



# Buddhist Architecture manifestations in Eco-leisure Gardens

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**Abstract:** Tourism is an important sector of every nation's economy. It not only boosts the economy but also helps in conserving the nation's cultural heritage. Many communities or practices long lost under the quest for urbanization are brought to the surface and presented in a new interesting form. Thus, tourism also helps in promoting the cultural wealth of the country. The site, the Assam Buddha Vihar is situated at Amingaon, a town across the Brahmaputra River in the greater area of Guwahati city. The site was studied thoroughly and certain design parameters were taken into account according to the necessities and requirement from ergonomic design perspective, the site condition and the people. Accordingly a garden was designed alongwith a guard room and toilet near the main entrance in order to serve basic purposes. The garden design inculcates certain Buddhist garden features like the Buddha statue, lanterns, lotus and several Buddhist philosophical concepts. The garden has both open and semi-open or covered seating spaces, water body at a corner, proper pathways are connected and stepping stones to create proper circulation.

**Key words:** Garden, Micro tourism, Buddhism, Eco-leisure.

## 1 Introduction

Buddhism in Assam is still shrouded in mystery. There is no mention of expansion of Buddhism in the region even in the life history of Lord Buddha. Only a faint reference is available on Buddha's sojourn to Pundavardhana from Jetavana (Sravasti). It is once again a strange phenomenon in history of Buddhism in Brahmaputra valley that though Hiuen-tsang visited Kamrupa on the invitation of Kumar Bhaskar (The mighty ruler of Kamrupa), the Chinese traveller did not mention anything about prevalence of Buddhism in ancient Kamrupa. But Archaeological research has amply testified the fact that at least lower Brahmaputra-valley comprising Goal Para district of Assam was influenced by Buddhism in the 1st century B.C. on the left Bank of Brahmaputra near Pancharatna and Suryapahar proved beyond doubt that Hinayana Buddhism flourished from North Bengal to Brahmaputra valley through river route and growth of Buddhist settlements there.

In early mediaeval period Buddhism once again flourished in the Brahmaputra-valley at least in the 9th-10th C.A.D. The discovery of an ancient kiln in village Bara-Bhita with large number of Architectural parts of terracotta votive stupas, image of Buddha, a Buddhist symbol speaks that Buddhism was in existence and there were great demand of terracotta stupas by the Buddhist.

A Buddhist garden displays Buddhist images and art, but more importantly, it is a simple, uncluttered garden that reflects Buddhist principles of peace, serenity, goodness and

respect for all living. Statue of Buddha is raised above the ground to display proper respect. Often, statues are placed on a marble slab or atar table, but even a mound of stones or a woven mat is appropriate. The statue is used in conjunction with a peaceful garden pond and floating lotus blooms. it fits into the harmonious design of the garden where it helps visitors overcome negative emotions such as anger, ignorance and greed. Lanterns are a recognizable feature of Buddhist gardens; Originally used in temples and shrines, lanterns were signs of worship that honoured Buddha or revered ancestors. The lotus flower is an important element in Buddhist garden design, respected for its ability to provide beautiful blooms even in shallow, stagnant

## 2 Methodology

The gross methodology involved several steps like Justifying the scope and purpose of the project, Understanding the project, Enlisting the requirements, Documentation of site, Site Analysis, climatic study, soil condition, light and shade etc., Literature case studies of buildings/projects of similar kind of function., Defining the purpose, scope, requirements, Concept Development Stage, Design Development Stage, Materials to be used. The final design is produced with architectural plans, elevations, sections, 3-D views etc. to give a better understanding of the project

**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 garden taken into accounts depends on the area available, number of people visiting the place, the needs of the residents, aesthetic considerations, preserving the Buddhist culture and context of the place.

A covered sitting space which can be utilized as an evening gathering space & relaxation area, A pond with water lilies in order to preserve the Buddhist culture. An open sitting area, play areas, flower beds, proper plantation, pathways, proper fencing, proper accessibility.

'Hard landscaping' means the 'materials' used to make a garden, not including the plants. The plants are often called 'soft landscaping'. Some of the hard landscaping design materials used are bricks, gravel, wood, fences, walls, paving slabs, pergolas, gazebo furniture, water features, containers and pots, garden lighting, garden ornaments and accessories.

**2.3 Conceptualization:** It is not necessary for the garden to look Buddhist or indeed even oriental. Many non-Buddhists garden- inspired by the serenity of the Buddha image, also cherish values such as essential goodness, rightful thinking and a purposeful life and wish to create gardens that reflect this. And inspired by the beauty and calmness of a Buddhist garden brings people to the Buddha's message and then through that a deeper understanding of their life's journey, purpose and meaning. So Buddhist garden design, which has peacefulness, goodwill and respect for all living things at its heart, can be more important than other garden decorations such as garden wind chimes, prayer flags or garden oriental stone lanterns.

## 3 Design and Outcome



Following are the various principles adopted to design the garden:

Enclosure – A garden area defined by borders of various materials.

1. To unify the garden into a cohesive whole, creating a virtually continuous living area.
2. To set the stage for a variety of moods and experiences.
3. Adds a sense of security and comfort.

Shape and Form – The contour and three-dimensional qualities of plants, built structures in the garden, as well as the outline of a garden room itself.

1. The use of Basic shapes to stage the look of garden like square, circle.
2. The symbolic meanings of shapes.
3. The arrangement of shapes in relation to one another thus defining certain styles.

Entry – A defined point of entrance into a garden enclosure.

1. A garden entrance is the first impression of a garden .
2. Entrances are symbolic signs of welcome.
3. Garden entrance reflecting the architectural style to create unity.

Focal Point – Positioning an object to draw the eye and to create a feature of attention:

1. Focal points give space a focus and direction.
2. Focal points visually organize an area.
3. Enhanced perspective adds to the power focal points.

Structures – A variety of constructed features within the garden:

1. Structures serve both functional and aesthetic purposes.
2. Structures add to the sense of enclosure, screen views, and provide a centre of visual interest.

Texture, Pattern and Rhythm – Using surface characteristics, recognizable motifs, and the cadence created by the spacing of objects as elements of design:

1. Texture, pattern, and rhythm add layers of richness to a garden.
2. Contrasting surface characteristics of plants and materials heighten the visual impact in the garden.
3. Repeating motifs create a feeling of continuum within a garden gives harmony to the design.
4. Repeated objects placed closely together tend to quicken the rhythm and the same objects spaced farther apart slow it down.

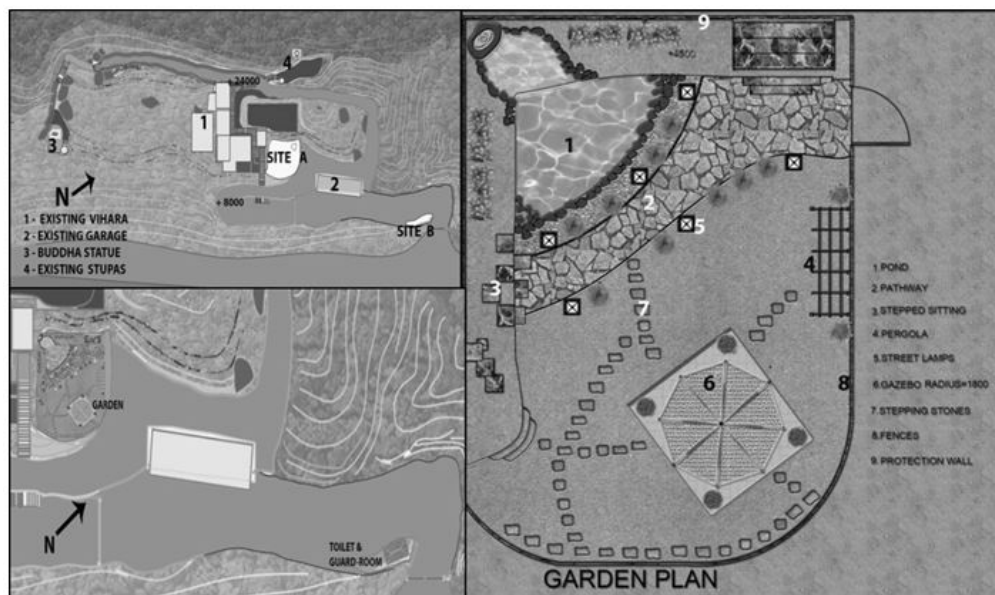


Fig 1. Amingaon Buddha Vihara – the site and proposed garden plan.

This design is based on one of the basic requirements of the system. There should be a Guard Room to serve Security purpose for the Vihara and also act as an in-quiry spot and a public convenience next to the guard room near the entrance gate of the site for general public use. The requirements of the guard room depends on the area, method of construction, the need of the user also keeping in mind the Buddhist context in building. Respectively a listing of the provisions were made like a guard room consisting of chair, table and a rack for storage. The convenience facility consisting of a wash basin and two toilet rooms having Indian and western systems.

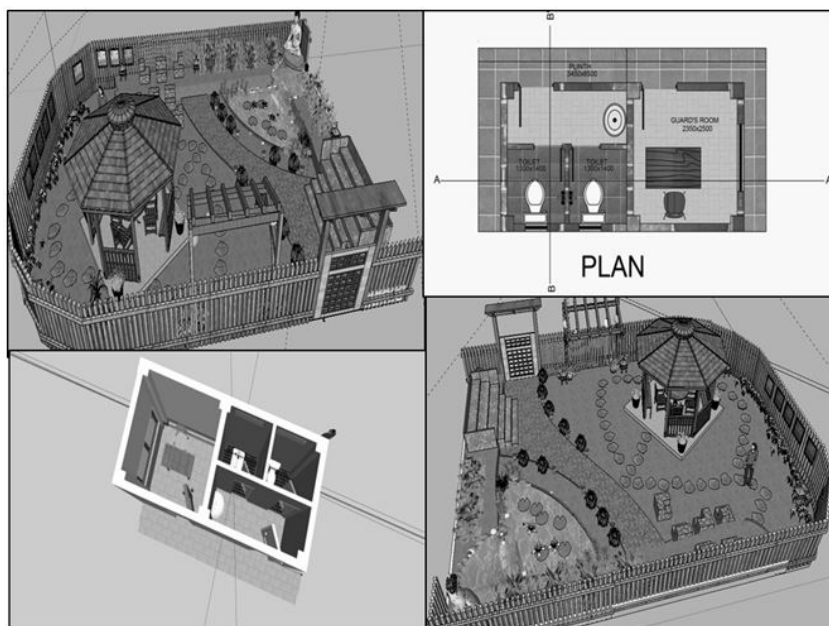


Fig 2. Proposed design of the eco-leisure garden. Top-Left & Bottom-Right: Two storied sitting area and park. Top-Right & Bottom-Left: Security Desk and Conveniences plan.



## 4 Discussion

The project is focussed on a eco leisure garden which reflects its Buddhist culture and is situated on a site which has tourist attraction. The site, Assam Buddha Vi-hara, is situated at Amingaon, a town across the Brahmaputra River in the greater area of Guwahati city (capital of Assam province, and largest metro area in north-eastern India). In spite of its location by the side of a national highway, it is sur-rounded by bountiful greenery and can be recognized and viewed because of a prominent Buddha statue rising up through the trees, high on a hill. Buddhist gar-dens features images and art of Buddhism, but more importantly, they are simple, uncluttered garden that reflects Buddhist principles of peace, serenity, goodness and respect for all living. Statues of Buddha is raised above the ground to display proper respect. Often, statues are placed on a marble slab or altar table, but even a mound of stones or a woven mat is appropriate. The statue is used in conjunction with a peaceful garden pond and floating lotus blooms.it fits into the harmonious design of the garden where it helps visitors overcome negative emotions such as anger, ignorance and greed. Lanterns are a recognizable feature of Buddhist gardens; Originally used in temples and shrines, lanterns were signs of worship that honoured Buddha or revered ancestors. The lotus flower is an important element in Buddhist garden design, respected for its ability to provide beautiful blooms even in shallow, stagnant water

The garden design includes several open seating spaces in form of steps and stone seating, a small pond with water lilies and a Buddha statue. It is designed in order to maintain the theme and sustain the ambience of Buddhist culture. The pathways are connected with stepping stones thus maintaining the rhythm in composition and unifying the space. Different varieties of colourful flowers are planted and various recognisable motifs are designed which is also creating texture, pattern and rhythm in composition. Lastly the design includes gorgeous lighting ideas like lanterns, fairy lights in bushes, low lighting around the pond and pathways in a very sustainable cost effective way by using solar powered lights. This would totally transform the garden at night. It also includes a gazebo, which is a semi open space, thus creating a contrast to the whole open space. it acts as the focal point in the garden and gives a wide view to every corner of the garden.

## 5 Conclusion

Microtourism is a new tourism marketing concept focused on 'little things that mean a lot', when it comes to attracting and retaining visitors longer. Microtour-ism represents all of those existing and potential hidden things, places and activi-ties that nobody really knows about and are generally not informed about.The garden design has been proposed which allows the visitors and residents to enjoy the ambience of the place and make it a useful area for recreation and leisure time. it also shows up the Buddhist culture and architecture and hence it attracts tourists to visit the place.

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