

INDEX

**HISTORIC CITIES & CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS HERITAGE:
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Rana P. B. Singh, Olimpia Niglio, Editors

- THE SACRED NODES OF PAÑCHAKROSHĪ YĀTRĀ ROUTE,
VARANASI (INDIA): SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES, AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE
Rana P.B. Singh, Santosh Kumar 123
- MINIATURE PAINTINGS - A BLUEPRINT OF BUNDI'S
HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE
Vijaya Srinivasan, Minal Sagare 143
- CULTURAL-ECCLESIASTICAL HERITAGE IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE:
HINTS AND STRATEGIES FOR A SYSTEMIC ENHANCEMENT
Francesca Daprà 155
- RECORD AND EVALUATION OF THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE ASSETS
OF ANO SYROS, THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE MULTICRITERIA SYSTEM
Eleni Linaki, Konstantinos Serraos 167
- THE CONTINUOUS AND NECESSARY REGENERATION OF THE CHARACTER
OF A PILGRIMAGE ROAD TWO ARCHITECTURES BY PAOLO ZERMANI
Edoardo Cresci 175
- THE GULF OF MEXICO: THE OTHER MEDITERRANEAN?
ELEMENTS OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY
Silvia Aloisio 181
- STATISTICAL STUDIES OF TYPICAL MEXICAN COLONIAL BELFRIES
IN MEXICO CITY, MORELOS, OAXACA AND PUEBLA AND
THEIR SEISMIC VULNERABILITY
Antoine Dib 195

MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGES. "THE HOSPITALITO IN IRAPUATO, GTO." Colmenero Fonseca Fabiola, Ávila Hernández Ma. De La Luz, Preciado Adolfo	209
PHOTO CAPTIONS	221

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**HISTORIC CITIES & CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS HERITAGE:
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Vol. 2



THE SACRED NODES OF PAÑCHAKROSHĪ YĀTRĀ ROUTE, VARANASI (INDIA): SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES, AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Varanasi, one of the sacred-heritage cities in India, manifests the cosmic symbolism in its planning with the form of multiple concentric sacred layers as territory. These sacred areas are being circumambulated by thousands of pilgrims during sacred periods of the Hindu calendar, where the Pañchakroshī pilgrimage represents one of these sacred cosmic layers in Varanasi. The pilgrimage route of Pañchakroshī covers 25 *kroshtas* (55.2 miles, or 88.5km) distance with five sacred nodes which act as night-halt during the mass pilgrimage. This pilgrimage is traditionally being concluded in six days by stopping at every five nodes for a night. The five nodes of the route act as a threshold point where walking pilgrims take a break for the night and have the pleasure of ‘mundane’ and restart their sacred journey in the next morning proceeding towards ‘sacred’. The node consists of multiple *dharmshālā* (pilgrims’ rest house), one sacred water tank/ or hand pump, and one major temple to house the cultural-religious activity of pilgrims like cooking, eating, sleeping, gathering, listening to spiritual discourses, sacred bathing, worshiping, and associated activities. During the sacred month of pilgrimage, these five nodes become the most active points in the whole sacred route where the three separate entities rest house, sacred tank, and temple connect and work, reciprocally and interconnectedly. The vast openness of the temple complex with sacred tanks and holy trees altogether creates a contrast in the narrow route and courtyard-style rest houses within the node. The mapping of all five nodes will define the contrast and similarity inbuilt and open space. Identification of different typologies in build form according to their spatial character will further help in understanding the regeneration of these cultural religious spaces and making pilgrimage tourism more viable.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, route, Nolli map, pilgrimage route, future prospect, *dharmashala*, mapping, typology, symbolism.

INTRODUCTION

“Probably when people became people and they began to think, to remember, to want a deeper experience of perceived reality, the pilgrimage begins” (Clift and Clift, 1996: 22). It is commonly believed that in the ancient period, the Panchakroshi route was not given importance; in fact, most of the area outside the main city was covered with forest and woodland (Singh, 2004: 53). The myths referred to this route in the ca. CE 12th century, and found again in a more developed form in the later myths (ca. CE 16th century) (Gutschow, 2006: 207-208). An abundance of myths concerning this sacred journey is also found in the literature (see Singh, 2002). The myths involved in narrating these systems are not only things of the past, “they direct a new vision of human understanding. The spatial nature of a cosmogony about series of sacred sites and their interlinking routes refer to a paradigmatic reiteration of the archetypal meaning of heaven and earth, this of course as mythically separate” (Singh, 1993: 248). Through circumambulation (*pradakshinā*), a pilgrimage circuit, pilgrims pass through a defined sacred route that interlinks series of sacred places attached, and serves as key centres of prayer and offerings, rituals, and related religious festivities, and are manifested and referred to as auspicious symbolism (Kumar, 2021 b: 232).

Since the 16th century, Pañchakroshī (Panchakroshi) Yatra (sacred journey) had become quite popular amongst pilgrims in India. Multiple scriptures from different parts of north India describe the details of this journey with fruitful results. Also, the third section of the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, known as *Kashi Rahasya*, is a

collection of myths about this pilgrimage. A widely known poet-saint of devotional movement in the medieval period, Tulasi Das (1547-1623), also glorified and eulogized this sacred path as the outer limit of Varanasi's sacred territory (Singh, 2004: 116-117). The Marathi text, the *Guru Charitra* (41.265-317), dated CE 1538, describes all the sacred spots on this route (Singh, 1987b: 156). During the Mughal ruling period, many of the important symbols and temples were destroyed, including the temple of the patron deity of the city, Vishvanatha (see Singh and Rana, 2022a). However, at the end of the 18th century, which was a period of strong Hindu renaissance, many were recovered, revived, and became active as part of pilgrimage tradition. By the end of the 19th century, the Panchakroshi Yatra path had returned as a popular pilgrimage circuit whereby the five night-halts were established, and 44 *dharmshalas* (pilgrims' rest houses) were built (see Singh, 2002: 145-146). Through the centuries, Hindu devotees have engaged in pilgrimage travel to find what is timeless and eternal in an attempt to renew their physical and cognition state. As such, pilgrimage in Hindu religious tradition is a process of gaining access to the "way", or going from a mundane state to a state of transcendence through engagement with the festivities at sacred places and along the pathway pilgrims engage with the "spirit of place" (*genius loci*), where faith is increased, regulated, constantly revived rituals performed along the way and at sacred destinations; in fact, "the will to pilgrimage involves a surrender of self to the divine through ongoing, intergenerational experiencing the spirit of place" (Singh, 1998: 57).

THE MULTIPLE TERRITORIAL LAYERS

Varanasi is the first and foremost sacred city in India, known as the cultural capital for Hinduism. The city structure had evolved in such a way that its signs, symbols, and invisible meanings correlate with sacred geometry and physical territorial boundary that reflects the city's cosmological significance. In a theological context, "Varanasi developed originally as a sacred city and later became a holy city. Varanasi is what it is because of pilgrimage circuits, the interlinking shrines, and temples, and the manifested powers imposed therein at different degrees. Kashi is a cosmogram. The ancient name of the city-territory is Kashi, i.e., *Kāshya eti Kāshī*; where the light of cosmos concentrates and illuminates in the circular territory is known as Kashi" (Singh, 1994: 191). Varanasi is considered to be a "cosmocised sacred city", in that the city acts as the centre of various cosmic axes that together represent the universe. More specifically, the centre of this sacred geometry is the Shiva temple of Madhyameshvara, the "Lord of the Centre", on the north bank of the Mandakini Tirtha, which, in Hindu cosmology, is surrounded by a mythic territory or sacred field (*kshetra*) referred to as the Kashi Mandala ("*maṇḍala*", i.e., "circle") (see Singh, 2002: 31, 39). This sacred territory has been divided into five layers (Fig. 1) of sacred route moving from outermost to innermost of the Madhyameshvara temple in Varanasi (Gutschow, 2006: 211, also 268-269, and 379). Here 'Five' also represent the connection to five 'gross elements' (*mahābhūtas*) of the entire creation in the Hindu mythological concept, viz. water, air, earth, fire, and sky/ether, parallel to that of symbolising five incarnations of Vishnu, the Hindu God of sustenance, representing respectively as Matsya (Fish), Kurma (Tortoise), Varaha (Boar), Narasimha (Man-Lion), and Vamana (Dwarf) (Singh, 1987a: 308). By this archetypal manifestation, the interconnectedness between the divine and the human realms can be perceived and expressed into the true form of natural existence (Eck, 1982: 30). The five sacred territories are further explained as the symbol of 'gross elements' and compared with the corresponding body archetypal symbols, transcendental power, and the sheaths (Table 1).

Macrocosm: Nature Element	Mesocosm: Sacred Route	Shrines on the route	Microcosm: Part of Body	Transcend-ental Power	Sheath (<i>Chakra</i>)
Sky	Chaurashikroshi	144	Head	Consciousness	Food
Earth	Panchakroshi	108	Legs	Action	Mind
Air	Nagar Pradakshina	72	Face	Cognition	Breath
Water	Avimukta	72	Blood	Wisdom	Intellect
Fire	Antargriha	72	Heart	Bliss	Bliss

Table 1. Kashi (Varanasi): Five Layers of Sacred Territories and associated symbols. (Source: Singh, 1991: 57)

The Panchakroshi Kshetra (territory) shows an organised and meaningful archetype in the intermediate realm of integration between macrocosmos (cosmos/heaven), the culturally conceived universe marking the outer edge (here it is *Chaurashikroshi*; see Singh and Rana, 2022b), and the microcosmic (temple/human body) world of a closed territory forming a small compound (the area surrounding the Vishveshvara temple) (see Singh and Rana, 2016: 1-2). In the light of ecological concept, the Panchakroshi Kshetra like a developed kingdom allowing the fulfilment of Hinduism's potentials for ordering a community, to be called "climax communities" as suggested by Levy (1990: 28). Here developed its potential for systematic complexity and with it temporal stability (e.g., sacred time for pilgrimage). This idea is narrated in various mythology by referring to this sacred territory as "Light-

manifested Shiva Linga" (*pañchakroshātmaka jyotirlingam*) and is understood by the pilgrims as they express that "while we are performing pilgrimage on the sacred earth, the divinities are also performing pilgrimage in the heavens, that is how we get merit" (Singh, 2009: 94).

These five sacred journey routes are identified by the respective boundaries in a series and never crossing one another, and are connoted as the five *koshas*, the 'sheaths' (Singh, 2022: 102). That is how *kosha* as are analogous to the five gross elements of an organism according to Hindu mythology and also "with human being where the outermost (*annamaya*/food-made) *kosha* being the material body and the innermost (*ānadamaya*/bliss-made) *kosha* being the subtle body" (Eck, 1986: 46). By this archetypal manifestation, the interconnectedness between the divine and the human realms can be perceived and expressed into the true form of natural existence (see Eck, 1982: 30).

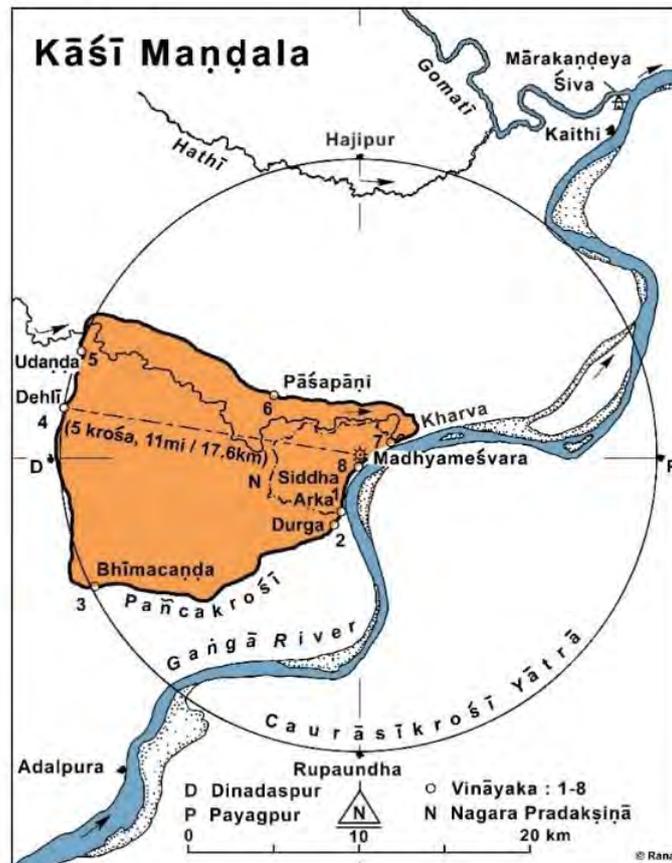


Fig.1. Kashi Mandala, marked with a series of three pilgrimage routes (after Singh, 1987: 155, and Singh, 1993: 242).

THE PANCHAKROSHI ROUTE AND FIVE NODES

As prescribed in pilgrimage treatises and conventionally accepted rules, pilgrims performing the Panchakroshi Yatra complete the pilgrimage (88.5 km) over six days, staying overnight at the five 'halt stations' (*vāsa-sthān*) at the five nodes, and recommence their journey in the following morning. Each of these five halts (nodes) has attached a sacred water tank, temple, and multiple rest houses to accommodate the walking pilgrims. A total of 108 temples directly associated with the Panchakroshi route have been located along the right side of the sacred path (Fig. 2). During the sacred time, these five halt stations become the most active point of the whole yatra route with generating much spiritual and cultural activity to support the act of pilgrimage.

As per the text, the *Kashi Rahasya*, which explains the five ways to perform Panchakroshi Yatra according to the number of days and overnight stays involved in the pilgrimage period. For one over-night stay, pilgrims have to stay at the bank of Varana river at the 3rd node (Rameshvara); for two halts, one night at the 2nd node (Bhimachandi) and the other at the bank of Varana, the 3rd node; for three over-night stays, halting additionally at Durga Kunda; for four nights, staying at 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th node (Kardameshvara, Bhimachandi, Rameshvara, and Kapiladhara); and for five nights, in addition to the preceding four stops 4th node (Shivpur) is added after Rameshvara (Fig. 2; also Table 2). But the five-day journey is the most common and believed to be more merit-giving. Of course, taking into view harsh weather, sometimes pilgrims complete the journey within 3 nights.

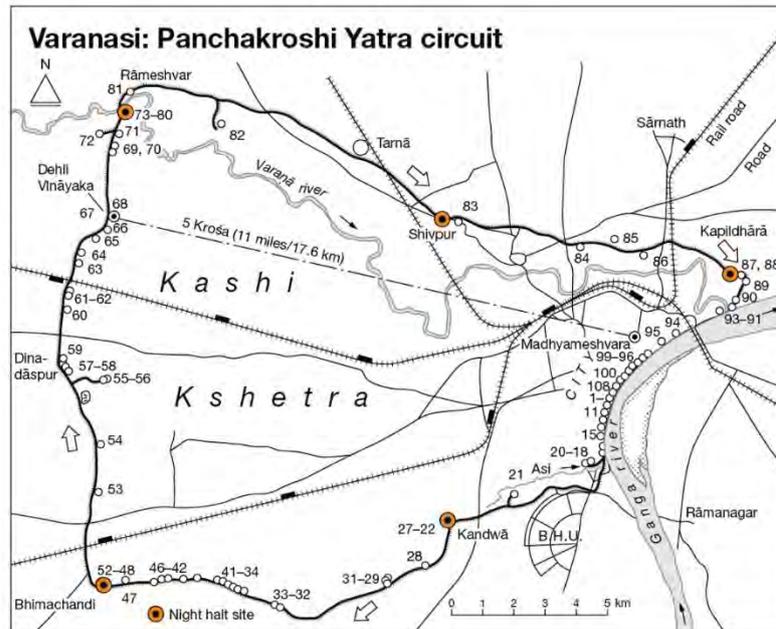


Fig 2. Varanasi: Panchakroshi route with 108 sacred temples and five-night halt (based on Singh, 1987: 156, also Singh and Rana, 2002: 163).

S.n.	Starting place	Overnight stop, last site	Distance, km	Context of the environs	No. of Shrines	
					Se. No. from - to	Total
0	Manikarnika	Kardameshvara	12.5	Urban	1 - 27	27
1	Kardameshvara	Bhimachandi	15.9	Agricultural	28 - 52	25
2	Bhimachandi	Rameshvara	23.0	Rural	53 - 80	28
3	Rameshvara	Shivpur	15.9	Town	81 - 83	03
4	Shivpur	Kapiladhara	10.6	Urban	84 - 88	05
5	Kapiladhara	-- return --	5.3	Waterfront	89 - 108	10
	Total		88.5		108	108

Table 2. Five Nodes along the Panchakroshi route with their distance and context. (Source: Singh, 1991: 61)

It is believed that the creating image of a space is a two-way process, it is the result of an interaction between the observer and the space in which they live. The process is not just how one sees things and others, but also how others see us as a part of the same space. Consequently, it reflects the influence of observer and environment on each other; "Nothing is experienced by itself, but concerning its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of the past experiences" (Lynch, 1960: 1). The five nodes along the Panchakroshi route are interlaced between three main building components, i.e., the temple, the sacred water tank, and the pilgrims' rest house (*dharmashālā*). These three major components support generating multiple cultural, religious, and physical activities during the yatra period as pilgrims become a part of the whole environment. The continuous placement of the rest house along the left side of the sacred route guides pilgrims further towards the temple complex, here the built heritage becomes a character of the space manifestation. The architectural style of the rest houses also gives a sense of belongingness to pilgrims as it follows a similar module of repetitive courtyard and colonnade. At the same time, the vast openness of the temple complex uplifts the spirit of exhausted pilgrims who witness it after a long walk. Open spaces along the rest house accommodate large gatherings of pilgrims to involve in discoursing stories from religious texts (*kathā-pravachana*) and other cultural activities. These open spaces are directly linked with the rest house and also have a community kitchen for serving food during the yatra period. These three entities of the Panchakroshi node cannot be separated as their functions are interlinked, interdependent, and managed by each other; the absence of one character can bring mess to the whole yatra system.

KARDAMESHVARA

Panchakroshi Yatra begins from the old part of Varanasi city and passes through a compact urban fabric before arriving at the first node Kardameshvara (Fig. 3), which represents an example of superimposed layers of growth, starting from the 9th, 10th to 13th centuries; as the temple iconography forms like Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Primordial and animistic too (Havell, 1905: 193). However, Sherring (1868: 178) opines that this temple presents the finest specimen of sculpture, but he thinks no temple in the region is older than 200-300 years; unfortunately, he was biased and wrong! In the southern part of the platform, there are fragments of the ancient shrine which consisted of the images of divine dancers, musicians, snakes, and mythical beasts; these figures date back to the 9th-10th century. During the period of the Gahadavala dynasty (12th century) most of the upper parts were built (Singh and Jaiswal, 2018: 58).



Fig.3. Kardameśvara temple: Overview (photograph by Rana P.B. Singh, 2015; for details of cross-section and divine images, see (Gutschow, 2006: 246).

Kardameshvara is a sub-urban area mostly dominating residential land use mixed with commercial. The pilgrims first visit the main Kardameshvara temple followed by five other auxiliary shrines in the sequence of the yatra route before halting at the rest house at the end (Fig. 4). The character of this sacred node stands in a contrast with an ornated temple, vast sacred water tank, and open spaces. There appears a total of 10 dharmshalas (pilgrims' rest houses) supported by open ground built in a modular courtyard surrounded by a pillared hall on the four sides.

The sacred route passing through the node is defined by a series of rest houses along the left side and mixed-use buildings on another side. The street character is defined with the parapet of rest houses and overhanging balcony, though new development along the sacred route is not following the similar character which makes it hard to recognize from outside. In a few areas, the sacred path has encroached with unauthorized development which further creates congestion during the mass movement of foot pilgrims, especially during festive occasions. This is an example of increasing materialistic ideologies and loosening of civic sense.

The temple complex of Kardameshvara incorporates a large sacred water tank 'Kardama Kunda' attached to the main temple, which is one of the largest within the city environs. The Kardama Kunda is also a part of the origination of one of the sacred rivulets 'Asi' in Varanasi which further gets linked with the adjacent water body Kandwa Pokhara. The sacred tank is surrounded by descending steps with two rainwater inlets on the east and the west side. In Hinduism, water and religion are bound to each other; "often central to religious cosmogony, water can be understood as a manifestation of the divine or is held to be governed by a divine being or beings. Water may be associated with sexuality, or otherwise perceived to be involved with the generation of life, or with healing, purification, or sacralization" (Singh, Rana, and Kumar, 2021: 13).

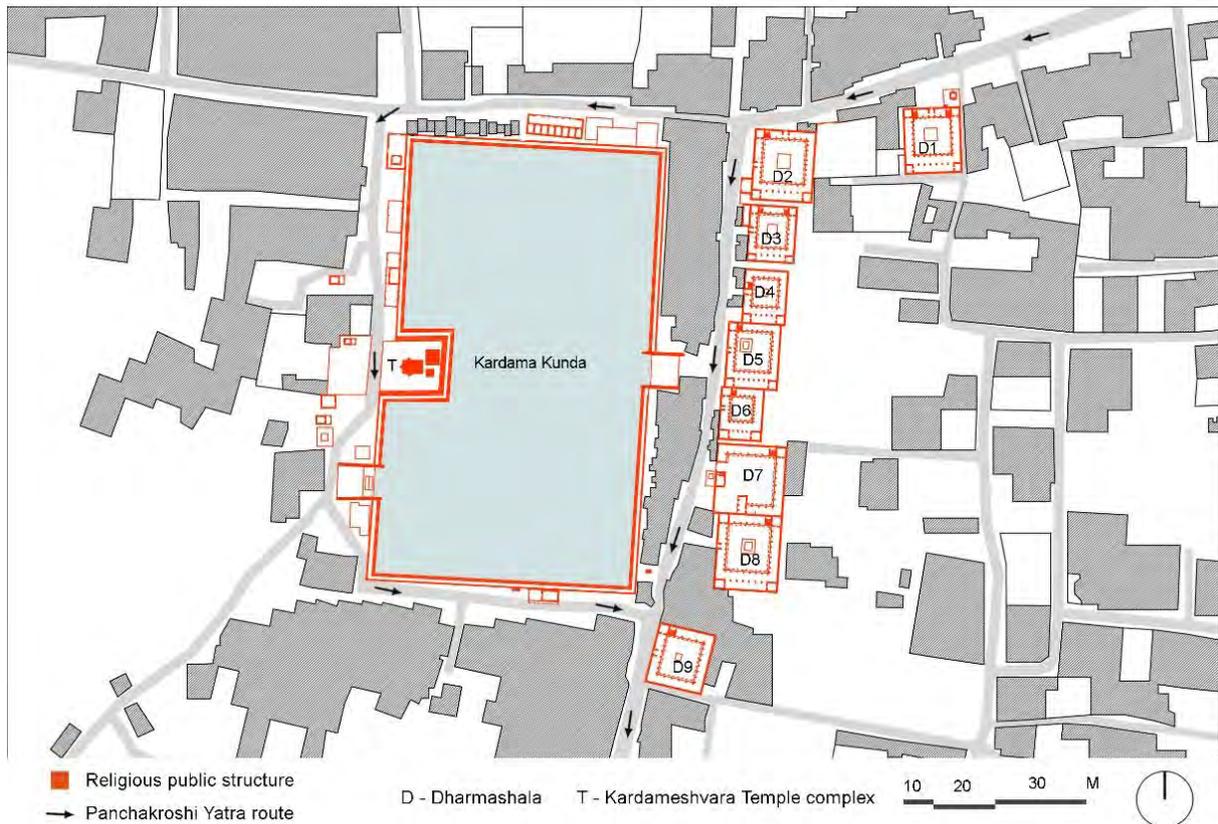


Fig.4. Kardameshvara: Nolli map depicting sacred route, temple complex, and rest house (modified and developed after Singh and Jaiswal, 2018: 60, see also Singh, 1991: 66).

Many sacred trees like *mango* (*Mangifera indica*) and *neem* (*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.) are located along the edge to support the biodiversity of the sacred tank, and help to make the territory sacrosanct. The east edge of the tank is faced by the rear façade of a mixed-use building which suddenly breaks the scale of the temple complex. The supporting corner pavilion structures are being neglected and overbuilt by locals causing the loss of religious cultural heritage sites.

The rest houses, 10 in total, are lying along the left side of the sacred route defined by similar yet unique architectural characters. These are low-maintenance building that has been built to support the religious and cultural activities of pilgrims. The basic structure consists of a single story with a terrace roof built around a courtyard surrounded by a pillared hall on all the sides. A shallow gutter is cut into the slab along the courtyard edge to collect rainwater which further flows in to back garden. Multiple small platforms have been built along with the courtyard on which the pilgrims prepare their meals. The covered area around the courtyard, generally deeper on the south side, has been provided to reduce the heat gain in the building. However, the front open area of these rest houses is being over-constructed by local dwellers which further makes it hard to recognize the identity of the building from outside. The renovation has been done to a few rest houses without keeping their original character causing the loss of traditional identity to this built heritage.

BHIMACHANDI

After resuming their sacred journey from Kardameshvara, pilgrims walk through small settlements and agricultural land. Bhimachandi is a small village named after goddess 'Chandi' with five divine images (Fig. 5) and a large sacred water tank 'Gandharva Sagar', described in pilgrimage treatises. The built structure of this tank is planned, having entrance steps from north and south, and at the centre there is a pole (Singh and Rana, 2002: 167). The village has around a hundred dwellings for residential use with a contrast of 7 rest houses supported with open ground, 2 temple complexes, and a sacred pool (Fig. 6). The main economy of this village relies on agriculture and pilgrimage tourism during the yatra period. The heritage quality of the sacred infrastructure has been maintained to a good level as it is being used by locals for community workspace. Here it becomes easy for pilgrims to identify the sacred structure as they display similar architectural characters throughout the left side of the sacred route, perceived as mundane.



Fig.5. The courtyard and entrance to Bhimachandi temple (photograph by Rana P.B. Singh, 2015).

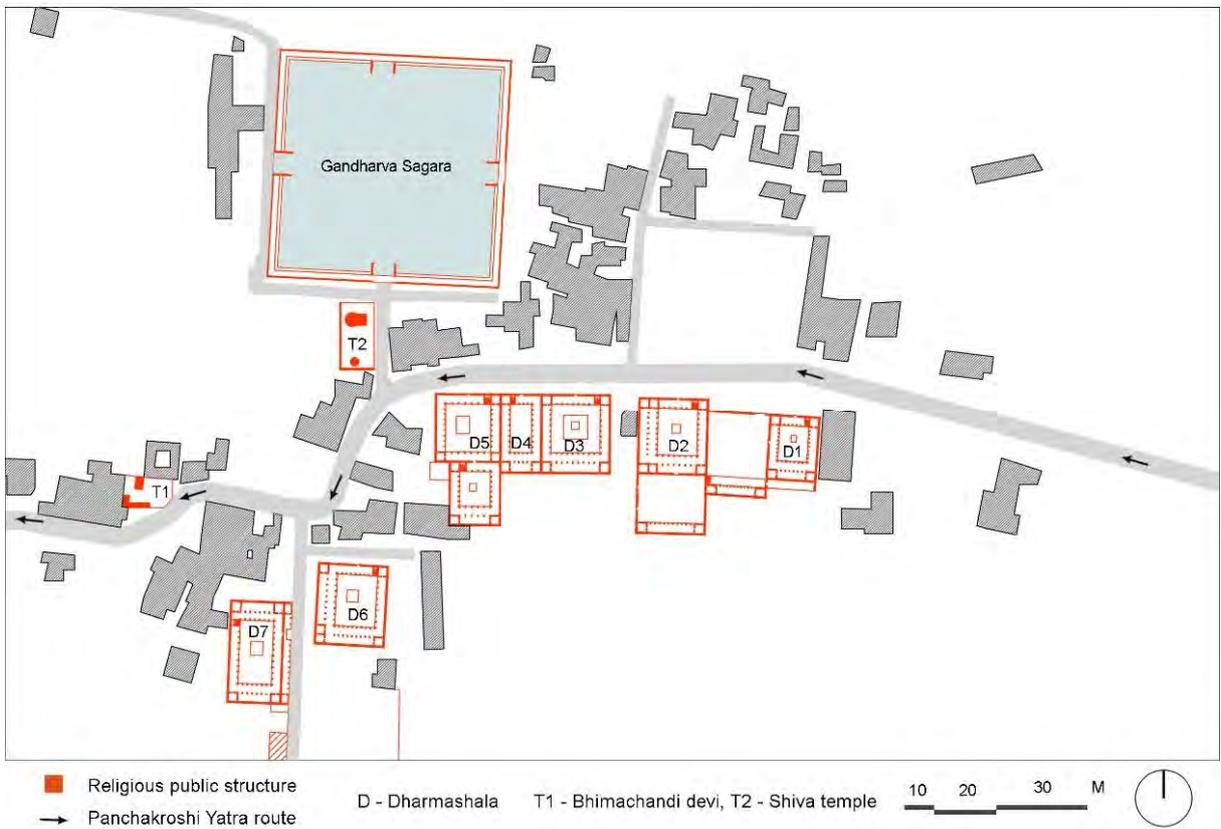


Fig.6. Bhimachandi: Nollis map depicting sacred route, temple complex, and rest house (modified and developed after Singh, 1991: 69).



Fig.7. The rural environment nearby to Bhimachandi: see the two shrines (Karuneshvara, and Moksheshvara, i.e., No. 30 and 31 on the Panchakroshi route) and farming activities (photo by Rana P.B. Singh, 2015; for details see, Singh, 2002: 90).

The sacred route at Bhimachandi passes through low-rise rural settlements (Fig. 7), where the left edge is commonly dominated by similar characters of pilgrims' rest houses. As one walks on the sacred path, all visual and olfactory elements help them to redirect toward the main temple complex, while passing through the sacred tank. Both sides of the route have extra open space which helps locals to set up their temporary shops during the pilgrimage period, which helps to revive their economy. There are many sacred trees lined along the sacred route that provide shade to the walking pilgrims.

The temple complex consists of two major sacred complexes located at Bhimachandi, the one dedicated to the god Shiva (Gandhareshvara) with a large water tank (Gandharva Sagar) and the other to the goddess Chandi. The Sikhara of the Shiva temple is visible from a far distance and as pilgrims approach the complex, they are left in wonder to find a large water tank in the middle of a small village. Whereas the main temple complex (Bhimachandi) is a cluster of small shrines arranged along the wall like a display stands at the turning point of the sacred route to welcome the pilgrims. The whole complex is shaded with the large foliage of sacred trees which also get worshiped along with other shrines. The sacred pool Gandharva Sagar has a pole in the centre with access from all four sides and is being used by locals regularly. The edge of the tank is adorned with a stone platform and sacred trees like the *banyan* (*Ficus benghalensis*), the *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*), the *neem* (*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.), and the *pakad* (*Ficus benjamina*). These trees have medicinal healing qualities, and are considered sacred; in fact, the pipal considered a tree of mighty and ambiguous power; the neem, an embodied form of a goddess whose presence is enhanced with colourful ornamentation and a facemask appended to its trunk; and the banyan, a tree noted for its association with longevity and immortality (see Haberman, 2013). Of course, the natural environment is dominated by mango groves and the sacred trees, thus providing a proper setting for a sacrosanct environment and divine experience (Singh and Rana, 2002: 169).

The rest houses at Bhimachandi have been supported alongside with large open ground for pilgrims gathering space during the yatra. Most of the rest houses, ornamented with carved arches along the courtyard are the most beautiful among all the rest houses along the Panchakroshi route. The original quality of the sacred heritage has been maintained to a reasonable level by the local people as they regularly use this space for household work. Bhimachandi can stand as an example to understand the value of community participation towards the conservation of the Panchakroshi route and its associated sacred heritage attributes.

RAMESHWARA

On the third day, pilgrims walk through the suburban landscape of approximately 23 km before reaching the third halt station Rameshwar village, named after the temple complex (Fig. 8). The name 'Rameshvara' has been derived from the presiding deity at the site, 'Rameshvara' – a form of lingam believed to be established by the god Rama himself on the Varana, another sacred river, while he was performing the Panchakroshi yatra. Rameshwar is a small village located along the eastern bank of river Varana with the predominance of residential and agricultural land uses. The village is also widely known for 'Karttika Mela' [*Lotā Bhañtā Melā*], a yearly festival dedicated to the village guardian deity. Rameshvara, the third node of the Panchakroshi yatra route is the most active node among all, as even on normal days, it is crowded with local pilgrims and devout visitors.



Fig.8. The courtyard and entrance to Rameshvara temple (photograph by Rana P.B. Singh, 2015).

The **sacred route** of Rameshvara passes through a narrow lane encroached by rest houses on the left side and a residential building on the right (Fig. 9). Continuous series of rest houses with low rise village settlement where the left edge is mostly dominated with similar characters of a raised platform of rest houses. The colour, texture, and scale define the direction of the route as visibility of the main temple tower gives a sense of proximity to the temple complex. After visiting the temple, pilgrims cross the river by the old bridge and continue their journey to the next stop. However, the narrow lane and bridge have low safety factors for mass movement as the low railing height.

The **temple complex** of Rameshvara (Fig. 8) has been overly built in an unplanned manner by many contributors and it has lost the focus toward the main central temple. The Panchakroshi route passes through the right middle of the temple complex and exits toward the steps leading to river ghat which makes it more vulnerable to have an accident during the yatra. The whole temple complex has been paved with hard surfaces without any trees or green space.

The **rest houses** along the left side of the sacred route have been placed in a continuous row with a common wall on a raised plinth level, and they possess an additional space added in the front as an entrance pavilion which makes them look different from other rest houses in the route. The big courtyard has been turned into an indoor garden with a shrine in the centre. Most of the rest houses have been maintained as it is being used as encroached areas for children's play area, police station, and local school. However, some non-contextual extension has been done as proof of development in sacred infrastructure, resulting to devastate the traditional aesthetics.

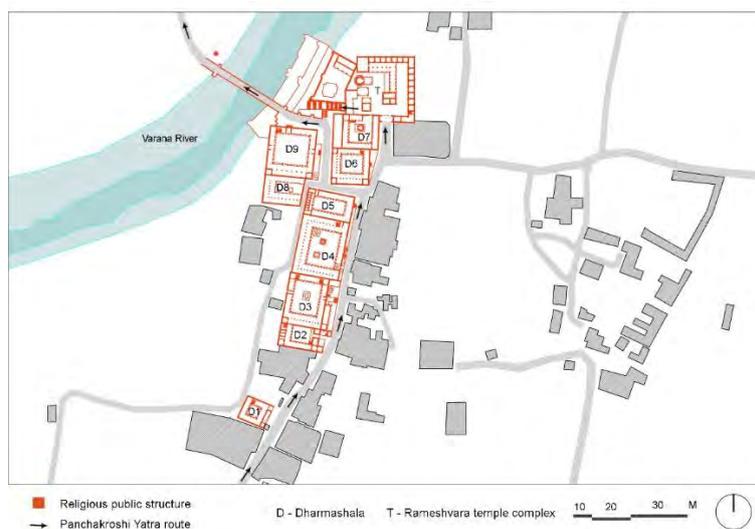


Fig 9. Rameshvara: Noll map depicting sacred route, temple complex, and rest house (modified and developed after Singh, 1998: 72; for cross-section of the temple, see Gutschow, 2006: 250).

SHIVPUR

On the fourth day of the Panchakroshi sacred journey, pilgrims walk around 10 km through many villages before entering the urban boundary of Varanasi. Shivpur (Fig. 10), the fourth node of the route is located within an urban district where the majority of building-use is functioning as mixed uses with commercial on the ground and residential on an upper floor. Here the streets get highly crowded with vehicular movement which also lacks pedestrian infrastructure. This 4th halt station has been introduced by the main temple of Shivpur, which consists of five Shiva lingams related to five brothers of the *Mahābhārata*, the ancient mythology epic, dated ca. the 10th century BCE. Across the road, a sacred well, named Draupadi Kupa is located with a small shrine of 'Draupadi' – the common wife of the five brothers. The sacred pond of Shivpur has been deserted and lost its connections with temples, and resultantly not being used for any purpose.

The sacred route of Shivpur is lost within an urban area without having any character related to the Panchakroshi journey (Fig. 11). For new pilgrims, it becomes extremely confusing to identify the route and sacred infrastructure along with it.

The temple complex of 'Pañch-Pandava' is located a little away from the main sacred route without any landmark feature (Fig. 10). Even the frontage of the main temple is hindered by commercial shops and priest residential blocks. One can experience the lack of connection toward sacrality as the urban activity has taken over all religious environment buildings of Shivpur. The sacred water tank has been neglected as it became a point of garbage disposal for locals.

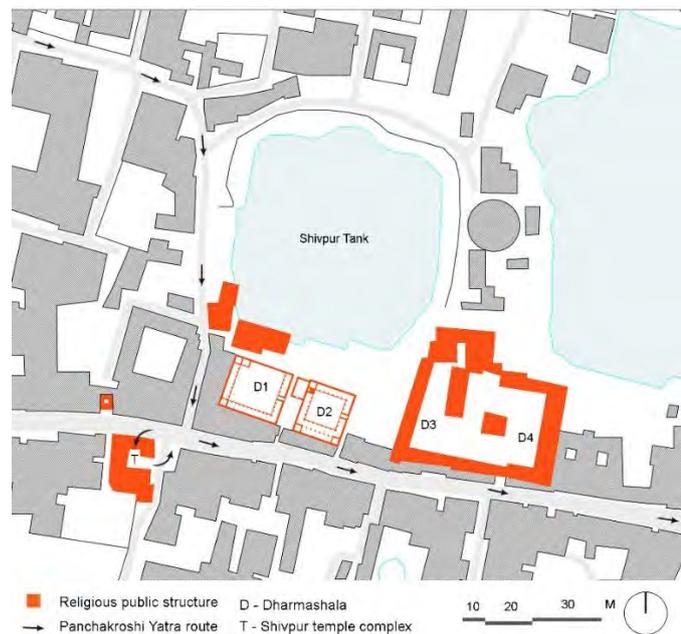


Fig.10. (left) The 'Pañch-Pandava' temple Shivpur: inner courtyard showing five lingams (photo by Rana P.B. Singh, 2015).

Fig 11. (right) Shivpur: Nollis map depicting sacred route, temple complex, and rest (modified and developed after Singh, 1991: 77).

KAPILADHARA

Kapiladhara is a small village located northeast of Varanasi city, and named after the Kapileshvara Shiva; the main temple with the sacred tank is eulogized in the ancient text of *Mahābhārata*. The natural and built landscape of this village with the cascading stairway connecting temple and water pool, raised meeting platform for religious activity (Fig. 12), the associated shrines and images all together make this area an important sacredscape. The courtyard-style rest-house has been located along with the left side of the sacred route with the continuous form also help in directing pilgrims during the yatra. The Kapileshvara (also referred as *Brishabhadvajeshvara*, in the ancient texts) temple is located at the highest altitude of the surrounding area with a sacred tank on the lower front. The landmark feature like the visibility of the temple shikhara from a far distance helps pilgrims to orient themselves while walking towards it. The majority of residents in the village are engaged in the carpentry business and they use the ground floor of their building for workshops cum shops with the upper floor as a house.