CHAPTER 3:

CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS URBANISM IN INDIAN PILGRIMAGE TOWNS
3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discusses theoretical inter-relationships between the thematic dimensions of culture, urban planning and sustainability. This research further explores linkages between these three themes by embedding this inquiry in context of pilgrimage towns in India. The unique characteristics of indigenous urbanism and the phenomenon of pilgrimage in India provide a historical religio-cultural context for embedding the research, and gain insights into this critical dimension of Indian urban planning initiatives.

However, urban history in India dates back to 4500 years and present Indian urban condition exhibits considerable diversity owing to accretion of myriad influences on its evolution (Spodek, 1980). The historic layers co-exist in contemporary Indian towns and impart complexity to the Indian urban condition. Three distinctive temporal layers manifested spatially in contemporary cities are identified as the historic town, newly planned and unplanned developments, and the informal growth of the urban poor (Menon, 1989). Earliest urban developments in India are known more through archeological remnants, and the traditional planning principles are insufficiently glimpsed through early Indian treatises like Arthasastra, Manasara, and Mayamata etc. Additionally, the acknowledged paucity of adequate studies on traditional patterns of urbanism or traditional Indian towns/settlements reinforces the imperative for contemporary urban professionals to engage with indigenous Indian urbanism (Menon, 1999).

Similarly, numerous pilgrimage towns – ‘tirths’- have evolved in India that are linked to a profusion of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. The Hindu tradition of reverence is linked primarily to the ‘place’ which is pivotal to a Hindu devotee/pilgrim (Eck, 1981). Even a visit to the holiest ‘Sapta Puri’ towns like Mathura, Varanasi, Haridwar, Ujjain, Ayodhya, Kanchipuram and Dwarka are known to bestow devotees with moksha i.e. spiritual liberation (Sinha, 1999). The sacred sites are often linked to natural features such as sacred groves, rivers, hills/mountains, ponds etc. and built up sites which constitute an ‘imagined landscape’ constituted of pilgrimage places and networks (Eck, 1998). Significance of a sacred geography is elaborated in various traditional Hindu texts viz. ‘Puranas’ and ‘Sthalpuranas’ – a sub-genre of literature describing the traditional history and functional importance of a sacred site or region (Goldman, 1986) (Nath, 2007) (Eck, 2012).

Exploring the thematic linkages in indigenous urban settlements with traditional pilgrimage thus emerges as a complex issue which cannot be studies using a single variable. Hence, a
A multidisciplinary approach is adopted to explore the linkages primarily through socio-cultural, historical, religio-pilgrimage, spatial and urban studies perspective.

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The broad structure of the chapter focusing on indigenous Indian urbanism in its intersection with culture and contemporary urban planning at Indian pilgrimage towns is shown in Figure 3.1. The Section 3.2 discusses evolution of Indian urbanism, and specifically focuses on temple-towns and pilgrimage centers. Section 3.3 presents the characteristics of Hindu pilgrimage while Section 3.4 presents contemporary urbanism of pilgrimage towns in India. Section 3.5 presents cultural considerations within urban planning framework in India through national policies and planning initiatives at select pilgrimage towns. Section 3.6 explores linkages between cultural characteristics and urban planning through a place-based pilot study at pilgrimage town of Haridwar. Section 3.7 draws the conclusions. Chapter 3 and Chapter 2 together address objective 1 of the research (Figure 3.2) that focuses on exploration of theoretical inter-linkages between culture, urban planning and sustainability.
3.2 Indigenous urbanism of Indian towns: Evolution

A majority of Indian towns had origins in village settlements that evolved temporally by intended or unintended accretion over time. The physical growth of villages were historically catalysed by trade between settlements, mercantile activity due to location of mines or local industry, villages excelling in local arts and crafts and visitations to temple towns and learning centers. Progressively, clusters of villages with in-between intervening farms/gardens were aggregated towards formation of larger cities (Dutt, 2009). Site planning of larger settlements was largely concerned with folk planning, and the material and design form were in response to purpose of the settlement and local circumstances of location, climate, accessibility and safety. Folk planning was largely based on varnashrama dharma, wherein people adopting similar pursuits of work or professions were clustered spatially together, ostensibly envisaging a uniformity of life patterns (Dutt, 2009). Important public buildings like the temple, royal house, courts, treasury etc. were positioned at the center of a settlement.

Evolution of temple-towns and pilgrimage centers

Inclusion of the sacred realm has traditionally been a significant aspect of settlement planning in India. Significance of spirituality as a fountainhead of life patterns and culture manifested itself in civic architecture by presence of traditional religio-communal center like a temple place in all community wards. Sacred geographies, places of primordial significance or mythic association with Gods were considered sacred, and temples were
constructed for commemoration and reiteration of its sacrality. The major temples were not only a place for prayers and pilgrimage, but significant centers of learning traditionally. Ashrams (hermitages) and mathas (monasteries) as centers of learning were important aspects of civic life, and were seminal for growth of towns that were important learning centers viz. Nalanda, Taxila, and Varanasi etc.

Pilgrimage activity also catalysed physical growth of the temple towns. The growth was centrifugally directed outwards from the main shrines, accompanied by construction of minor shrines in their vicinity constructed by saints attached to main shrines. The shrines also developed as centers of learning where spiritual training was imparted, and attracted considerably more people. More residences, rest houses ashrams, mathas and akharas developed, and towns acquire growth beyond the temples. Spatial provisions for enacting the rituals associated with the shrine expanded and were facilitated by religious actors. The entire pattern that develops in these sacred are constituted of a combination of ‘sacred centers’, ‘sacred performances’ and sacred specialists’ which is conceptualized as “sacred complex” by Vidyarthi (Vidyarthi, 1961). Sacred centers allude to the sacred sites, sacred performances to the rituals and sacred specialists to priestly actors facilitating rituals. The components of sacred complex are also analogous to ‘cultural stage-place’ - where cultural performances occur; ‘cultural performances’ that allude to prayers, rituals, readings, recitations, rites and ceremonies; and ‘cultural media’ that includes singing, dancing, acting, sanskritic knowledge and technique of drama recitation through which culture specialists’ communicate to the masses (Vidyarthi, 1961).

Sacred places are configured as sacred centers, sacred clusters, sacred segments, sacred zones and sacred ground based on the locational, organizational, cultural, ritualistic, sectarian and functional considerations. These sacred categories are further categorized as minor, major, domestic, regional or universal based on their significance expressed in the visitations it attracts. This categorization appears as a conducive mapping tool at a city level for spatial aggregation and ordering of otherwise disparate sacred centers dispersed in a city, and the activity patterns they generate.

Bharne (Bharne & Krusche, 2012) classifies temple-related-habitat in India into ‘place-types’ based on either the physical characteristics, or the socio-cultural force that shaped them. The temple habitats are accordingly characterized into five types (Bharne & Krusche, 2012):
- Temple compounds and hamlets: Enclosing of a temple, thereby creating a setting for sacred activity. The enclosure may be simple or complex, having a single or multitude of deities within the compound.
- Sacred campuses and towns: A large temple complex formed through incremental accretion of shrines. It is smaller than a village, that over time evolve to become larger temple towns.
- Exurban ensembles and acropolises: Implies a detached sacred to urban relationship, viz. by placing a sacred center at a hilltop.
- Sacred and political centers: The growth is not incremental, but patronized by royal power – characterized by the binary of sacred and royal.
- Mythic cities and translations: Cities considered the holiest by the sacred texts.

3.3 Characteristics of Hindu pilgrimage in India

Pilgrimage is deeply ingrained in the cultural psyche of Indians and originates in the sacrality accorded to natural elements like rivers, river confluences, lakes, mountains, forests etc. Three hundred sacred places are mentioned in the Mahabharata (350 BC) and people seek merit by travelling to such sacred places. Pilgrimage as a tradition still perpetuates as large civil society movement for religious/spiritual experiences in the religious traditions of India (Singh, 2013). The two broad category of motives for pilgrimage are ascribed either to mundane reasons of existence, or to earn religious merit (Bhardwaj, 1983). The pilgrimage for fulfilling a vow, well - being, death rites, darshan etc. belong to the first motive and spiritual purification to the second.

Eck (Eck, 1981) elucidates upon importance of the role of pilgrimage places as:

- a good places for performing of rites,
- a substitute for other ritual activities,
- egalitarian places enabling crossing of social restrictions,
- places for ‘crossing beyond’ sins i.e. wash away one’s sins
- a geographical journey and a crossover journey within and
- to fulfil specific vows.

These pilgrimage towns are living cultural repositories of religious traditions and have functioned as nodes for religious organization and perpetuation of traditional values and beliefs. The Hindu pilgrimage towns are varyingly categorized based on its presiding deity,
rites and rituals of significance and on basis of reach of its sanctity. Their pilgrims’
activities at pilgrimage towns include rituals of obligation, circumambulation along
ritualistic routes, reliving mythologies and engaging in pursuits for spiritual experiences
Significance to a pilgrimage town is accorded by its recognition in traditional religious
literature or linkage to Sanskritic texts – often Sthal Puranas. On the basis of pilgrims’
perception of significance, the pilgrimage towns are identified at various levels of
significance - local, sub regional, regional, supraregional and pan-Hindu (Bhardwaj, 1983,
pp. 226-227). The pilgrimage towns are constituted of religious functionaries, ashrams,
mathas, and akharas and witness diverse patronage relations viz. Jajman-purohit system.

The number of pilgrims has increased manifold due to improvement in the communications
and transportation system over time. Massive influx of pilgrims coupled with poor
environmental infrastructure, lack of hygiene, weak governance apparatus, inadequate
awareness, capacities and capabilities of the citizens or governance authorities creates
problems related to health, safety and experiential aspects at the pilgrimage town. The
resulting transformations are socially and environmentally detrimental for the pilgrimage
town and diminish the quality of experience of pilgrims (Shinde, 2012). Unless planned
sensitively, the pilgrimage towns fail to offer any significant experience to pilgrims or a
liveable quality of life to the residents and hence lose meaning to become unsustainable.

3.4 Contemporary Indian urbanism and pilgrimage towns

Indian urban conditions are characterized by abundant diversity that results from a
combination of multiple planning processes and spatial layering of diverse vernacular,
indigenous, formal planned and extra-legal idioms of urbanism. The towns and cities
exhibit spatial juxtaposition of planned and un-planned (extra-legal) activities that are
manifested in ‘static city’ and ‘kinetic city’ respectively (Mehrotra, 2008) (Gupte, et al.,
2010). The static city is usually built of permanent material, whereas kinetic city is in
motion, temporary, built of impermanent material, and in a realm outside the planning
framework, informal and usually extra-legal. Visibly, un-planned activities are a formidable
presence in Indian urban conditions and are normally ignored or not included in the formal
planning process (Roy, 2009). Largely manifested in the interstitial spaces of a city – road
edges, slums and informal settlements the un-planned is constantly in a state of adversarial
relationship with the planning process.
Urban planning process imperatively needs to negotiate the Indian urban conditions of contrasting neat suburban developments and heterogeneous traditional settlements, city of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, automobile and the bicycle etc. to understand real issues prevailing in Indian cities. Tracing these antecedents in the Indian urban experience, Menon raises the issue of professional engagement with complexities of traditional Indian urbanism, by considering settlements as both a socio-cultural construct and technical entity (Menon, n.d.). It is also suggested that Indian architecture and urbanism be self-referential because of the inherent uniqueness of Indian cities characterized by heterogeneity, plurality and multiculturalism (Menon, 1999).

These generic informal and kinetic aspects of urban functioning characteristics also manifest in the urban conditions at Indian pilgrimage towns. Such towns usually have a traditional core in the city, which is sacred, dense, and culturally vibrant with high numbers of pilgrim visitations. It experiences a kaleidoscope of religious rituals and practices like darshan, parikrama, ritual offerings like flowers and prasad to Gods, chanting of mantras, community bhajans and celebration of festivals etc. that exhibit considerable place-based variations. Processions of communities chanting hymns, festivals of Dusshera and Ganesh Chaturthi and ritual bathing at ghats signify the kinetic dimension of sacred activities in the public realm that forge functional linkages between the sacred and the habitat.

In pilgrimage towns, these activities are usually supported by inadequate physical infrastructure for organization of cultural activities, or pilgrimage infrastructure like accommodation, foooding, transportation or hygiene that often function at the periphery of the mainstream planning – informally and extra-legally. However, an urban planning approach accommodative of indigenous urbanism characteristics of these sacred towns may provide an opportunity for revitalization of their civic environment.

A relevant approach for study of Indian heritage (traditional pilgrimage) towns from a cultural perspective has been postulated in the ‘Architectural Knowledge Systems’ (Thakur, 2002) that approaches study of Indian historic towns in a people-time-place continuum framework; thus implying an assimilative and holistic enquiry into the anthropological, historical and the geographical narrative of the city. The emergent Indian Cultural Landscape (ICL) is termed as the ‘intellectual landscape’ – a repository of knowledge, where collective memory, information and imagination shape the landscape (Thakur, 2011). Accordingly, the place may be conceived as an overlay of cultural layers in a temporal perspective, which may be discerned and approached uniquely at each settlement. It is
assumed that even awareness of indigenous knowledge systems would provide impetus for relevant approaches to culturally responsive urban planning processes.

3.5 Cultural considerations in urban planning framework in India

The 9th Five Year Plan (Planning Commission, 2014) of India recognized culture as an enduring and integrating instrument of harmony and social cohesiveness, and acknowledged as one of the basic concepts for integration in all development activities. The 12th Five Year Plan (Ministry of Culture, 2012) of India highlights the significant role of culture as a medium of self-expressions of individuals and communities developing creativity, and not a fringe activity but the core of all developmental activities. The Ministry of Culture, Government of India (Ministry of Culture, 2014) envisions cultural diversity and heritage as important pillars of national development with focus on preservation, promotion and safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage. There is potential for furthering these objectives by envisaging a seminal role for culture in developmental activities by adoption of holistic area based multi-dimensional approaches. These approaches informing the urban development processes may agreeably envisage culture to remain vibrant for imbibing new ideas, but also focus that the non-variable component of culture does not erode (Ministry of Culture, n.d.).

The Urban and Regional Development Plans Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India (TCPO, 2015) cluster the heritage-religious-tourism led cities for purpose of recommending generic approach to urban planning. The recommendations appear to have emphasis on the economic aspects of tourism, and heritage is envisaged as means of economic gains instead of focus on contribution of its intrinsic values. Similarly, the master plan as an approach for city development has been viewed as primarily a landuse zoning plan which is rigid, deterministic and lacks integration with regional framework. It lacks vision for a city wherein ideas of livability and usability are ignored, lacks an operational strategy and is not participatory (SPA, Delhi, 2009; MoHUPA, GOI, 2011). The sacred pilgrimage towns embody a dynamic cultural context which also exhibit cyclic patterns of diverse spatial usage of the city. The ‘one size fits all’ approach of the master plan totally neglects specific spatial dimension prevailing in dynamic context of pilgrimage towns. Considering the acknowledged gaps in prevailing master planning approach, there is potential for greater consideration of pilgrimage-specific recommendations even in the master plan.
Master Plan is the statutorily mandated instrument for urban planning of cities, and its limitations led to development of other urban development initiatives by the government. The former JNNURM Mission involved preparation of City Development Plan’s (CDP’s) of select cities, wherein a supplementary heritage toolkit (Government of India, 2006) was specifically developed for heritage towns after realizing gaps in earlier developed generic toolkit for the mission. However, interface between statutory master plans and mission initiatives to address mutual contradictions did not achieve desired levels and led to disjointed urban development (Meshram, 2006). Subsequently, HRIDAY Mission (Ministry of Urban Development MoUD, 2015) acknowledges the disjunction between the conservation of historical and cultural resources from the needs of local communities thereby presaging the critical link between the two. The Mission raises the significance of revival and revitalization of the soul of heritage/pilgrimage city and the emphasis is on physical, institutional, economic and social infrastructure. The mission emphasizes on the greater need of direct thematic focus on cultural aspects of such cities. HRIDAY and other important Smart Cities Mission (Ministry of Urban Development MOUD, 2015) and AMRUT Mission (Ministry of Urban Development, 2015) are in process of developing proposals for select cities and thus offer greater possibilities for real integration of cultural dimensions into the mainstream urban planning and development process.

An Inclusive Heritage-based City Development Program in India (World Bank Group, Cities Alliance, 2014) emphasize on the need for urban development schemes to value historic heritage and cultural landscapes as assets for sustainability of cities. The city development program identifies heritage as inclusive of ‘monuments and buildings’, ‘traditional neighborhoods, streetscapes, ghats and parks’ and practices and traditions - thus including both the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage in its considerations. The approach envisages ‘cultural capital’ as potentially ‘socially valuable endowment’, ‘powerful wealth and economic driver’ and provider of ‘essential basic and environmental services’. Four pilot cities included Varanasi, Ajmer, Pushkar and Hyderabad and investigations focused on five core components of institutional setup, state level assessment of heritage in urban approach, city profile, investment action plans and knowledge management. The program adopts a bottom-up participatory approach taking cognition of community aspiration, cultural values and imparts a multi-sectorial focus for developing of demonstration projects.
PRASAD – National mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (Ministry of Tourism, 2015) aims to develop pilgrimage tourist destinations to enrich religious/spiritual tourist experience and enhance employment opportunity. Its vision includes twin objectives of sustainable development of pilgrimage destinations, and to position tourism as a major engine of economic growth. The predominance of economic dimension underpinning this strategy of showcasing the towns as world class tourism products needs assessment of its impact on cultural authenticity of Indian pilgrimage towns linked to the sacrality of a place. The twelve short-listed cities include Vellankanni, Kanchipuram, Amravati, Puri, Kamakhya, Gaya, Varanasi, Mathura, Kedarnath, Amritsar, Ajmer and Dwarka.

**Culture and urban planning at select pilgrimage towns in India**

Alternatively, some cities selected for their religious/cultural significance under the JNNURM mission indicated priority for heritage over tourism as reflected in vision statements of its city development plans. The CDP vision for Ujjain (Ujjain Municipal Corporation, n.d.) was to make it “a knowledge and pilgrimage center – maintaining its great religious and cultural image and providing a better and sustainable environment to all walks of life”. Its vision as a Smart City (Ujjain Nagarpalika Nigam, 2016) also envisages a “…eminent, prosperous and Luminous Ujjain – A transformed pilgrimage and heritage destination”. This prime focus is supported by branding Ujjain as a pilgrimage and heritage destination, by increasing economic opportunities, and improved living environment and governance.

The core focus of CDP report at Haridwar (GHK International, 2007) was its development as a “City of Hope, Faith and Spirituality”. Largely known for its mythological association with the descent of sacred river Ganga and the entry to char dham, Haridwar is a major Hindu pilgrimage center. It is envisaged to develop into a pilgrimage and tourism destination in consonance with its cultural heritage, pristine natural surroundings and nodal location on the pilgrimage route. However, comprehensive planning for inclusion of heritage conservation in the development strategy is minimal, restricted to ‘Cultural Resource Mapping of Haridwar District’. The need for specific master plan initiatives for preservation of core heritage areas with intrinsic religious character has been highlighted.

The Master Plan of Mathura (Mathura Vrindavan Development Authority, 2008) recognizes significance of the place for its association with Sri Krishna which is manifested
and transmitted through different cultural idioms of literature, music, etc. Of immense religious, cultural and archeological significance, Mathura is recognized as a prime pilgrimage destination. The master plan suggests the need for an area-based approach for heritage-based development, but stops short of any spatial delineation. The key focus of CDP of Mathura prepared under the JNNURM mission envisioned “Mathura as a prime Heritage-tourism and religious focus of Braj” (Infrastructure Professionals Enterprise (P) Ltd, 2006). The Cultural Heritage Plan (CHP) for Mathura prepared under the HRIDAY mission adopts an area-based approach by identifying multiple clusters of cultural significance based on mapping of the cultural assets (The Braj Foundation, 2016) for initiating interventions.

CDP report for Puri under the JNNURM mission (Puri Municipality, 2006) envisages its development as a “vibrant sustainable city with unique heritage and rich legacy”. The CHP of Puri (Puri Municipality, 2016) prepared under the HRIDAY mission identifies multiple areas of cultural significance, endeavors to reconnect the residents to fundamental values of their heritage through urban planning, and imbue a holistic approach towards sustainable development. The report seeks mechanisms for greater convergence between various government structures and schemes proposed in the CHP for its requisite implementation.

Bodhgaya as the birthplace of Buddhism is a place accorded very high reverence in the Buddhist faith. The CDP prepared under the JNNURM mission (Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd., 2006) envisages Bodhgaya to have a spiritual ambience with adequate provision of pilgrim facilities and infrastructure to ensure a high quality of life for the community at the same time. Bodhgaya is envisioned to emerge as a cultural and educational hub for the region by 2030 AD. The master plan also identifies specific areas of high cultural significance demarcated as ‘special area’ to enable adoption of specific development strategies for this area, which is approx. 10.3% of the total available planning area.

More heterogeneous towns of high pilgrimage significance like Allahabad envision it as a tourist destination, as a knowledge-hub/hi-tech city with a sustainable and vibrant economy and a high quality of urban life (Feedback Ventures, 2006). Bhubaneswar has been shortlisted for development as a smart city wherein culture figures only as a sub-category for consideration under the category of social development. The vision of Bhubaneshwar as a smart city envisages it as a Transit oriented city, livable city, child friendly city, eco-city and a regional economic center (Bhubaneshwar Municipal Corporation, 2015).
Pilgrimage to Alandi Pandharpur is distinct in a sense that the accent is not on reaching the sacred goal point, as is usual in a pilgrimage, but the journey itself. The approach focuses on the behavioural aspects of the pilgrimage and also on various aspects of the actual journey viz. the route, organization of sequencing system, food arrangements, stay arrangements, activities during stay, services offered, and events during the journey (Kulkarni, 2016). With emphasis on the sustainable aspects of traditional values, a conservation-based approach for development of pilgrimage places focussed on i) behaviour patterns of pilgrims, ii) traditional wisdom, iii) generative processes of the town and iv) inherent sustainability values. This approach led towards generic problems of water supply, sanitation, solid waste disposal, traffic and transportation, accommodation and visitor management addressed from a perspective focusing on core values of the place, which lies is its cultural dimension of pilgrimage.

Tirupati is amongst the most visited pilgrimage site in India with 16 million annual visitations in 2005, and the primary objective of visitors is to have darshan of the principal deity and undertake associated rituals including tonsuring. The annual visitations exceed the 12.6 million annual visitations at Vrindavan in 2015 (Tourism, 2016), and is about 7-8% of total domestic tourism in India in 2015. With a very high number of pilgrim visitations the challenge of managing pilgrimage experience was addressed through a process-oriented approach combined with information technology (Ravichandran & Rao, 2005). The approach recognized that being tradition bound and culturally significant, modifications in procedures was not very desirable and long waiting time was inevitable due to very high numbers. Thus the central idea of the approach was to make the process of waiting more enjoyable. The process orientation implied inquiry into the various pilgrim support systems including transfer service, tonsure center, hundi, cottages, prasad and free meals and finding pilgrim centered process improvement initiatives.

Urban development initiatives and policies discussed in earlier paragraphs for specific city examples at Allahabad, Bodhgaya, Mathura, Ujjain etc. indicate that urban planning process at pilgrimage towns of religio-cultural significance are cognizant of their cultural heritage and concerned about its sustainability. This concern is expressed in vision statements of the reviewed planning interventions, though the priority accorded varies. It is observed that the core concern at Ujjain focuses only at the religio-cultural aspects of pilgrimage, though approach at Haridwar, Mathura, Bodhgaya and Allahabad also encompass other aspects viz. pilgrimage tourism, social infrastructure, knowledge center
etc. selectively into planning processes and initiatives. It thus emerges that envisioning synthesis of culture and the urban planning process at functionally congruent pilgrimage towns, exhibit diverse planning visions and approaches based on specific cultural context and its characteristics.

Recognizing the uniqueness of urban and cultural situation at each of the pilgrimage towns entails varying planning approaches for synthesis of culture and the urban planning process. A place-based exploratory pilot study is thus undertaken to examine the linkages between culture and urban planning process at Haridwar, a culturally significant pilgrimage town in India.

3.6 Linkages between cultural characteristics and urban planning: Place-based pilot study at Haridwar

![Map of Haridwar](image)

Figure 3. 3: Geographical location of Haridwar and its surrounds

Located in Uttar Pradesh at foothills of the Himalayas (Figure 3.3), Haridwar is an ancient tirtha, a sacred geography mentioned earliest in the Rig Veda (Eck, 2012) and epics like Mahabharata wherein it is recognized as Swargdwar. Skandpurana recognizes Haridwar as one of the seven sacred cities that offer moksha (salvation). The region is known as Kedarkhand – the abode of Kedar (Lord Shiva); and the legendary association is reinforced by the presence of Daksha Mahadeo’s temple at Kankhal (near Haridwar), earlier known in legends as Prajapati Daksha’s capital. As narrated in the Puranas, Haridwar is the site for
Bhagirathi’s penance, which led to the descent of (river) Ganga. An event of immense cultural significance in the national consciousness, the descent of river Ganga was enshrined in the Indian Constitution to reinforce its significance. Earlier known variously as Mayapur, Kapilasthana, it is called Har-dwar (gateway to Shiva) by the Saivites and Hari-dwar (gateway to Vishnu) by the Vaishnavites. Puranas and Mahabharata accord scriptural sanctity to Haridwar, and as a paramount pilgrim destination, its appeal has been non-sectarian and supra regional.

The importance of Haridwar centers on sacrality and reverence accorded to the river Ganga – Ganga Maa (mother) as frequently mentioned in the scriptures. Venerated by devotees, the river is identified as an embodiment of sacredness, and its holy water is known to offer moksha – freedom from the cycles of birth and death. River Ganga descends to the plains at Haridwar flowing between two hills – ‘neel’ and ‘bilwa’(Figure 3.4 & 3.5), and is also known as the ‘Gangadwar’- dwar (gateway) to a network of sacred pilgrimage spots in the Himalayas – Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri (Figure.3.6).

![Figure 3. 4: Natural setting of Haridwar along the river Ganga between the hills ‘Neel’ and ‘Bilwa’](image-url)
Natural scenic beauty, enchanting ghats, picturesque sites, Sivalik forests, mandirs, ashrams and akharas have long been a primary attraction for pilgrims and travelers. Haridwar is a center for traditional learning and ayurvedic knowledge, is home to erudite scholars and sanyasis of varying sectorial orders. It also hosts Kumbh mela (fair) – a religious event of utmost national significance – every twelve years, with an estimated 30-50 million pilgrims.
having visited Haridwar during Kumbh mela in 2010. Kumbh mela is organized in an area specifically earmarked as a ‘mela kshetra’ which included large tracts at Haridwar and Rishikesh (Figure 3.7). The total area delineated to the Kumbh mela kshetra was equivalent to 130sq.kms.

Figure 3. 7: Influence area of Kumbh mela compared to the scale of urban settlement at Haridwar

Situated at the right bank of river Ganga, Haridwar was earlier an area of wilderness that attracted pilgrims primarily for religious activities. It was known as ‘Tapovan’ - a meditational retreat – and scarce physical development maintained its serenity. Mayapur – earlier prevalent name of Haridwar – was a riparian settlement and River Ganga was considered sacrosanct and worshipped. The physical location of earliest Mayapur is uncertain and is conjectured by findings from archaeological remnants, interpretation of texts and descriptions left by travelers. The sanctity attracted many seekers and devotees, and livelihoods were organized strictly on basis of Vedic tenets. Rituals were conducted in ‘purnyashalas’ (charitable establishments) at Haridwar, and residing facilities were at nearby Kankhal or Jwalapur which later developed at Haridwar through patronage of wealthy patrons or kings (Karar, 2010). Core of the traditional town at its present location is believed to have developed over ruins of an earlier settlement, though scarce evidences of the antiquity and architectural heritage are presently available.

Morphologically, Haridwar evolved along the river Ganga on the land at its right bank and the adjacent ‘Neel’ parbat (hill). The growth of the town is linear, as land availability is constrained by river Ganga and ‘Neel’ edging its adjacent sides longitudinally. The spatial patterns in the traditional core area evolved linearly in response to its geography (Figure 3.8, 3.9) and the physical development influenced by ritual and pilgrimage practices. The riverfront comprised of ghats assumed significance for bathing and other ritual activities,
and emerged as sacred centers of Haridwar. Supporting livelihoods linked to main worship and ritual activities at the sacred areas developed along riverbanks in this area. Numerous dharamshalas (charitable rest houses), mostly having their own private ghats were built along the river that provided ritual bathing areas for the residents and the pilgrims staying within.

Consequently, a mixed land use emerged in the traditional sacred zone that incrementally supported hybrid residential, commercial and religious activities (Figure 3.10). The number of pilgrims and their ritual and non-ritual activities exhibit variations in magnitude based on three temporal cycles i) The daily performance, ii) Performances during the auspicious occasions and festivals and iii) Every six years during the Kumbh/Ardh-Kumbh festival.

Figure 3.8: Linear morphological spatial growth in the sacred core along the river Ganga at Haridwar (encircled area)
Figure 3. 9: Riverfront at Haridwar reflecting its linear growth along the river Ganga

Figure 3. 10: The mixed landuse reflected in the sacred core and heritage influence area at Haridwar
The cultural identity of Haridwar as a sacred center of traditional ritual and pilgrimage activities converging along the sacred river Ganga (Figure 3.11 & 3.12), has mutated by juxtaposition of a physically dense, populous, and amorphous urban settlement with divergent activities in the sacred core, that also expands beyond the core. The sacred core is spatially insignificant to the geographic expanse of the town (Figure 3.8), and the preponderance of sacred activities has also reduced. These aspects lead to diminishing of spiritual experiences, and experiential aspects of pilgrimage. The unplanned transformations of built fabric change in usages and activities, and lack of environmental services in the sacred core results in an unsustainable physical environment, leading to gentrification from the traditional sacred centers. Contemporary urban developments also subsume the indigenous urbanism patterns, and traditional identity of Haridwar as a sacred pilgrimage town is being progressively obliterated.

Figure 3. 11: Cultural identity of Haridwar as a pilgrimage town centered on River Ganga exemplified by ritual bathing in River Ganga

Figure 3. 12: River Ganga being venerated as a symbol of purity

Presently, Haridwar district is comprised of three tehsils, and is headquartered at Haridwar town. The current population of Haridwar metropolitan area exceeds three lacs in 2011 census and continues to exhibit significant growth rates (Table 3.1)(Census, 2011). Contemporary developments include housing and commercial development at distant periphery of the core area, as also an industrial estate in its proximity; which results in an increasing heterogeneity of activities. These aspects of expansion are often confounded with diluted emphasis on traditional ritual-pilgrimage based activities (Table 3.2) which is
reflected in less than 5% of the available land in the urban area is apportioned for ashrams, tourism or mela grounds in the present landuse plan for Haridwar (TCPO, 2009).

Table 3. 1: Population figures from Haridwar indicating the growth rate

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<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Urban agglomeration/Metropolitan</td>
<td>3,10,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nagarpalika/City</td>
<td>2,25,235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Census, 2011)

Table 3. 2: Existing land use (2004): Haridwar Master Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Land use type</th>
<th>Area(hectares)</th>
<th>Percentage (%) in landuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1455.33</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ashrams</td>
<td>240.20</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>157.20</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>167.10</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1139.70</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tourism/Mela</td>
<td>734.56</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Public amenities</td>
<td>294.00</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Traffic and transportation</td>
<td>626.40</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>578.50</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>10553.32</td>
<td>52.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Uncultivable land</td>
<td>1100.21</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Open area</td>
<td>916.86</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Water bodies</td>
<td>1864.72</td>
<td>9.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Forests</td>
<td>690.80</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Total Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>20119.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Town and Country Planning Organization, Uttarakhand, 2009)

Pilgrimage is prime cultural activity that contributes to the local economy. Religious actors and institutions benefit directly by the economic support and donations by the devout pilgrims, whereas immense indirect benefits accrue to other stakeholders in catering to pilgrims’ requirements of accommodation, travel etc. Religious tourism and related tourism activities have also proliferated (Lochtefeld, 2010). Other divergent economic activities like manufacturing have also developed; thus relegating direct benefits of cultural economy to relative insignificance. It is significant however, that cultural products are of high associative value as symbolic links to memories of a place, and spatial provisions for its cultural production should be favorably considered in urban planning process.
Prominent NGOs and community based organizations active in the cultural domains focus on varying issues including cleaning of Ganga, facilitating of traditional ritual performances, promotion of afforestation and conservation of forests, protection of natural heritage – flora and fauna, and protection of built heritage. Few large social and quasi-religious organizations are involved in research and synthesis of aspects related to traditional beliefs, local practices and indigenous knowledge systems; and are potential resources for cultural mapping. Most organizations view the contemporary urban development as driven more by concerns of economic development that is evidently at crossroads with the ethos of this sacred town and cultural values of the local community. The community stresses on critical need for mechanisms to integrate embodied knowledge of the community, and mediation of cultural and traditional practices in the urban planning paradigm.

The urban and spatial planning processes to sustain the rich cultural and historical heritage of Haridwar are mandated by development in accordance to a Master Plan. Additionally, ‘A City Development Plan (CDP)’ focusing on the municipal area in Haridwar was prepared under the ambitious Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in 2007. The Haridwar Master Plan 2025 recommends cognizance of cultural aspects related to the historic-religious aspects of Haridwar in framing objectives for its future urban development. The vision statement of CDP Haridwar envisages it as a ‘city of Hope, faith and Spirituality…an international destination of pilgrimage and tourism, in keeping with its rich cultural heritage’ (GIHK International, UK, 2007). Haridwar has been simultaneously identified as a potential site for urbanization and industrial growth in the hilly state of Uttarakhand. This dialectic schism between the heritage imperative and economic growth through urban development affect development to detriment of the heritage. The urban planning strategies/policies for Haridwar are more in-response to prevailing urban situation, and despite recognition of primacy of cultural aspects, negligible efforts are evident for its prioritization and center-staging for urban growth.

For synthesis of cultural aspects and urban planning process in sacred pilgrimage towns such as Varanasi, Allahabad, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot etc., it is significant to view evolution of spatial patterns from a prism of spiritual-pilgrimage based traditional cultural activities. This may be advanced by observing cultural activity patterns of communities and visitors’ in its spatial linkages with larger sacred centers and the associated ritualscape. It is considerably important to record the temporal patterns of participation in local cultural
activities and festivals/events for assessing variation of spatial demand. It may be submitted that traditional ritual-pilgrimage activities are crucial for reinforcing shared cultural identities of communities, and spatial facilitation of such activities must be an indelible objective of urban planning process. In context of development objectives at Haridwar being identified as accelerated urban growth, it is critical for urban planning initiatives to recognize the significance of cultural values inherent in the sacred city, spatial patterns of religio-cultural activities, architectural heritage and ecological aspects of physical growth.

3.7 Conclusions

This empirical inquiry looks into linkages between culture and urban planning for future urban planning initiatives. The scope of the study restricts the context to sacred Indian pilgrimage towns and this chapter explores urban and cultural characteristics of pilgrimage towns through structured interdisciplinary literature perspectives, case examples and a pilot field study. The chapter seeks to underpin exploring urban futures of pilgrimage towns as modern emergent cities, and suggest that presence and significance of culture and heritage is not comprehensively considered in planning and development decision making. Exploration of linkages between culture and urban planning at sacred pilgrimage towns is advanced by structuring of relevant theoretical information collated from a broad spectrum of inter-disciplinary literature study. It emerges that culture of pilgrimage towns is largely underpinned by religion-based happenings. However, neglect of religious aspects in urban planning process underscores the need for recognizing significant role of religion in urban planning context of South Asia (Narayanan, 2016). This aspect has been theoretically posited by Habermas through suggestions of a post-secular imagination wherein religion is re-imagined as a progressive and liberal construct operating in public realm (Habermas, 2005). Religious heritage thus reflects not only in urban histories, heritage and living traditions but also in space and built form; and it is identified to contribute to a sense of place and urban identity (Baker, 2016).

The literature review, theoretical city examples and the pilot case study undertaken in this chapter lead to emergence and identification of eight thematic dimensions that are considered significant for examining the linkages between culture and urban planning processes for sustainability of Indian pilgrimage towns. The identified thematic dimensions are urban morphology, spatial growth, theological values, ecological values, urban governance, community engagement, cultural heritage and cultural economy (Figure 3.13).
Figure 3.13: Dimensions reflecting linkages between culture, urban planning and sustainability at pilgrimage towns in India

The city examples reveal that the approaches to synergise inter-relationship and linkages between culture and urban planning in a pilgrimage city is neither spatially nor temporally static itself. In addition, other causative factors that influence synergies between culture and urban planning can be understood through careful observation and analysis of identified thematic dimensions embedded at a particular town. It is implicit that in view of plurality and heterogeneity of pilgrimage towns, the interrelationship between cultural characteristics and urban characteristics shall exhibit great diversity. Accordingly, inclusion of culture in urban planning domain purports the need of a flexible and adaptable framework to examine these inter-relationships for Indian pilgrimage towns. The following Chapters 4 and 5 present development of a framework and its adaptation for a place-based inquiry at the pilgrimage town of Vrindavan.