

## DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR CULTURAL CLUSTER: CASE OF KATRA TOWN, INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Tourism is formative nation building activity. Encouragement and promotion to region specific development, related communities is imparted by tourism. Increased affordability and advancement in technology enable people to travel and promote tourism by visiting various such sites. The tourism is widely carried forward through religious sites globally by diverse belief and cultural practices. In this paper, authors consolidate on their previous research regarding identification of various factors influencing developments of Katra Town, India. It was researched that essentials like infrastructure, security and safety are questionable at many such religious tourism potential spaces. The urban growth potential, public realm and pattern at such places is greatly affected hence-forth. Pertinently need for striving towards suitable development aspects of religious tourism sites is a potential research area in religiously driven country like India. This study put-forth an architecture design proposal based on case studies and contextual study for Katra town, India. The comprehensive design proposal is arrived at by the previous findings by the authors for the Town, local cultural aspects of the place and site study. The research is novel one contextually and would facilitate the policy makers and others in inclusive development of Katra town. Role of planning, Architecture and urban form is realized to cater emerging and multi-faceted issues in such contexts.

**Keywords:** Planning and Architecture, Cultural, Design proposal, Katra, Religious Tourism.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism activity is larger than seeing the sights. It has a lasting and deep impression, sometimes impacting the full life circle and philosophies of tourists. Urban form also contributes a great deal in areas which flourish in its shift and transformation from industrial to pre-dominantly tourism outlook. Universal globalization has refurbished

the development process in many urban centers cities relying on profits majorly. Many sites with religious context have also become prey to universal order and paved way as centers of economic development. The Socio-cultural and other contextual aspects are found missing accordingly.

India is popular tourist destinations for pilgrimage sites. It involves journey to sacred centers. Such centers have deep religious message. At times, it is articulated with symbols or demonstrated with local meaning- across traditions and culture. Indian context largely sees pilgrim centers to have association with natural sites like water shores, forests mountaintops etc.

Pilgrimage has evolved distinctly from its traditional form. Contemporary Pilgrimage see new derivations involving few-some as keen devotees and other lot having extra motive beyond the site's religious importance [1].

Hence, by focus on contextualizing (belonging to the place) these sites can help tourists. Tourist could focus aspects and entities having great impact to the physical environment. These can be potential mind impacting sites in varied way for travellers. In present context involving large tourist footfall, economic opportunities-based redevelopment of such sites is easy affair. Contemporary tourists have interests beyond that of inclusive sites [2], [3]. These interests encompass to combine everyday phenomena of the destinations. This includes discovering, participating, experiencing and gathering the all-around knowledge specific to the contextual area and site. [4]

Katra Town situated in UT of Jammu and Kashmir in India is one such Town in heart of debate [5]. Town is world famous as base town to the religious pilgrimage site of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine on Trikuta Hills. There are multi-fascinated socio-economic and socio-cultural impacts put forth by previous researches including by the authors [6] [7]. While, call for public realm quality and urban form were also put-forth. The pressure on the infrastructure and need for sustainable solutions particularly energy demands are further seriously emerging area in the context of Katra [8]. Waste production is enormous by pilgrims footfall, their stay and needs. Requirement, demand and reduction of transport needs and extent within the city could be the crux area of solving multiple problems of Katra [9]. The congestion, safety and security for the pilgrims owing to conventional transport dependence and poor planning needs immediate addressal. Security in particular is non-negotiable requirement as envisaged even in contemporary smart cities [28].

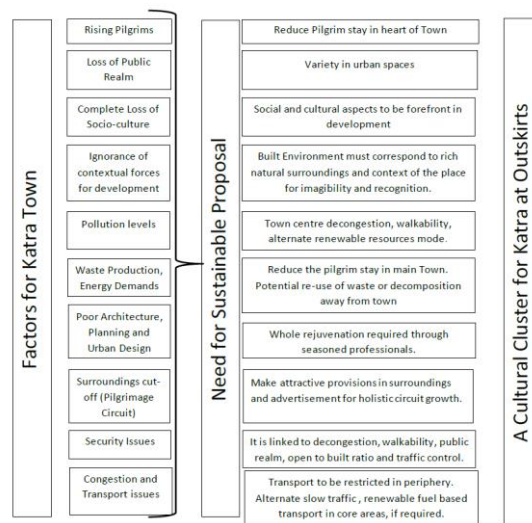
The non-promotion of rural surrounding potential is another key concern. This calls for new infrastructure to carry pilgrims in the outskirts of Katra for different attractive purposes as targeted in this paper. Such envisaged initiatives lead to inclusive developments in rural surroundings. Development not only benefits economically but access to different facilities like health also gets promoted [32]. Waste production at the heart of town can be reduced as well as carried far from the core of the town or reused to meet fuel demands at alternate location outside the existing Katra town [31].

The redevelopment scenario and changing context of contemporary pilgrimage is another aspect to ponder [5]. Planning and Architecture, Urban form without further

degrading the town congestion is hereby seen as one of the solution. It would promote decongestion of existing Katra town, promotes more tourism in surroundings of Katra for positive impact through learnings from Katra’s development scenario. The traffic congestion on highways can be further addressed for locals and visitors [29]. This research is one such example through Architecture and planning as major tool.

## II. METHODS AND TOOLS

There are various factors influencing Katra town as researched in various studies e.g. [5], [10], [21]. A summary of these factors affecting Katra town reached through researched in the previous studies of some of the current paper authors are illustrated in the representational image Fig. 01. The factors as researched calls for a sustainable proposal focusing on various components as illustrated. A cultural cluster for Katra town in its outskirts at some potential site could be a fair some solution to counter present problems it is facing and for the long term sustainability of the place, its surroundings. Solution as presented in this paper would address many issues directly like town congestion, surroundings negligence in development. Many issues like pollution, waste production and security issues in the crowded town are addressed also indirectly through the proposal of cultural cluster in outskirts of Katra town.



**Fig. 1 Factors affecting Katra [5], [10], [21] [Author]**

The design solution in terms of cultural cluster presented in the paper is apprehended in following 03 steps:

- Problems and Context affecting Katra and its built environment. Understanding travelling, various forms and factors relating to travel and how the context responds in providing wholesome experience. Focusing of various parameters that drives tourist and are essential to know a place. (through the previous

research conducted by the authors ) [10], [21]. [5].

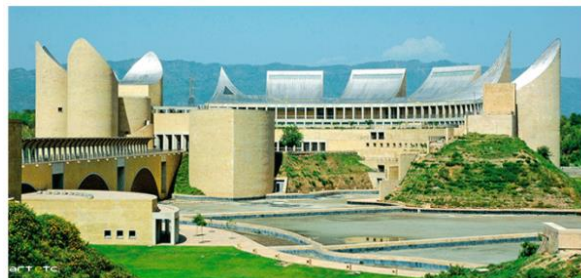
- Case studies of similar destinations to apprehend activities, tangible and intangible factors, Architecture and urban design manifestations.
- Local contextual Study of surroundings for potential proposal.

### III. CASE STUDIES

#### A. Virasat-e-Khalsa Museum in Punjab by Ar. M. Safdie)

The Heritage Complex Virasat-e-Khalsa showcases the heirloom and historical craftsmanship and communication, setting the stage for the unfurling show of Sikh Legacy [11]. The contextual spaces in the building complex's form and spaces serve as a reaffirmation of their roots for Sikhs, while for non-Sikhs, it exhibits an exciting voyage into spirited culture.

The complex is situated in the Punjabi town of Anandpur Sahib, overlooking the town and near to Anandpur Sahib (1.2km). For tourists, the entire site becomes a comprehensive complex as it offers an experience area where history is narrated through an unusual juxtaposition of paintings and installations. Oral histories, traditional crafts, and state-of-the-art technologies are used to imagine and create the museum as a whole [12].



**Fig. 2 View of Museum [22]**

Inferences:

- A magnificent work of art that exemplifies regional architecture. It uses a language of large volumes and a sense of spatial architecture to distribute the cultural and natural wealth of the region.
- Scale is used to depict status and relevance. The massive volumes show the extant of power in Sikhism.
- It been a landmark now and sets itself as contextual art responding to the context

of site.

- The forms are contemporary while vernacular is depicted in the essence of spaces.
- It's a great example of a welcoming tourist attraction that caters to a variety of interests.
- The complex has the ability to keep Sikhs connected to their origins and roots.

## B. The Heritage Street, Amritsar

Amritsar is Sikhism's holiest city, as well as its commercial and cultural centre. Sri Harmandir Sahib (The Golden Temple) [13], one of Sikhism's most treasured spiritual places, is located in the city.

One such development on Amritsar's Heritage Street enhanced the city's tourism sector, income, and imageability. It's a lovely example of how careful urban renovation can improve the accessibility, comfort, and enjoyment of public areas. The development has resulted in a complete transformation of the street experience. Lamp Posts in Vintage Style, Statues, and building facades reminiscent of Mughal and Rajputana architecture are small yet conspicuous roomy components. [14]



**Fig. 3 Traditional Elements, Heritage Street [23]**

The entire street form is impressed by the confluence of Mughal and Rajputana architectural components. Arches, Jalis, Pediments, Columns, and other architectural elements all have a distinct role to play. The same language is evoked by the structural continuity in terms of façades, regardless of different typologies. The articulation was carried out without causing any disturbance to the inside space. The streets have become more busy and intriguing, with people living there till late at night. Tourism grew dramatically as a result of the building, with visitors flocking to nearby attractions such as the Sikh museum and Jallianwala Bagh, among others. The new development exalts the city. Tourists used to come to the city for one or two days to see the Golden Temple and other landmarks, but with this stunning development, many are staying longer [10].

Inferences:

- Splendid example and interestingly thought of the urban development.

- The street caters to variety of different cultural and heritage art forms.
- The development is heavily influenced by cultural factors. All intricacies and embellishments are done in the traditional method, from the smallest to the largest.
- It responds to the context through its colors and setting.
- It has set an example for all the religiously driven site developments

### C. Delhi Haat, Janakpuri Delhi

The design process is a dialogue between the past and the present, an embrace of the traditional and its remodelling in modern times, both conceptually and physically. Dilli Haat, Janakpuri takes a novel look in its space movement and connection, which is kept barrier free and more comfortable, breaking clear of the traditional look and spirit of its other two equivalents with their brick vocabulary. The material palette of Dilli Haat, Janakpuri has been updated in response to the diversified programme that it serves [15]. The material palette is a mix of modern and traditional elements. The use of timeless red Agra stone, kota stone, slate, and local Delhi quartz stone masonry on exterior facades and landscapes gives this largely green complex a very distinct and natural typology. Bamboo is one material that is being appreciated for its widespread use; on one hand, structures for shading, screens for baskets and food courts, sculptures for street furniture, and on the other, natural growing bamboo as soft-scapes of border plantations and accent trees.



**Fig. 4 Site Plan, Delhi Haat Janakpuri [24]**

Inferences:

- Illustration of elements seen in form, color etc.
- The complex depicts good sense in built open ration.
- The user of materials governs with the site.



- The whole complex is user friendly.
- Formal and informal open spaces at regular intervals create an interesting pattern.

#### **D. Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal (Ar. Charles Correa)**

The complex's design was part of Correa's ambition to these two components generates a flow and stream of vitality around the complex.

build a modern architectural style that was unique to India and belonged to India. Using the abundant source fabric given by his homeland's rich architectural heritage. At Bharat Bhavan, Correa created a structure for the modern era that manages to stay immovably rooted in India's previous vernacular traditions. Terraces and courtyards that continue across space give the impression of a maze or puzzle, where portions are revealed at random and the complexity of internal passageways operates like a village pattern, reflecting Bhopal's own organisational system. The flow down to the site's natural grade is encouraged by the movement through the terraces, with the courtyards providing calm spaces for rest and leisure. In what Correa called a "Ritualistic Pathway [16] [17], the dialogue between these two components generates a flow and stream of vitality around the complex.



**Fig. 5 Bharat Bhavan Bhopal [25]**

#### **Inferences**

- A beautiful creation of space through form and material.
- An interestingly dramatic spatial experience.
- Incorporation of natural light and ventilation that is very less seen in galleries.
- The courtyards creating communal public space with step periphery articulating the sitting space.

- The ideology of context and publicness is well much seen.
- The whole complex becomes a place of encouraging movement, where people like to spend time.

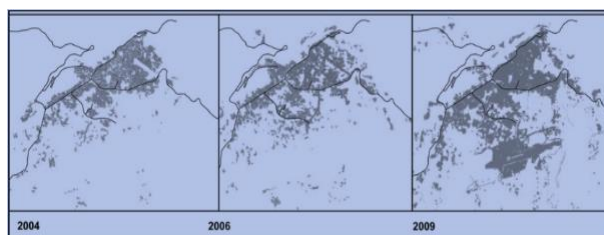
#### IV. ABOUT THE SITE

A comprehensive development responds to the town's urban surroundings, addressing the requirement for a diverse collection of people. Katra as a town has evolved and grown immensely since last 50 years in way of its infrastructure and other aspects.



**Fig. 6 Base Map of Site, Surroundings Katra [Author]**

The development has happened majorly in and around Main bazaar as focal point in a linear structure. The town is vibrant in itself because of great number of social activities due to Mata Vaishno Shrine [1], [5], [6], [7]. The general slope of the town is from north to south and from east to west.



**Fig. 7 Growth Morphology in surroundings [5]**

#### A. Site Analysis

The site selection is done based on activities identification for cultural cluster and



factors affecting the Katra town presently as illustrated in figure 1. Moreover, the context vouch for serene and peaceful surroundings for tranquility of mind and soul for such locations devoted to religious pilgrimage, as also identified by Geetika et.al (2019) [10]. Such a site would be near to Katra also and would also be promoting surroundings' tourist circuit potential. Also, the vastness and context of the site is good enough to accommodate and attract the visitors of different age groups owing to different needs expected out of such places as contained in design program through the case and site studies.

Location: Katra (outskirts) 6km from town Site Area: 12.5 acres; 50585.71sq.mts.

Since the major attraction of this development was from tourists, the site was taken at the outskirts of the main town adjacent to the connecting highway that forms a tourist circuit combining other touristic spots [5], [6].



Fig. 8 Site Images [Author]



Fig. 9 Google image of Site

## B. Climatic Data

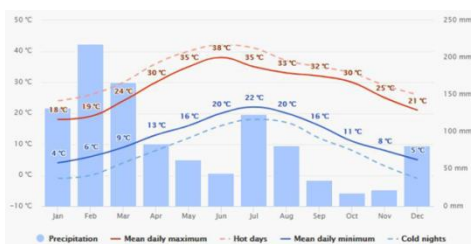


Fig. 10 Average Temperature [26]

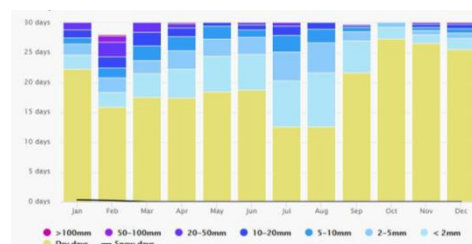


Fig. 11 Average Precipitation [26]

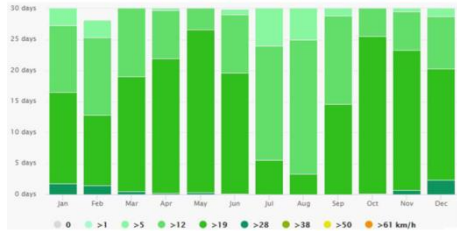


Fig. 12 Wind Speed [26]

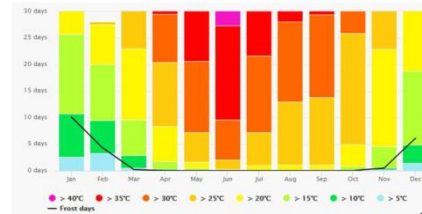


Fig. 13 Maximum Temperature Data [26]

### C. Flora, Fauna and Materials

The flora -fauna is of Pine forests, Subtropical dry evergreen forests, Himalayan moist and dry temperature forests, , sub-alpine and moist-alpine forests, lower Shivalik Chir (Pinus roxburghii), Pine forests,

Common Leopard, Leopard Cat, Jungle cat, Jackal, Common Fox, Rhesus monkey, Common Indian Hare and Mongoose.

Stone, Bamboo, bricks, wood, gravels etc. are the main materials available and commonly employed in the area.

## V. DESIGN IDEALOGIES

### A. User Identification and design Initiation

In this research different tourists were first examined and their needs were considered in forming different set of areas. A scheme (design) was obtained in order to provide a travelling experience and set a balance between different travelling groups and individuals.

Through different interviews and questionnaires different tourist groups were understood. And further they were categories broadly into Tourists who come frequently, special visitors and local people (people travelling from adjacent areas). It was very important to understand the level of engagement between such varied groups and provide a solution that helps everyone simultaneously.

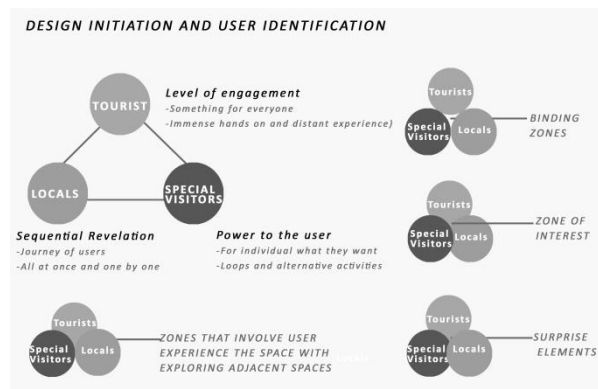


Fig. 14 Design Initiation [Author]

## B. Space Analysis and Area Programming

Through the understanding of various users the spatial analysis to regard of spatial planning was thought.

It was through the design how different set of people were targeted. Since the research entitles cultural cluster, the spaces were in respond to the cultural psyche of people and responding to the context of chosen site. [18]

All the spaces that combine to become the part of whole complex goes in a very easy flow movement, where each individual gets driven and interested with virtual illustrations and audio visuals.[19]

Different galleries, performing zones, Workshops, plazas, activities concerning nature and environment, social practices, traditional craftsmanship etc were all part of the huge 12.5acres site.

## VI. DESIGN PROPOSAL

The process of designing started with understanding the importance of site and respecting the site as well as the context. Since, the site belongs to a region which is very particular about the tourist that are coming and mainly many of them are directed to one direction i.e. Pilgrimage. So it was essential to showcase and form a path that leads to a journey which stays with them forever.

So the process started with making the whole site pedestrian friendly and providing vehicular road at the periphery with minimum surface parking so that the maximum area could be used for different open area activities.

In the process of combining different set of people in a way that they belong to one site the central space (transitional space) was created. This is marked for various plazas and activities. These activities could be social activities, festival activities and etc.



**Fig. 15 View of Proposed Site Layout [Author]**

The result of creating such a space was based on the significance of:

- Encouraging person to person and person to environment interaction and gaining knowledge about various local traditions.
- Making an enjoyable and positive environment.
- Experiential journey that promotes the user participation.

Combining to this, site was divided into three parts the main block that included all the different galleries and workshop areas, the conventional block which had all the performing zones with library facilities and a common recreational plus accommodation block. The blocks were placed according to their functionality and the form was derived through the site contours. [5]

The flowing form was chosen to depict the barrier free movement within the blocks. It was important to understand and respect the individual needs. The central big block was provided with cultural gallery, heritage gallery, sculpture gallery, different workshops at different levels. Ground floor was left open with integrating plazas and open galleries that form the part of cultural landscape.

A journey through different mediums was explained at every floor that would keep the visitors intact to the site.

Though the form looks like inward planning scheme but functionality was such that all the peripheries were open to outside that would give users a feeling of being outside while being inside and vice-versa.

The central plazas creates a contemplative void, enhancing the placed of sculpture courts, open galleries and different display areas. The route was encouraging with spaces to rest and relax in a very calm way.

The idea for developing the whole site as a one was to retain the essence of the place as the small town. It has a main street and everything revolves around that street and that's how it makes the people feel as if they belong to this place. Moreover the tourists that comes to the town are very comfortable and enjoys that form of dynamic environment. The language changes from morning to afternoon, and from afternoon to night. So, it was interesting to create a space that focuses on need of local people and manages to meet the desire of contemporary society. Most importantly, by use of local architectural style, architectural elements and material usage etc.

**Fig. 16 Proposed Site Layout [Author]**



Site being on the way of very prominent tourist circuit, it became much more important and challenging to amalgamate the surroundings. The whole site was a part of beautiful landscaped area where Trikuta Hills were just beside the site. Whole skyline hold back by the hills gave us beautiful spots and tend us to open the site to maximum landscaped area.

In understanding the whole process of journeys and experiential spaces where multiple users will be the users at a particular time it was very important to understand and respect every one's choice to some extent.

In this modern era it has become essential to understand and provide an architecture that responds to the context in way of its form, style, material etc. in a modern way [14]. Attempt to see Architecture as amalgamation of three C's i.e. Climate, Culture

and Construction is advocated and manifested by the author through this small attempt.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The whole idea about making such unique project came with a very basic understanding and realization about the place. Understanding that how important it has become these days to focus on such important sites. Such sites which are being neglected due to high demand in development of large cities. Moreover as a wholesome idea these type of projects help in satisfying different group of people.

As quoted in the previous paper "Pilgrimage sites" were an important part of life, still is very important part of life and will always continue to be as long as the mankind exists [21]. Hence judicious solutions owing to comprehensive development of such sites as per changing times, changing context for complete experience as intended for tourists is the key. Sole physical economy motives must not be superlative always.

Future research could focus on detailing more on Architecture and construction aspects because of its variable subjectivity. Contextual cultural practices must be explored in such locations for safety, economics of construction and sense of place. Low cost and energy efficient materials would offset the visitors' impact indeed [30].

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are grateful to the support extended by profession, Universities and Government administration departments directly or indirectly in this research. We have tried best as we could to cite and acknowledge all the used resources. There is no funding received for this research. There is no conflict of interest among authors. Besides any other conflict of interest, if any, may be avoided for better exchange of knowledge and research. Research is attempted in the interest of pilgrimage sites for improved human experiential part.

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