (ID: 691) 05/10/2016

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution and this learner must have been a paid independent learner.

CITI Program
Email: citi@pitt.edu
Phone: 335-243-1910
Web: http://www.citiprogram.org

86