



# Ergonomic and Architectural Facilitation to Boost Buddhist Circuit Tourism in Assam

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**Abstract:** Tourism is an important sector which not only boosts the economy but also helps in conserving the nation's cultural heritage of all the naturally and cul-turally rich states of the country, Assam is one of the most visited tourist location. the natives. The Assam Buddha Vihar is situated at Amingaon, a town across the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati city (capital of Assam province). In spite of its location by the side of a national highway, it is surrounded by bountiful greenery and can be recognized and viewed because of a prominent Buddha statue rising up through the trees, high on a hill. However, this paradise remains unexplored due to urban encroachments and lack of resources to accommodate renovation consequently leading to diminishing of the prominence of the vihara. The concept of a Buddha Vihara in the greater area of Guwahati City will promote the regional economy and also conserve the fading culture/communities. The development of this project will give a new face to Buddhism in Assam and help revive the community in a better way.

**Keywords:** Garden, Micro Tourism, Buddhism, Eco-leisure

## 1 Introduction

Buddhism, founded in the late 6th century B.C.E. by Siddhartha Gautama (the "Buddha"), is an important religion in most of the countries of Asia. Buddhism has assumed many different forms, but in each case there has been an attempt to draw from the life experiences of the Buddha, his teachings, and the "spirit" or "essence" of his teachings (called dhamma or dharma) as models for the religious life. In spite of the contrary traditional views of many scholars, there are various indications that Buddhism was introduced into ancient Assam quite early and that it flourished till the Middle Ages and beyond. In early mediaeval period Buddhism once again flourished in the Brahmaputra-valley at least in the 9th-10th C.A.D. Most traces of the great Mahayana Buddhism are now erased from modern Assam - what remains are just some relics, legends and historical analyses. In modern Assam, Buddhism survive in its Theravada form, mainly due to the presence of communities like the Tai (Phake, Alton, Khamyang and Turunng), Singphos, Khamti, Chakmas and the Chittagong Baruas

## 2 Methodology

Exploring the scope and purpose of the project work based on tourism requirements, contextdocumentation of site (existing conditions, topological surveys, geographical,

natural and historical patterns, physical and social patterns, pedestrian connections and site potentials and constraints relative to the project) was performed. This was followed by conducting a detailed study of the selected site to determine possible design features that can be accommodated, etc. Compiling data obtained from the site study and tabulating them. Selection of literature case studies of buildings/projects, which are used for similar kind of functions or location, to extract the basic idea of project. Compilation of additionally acquired data with previously obtained data to form a clear picture of the topic in hand and what steps to follow to get the desired outcome. Based on the compilation, framing the final design problem by defining the purpose, scope, requirements and necessary aspects of the project. Following this, the design is evolved based on the concept and the requirements of the project. Checking at regular time intervals if the work is progressing in the desired manner. Final design was produced with architectural plans, elevations, sections, 3-D views etc, to give a better understanding of the outcome.

**2.1 Choice of Location:** The Assam Buddha Vihar is situated at Amingaon, a town across the Brahmaputra River in the greater area of Guwahati city. It is a lovely but lesser known Buddha Vihar. In spite of its location by the side of a national highway, it is surrounded by bountiful greenery and can be recognized and viewed because of a prominent Buddha statue rising up high on a hill.

**2.2 Requirements:** The requirements of the design work were entrance roads, gathering and recessed areas, retaining walls, pedestrian paths, handrails and railings, proper lighting arrangement, shaded sitting areas and signage.

**2.3 Conceptualization:** According to Mahayana Buddhism, every person can become a Buddha. These concept existed within the context of the traditional culture and constitute an ephemeral and, at the same time, integral part of an architectural image. Principles in the spatial arrangement of the Buddhist temple based on: various concepts Buddhist scheme of the universe, the symbolic interpretation of the road to enlightenment and the theory of five elements.

### 3 Design and Outcome

Entrance, Sitting Areas, Pathway, Recessed Space, Stairway, Intersection point, Stupas, Way to Buddha Statue, Buddha statue, Retaining walls, Railings, Directional Signs, Pathways, Lighting.

**3.1 Inclusive Design:** Signs and Information, Pathway Surfaces, Pathway Width, Handrails, Step Safety, Level Changes, Shade and Rest.

**3.2 Architecture in landscape:** Farther from the centre there are less architectural structures and more natural landscape, the more secular is the place. Set on the temple rim, monastery courtyards, taking the shape of a vernacular house, are usually clustered randomly on the slope of the land, thus creating a transition between the central architecture and the surrounding landscape.

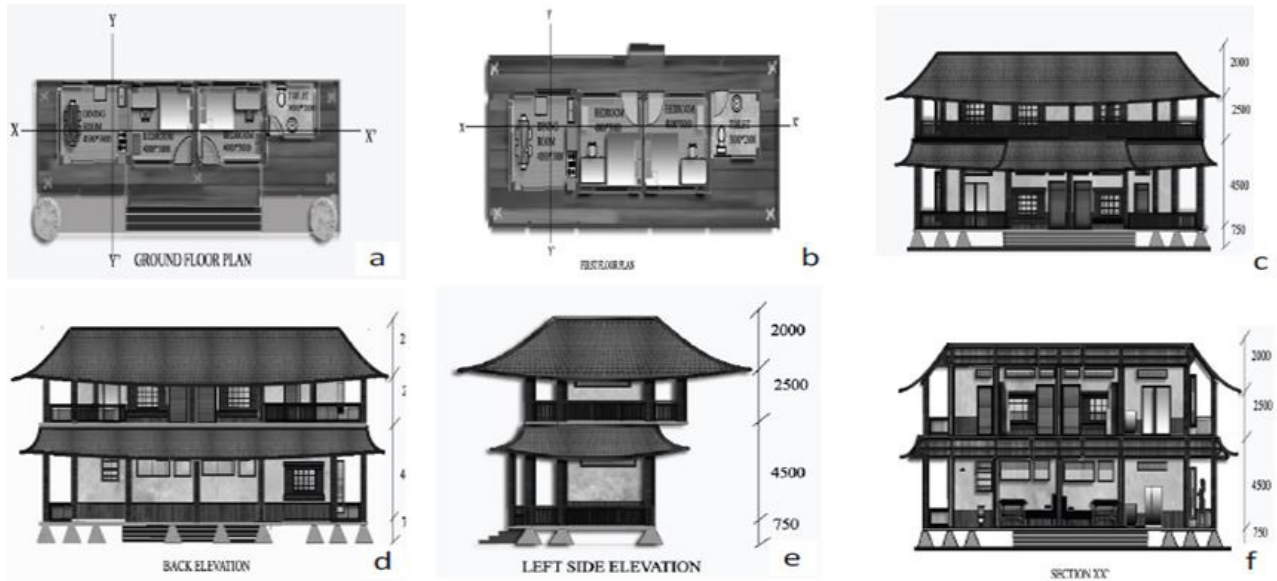
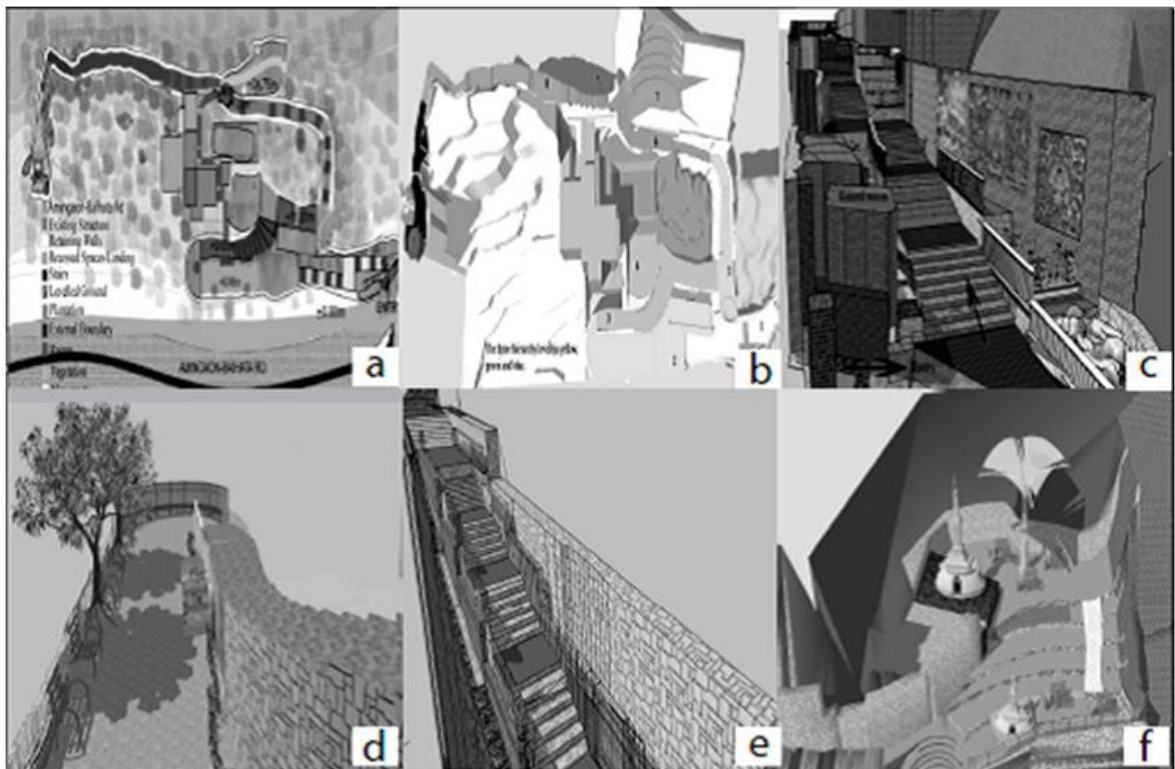


Fig 1. Design and area plan of staff quarters alongwith elevation.

**3.3 Staff Quarter Design:** The requirements of the staff quarter depends on the area, method of construction, and the need of the user also keeping in mind the Buddhist context in building. The basic requirements are as follows: a semiprivate veranda, private rooms for the staff, dining area and washrooms. We followed the below mentioned norms for design – Understanding structural styles >Traditional wooden structure>Column = man>Kongp’o = social utopia. The interpretation of the Kongp’o system as a symbolic image of social harmony gives us a key to understanding the logic of its development. It also leads to clarification of the roots of its origin which stands beyond its pragmatic and utilitarian functions.



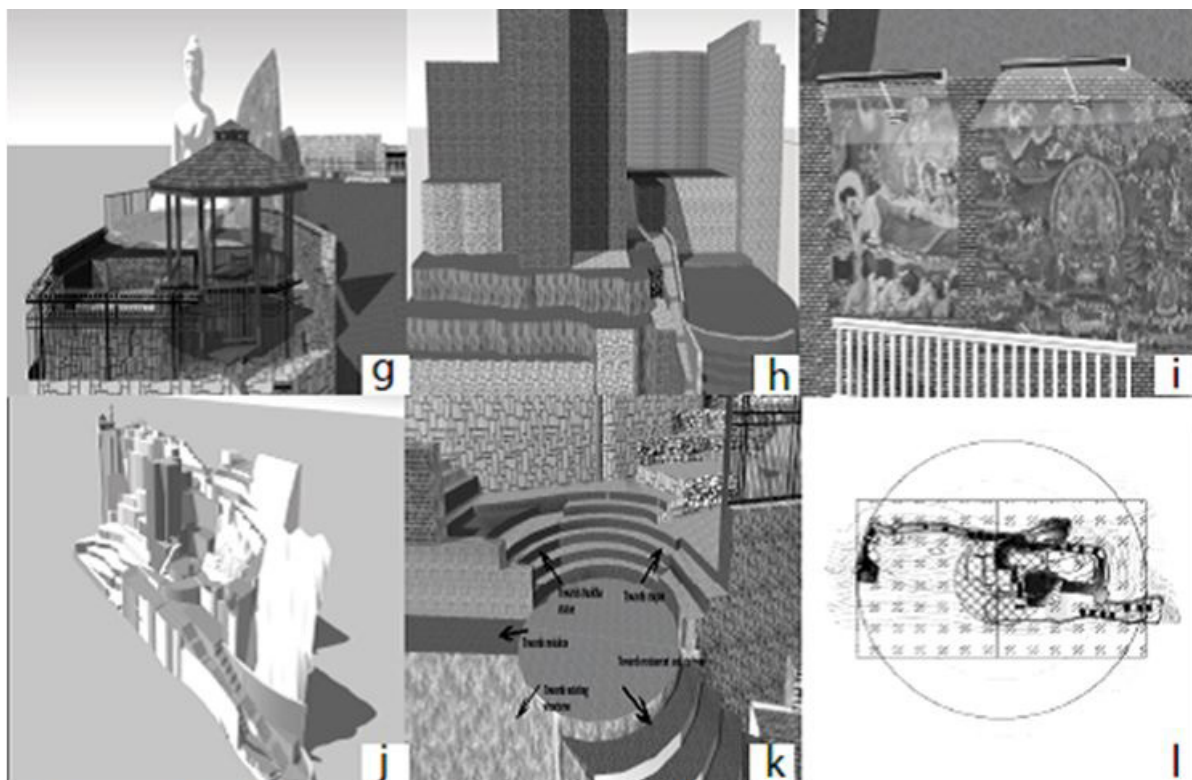


Fig 2. Ergonomic and architectural plans the Buddha Vihara as a site for the eco-tourism.

#### 4 Discussion

The delimiting of the sacred often requires remote locations reached only by lengthy path sequences; paths that traverse sacred landscapes and lead to sanctuaries and temples have enjoyed a long and distinguished history. Separation requires the means of connection: thresholds and pathways that lead from outside to inside, from the undifferentiated secular to the specific sacred.

Entrances-. The Importance of the gate is easily understood, based on the anthropomorphic model. The bridges, gates, path surfaces, steps, scales, hierarchies, and framed vistas reinforce the individual nature of the spiritual path of Buddhism, unified by collective symbols of proportion and geometry to create hierarchies of space and scale. The significance of the hierarchies of scale reinforces the monastery's multicentre organization.

Pathways- The main road is an interpretation of the concept. The picturesque landscaping and the gates form a unique story of "entering nirvana". While moving through it one perceives the changing scenes and stories and the road and trees in an architectural performance carved in the stone walls. It represents a sequential path. Due to shifts of axis or turns of the main road, the view of the main structure appears suddenly, just like the experience of sudden enlightenment. In other cases, a beautiful view of the surrounding scenery becomes available from the hierarchical terraces. This is similar to the vision of Buddha, who perceives the world in a different way.

Spatial Arrangement- Spatial sequence and symbolic narrative that leads to the sacred Buddha — is in relationship with the landscape and a dynamic interrelationship of multiple



hierarchical centres congruent with aspects of Mahayana Buddhism . The vihara is centred around several multileveled recessed space each with its distinguished use:

- The first level has the prominent stepped garden designed along the entrance pathway, a dedicated area for the staff quarter and a recessed space for public relaxing located in the lower realms leading to the sacred centre ,offering a tall view of the majestic idol and surrounding vihara .
- From the lower space the next level is subdivided into three space that serves the monks and comprises of the main temple & activity centre. While entering, the other way has garden and a tourist spot in the Buddhist style both offering breath-taking view of the scenery in different level.
- The third and the largest level; multileveled public resting space adorned with stupas and light tower. The multiple scaled path, arranges around the existing environmental setting of the monastery which articulate the dynamic relationships of its multicentered composition, and reinforce its individual and collective symbolism .
- The symbolism and significance of the hierarchies of scale reinforce the monastery's multicentered organization; the cosmic scale of its mandala pattern symbolizes aspects of Mahayana Buddhism; the collective scale of the individual recessed spaces accommodates the lay and public; and the individual scale of the shrines and hermitages serves the individual penitents and practitioners.

## 5 Conclusion

As the huge terrain of the vihara is covered ,intertwining of grand slopes within and circumferentially is sustained elevating the calm serenity of the place. The Vihara has a magnificent Buddha statue atop the highest projecting contour renovated to attract more tourists .Retaining walls have been bestowed with life like scenes depicting great stories of the bygone era. The management of the vihara has also been arranged a staff quarter facility constructed with mainly timber, stone and brick. The pathways and retaining walls have been fabricated with traditional materials and locally available stones. The Vihara hence developed, provides the visitors with scenic beauty, necessary facilities and the opportunity to know the existing Buddhist community/culture in a better way accompanied by ample opportunities for the upliftment of the region.

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