

TOPIC: VARANASI

AUTHOR: SUKANYA KAKOTI, 5th sem

Varanasi or the spiritual capital of India has been standing the tests of time for over 5000 years and is said to be one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. The reason behind drawing millions of pilgrims from all over the world to this city is the fact that it is one of the holiest of the seven sacred cities in Hinduism. It is unabashedly colourful, vibrant, and wonderfully rich in history and legends.

According to legend, Varanasi was founded by Lord Shiva and was his favorite abode. The mighty river Ganga is also situated here. It is said to have its origins in the tresses of Lord Shiva. It is believed to have the power to wash away the sins of mortals.

In the year 2016, we the students of Royal School of Architecture got the opportunity to visit this wonderful city for our study cum documentation trip. It was a 5 day trip i.e. from 9th of February to 12th of February. I visited this place for first time and the experience was amazing!

We started our journey by train on 8th and we safely reached Varanasi at around 2am the next day. The first day basically went on sightseeing. We visited many ancient temples of great importance like the Tulsi Manas Temple, the Durga Temple, and the Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple etc. We also took a round around the campus of the Banaras Hindu University, which is one among the renowned universities of India. But personally, my most beautiful moment of the day was the early evening boat ride in the mighty river Ganga. All the students and the faculty members were divided into two groups for the ride. It was an hour long trip and we really had a wonderful time watching the colour and clamour of pilgrims bathing and performing puja in the Ghats. Burning corpses at the Harishchandra Ghat was also visible. Before the evening aarti started, we lighted

beautiful lotus flower shaped candles and set it adrift on the water from the boat itself. The positive vibes that we received by watching the nightly Ganga aarti will always be like a life time experience.

The next day we woke up early and went to Ganga ghat in order to document it, for which this particular trip was basically meant for. The works were divided into different groups headed by respective faculties.

We documented the Darbanga Ghat and the BrijRama palace. We documented it by taking measurements of the ghat and the palace. We drafted rough sketches of the plans, elevations and sections of the same. We also studied the materials and techniques of construction of the palace. Moreover, information was collected by enquiring the local people about their livelihood, means of earning, the festivals that they celebrated and most importantly the history of the place. Apart from asking people, we also referred to some historical books from the local library of Varanasi in order to get the remaining information.

The documentation was completed within three days and we left from Varanasi on 11th, with a bag full of memories, knowledge and wisdom. It was indeed a learning experience for me and as well as for each individual. We learnt about the history, architecture, religion and the culture of the place. The construction of the temples was indeed unique and appreciable. It would definitely help us immensely as we could implement those amazing techniques in our design projects.

This study tour was undoubtedly a life time experience for each one of us and the memories will always remain afresh in our hearts for eternity!

