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## **An Architectural Appreciation of Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi City, Uttar Pradesh**

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### ***Abstract:***

*Popularly known as the Cultural capital of India, Varanasi (Benares or Kashi) is a very old timeless city in India. The main city spreads over an area of 84.55 km<sup>2</sup> and is inhabited by nearly 1.21 million people. Additionally, everyday about 40,000 commuters visit the city. It itself present as an excellent example of traditional habit, culture and interaction. Natural landscape as well as aesthetic importance makes this city specific in all the respect. It too has an outstanding expression of architectural assemblage and landscape. The beauty of the Varanasi city is that it is situated near the sacred river Ganga along with long uninterrupted stretch of nearly eighty four ghats. Each ghat uniquely provides platforms for all rituals, art, music, drama, meditation, gathering, etc. The present case is to visualize the architectural setting and analyzing the space and volumes at the ghats associated with these activities, particularly Dashashwamedh Ghat is chosen for the case study.*

### **1. Introduction**

Associated to numerous mythologies, historical aspects, culture and traditional importance, the Dashashwamedh Ghat; among the rest of eighty four ghats in continuous near sacred river Ganga, is considered as the most important and busiest ghat. Numerous legendary tales are associated with these ghats. Expressions of Mughal Emperors and the British Colonial era can be seen in architectural settings in the buildings.

This ghat has got the importance in terms of its history, well connected network of streets, market, temples, buildings and gathering of people from different regions at the same local place. This is also important to notice that this imbibes the present modifications while preserving its own natural known identity.

According to one of the Hindu mythology the number in the term Dashashwamedh speaks that this is the place where Lord Brahma had performed a Yagna in which He had given the sacrifice of ten horses. Dashashwamedh Ghat is the place where a large number of pilgrims and tourist come for Ganga Aarti.



Figure 1: Image of Heritage Zones, Varanasi

### 1.1. Features of Dashashwamedh Ghat

- Connected to the road by Britishers during mid 1800.
- Historical façade with diverse architectural styles.
- City level market and neighborhood community center
- Connected to traditional bazaars of the Vishwanath gate (Street)
- A courtyard system market complex
- Importance for apparels and accessories

## 2. Architectural Appreciation

### 2.1. Ghat vs. Human Respiratory System

From the model and layout of the Dashahwamedh Ghat, it can be comprehended the intellectuality in the architectural style that makes ghat to sustain through the years (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). The ghat near to river Ganga is acting same like as the nostril part of the human body system. Like the human respiratory system, as oxygen (Prana Vayu) which is essential for proper functioning of the human body physiology and ultimately the life, enters through the nose and reaches of the lungs via the trachea. In the same way, fresh air enters through the ghats via streets and circulates in the whole surrounding areas. These narrow streets act like narrow channels for fresh air circulation which supplies air to all the parts of this city area near to it. This area is so compact and congested if these streets are not so built then it could not be possible for this land to survive.

The small area of land is imbibing both modern as well as traditional values and methods. Very near to the ghat, a high spiritualism is sensed. It makes us remember about Mughal and British colonial periods and architectural advancement in this area. As we move more interior to this ghat traditional market exist along the sides of the narrow street and remains working too late nights. The modern market takes its position in the very interior of this ghat. The combination of traditional and modern market both survives in harmony. The beauty of these markets is that in spite of being very crowded and congested, it runs very smoothly in these very narrow streets. Presence of Vishwanath temple and Ganga Aarti (Worship of River Ganga) every day in the evening makes this land a heavenly place.

## 2.2. Land Use and Movement Network

Fig. 4 is used for displaying locations and functions of different important gravity points and daily movement in Dashashwamedh bazaar. Fig. 5 shows a layout of land use pattern in the Dashashwamedh area. It is inevitable that the ghat and the surrounding Dashashwamedh area are well communicated through its streets. Streets are not the only path to connect its neighborhood, but also connect the public domain. Drainage air and duct ventilation purpose are fulfilled by the streets. So the easy movement in this area during the day and late night time could become possible to run. Trimuhani (Where the two or more streets joins) act as a point of social interaction in the community. For the new visitors, street is not less than any Bhulbhuliya. Streets have a very complex network along the Ghats. The play of light and shadow provide unique experience to the community. Every street has a unique soundscape. It can be said that this place is created with time not by the people.

Starting from the general seating area at the ghat, which is generally occupied during the time of Ganga Aarti in every evening. Religious books, Rudraksha mala and other religious items can be seen in the market attached near to it and at the ghats. Garlands, flower sellers, tea seller, chat thelas etc. are engaged in these ghats to run their livelihood.

As we move more interior to this, modern market takes its position. The combination of traditional and modern market both survives in harmony.

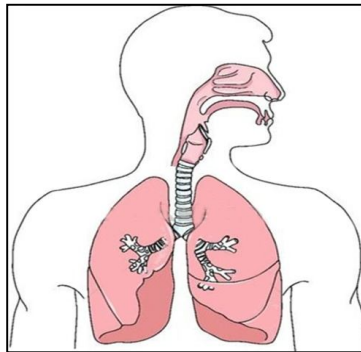


Figure 2: Human Respiratory System

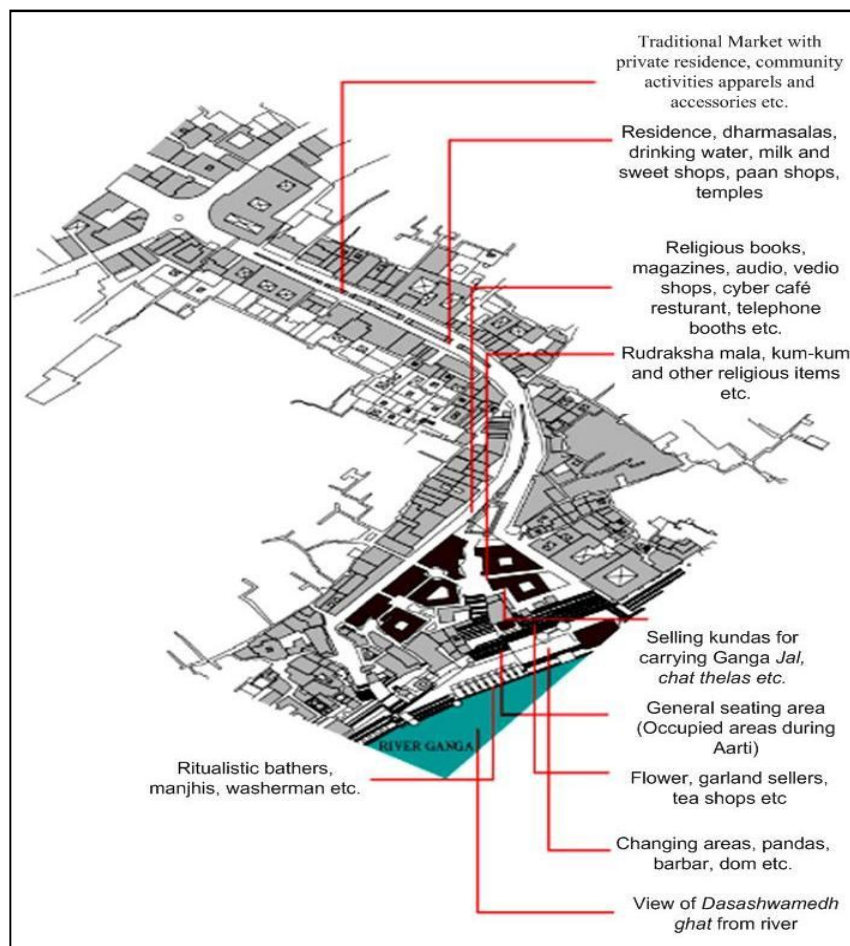


Figure 3: Layout of Dashahwamedh Ghat

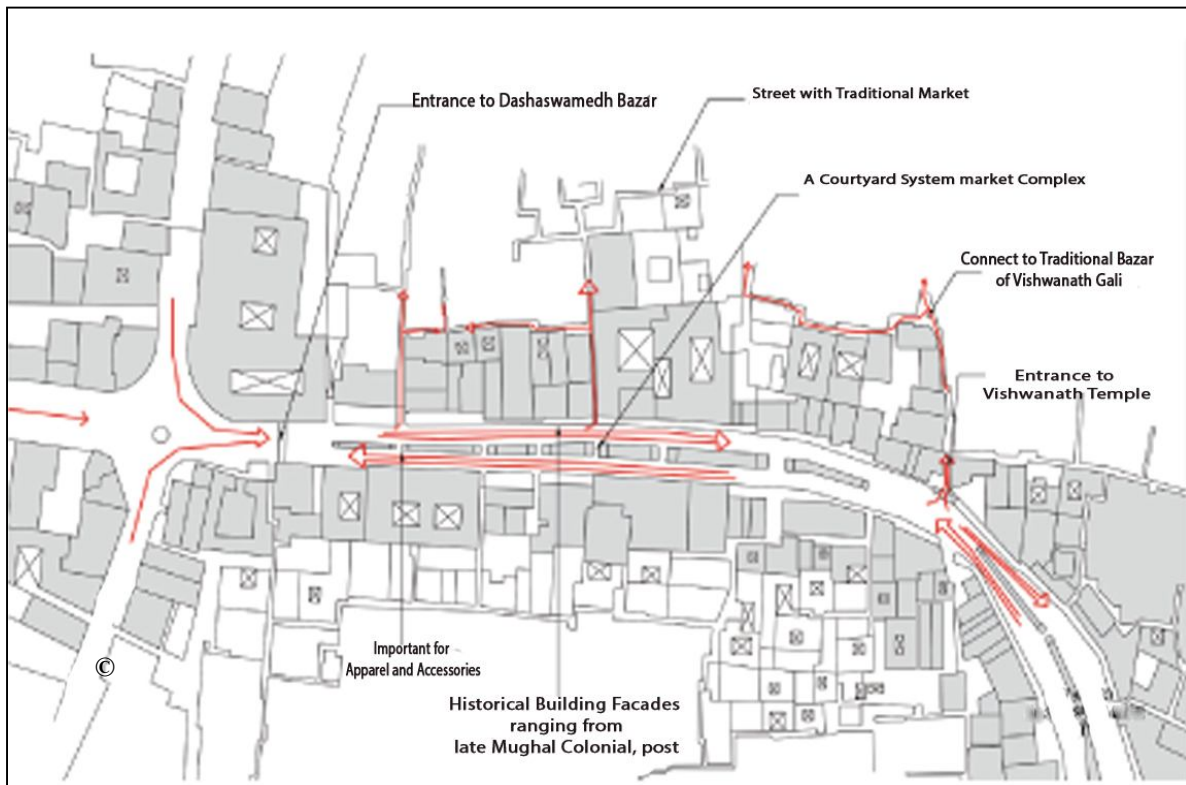


Figure 4: Layout of Movement Network Analysis and Existing Dashaswamedh Bazar

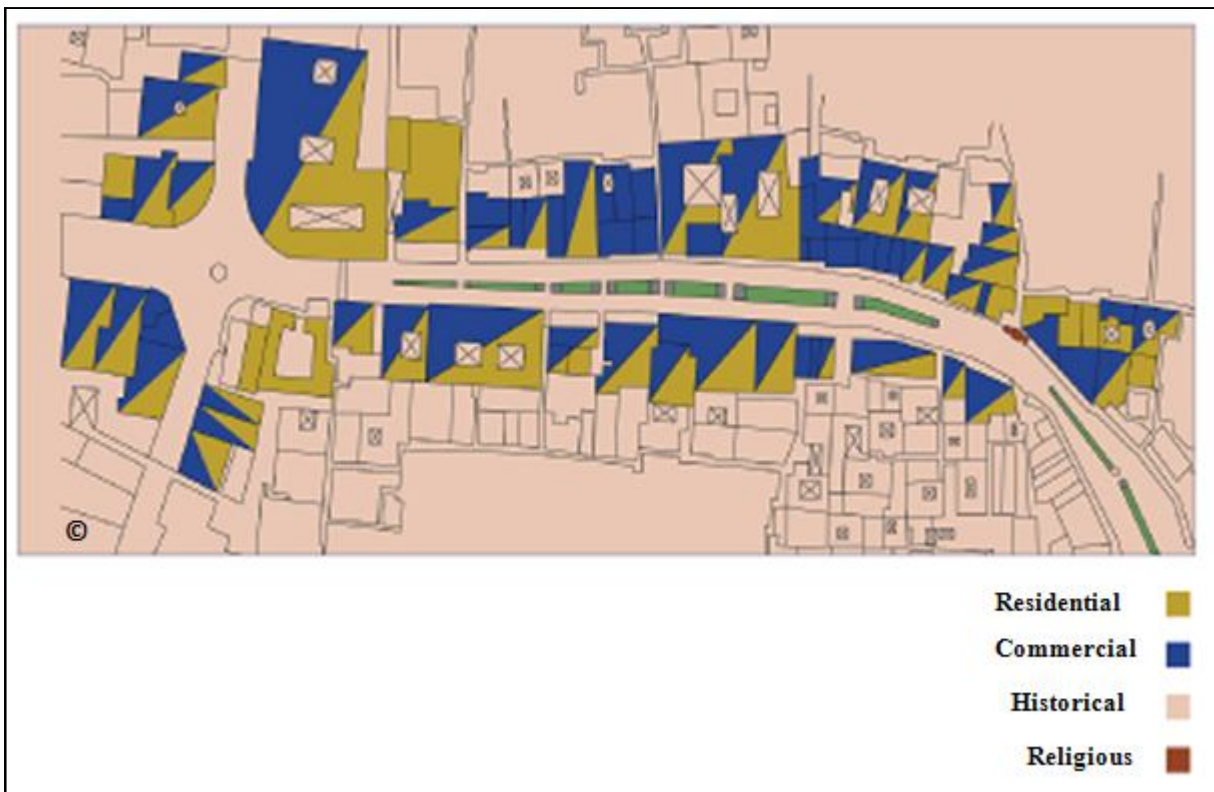


Figure 5: Layout of Land Use Pattern in Dashaswamedh Area

Kashi Viswanath temple, which is considered as one of the most famous temple of Lord Shiva located in this place. Built in sandstone, this temple presents a unique example of hybrid architecture. Chitranganj Park, which named after the famous freedom fighter Deshbandhu Chitranganj, is currently used as temporary shed for pilgrims.

These ghats are the platform where the worship of the five essential elements of nature, namely; Aakash (Sky), Vayu (Air), Agni (Fire), Jal (Water) and Prithvi (Earth or Bhoomi) done every day. This small place imbibe the whole universe. These ghats are the

repository of many tangible and intangible things. These ghats live on its streets, in buildings, in traditional and modern market, Viswanath temple, in people, in their belief and culture, in River Ganga, in Ganga Aarti and other rituals, etc. That's why, all these factors together make this place an important position in the world heritage and has always been the attraction for tourists.

- Acknowledgement: Varanasi Development Authority

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