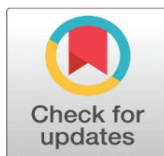
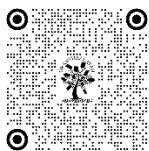


BANARAS: THE LANDSCAPE OF TEMPLES

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ABSTRACT

In this study I would like to express the excellence of temples art and architecture of Banaras. Banaras is popular for its deep cultural heritage and timeless morals. It is a city of temples, Ghats and lanes, which is adorned with every colours of the natural scenery, which is beyond imagination. This city is an ancient city and a great blending pot of cultures from India and all over the world.

Banaras city is more famous for many Hindu temples and those temples were built at different times throughout the history of Banaras by nawabs, kings, monasteries and empires. This city has a huge collection of historical Hindu temples and it reflects great ancient architectural structure.

Through this paper I attempt to analyze the fascinating composition of the historical temples of Banaras.

Keywords: Banaras, Ghats, Temples, Ganga Aarti, Culture, Baba Vishwanath, Kaal Bhairav, Devi Annapurna Temple, Maa Durga Temple, Sankat Mochan Temple.

1. INTRODUCTION

Banaras is a city of temples. It is naturally adorned with natural beauty of every colour of the nature and beauty, which is beyond imagination.

When we think of Banaras we imagine of place of temples embodied with its supernatural powers, customs and traditions according to the Hindu philosophy.



Banaras

Banaras is very popular among the Spiritual seekers, searching to find their dignity of life in form of the deities present in the temples. The names of the temples are the identity of the streets, and the particular streets are named after that particular temple.

For example, Dashaswamedh Ghat, this is not only the name of the Ghat but also the identification of surrounding area up to the range of 2 to 3 Km. Vishwanath Gali also got its identity from Baba Vishwanath Temple. These streets have a variety of shops ranging from worship necessities to wedding clothes and a variety of sweets shops, the street is known for a variety of commodities. In the same way area surrounding the Durga Temple is named Durga Kund and the area around Sankat Mochan temple is popularly known as Sankat Mochan. We can see a pattern that particular areas are named after the particular temple present in that local area all over Banaras.

There is no specific knowledge of how many thousands of years the city of Banaras has been dedicated to Lord Shiva. The people, who are inhabitants of the bank of River Ganga, are known as Banarasi or Kaashi-Vaasi. Banaras does not need any introduction because we worshiped Lord Shiva who resides in the jungles of Banaras. Banaras is a city that the quality of life is enough to make one happy. If you want to spend the whole day by the banks of the river or visit the temples, you will attain complete connection with your Ishta-Devata by connecting with him. This is the city of celebrations, this is the city of innocence, we can also say that this is the city of adabhangiyo and saints. Along with this, it is also known as the place of inspiration, centre for education and culture, which is called Banaras.

If the mathematical measurement of the Stairs of the Ghats of Banaras is found out then it will be possible to understand the graphs of life as it is on this earth, which only can understand by a Banarasi. There are so many verses are found in the seeds of Banaras, that the value of life is displayed through the medium of the architecture from the ancient times. If only we follow the stairs, we can consider how many aspects of life we have seen since ancient times. Because of this, Lord Shiva, the healer from the beginning of life and all the gods and goddesses, have lived with these stairs and have become human beings. Amidst the beauty and charm, there are many number of temples on the stairs with the presence of many Gods and Goddesses and in the middle of the stairs, crowds comes in the form of a ritual, in the form of a small business, in the form of a small earth's upheaval, setting on the stairs. The stairs are the path that meets the Goddess Ganga, it is also called the house of monks, who spend their entire lives on these stairs. Stairs are not just stairs they are like the lines of life which give the feeling of Banaras to the particular beauty of Banaras in a perfect way.

2. TEMPLES OF BANARAS

Now I would like to analyze some of the main temples of Banaras which have been in the faith of Hindus since ancient times. The specialty of Banaras in the form of Visual is its balance on the basis of tradition and cultural of the daily routine. Who makes Banaras tremble with its visual appearance.

Goddess Ganga of the *Uttar vahini* is in the form of Crescent (*Aardhchandrakar*), just like Lord Shiva is in his *Jata*, Goddess Ganga is present in the Kaashi city of Lord Shiva and Goddess Ganga is also known to live with Shitla Devi temple in the

form of salvation vehicle. Whoever comes to Banaras for appearance before taking appearance of Baba Vishwanath, after taking bath in Goddess Ganga and taking his blessings, he gets sight of Lord Shiva.



BABA VISHWANATH TEMPLE:

Banaras city Kashi Vishwanath Temple is one of the most famous Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. This temple is situated on the western bank of the holy river Ganges, and is one of the twelve *Jyotirlingas*, which are the most sacred. Lord is known by the name Vishwanath or Vishveshwar which means ruler of the universe. Banaras city is also called Kaashi. Therefore the temple is called Kaashi Vishwanath Temple.



Baba Vishwanath Temple

KAAL BHAIRAV TEMPLE

Kaal Bhairav is called the *Kotwal* of this Banaras city. According to Hindu belief, Kaal Bhairav manages the entire city on the orders of Lord Shankar. Being a Banarasi let me tell you that Bhairav had performed penance in Kaashi to be free from the sin of killing a Brahma. And whoever comes to Banaras for *darshan* of Baba Vishwanath does not leave without having *darshan* of Kaal Bhairav Baba.



MATA ANNAPURNA TEMPLE:

Apart from its Ghats of Banaras, situated on the banks of Ganga, is also known for its famous temples of gods and goddesses. One of these is the temple of Mata Annapurna (*Annapurna Mandir*). Goddess Annapurna is considered the mother of all three worlds (*Trilok*). This temple is very special in itself. 500 year old statues have been installed in this temple.



According to tradition, the temple with the golden statue of *Maa Annapurna* opens for four days every year on the occasion of *Dhanteras*. The doors of the temple are closed after the *Annakoot* festival on the second day of Diwali. In this temple, 500 years old golden idols are installed which are present along with the idol of Goddess Annapurna. Lord Shiva is standing in front of Goddess Annapurna in the posture of donating food. On the right side is the golden idol of Goddess *Lakshmi* and on the left side is the golden idol of *Bhudevi*.

According to *Mahant* (Prist) of the temple, the priceless treasure of the temple is opened on the day of *Dhanteras*. Its significance lies in the mythological stories associated with the temple. It is believed that once there was a famine in Kaashi. People were dying of hunger. Then Lord Shiva had asked for alms from Goddess Annapurna to feed the people. Along with the alms, the Goddess also gave a promise to Lord Shiva that no one would ever sleep hungry in Kaashi. It is also said that everyone who comes to Kaashi gets food only with the blessings of Goddess Annapurna.

DURGA MATA TEMPLE:

“ॐ जयंती मंगला काली भद्रकाली कपालिनी।
दुर्गा क्षमा शिवा धात्री स्वाहा स्वधा नमोऽस्तुते॥”

Means “I salute you Jagadamba, famous by the names Jayanti, Mangala, Kali, Bhadrakali, Kapalini, Durga, Kushmanda, Shiva Dhatri and Swadha.” The blessings of Maa Durga are always present on Kaashi, under the special blessings of Kaashi vaashi.

There is power without Shiva and without power Shiva is incomplete. That is why in Banaras, Goddess Durga is also present among her devotees. Where on one side Baba Vishwanath is seated, on the other second side the statue of Goddess Durga in the form of *Svyambhu* is visible. This temple was beautified by the Bengali queen in the 18th century by it in a huge form.



Durga Mata Temple

SANKAT MOCHAN TEMPLE

Sankat Mochan temple is one of the historical temples of the country is the Sankat Mochan Hanumanji Temple of Kaashi. It is told in the *Puranas* that the history of the Sankat Mochan Temple of Kaashi is about four hundred years old. It is said that this temple was built between *Samvat* 1631 and 1680. The temple was established by Goswami Tulsidasji. It is believed that when he was writing *Ramcharitmanas* while living in Kaashi, his source of inspiration was Sankat Mochan Hanuman. In this temple, Hanumanji had given *darshan* to Ram devotee Goswami Tulsidasji.

After which *Bajrangbali* assumed the form of clay and settled here. It is said that all the troubles of the devotees coming here go away just by seeing Lord Hanuman.



Sankat Mochan Temple

3. CONCLUSION

***"Rand, Sand, Seedi, Sanyasi,
Inse Bache to Sevai Kashi."***

This is a popular Doha of Kabir. Its means "widows, bulls, stairs and saints, escape them all to reach salvation (Kaashi). Banaras is such a place, it is said that all the troubles of the devotees coming here are solved by Baba Vishwanath. They go away just by seeing Baba Vishwanath. Banaras is the holy land of Baba Vishwanath and it is a melting pot of cultures from all over world, which is always lit, no brother's presence happens here, because here even death is considered as the second life. Death is such a truth which shows the beauty of Lord Shiva. ***Satyam Shivam Sundaram.***

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None

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None

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