

Heritage Series: No. 1.

Rationales for including
Varanasi as Heritage City
in the UNESCO World Heritage List

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2001

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Abstract

In its convention in 1972 UNESCO instituted a special body called World Heritage Committee. Until December 2001 there have been 122 State Parties (countries) as members. In the World Heritage List, 690 properties are enlisted. It has been realised that the cultural and natural heritages are increasingly threatened by destruction not only due to the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions. It has further been decided to adopt a general policy, which aims to give the heritage a function in the life of the community, and maintaining it in a sustainable way for the future generation. For any property or site to be enlisted, the WHC has passed a general criteria and regulations. India has recently become the member of the general council. From India 23 properties are enlisted, however Varanasi has not yet been proposed for inclusion. Here an attempt has been made to critically examine the rationales for proposing Varanasi as a heritage city in the WH List. In this context the status of Varanasi on the scale of UNESCO-WH List, the implications of the present Master Plan, and governance strategies are described.

Key words: conservation, preservation, cultural heritage, cultural tradition, heritage city, heritage zone, Master Plan, natural heritage, property, sectional plan, site plan.

1. The UNESCO's WHC & India

On the 16th of November 1972, UNESCO officially adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Article 4 of this Convention states that "each State Party to this Convention recognises that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage (as referred to in Articles 1 and 2 of the convention) and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State." This article says further that "Each State Party will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co-operation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain."

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India is one among the 21 members of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) elected by the General Assembly of States Parties in its 30th session on 31 October 2001 and its term will be until the 34th session of the General Conference of UNESCO (2007). The WHC is responsible for guiding the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and making the final decision to inscribe sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO. By June 2001 the WHC has included 690 properties (529 Cultural, 138 Natural, and 23 mixed) in the List from 122 State Parties, of which 23 belong to India. But Varanasi has never been proposed for inclusion in this list even though it is one the most unique cities in India and the most ancient continuously living city in the world. In the 25th Session of the WHC, to be held in October 2003, approximately 30 new sites would be accepted in the List; it is strongly expected that in that Session Varanasi would certainly be enlisted.

2. World Heritage List & Criteria

In order to be included on the World Heritage List, sites must satisfy the selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the **Operational Guidelines**, which, besides the text of the Convention, is the World Heritage Committee's main document. Revised regularly by the Committee, the criteria have evolved to match the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself. Two parts, given below, display the evolution of the **Cultural** and **Natural** criteria, 1978-1997.

(A) Cultural criteria

The criteria for the inclusion of cultural properties in the World Heritage List should always be seen in relation to one another and should be considered in the context of the definition set out in Article 1 of the Convention which is reproduced below:

- (i) **monuments**: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- (ii) **groups of buildings**: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- (iii) **sites**: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view."

A monument, group of buildings or site, as defined above, which is nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List will be considered to be of outstanding universal value for the purpose of the Convention when the Committee finds that it meets one or more of the following criteria and the test of authenticity. These criteria are defined by the Committee in its **Operational Guidelines**. Each property nominated should:

- i. represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or
- ii. exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; or
- iii. bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared; or
- iv. be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; or

- v. be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; or
- vi. be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural);

(B) Natural criteria

In accordance with Article 2 of the Convention, the following is considered as "natural heritage":

- (i) natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- (ii) geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- (iii) natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty."

A natural heritage property, as defined above, which is submitted for inclusion in the World Heritage List will be considered to be of outstanding universal value for the purposes of the Convention when the Committee finds that it meets one or more of the following criteria specified by Operational Guidelines and fulfilling the conditions of integrity set out below. Sites nominated should:

- i. be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; or
- ii. be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; or
- iii. contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; or
- iv. contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

The cultural heritage and the natural heritage are among the priceless and irreplaceable possessions, not only of each nation, but of mankind as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized possessions constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples in the world. Parts of that heritage, because of their exceptional qualities, can be considered to be of outstanding universal value and as such worthy of special protection against the dangers, which increasingly threaten them.

In an attempt to remedy this perilous situation and to ensure, as far as possible, the proper identification, protection, conservation and presentation of the world's irreplaceable heritage, the Member States of UNESCO adopted in 1972 the **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, referred to as "the *Convention*". The *Convention* complements heritage conservation programmes at the national level and provides for the establishment of a "**World Heritage Committee**" (WHC) and a "**World Heritage Fund**" (WHF). Both the WHC and the WHF have been in operation since 1976.

3. Varanasi on the criteria of UNESCO-WHC

a. **Constitute a unique artistic & aesthetic accomplishment**

The city represents a unique natural shape along the Ganga river which flows northerly in crescent shape for about 7km and the city has grown on the left bank in circular form around it. The area along the right side is a flood plain, preserving the natural ecosystem. Thus, together the two sides represent the cultural and natural heritage, which is unique in whole of India. This aesthetic harmony between the river and the city is unique in its presentation.

The **natural heritage** of the city is equally unique. The river Ganga, considered the most holy river for the Hindu people, is especially sacred in Banaras where its course towards the Bay of Bengal suddenly turns to north. This led to the development of the ancient city on the west banks, facing thus the rising of the sun and making the *ghats* of Banaras sacred for all Hindu rituals. The Ganga is rich in clay that is a natural absorbent of organic polluting substances. The rich abundance of clay has kept the ecosystem of the river Ganga still intact but increasing urban and industrial pressure and pollutant agricultural run-offs are stretching sustainable limits of the river system to the maximum. The religious importance of the city of Banaras is directly related to the sacrality of the course of the river in the city and to the reinvigorating medical qualities of the abundant clay present in the river.

b. **Recording considerable influence at a certain period**

In history, the city recorded its special role in promoting education, debates and dialectics both religious and spiritual, and manifestation of holy centres, of pan- India sites. That is why people from all parts of India came and settled here. Teaching and training of Sanskrit and Ayurveda (traditional system of Indian Medicine) has been here since at least 5th century BCE. Further, the pattern of spatial transposition of holy sites is unique in a sense that all the important holy centres of India are replicated here before the 12th century. This way it represents a mini-India, perceived as Cultural Capital of India. There are presently, five universities, several institutes and around hundred traditional Sanskrit and Islamic schools

c. **Evidence of a disappeared civilisation**

The city has two remnants of a holy past: the first one being Sarnath where Buddha gave his first sermon, "Turning the wheel of law" in ca.528 BCE. Later during 3rd century BCE king Ashoka built a monastery township there which continued its existence till 12th century CE and was later destroyed. The second one is Rajghat Plateau, where the archaeological findings and the C¹⁴ dating of some of the wares excavated from the earliest level (upper part of IA layer, sample No. TF-293) refer the existence of urban settlements in the period during 800-500 BCE. The archaeological investigation is further supported by Robert C. Eidt (1977) on the basis of scientific analysis of chronosequence of non-occluded/occluded phosphate ratios of the vertical profile of anthrosols in the Rajghat area of Varanasi, dated from 800 BCE to CE 800. The results support the fact that residential settlement during this time span was uninterrupted. This further supports a claim that the site is the original centre of one of the oldest continuously occupied modern cities in the world. The site evidences refer small farming to domestication of animals, a sign of pastoral economy.

d. **Illustrate a significant historical period**

Since at least 6th century CE, the city started growing as a pilgrimage site and by 12th century, it became the most popular holy centre for the Hindus. During this period, various deities and their images were established. Their number at present reaches over 3000 Hindu shrines and a few Buddhist, Jain and Sikh shrines. Later Muslim shrines also became prominent and now their number has reached over 1300 – more than any Islamic site.

e. Constitute an outstanding example of a traditional way of life

Since ancient times the natural and cultural landscapes of the city have retained an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life. The city is a place of pilgrimage and a holy site for sacred baths in the Ganga River, to have a good death, to get relief from transmigration, to learn and receive spiritual merit, etc. The city has still maintained its traditions. In spite of several downfalls and upheavals, traditions are fully alive even today. Presence of “dying homes”, charitable homes, pilgrims’ rest houses, 84 *ghats* (stairways) along the Ganga, are some of the city’s unique characteristics. Additionally, silk weaving and sari making, metal, wood and terracotta handicrafts, toy making, particular painting forms, etc., comprise the continuity of historico-cultural tradition.

Banaras is considered to be a veritable jungle of fairs and festivals with respect to variety, distinction, time, sacred sites, performers, overseers and side-shows. The popular saying that there 13 festivals happen in the 7-days of a week express that richness. “Every day is a great festival in Banaras” – so says the tradition.

The natural setting, the spirit of place, and the continuity of cultural traditions have all blended together to create and preserve a unique lifestyle known as Banarasi. This lifestyle has manifested itself in a musical tradition known as the Banaras Gharana (style). Many great musicians and performing artists have been born here and still regularly return to visit and to perform their art for the public as tribute to the spirit of the soil. Layers of time and traditions are superimposed one upon the other but the essence of the life has maintained its continuity. Recently some of the old festivals have been revived in the original style, despite some modern touches.

f. Be associated with ideas or beliefs or universal significance

It is the only city where textually described cosmogonic frame and geomantic outlines are existent in their full form and totality, thus the city becomes universally significant. The City is a mosaic of the various religious groups and their traditions; here Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and even Islam have their distinct traditions and on the other end they together make the harmonious life and culture in the city. Here the deepest spirit of place involving sacred ecology, spatial manifestation and historical events is in its superb form.

4. The Context

Geographical Background. The city of Varanasi is located along the left crescent-shaped bank of the Ganga river (Fig. 1). By railway route it is well connected from New Delhi (764km), Calcutta (677km) and Bombay (1476km); also it is connected by roads and air services from different parts of India. The City is a part of ‘**Varanasi Urban Agglomeration**’ (VUA; 82° 56’E – 83° 03’E and 25° 14’N – 25° 23.5’N, covering an area of 112.26 sq. km) that consists of 7 urban sub-units. These urban units are: (a) Varanasi (i. Varanasi MC, ii. Lahartara OG), (b) Ramanagar MB, (c) Maruadih Railway Settlement (i. Maruadih Rly. Sett. NA, ii. Maruadih OG), (d) Varanasi Cantt, (e) Banaras Hindu University NA, (f) Phulwaria CT, and (g) Sheodaspur CT. For the 2011 Master Plan the VUA is planned to expand over an area of 144.89 sq. km (82° 54’E – 83° 04’E and 25° 13’N – 25° 24’N). The average height of the city from mean sea level is 77m, which is around 72m in the south along

Fig. 1. Varanasi

the Asi stream, and 83m at the high ground near the confluence of the Varana to the Ganga river in the north (known as Rajghat plateau). The nature and the character of the bank of the Ganga has made the position of Banaras so stable and enviable that it is amongst the few cities of the world which shows little shifting in its site. The city proper is built on a high ridge of *kankar* (lime concretion) that forms the left bank of the Ganga for a distance of 6.5km, being quite above normal flood level. The city enjoys sub-tropical monsoon climate, recording three distinct seasons: the *cold* from November to February, the *hot* from March to mid-June, and the *rainy* from mid-June to September, while October is regarded as strictly transitional month. During winter average temperature ranges between 7°C and 13°C, in summer it ranges between 32°C and 46°C. The average relative humidity runs around 72 per cent. The annual normal rainfall in Varanasi is 1114mm.

Varanasi in comparison to cities of its size is a balanced multifunctional city with six sporadic industrial areas at Ramanagar, Chandpur, DLW, Lahartara, Lohta and Shivpur. Out of its total population of 1.5 million in 2001 only a little over one-fourths is main workers, while among the main workers about one-thirds is under household industry. The household industry comprises manufacturing of silk *saris* (known as *Banarasi Saris*), toys, brass, utensils, wall hangings and a variety of other handicrafts. Trade and commerce is another important category. The urban morphology of the city shows a complex pattern where traditions are maintained and in unpleasant manner modernity is introduced, however both are developing together with human adjustments.

Varanasi as Microcosm, a mini-India. The city considered as the microcosm of Hindu pilgrimage, is visited by thousands of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain pilgrims and foreign visitors each day and known the world over as the “sacred city”, is rich in architectural, artistic and historical buildings (temples, palaces, maths, mosques, ashrams, etc.). Besides being an indelible part of our heritage, these buildings, along with the local religious and cultural life, constitute an immense resource for tourism (both religious and cultural tourism, Indian and foreign) that is one of the major economic activities of the city. Varanasi is a living symbolisation and a living expression of Indian culture and traditions in all its religious rituals, in its multi-ethnic artistic traditions, in its architectural treasures, in its life-expressions, in its particular relationship with life and death, in its ancient educational forms and methods and in its multi-ethnic population.

Banaras is the mosaic of Indian culture with respect to representing the diversity and the distinctiveness of the regional cultures of India. Superimpositions of various traditions have been added one upon the course of time. People from all parts of India, speaking different languages and dialects and carrying their own traits, taboos and traditions have settled in this city while preserving their own culture inwardly, and becoming part of the mosaic culture of the city outwardly. This synthesis of diversity in regional identity, language and tradition converges to form the personality of an all-India city, Banaras. Unity and integration among diversity and multiplicity are the things this city presents. Mythology says that even those who came to disturb the city, ended up settling here and became an integral part of its culture. Ultimately they accepted Vishvanatha Shiva as their main deity. In Banaras alone, there are over 3000 Hindu shrines and temples, about 1400 Muslim shrines and mosques, 12 churches, 3 Jain temples, 9 Buddhist temples, 3 Sikh temples (*Gurudvaras*) and several other sacred sites and places. This is the only place in the world where such a huge number of Hindu and Muslim sacred places co-exist.

The city has possessed a strong force of spiritual magnetism, the special power that always enhances the sensitivity to the “**crossings**” from this world to the world beyond, where humanity meets divinity. It is not a surprise why the city has found its place in all the great Indian epics, *Puranas* and other

ancient Hindu and Buddhist literature. The city is believed to be out of this world, and you have to try to see it through the eyes of a Banarasi, ‘the dweller of Banaras’. It is said ‘by seeing Varanasi, one can see as much of life as the whole India can show’; but it is not an easy city to comprehend for those of us who stand outside the Hindu tradition. The life style of Banaras is distinct in nature, and referred to as Banarasipan. It is an art of living, both passionate and carefree, what the Banaras dwellers call *masti* (“joie de vivre”), *mauj* (“delight, festivity”) and *phakarpan* (“carefreeness”).

Varanasi occupies a special place in world culture. It is the living symbolisation and a living expression of traditional Indian culture in all its religious rituals, its artistic traditions, its architectural treasures, its life-expressions, its relationship with death, its ancient educational forms and methods, its multicultural human population. This living cultural heritage of the city is a unique asset – seen to be believed – for its residents and for the world, contributing to the cultural and philosophical knowledge, not only of Indian culture but also of the cultural community of the world.

The Old vs. Heritage. The old part of the city, i.e. the historic heritage zone, records very high density of population. Most of this population lives in the narrow lanes of the old city that is also the commercial centre for retail and wholesale shopping in consumer goods, food items, handicrafts, etc. This increasing population is over burdening the carrying capacity of the urban environment and the water resource of the river. Social hygiene and sanitation methods too are unable to stand the pressure of a growing resident population and a constant large floating population.

The transformation in process. In order to absorb population growth in the old city centre, new buildings are being constructed either by demolishing old structures or by building on them. Many of these are potential heritage buildings. They are either part of a collective ownership (like temples, ashrams, etc.) or are occupied by tenants, thereby making their maintenance or renovation difficult. In fact, when parts of these buildings collapse, they are often replaced by new, cheap construction alternatives. And these are often utilised as hospitality or other touristic structures that respect neither the religious exigencies of the city nor the urban carrying capacity of a congested city centre and are bound to have a hard impact on the long-term sustainability of the cultural assets of the city. This trend, over the years, is contributing to a slow destruction of the heritage buildings of this city, leading to a transformation of the architectural façade of the old city, altering its skyline and affecting the aesthetic and sacred harmony of the ghats.

5. The Issue of enlisting in the WHC List

The Consequences of Development. Development pressures are altering irreversibly many aspects of the cultural, architectural, artistic and above all the historic fabric of the city that is the very base and the very resource of economic sustainability of the city. In order to make development economically, environmentally and socially sustainable, conservation must become a determining factor for development plans and due attention must be given to heritage conservation issues and action plans based on the same. In order to achieve this, the city needs broad-based policy initiative to protect and utilise its built heritage.

The Question of Built Heritage. The built heritage of our country, the impartial part of cultural heritage, is a priceless non-renewable resource that is seriously threatened today. Varanasi is no exception to this threat. The ongoing efforts of protection and management, though commendable are not comprehensive. According to INTACH, the Archaeological Survey of India protects approximately 3500 monuments throughout the country and the Archaeological Departments of the states look after

another 5000 (approx.) monuments. The unprotected heritage, however, remains largely neglected, threatened by urban pressures and even systematically eliminated. Since the policy framework for protection and integrated conservation is a developing area in our country, it is essential to take stock of the built heritage. Rapid changes in the environment also entail a focused approach to the management of the built heritage.

The Question of Sacredscape. Destruction of the architectural heritage and modification of urban spaces in the old areas of Varanasi, could negatively alter the religious and cultural life for which the city is sacred and destroy the tourist attractions – both of which are the major sources of earning for its population. The intervention of the city administration in the demolition and reconstruction activities of old buildings can be effective only when it is supported by detailed visual and descriptive documentation of the city and through adequate citizen awareness on these issues. Much of the loss in the historic and architectural building stock can, in fact, be attributed to lack of information on the structures and their significance and subsequent dissemination of the same.

The Nature of Universality. The living cultural heritage of the city combined with its extensive built heritage and its unique natural landscape is an inimitable asset for India and for the world. Varanasi is internationally recognised as the only city of its kind in the world, contributing- yesterday and today- to the cultural and philosophical knowledge of India and of the cultural community of the world. This recognition will help orient architectural preservation and landscape conservation standards of the city and keep them on par with the international standards and it will facilitate utilisation of the knowledge of international NGOs and UNESCO expert teams in order to make the development of the city preservation-conscious and sustainable.

The Perspective. In order that this heritage become a resource for development, it needs to be first documented, then protected, maintained and finally utilised according to specific heritage guidelines and legislations. Only then, combined with an increased stakeholder awareness and participation, will policy efforts and interventions become sustainable – environmentally, socially and culturally.

6. Varanasi: the Religious Heritage

(a) Hindu temples as Heritage Sites

It appears that there are around 4000 historically and literary described images of Hindu deities enshrined in temples and shrines in the city of Varanasi. According to the *Kashi Khanda* (a part of the *Skanda Purana*, dated 14th century CE) in Varanasi there appear innumerable images of Hindu divinities, notable among them are: Shiva's form 324, Vinayaka (Ganesha, elephant-headed god, son of Shiva) 74, Shiva's associates 27, Rudra 11, Jyotirlingas (light-manifested) of Shiva 12, Svambhulingas (self-manifested) of Shiva 12, Rishilingas (sage associated images) of Shiva 7, Devi (goddess) 96, Vishnu's form 48, Bhairava 17, Vasus 8, Sun god 14, Hindu planets (*grahas*) 9, sacred abodes (*saptapuris*) 7, sacred area (monthly base) 13, sacred land area 2, river confluences (Asi and Varana to the Ganga) 2, the sacred water spots along the Ganga 96, sacred water pool 31, sacred well 22. Of course some of them lost, and some get their identity transformed, however the majority of them exists and are part of the pilgrimage, visitation and ritual systems.

On the basis of an all-India representation of all the Shiva's forms, the city of Varanasi contains both, the Jyotilingas and the Svambhulingas, each 12 in number and are located in different parts of India.

Their manifestation and replicas were made in the historical past, at least before 12th century and eulogised in the ancient mythologies. These two groups are given in the two tables, 1 and 2.

Table 1. **Varanasi : Jyotirlingas, Light-Manifested Forms of Shiva**

No.	Siva Jyotirlinga	Original place in India	Location in Varanasi, House No.	Latitude, N°	Longitude, E°
1	Someshvara	Somnath, Gujarat	<i>Someshvara</i> , near the Man Mandir Ghat, D 16 / 34	25 18.498	83 00.636
2	Mallikarjuna	Shrishail, Andhra Pradesh	<i>Tripurantakeshvara</i> , Sigra (Sivapurva) Tila, D 59 / 95	25 18.505	82 59.261
3	Mahakaleshvara	Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh	<i>Vridhakareshvara</i> , Mahamritunjaya, K 52 / 39	25 19.361	83 00.911
4	Omkareshvara	Mandhata, MadhyaPradesh	<i>Omkareshvara</i> , Pathanitola, A 33 / 23	25 19.539	83 01.355
5	Vaidyanath	Deoghar, Bihar	<i>Vaidyanatheshvara</i> , Kamachha, B 37 / 1	25 18.171	82 59.411
6	Bhimashankara	Pune, Maharashtra	<i>Bhimeshvara</i> , Kashikarvat, CK 32 / 12	25 18.662	83 00.638
7	Rameshvara	Rameshvaram, Tamil Nadu	<i>Rameshvara</i> , Rama Kund, D 54 / 45; (at 4 sites more)	25 18.565	82 59.826
8	Nageshvara	Near Dvaraka, Gujarat	<i>Nageshvara</i> , Bhonshala Ghat, CK 2 / 1	25 18.822	83 00.921
9	Vishveshvara	Varanasi itself	<i>Vishvanatha-Ji</i> , Jnanavapi, CK 35 / 19	25 18.637	83 00.594
10	Tryambakeshvara	Nasik, Maharashtra	<i>Tyayambakeshvara</i> , Baradeo, D 38 / 21	25 18.599	83 00.392
11	Kedareshvara	Chamoli (U.P.), in Himalaya	<i>Kedareshvara</i> , Kedar Ghat, B 6 / 102	25 17.985	83 00.425
12	Ghushmeshvara	Ellora, Maharashtra	<i>Ghushrinishvara</i> , in Kamachha, B 21 / 123	25 18.216	82 59.556

(The latitudes and longitudes are based on GPS values, using GPS Garmin 12X, @ Rana P.B. Singh)

Table 2. **Varanasi : Svayambhulinga of Shiva, Self-Born Forms (12).**

No.	Svayambhu Siva Linga	Original Place in India	Location in Varanasi, House No.	Latitude, N°	Longitude, E°
1	Avimukteshvara	Chamoli (U.P.), in Himalaya	Jnanavapi, Radhakrishna Dharmashala, CK 30 / 1	25 18.681	83 00.604
2	Omkareshvara	Mandhata, MadhyaPradesh	Omkareshvara, Pathanitola, A 33 / 23	25 19.539	83 01.355
3	Jyeshtheshvara	Jyesthashtan, Gujarat	Saptasagar, Karnaghanta, K 62 / 144	25 19.042	83 00.598
4	Madhyameshvara	Chamoli (U.P.), in Himalaya	Maidagin, Daranagar, K 53 / 63	25 19.239	83 00.837
5	Mahadeo	Vrindaraka Kshetra	Adi Mahadeo, Trilochan, A 3 / 92	25 19.169	83 01.372
6	Vishveshvara	Varanasi itself, U. P.	Vishvanatha-Ji, Jnanavapi, CK 35 / 19	25 18.637	83 00.594
7	Vrishabhadvaja	Gangasagara, West Bengal	Kapileshvara, Kapiladhara	25 20.408	83 02.742
8	Kedareshvara	Chamoli, Uttaranchal	Kedara Ghat, B 6 / 102	25 17.985	83 00.425
9	Karpadishvara	Chhagland Tirtha	Pishachamochan, C 21 / 40	25 19.317	82 59.763
10	Svayambhu Linga	Nakulishvara Kshetra	Near Mahalakshmeshvara, D 54 / 114	25 18.622	83 00.022
11	Bhurbhuvah Linga	Gandamadhan Parvat	Bhutabhairava, K 63 / 26	25 19.029	83 00.658
12	(Atma) Vireshvara	Ujjain, MadhyaPradesh	Scindhia Ghat, CK 7 / 158	25 18.729	83 00.930

(The latitudes and longitudes are based on GPS values, using GPS Garmin 12X, @ Rana P.B. Singh)

(b) Jain Heritage Sites

The Jain literature refers to Banaras as an important holy place because here were born 4 of the 24 Jain Tirthankaras (the “ford-makers”). According to the legends, the 23rd Tirthankara **Parshvanatha**, who lived in the 8th century BCE, was born near a mythical tank, which was in Bhelupura near the present *Parshvanatha Temple*. The main Jain images excavated at this site belong to the 9th-11th centuries. A few of the images are dated back to the 5th century. Presently there are 15 Jain temples, 10 of them belong to Digambara and the rest to Svetambara groups.

Parshvanatha was followed in the 6th century BCE by **Mahavira**, a younger contemporary of the Buddha, who also visited Varanasi during his 42nd year of itinerant teaching. The birthplace of **Suparshvanatha**, the 7th Tirthankara, is also described in the Jain literature, though its location and identification have still not been confirmed. The temple of Suparshvanatha in Bhadaini (house no. B 2/ 89) commemorate that incident. Close by to it is the Svetambara Jain temple (house no. B 3/ 78). According to folk tales his birthplace was close to the present Jain Ghat, where Jain celebrations are still performed. It is believed that the present Jain temple in Sarnath, near the Dhamekha Stupa, was built to commemorate the birthplace of Shreyamshanatha, the 11th Tirthankara. He was born in the nearby village of Simhapur. Other important Jain temples in Varanasi city are Chhedilal Digambar Jain Mandir in Bhadaini, Sanmati Digambar Jain Mandir in Naria on Lanka-DLW Road, Digambar Jain

Mandir in Khojwa, Parshvanatha Digambar Jain Panchayati Mandir in Gwaldas Sahu Lane (Chowk), and Parshvanatha Digambar Jain Mandir in Bhat-ki-Gali and of the same name in Maidagin.

The birthplace of the 8th Tirthankara **Chandraprabhu**, is identified with Chandravati. This is an ancient village lying on the Varanasi-Ghazipur road at 23km northeast from Banaras at the western bank of Ganga River. There are two Jain temples belonging to the Svetambara and Digambara groups of the Jains. These temples were built in 1892 and 1913, respectively. The oral history narrates that this site had a glorious history in the past, but during the Mughal period (14th to 16th century) the site was transformed into ruins by the Muslim rulers. However, again in the early 18th century the Raghuvamshi Rajputs chief Domandeo settled his community here and re-built a massive brick fort over an ancient mound, most probably belonging to Jains.

(c) Sikhism Heritage Sites

The *Guru-ka-Bagh* (Gurudvara at Gurubagh) commemorates the locality where Guru Nanak stayed and the *Asu Bhairava Sangat*, the place where the 9th Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675) had stayed in 1666. Asu Bhairava had also been the residence of Guru Govind Singh (1675-1708), the 10th and the last guru. During his period of stay Guru Tegh Bahadur had given a few lessons of teachings at Dhupachandi, Jagatganj, where in course of time a Gurudvara has been built in memory of the incident. Legends also relate that Guru Govind Singh sent his five disciples to Varanasi to get Sanskrit education, and the school is still continuing under the name of *Nirmal Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya* in Lahori Tola. The *Guru Nanak Sanskrit Vidyalaya* in Bisheshvarganj is also dedicated to his memory. There are three more sacred sites, *Sangats*, associated with the Sikh community. The *Shahzade-ka-Math* belongs to Baba Sumer Singh Shahzade in the Asu Bhairava. There is another monastery at Ramanagar, which possesses an authentic copy of *Guru Grantha Saheb*. Finally, a palatial *Gurudvara* was also constructed near Augharnath-ka-Takia.

(d) Christian Churches as Heritage Sites

Banaras came under the direct political control of the East India Company in the time of Warren Hastings by end of the 18th century. By serving the cause of Sanskrit teaching and Hindu theology through establishing a Sanskrit School in 1791 (by Jonathan Duncan), the East India Company has established a strong foothold for Christianity in the city. The first English Seminary, named Anglo Indian seminary, was established in 1830, and this encouraged the development of Christian missionaries. Presently, there are eleven important churches in Banaras, viz. St. Thomas (at Godaulia), Red (Nadesar), St. Paul (Sigra), David's Church (Teliabagh), St. Mary (Cantt.), Bethlehem Gospel (Mahmoorganj), Evangelical Church of India (D.L.W.), St. Mary Cathedral (Cantt.), Church of Banaras (at Sunderpur and Kakarmatta), and Pilgrims' Mission (Cantt.).

(e) Muslim Heritage Sites and Monuments

Muslims constitute 35.7% of the total population of Varanasi City (1.5 million in 2001 CE) and have earned a significant place in the society, culture, landscape and traditional economy of the city. Although Muslim settlement started in the 11th century, the formation of a stable cultural group had begun by the turn of 18th century. The invasions of Mahmud of Ghaznawi in 1021-1030 CE had opened the door to Muslim settlement in Varanasi. With reference to spatial, functional and numerical perspectives, the Muslim sacredscapes of Banaras may be grouped into 7 types. They are: **Masjid** (mosque) 415, **Mazar** (religious-cultural sites) 299, **Imamchawk** (the crossing sites for Taziya) 197, **Takiya** (burial ground) 88, **Idgah** (place of special prayer) 11, **Imambara** (the burial site for Taziya) 3,

and **Others** 375. The total number of sacred places reaches to 1,388 of which about 30 per cent fall under the mosque category.

There are two types of mosques – the one historical, and the other general. Among the 15 historical mosques the most famous are Dhair Nim Kangoore (built 1071), Ganje Shahada (early 18th century), Chaukhambha (early 18th century), Bibi Razia (18th century), Gyanavapi (1677), Alamgiri Dharahra Masjid (1680), Fatman (1752) and Abdul Razzaq (1316). Most of these mosques were built using the debris of Hindu temples demolished by the Muslim invaders or rulers. During 18th century many Muslim shrines built in honour of Sufi saints and martyrs, which attract people from Hindus and Muslims both; among them the notable tombs are of Ghazi Miyan, Chandan Shahid, Maulviji ka Bara, Maqdam Shah and Yakub Shahid.

Close to the gate of Fatima Bibi (Fatman, Sigra) is a tomb of one of the greatest Persian poets and philosophers, Sheikh Ali Hazim (1697-1766) who, in 1734, came and settled in Varanasi. After passing 32 years in Banaras Hazim died here in 1766. The Hindu king of Banaras, Balwant Singh (1740-70), was his patron. Besides compiling four *diwans* that contain all forms of poetry, he wrote his autobiography, *Tazkira-I-Ahwal* (1741-42), a biography of about a hundred contemporary poets, *Tazkira-ul-Masir* (1752), and 20 volumes of prose works of which only 13 are now extant. On his tomb one of his inscribed poems says:

I don't leave Banaras for elsewhere,
As it is a house of worshipping wholeness.
In fact, each and every Brahmin boy,
Looks like Rama and Lakshmana here.

In Maruadih in a huge compound is the tomb of Maqdam Shah Tayyab, a martyr and follower of the order of Chisti, who died here in 1785. To commemorate him, his disciples and followers built a mosque and a tomb. On these occasions the share of Hindu shopkeepers and visitors reaches close to 40%; this clearly indicates its multi-religious nature.

Near Rajghat School is a tomb of a ca 18th century Muslim martyr, Chandan Shahid, set in a beautiful natural setting. In the Cantonment a complex of mosque and tombs is associated with the Sufi saint and martyr Bahadur Shahid (ca 12th century), again equally visited by Hindus and Muslims both. After this invasion Niyaltgin on the debris of a famous temple had built a mosque in 1071, called Dhair Nim Kangoore, which is a testimony of Islamic architecture. The grandeur and massive scale of stone work is an example of the 12th century, showing the downfall of the Gahadavala dynasty.

Alamgiri Masjid was built by the order of Aurangzeb in 1659 by demolishing the temple of Krittivasheshvara. This has three rows of lofty stone pillars, eight in each row, but the pillars at the extremities are in three-fold arrangement. The Gyanavapi Aurangzeb Masjid, dated late 17th century, is close to the Vishvanatha temple. Its most interesting feature is a row and series of Hindu columns with beautiful architectural carving in the front elevation. It was used as a prayer ground by the later emperors. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb demolished the temple of Vindu Madhava in 1673, and converted it into a mosque, called Aurangzeb Mosque. Emperor Shah Alam (1707-1712) completed the present structure under the supervision of Ali Ibrahim Khan, a military officer at Banaras. Presently the mosque has been declared as an archaeological monument. In 1316 the then Governor of Banaras, Abdul Razzaq has constructed a mosque, named after him, i.e. Masjid Abdul Razzaq.

(f) Sarnath: Buddhist Ruins and Stupas as Heritage Site

After attaining enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya the Buddha came to Sarnath and turned the Wheel of Law (*dhamma*) twelve times in 538 BCE. From the time of the Buddha, monastic tradition flourished for over 1,500 years on the site of the Deer Park. Amongst the many ruins, archaeologists have found traces dating from as early as in ca 260 BCE, and the existing inscription of Ashoka's pillar, dating from that time, implies that a monastery was already established during Ashoka's reign (273-232 BCE). Remains of carved railing pillars ascribable to the Shunga period (2nd -1st century BCE) are also found here. With the advent of Kushana (1st-2nd century CE) parallel to the Mathura school of art Sarnath also flourished as centre of art. The colossal image of Bodhisattva imported from Mathura in the 3rd regnal year of Kanishka is now exhibited in the museum. By the Gupta period (4th-6th century CE) Sarnath experienced as a great seat of Buddhist art, producing exquisite sandstone images of the Buddha. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien (ca 405 CE) narrated its scenic beauty and glory at the time of Chandragupta II (CE 376-414).

Formerly, two great *stupas* adorned the site. Only the Dhamekha remains, assigned by its inscription to the 6th century. The Dharmarajika *stupa* built by Ashoka, some say upon the very place of the teaching, was pulled down in the 18th century by Jagat Singh. Hsuan-tsang (ca 635 CE) describes that Ashoka's pillar, which stood in front of the *stupa*, was so highly polished that it constantly reflected the *stupa*'s statue of the Buddha. During the reign of Skandagupta (CE 455-467) Sarnath had flourished but later was destroyed by Huna. Again since 8th century the town was continuously expanding its glory until 1017 when Mahmud of Ghazni destroyed most of the monuments, and again in 1033 by Ahmad Nialtgin. However, during the Gahadavala king Govindacandra (1114-1154) with the support of his Buddhist wife Kumaradevi, the town was rebuilt, repaired and monuments were preserved. Again in ca 1193 the Turk king destroyed and abandoned the monuments at Sarnath. In 1567 Mughal Emperor Akbar in memory of his father, Humayun who visited and stayed there in 1532, made a memorial octagonal tower above one of the ruined *stupas* (Fig. 2).

Thereafter during 19th century several excavations were done firstly by Alexander Cunningham (1834-36), and followed by others. In February 1912 the first archaeological site museum was opened at Sarnath. In the period of 30th December 1990 to 1st January 1991 the 14th Kalachakra Puja (a Buddhist-Tantric ritual process) was held at Sarnath under the guidance of 14th HH Dalai Lama, Tenzing Gyatso. The archaeological area is spread over an area of 16.73ha enshrining many monuments and *stupas*; the religious and historical monuments are spread over an area of 9.59ha.

Based on archaeological excavations it is believed that this Chaukhandi Stupa, or a terraced temple, appears to be constructed prior to the times of Gupta kings, i.e. 5th century. This site assumed to be the actual spot where the Buddha after his enlightenment met five ascetics who earlier left him in disgust at his alleged backsliding, and finally gave the First Sermon. "The Four Noble Truths".

The Archaeological Museum

The main two galleries are further attached to associated galleries. Altogether there are over 2700 objects. The oldest and the finest piece of sculpture found at Sarnath is the Ashokan Lion-Capital, carved out of a single block of black-spotted buff-coloured sandstone from Chunar, and symbolises the "National Emblem" of the Republic of India "Bharat". It measures 2.31m in height and is of the Persepolitan bell-shaped type, surmounted by four magnificent lions sitting back with a wheel between them, perhaps symbolising the Law of the Buddha.

Fig. 2. Sarnath, Varanasi.

The standing image 2.87m high, made of red stone showing a inscribed colossal Bodhisattva in the *abhayamudra* (“posture of imparting security”) in the central hall is a representative of Mathura school of Art. Monk Bala dedicated it in the 3rd regnal year of the Kushana ruler Kanishka. The octagonal shaft now set up behind the statue once carried a beautifully carved monolithic parasol exhibited at the northern side of the hall. This stone-umbrella is 3.05m in diameter and adorned with concentric circular bands of decoration.

The images of Buddha in different postures like in *varadamudra* (gift bestowing attitude), in *dhyanamudra* (attitude of contemplation), *abhayamudra* (attitude of granting security), lying in the central hall, are known for their elegance, simplicity of forms and sublimity; they are the representative of the Sarnath school of Art.

Leoglyph, a mythical animal, seated Bodhisattva Padmapani with a stem of full bloomed lotus, pot bellied Jambhala, god of wealth and prosperity, Ramagrama Stupa being protected by *nagas*, and inscription of Kumaradevi, the Buddhist queen of Gahadavala king, are some of the important antiquities displayed in Triratna gallery. The northeast gallery (Tathagata) displays images of Buddha, Vajrasattva, Bodhisattva Padmapani with stem of full bloomed lotus in hand, Nilakantha Lokeshvara with a cup of poison in hands, and Maitreya.

The most notable and the best sculpture of the Sarnath School of Art is the image of Buddha in *dharmacakramudra* (the pose showing “Turning the Wheel of Law”), which is made of Chunar sandstone and retains traces of red colouring. This image (1.6m high up to the top of the halo, 0.79m width at base), seated cross-legged, preaching the first sermon at Sarnath, on a thick cushion supported on a seat with moulded legs is lying at the corner in Tathagata gallery. This image is a remarkable example of the Buddha’s personality of compassionate one in its spirituality and inner-bliss. The Trimuti gallery, lying in the southern side, exhibits mostly Brahmanical deities, including Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), Surya, Sarasvati, and Mahishasuramardini. Some secular objects like figures of birds, animals, male and female heads ranging from the 3rd century BCE to the 12th century CE are displayed in different showcases.

The Ashutosh gallery exhibits *Brahmanical deities* like Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesha, etc. A panel depicting Navagrahas with Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, is also remarkable. Shiva as Bhairava (aggressive form of Shiva) is one of the finest Brahmanical images found at Sarnath. A colossal Andhakasuravadha (killing of demon Andhaka) image of ten-armed Shiva in his terrific form is an unfinished sculpture, dated ca the 12th century.

The Archaeological & Excavation Area

Monastery V contains an open courtyard on the four sides and a well in the centre of the court. The left one, Monastery VII, belongs to medieval period built on the ruins of an older structure consisting of an open courtyard and is surrounded by a running veranda and ranges of cells on all the sides. It is believed that the monasteries, V and VII were destroyed by fire. Dharmarajika Stupa built by Ashoka, in 3rd century BCE, represents one of the light “Divine Towers”, all of them having reference to certain leading events in the life of Buddha. Main Shrine marking the place of the Buddha’s meditation is attributed to Ashoka and the later Guptas. To the rear is the 5m lower portion of polished sandstone Ashokan Column (3rd century BCE).

Ashokan Lion-pillar. The Lion-Pillar at Sarnath is the finest and the most famous of all the examples of Mauryan art. Discovered in 1905, this consists of a shaft made of a single piece of block of black

spotted buff-coloured sandstone that supports a capital made of another single piece of stone. The pillar bears three ancient inscriptions. Mulagandha Kutivihara (ancient), a monument, square on plan measuring 18.29m along each side, represents the main shrine where the Buddha used to sit in meditation for three months during the rainy season. According to Hsuan-tsang it was 61m high. Dhamekha Stupa. This spot is believed to be exactly the place where the Buddha delivered his Second Sermon to his five disciples. This is considered to be the most important and sacred among the structures at Sarnath. This solid cylindrical tower consists of a circular drum to a height of 11.2m, resting on the ground without a usual rectangular basement. Dharmacakra Jina Vihar. Referred as Monastery I, lying 232m from east to west and occupied by a central block of buildings, this monument was the gift of Kumaradevi, the Buddhist queen of the great Gahadavala king Govindracandra of Kashi (CE 1114-1154).

7. The Master Plan & Heritage Zones

In 1982 the Varanasi Development Authority (VDA, formed in 1974) made an assessment of the earlier plans of the city. And, under its direction, the Town & County Planning Organisation, TCPO, prepared a comprehensive Master Plan of Varanasi 1991-2011, during which time the population of Varanasi Agglomeration is expected to double of the 1991. This Plan was submitted to the government of Uttar Pradesh on 21st June 1999 (ref.: 96/Vi-Pra/NaVi/Adhi/99-2000), and after approval it returned back for implementation in 10th July 2001 (ref. 2915/9-Aa-3-2001-10Maha/99). The five-tier areal units are defined on the basis of administration and planning strategy, taking **Varanasi Development Region, VDR** (as in Master Plan 2011). From lower to higher hierarchy they are: Varanasi City Municipal Corporation 84.55 km², Varanasi Urban Agglomeration, VUA 112.26 km², Varanasi Master Plan - Operative Area 144.94 km², Varanasi Master Plan - Projected Area 179.27 km², Varanasi Development Region, VDR 477.34 km² (approx.).

Table 3. **Varanasi Master Plans, MP: Land Use, I: 1961-91, and II: 1991-2011**

Se	Land Use Category	Area, 1988, ha	I: MP, as in 1999		II: MP, as in 2011		Change, I – II, %
			Area, ha	% of area	Area, ha	% area	
1.	Residential	2615.64	5,457.24	37.65	9,254.61	51.62	+ 69.58
2.	Commercial	176.08	475.10	3.28	618.23	3.45	+ 30.13
3.	Industrial	195.31	981.37	6.77	656.19	3.66	- 33.13
4.	Public & Community facilities	261.05	450.42	3.11	1,309.07	7.30	+ 190.63
5.	Recreation (Park/ Open ground)	53.04	2,705.76	18.67	948.47	5.49	- 64.95
6.	Services & Utilities	----	----	----	103.97	0.58	---
7.	Govt. & Semi-Government	56.69	292.18	2.01	1,433.15	7.99	+ 390.50
8.	Tourism (area) & Heritage zone	----	----	----	423.73	2.37	---
9.	Transport & Communication	914.30	1300.27	8.97	1,460.35	8.15	+ 12.31
10.	Other (agriculture & open space)	1,393.79	2,832.06	19.54	1,683.45	9.39	- 40.56
	TOTAL Area, ha	5,665.90	14,494.40	100.00	17,927.22	100.00	+ 23.68

(Source : *Varanasi Master Plan—2011*. Varanasi Development Authority, & Town & Country Planning Organisation, Varanasi Uttar Pradesh. 13 July 2001; 50pp + 1 Map; ref. page 5)

For the first time in the history of Master Plans for Varanasi, some strategies of urban heritage and heritage zoning were proposed in the recent Master Plan (1991-2011; Table 3) to maintain and preserve the religious and cultural symbols of the ancient glory of Varanasi, and to identify necessary facilities and infrastructure and various heritage complexes (cf. Rana and Singh, 2000: 150-154). A little over 2 per cent of the total area is prescribed under tourism and heritage zone. More emphasis has been laid on the government and semi-government uses. According to the zoning plan, five heritage zones can be identified in Varanasi (Fig. 3). These are outlined below.

Fig. 3. Varanasi: Heritage Zones and Sites as in the Master Plan 2011.

1. Riverfront Ghats (stairways to the riverbank)

The area from the bank towards city covering a distance of 200 metres is declared as the riverfront heritage. The UP Government, order number 320/9-A-3-2000-127, dated 5 February 2000, states that, in all the towns situated along the river Ganga, no development activities can take place 200 metres from the riverbank. Eighty-four ghats cover a length of 6.8km along the crescent-shaped bank of the River Ganga, *Gangā-ji* (Ganges), from the confluence of Asi drain in the south to the confluence of the Varanā river in the north. Here the riverfront is marked by lofty palatial buildings built mostly by kings and lords from different parts of India between eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and the area along the ghats is dominated by various shrines and temples.

2. Durgakund-Sankatmochan Area

This area contains about twenty temples and shrines and the water pools of Durgakund and Kurukshetra *kundas*, which are two historic sacred tanks dating from the late eighteenth century. Every Tuesday, and more frequently in the month of *Shrāvana* (July-August), worshippers perform rituals in the Durga temple. This was built on the orthodox model of Hindu temples, but without the excessive display of minute carvings and sculptures. In this area also exist the temples of Tulasi Manas Mandir and Sankatmochan Hanuman Mandir. Towards the east near the River Ganga is the oldest sacred pond in Varanasi, Lolarka Kund, which was referred to in the *Mahābhārata* (2nd century BCE) and which still attracts a large mass of pilgrims.

3. Kamachcha-Bhelupura Area

This area records some of the old monasteries, ancient shrines and an ancient heritage site associated with the Jain Tirthankara Parshvanath, together with many monuments and buildings of the British period (18th – 19th centuries). The historically notable temples and shrines in this zone are: Kamachha Devi, Krodhan Bhairava, Angareshi Chandi, Vatuka Bhairava and Vaidyanath Shiva. The Dvarakadhisha (Vishnu) temple are sacred pool of Shankhudhara are other heritage sites.

4. Kabir Math (Lahartara) Area

The area was the birthplace of Kabir, a great saint-poet and social reformer of the sixteenth century. There are several monasteries in this area related to the life of Kabir. The Kabir Temple Complex is coming up as a great heritage and centre of solace and learning. Under the heritage complex development programme by the UP Government, a development plan has been prepared and some works have already been started.

5. Sarnath

This archaeological heritage site was famous for its sanctity, beauty and natural scenery, qualities that attracted the Buddha to give his first sermon here in 532BCE. Following Muslim invasions and the downfall of the Gahadavalas Kings, the site was left in ruins and only came to light in 1793. The principal site includes a well-preserved commemorative stupa (a decorated masonry tumulus) which dominates the site, the foundations of a reliquary stupa, the ruins of the temple complex and ancient monasteries, and a myriad of small votive stupas (cf. Fig. 2).

Other Heritagescapes

There are many other sites, areas and monuments in Varanasi, which urgently require restoration and preservation and inclusion in the sustainable heritage tourism programmes. These include the Hindu Observatory at Man Mandir Ghat, the Sumer Devi temple at Ramanagar, the Amethy temple at Manikarnika Ghat and many others. Varanasi is famous for its series and layers of sacred circuits (cf. Singh, 1997b, 1998), among which the Panchakroshi is the most popular. This pilgrimage circuit symbolising the cosmo-spatial *māndalic* territory (*kshetra*) of Kashi is a unique attribute of Varanasi. The total route covers 88.5km (25 krosha) and is divided into five parts marked by overnight stops (Fig. 4). At these five spots there are 44 *dharmashālās* (rest houses) for pilgrims. In every intercalary month,

malamāsa (e.g. the current one covers a period of 18 Sept to 16 Oct 2001), over 45,000 devotees perform this pilgrimage (cf. Singh, 2002). Under the recently initiated heritage development project, a part of the Master Plan, partial works like improvement of roads, cleaning of the water pools and repairing of roads are completed. On the ground of pilgrimage-tourism this cosmic circuit should be given special emphasis in promoting sustainable heritage tourism.

Fig. 4. Panchakroshi Pilgrimage Circuit and 108 Sacred Spots, Varanasi.

8. The March ahead towards Inclusion

Residents and City Administration together propose the inclusion of Varanasi in the World Heritage List. The District Administration of Varanasi, some eminent residents and local non-government organisations (NGOs) together propose that the historic centre of the city of Varanasi be included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

The Divisional Commissioner, Mr. Manoj Kumar, called several meetings, of the concerned eminent citizens and local organisations of Varanasi in order to discuss this proposal. It was observed that the historic centre of Varanasi, already nominated as the heritage zone in the Master Development Plan of the City (1991-2011), fulfilled all the six criteria for cultural sites (and also some criteria of natural sites) laid down by UNESCO for inclusion of any site within its World Heritage List.

It was unanimously decided in the above meeting that a proposal be drafted on the lines prescribed by UNESCO's World Heritage Cities List. Since UNESCO requires that the city authorities already have bye laws and promote activities that protect the site being proposed for inclusion, it was decided that the process to fulfil these requirements be started immediately. For these purposes a Working Group is formed.

The Working Group. Dr. Rana P.B. Singh, President of the Society of Heritage Planning & Environmental Health, (SHPEH), who has worked extensively in this field, will head the Working Group for drafting, co-ordinating and supervising the proposal. The Kautilya Society, a local NGO working to promote Indian studies and to protect the cultural heritage of the city, represented by its General Secretary Ms. Vrinda Dar, will collaborate actively with him in all the programmes. This Working Group will work in close contact with the district and town administration. It will document (make comprehensive maps of the sites, take photographs, write out historical description and present status of conservation, valid justification, etc. of all properties to be included in proposed heritage sites). Further, it will also make critical and comparative study of similar proposals at the national and international levels, communicate with the concerned UNESCO bodies, propose legislations and confer with Indian and foreign experts. The administration (Varanasi Development Authority, VDA) and the Working Group have already begun the preliminary activities.

9. Actions at the various levels of Governance

The declaration of Varanasi as a heritage city in the World Heritage Cities List implies that specific heritage-conservation related actions be taken at the following governance levels:

At the City (District) Level

It is suggested that the City (District) Administration:

- 1) Draft and ratify a Manifesto committing itself to the conservation and protection of the city and accepting its responsibilities as the guardian of a World Heritage Site. This manifesto must include, among others, the following articles:
 - All proposals for development will give importance to the protection of the cultural and historic fabric of the Heritage City.
 - Planning and demolition permits for the heritage city will be in accordance with the declaration of the identified precincts of the city as a heritage site
 - All pressure for change and development will be in such a way as to preserve and enhance the cultural, historic, architectural and artistic fabric and landscape of the Heritage City.
- 2) All built heritage assets of the city must be identified and documented through a survey, listing, mapping, architectural plans of individual buildings, historical evidence, visual photography, etc. of the same

- 3) A specific conservation plan must be drafted and must be made an integral part of the development plan of the city.
- 4) A Conservation Cell must be created within the local Development Authority, without whose approval no demolition or renovation of listed heritage is permitted. The Cell must comprise administrative officers, local political representatives, concerned local organisations and experts. The Conservation Cell must approve all interventions in, on or around the listed sites. All intervention in the listed heritage sites must be in accordance with national and international norms and specifications laid down in a Charter drafted and ratified by the Conservation Cell. The Cell will continuously update concerned conservation by-laws and development plans. The Conservation Cell must nominate local organisations for systematic and continuous monitoring of listed heritage assets of the city.
- 5) Specific by-laws must be formulated for the development and preservation of listed heritage sites, their skylines and surrounding areas. The Conservation Cell must be part of the process of formulating these By Laws.

At the State Level

It is suggested that the State Ministries and concerned institutions:

- 1) Draft and approve legislations for the heritage zones of Banaras that are binding on citizens, government and political institutions alike.
- 2) Promote local efforts to involve stakeholders in policy making processes.
- 3) Give the same weight to conservation as to development, on the principle of co-existing sustainability.
- 4) Draft tourism development plans that are environmentally-sustainable – natural, cultural and urban areas, put utmost attention on restricting hard-impact tourism and on the carrying capacity of heritage zones.
- 5) Make continuous impact evaluations of conservation efforts, policies and laws.
- 6) Promote training and development of technical capacity in the field and scope for adjustment and alterations.

At the National level

It is suggested that the National ministries and concerned national institutions:

- 1) Make legislations to foster a climate of conservation and appropriate administrative and financial measures.
- 2) Sustain legal, administrative, technical, economic development and social-cultural measures that support the specific characteristics of the Heritage City
- 3) Channelise part of the national funds for conservation of important heritage sites.
- 4) Have a holistic approach to development of heritage sites satisfying both economic and social-cultural objectives.

10. Towards Epilogue

Heritage is the mirror of mankind's growth, progress and prospects; that must be preserved. One has to remember that modern science and way of life, and ancient wisdom and its messages can work together to help in searching harmonious and peaceful path of mankind's integrity with nature. We may separate ourselves from the web of our heritage in the line of modernity and secularism, but it would always be in the heart and soul of ourselves (cf. Singh, 1993: 306). A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the site as living organism.

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