Saidpur city has always been a culturally diverse place in the context of the Indian Sub-continent. It was such a strategic & crucial location to the British Crown that they established the Largest & one of the most significant Railway workshops of Assam-Bengal Railway. This workshop opened a new door to this city for the Railway officers, service holders, workers, and traders from around the Indian Sub-continent. Soon, this place was thriving with people of diverse cultures & ethnicities. It had become so prosperous & burgeoning that it became the third-largest city in East Pakistan before 1971. Since then, Saidpur has been facing a decline in growth due to conflicts in post-partition British India, the Independence War of Bangladesh & post-war problems. These incidents left deep scars in the people’s hearts and generated misguided hatred. It had resulted in uneasy interaction & irrational mistrust among the diverse ethnic group of people living there for more than one & a half centuries. This thesis explores whether architectural spaces can reconcile the ethnic tensions among different beliefs or not. It intends to find the built environmental solutions that make the local people recognize their true history & identity and open up to the differences of beliefs & cultures. It will help the people to realize what the city already has in order to help re-identify the city in the future. The purpose of this project is to promote social interaction of diverse groups which will eventually help the city to grow more prominently. This project also aims to find the architectural space that can encourage people to understand their culture, identity and also tell the narrative of the city history which gives the space for people to learn new things from the past.
Category of People & their Descendants Found in Saidpur

- Indigenous People: 43%
- Brought in for works and migrated to do businesses and preaching from other regions of the Indian Subcontinent: 47%
- Forced Migrants following the event of Partition of India: 36%
- Supported Pakistani military during war and became stranded after war: 10%
- Migrated from other regions of Bangladesh: 11%
- Migrated from some regions of Indian Subcontinent: 20%
- Stranded Pakistanis living in camps: 10%

Based on primary data

Selected Site Location Map

Site is well accessible from Dhaka-Rangpur high way and from surrounding neighborhoods. Rail station, bus terminal and Airport, all are in only 2km radius of the site. Site is owned by Municipality adjacent to big railway owned ponds which are in illegal encroachment.

Sources of In-migration to Saidpur on Pre-partition Map of British India

Saidpur became prominent, drawing in skilled workers from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, railway officers from Britain and Bengal, merchants and traders from Marwar, Kabul, Sindh and Kashmir, service workers from Orissa and Andhra Pradesh and British missionaries, preachers from Cooch Bihar to Iran, as well as doctors for the Anglican Church.

Saidpur was the third largest city before 1971, after Dhaka and Chittagong in the former East Pakistan.

Ratio of Bengali and non-Bengali people residing in Saidpur

Prominent ethnic groups were Bihari, Marwari, and Bengali settlers—both "local" and "Gholis" (Bengali migrants from India). The distinguished languages found in Saidpur were Bengali, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Marwari, and Bahe.

Comparison with other cities

Saidpur has been compared to other five cities in Bangladesh from which it is found out how the growth of the city was hampered after independence due to political intervention and social exclusion. People have migrated from Saidpur to other cities because of the conflict of interest of diverse cultures.

11874
5108
20525

1971

5108
20525

Mymensingh
Rajshahi
Comilla

Ratio of Bengali and non-Bengali people residing in Saidpur in 2018

Bengali: 65%
Non-Bengali: 35%

Saidpur: 1,426,454

Total population of Saidpur Municipality

Existing Scenario of the Site

Past Scenario of the Site & surroundings

Trees are being cut down from the site.

Demolished water reservoir & its supporting structures and to be relocated. Trunk roads, buildings left void spaces in the dense trees.

Panoramic view showing void spaces in between the green spaces in the center of the site.

DENSITY PER SQUARE KM

1,42645
Masterplan Scheme Strategy

Creating an internal hierarchy of streets and spaces which will be submerged into serene green

Marking the existing trees inside the site
Finding the void spaces within the trees
Connecting the existing pathways & propose new ones to create an internal network of streets
Connecting the void spaces to create a continuous path to pass through
Placing the builtforms along the path strategically defining the functional zoning and creating legibility
Creating multiple nodes surrounded by builtforms to recreate city’s built environmental image
The conceptual thought process revolves around elements of social division, historical unease, and hope for a shared future.

**A Fracture Within Society**

The sunken pathway is expressive of many features that tie closely to the conceptual basis. A crack that runs along the length of the site represents the crack in the existing social fabric, a crack that creates a divide among the people. This crack forms a pathway that acts as a division and connects the various functions on the site.

**Shared Explorative Pathway**

The depressed pathway that runs along the site is strategically designed to promote exploration. The pathway is to be shared by all the people of the local communities.

**The Japanese Art of Kintsugi**

The formation of the cracks and the process of using a variety of other functions to infuse the crack is very similar to the worldwide popular Japanese art form of 'Kintsugi'.

**Values and Preferences**

With a focus on value and preferences, the design aims to promote flexibility in terms of functionality. In doing so, the goal is to reflect organically on the behavioural pattern of the local community.

**Connecting Nodes with Memories**

The site is divided into 3 major zones and each zone connects to the depressed pathway with a node. The nodes are positioned to visually connect the built forms and shared spaces, with the plants and vegetation around the site. In doing so, these nodes help people reflect upon the historical significance of the site and remind them of the collective loss they, as a community, have gone through.

**Sunken Pathway**

The connecting pathway is sunken to ensure that nature dominates the site and the built form. Due to the historical significance of the place and its natural surrounding, this is conceptually essential to the design.

**Fluidity and Permeability**

The forms open up to the place in the ground floor allowing fluid organic movement among visitors. This helps make the forms much more permeable.

**Shared Experiences**

The pathway links the community into the site and brings the people together as various closed platforms placed across the site.

**Past, Present, Future**

The common pathway represents the present, where people from entry from different points of the locality. Shared platforms signify a unified future the community aspire to.

**From Deltaic Pattern to Fluid Walkway**

The free flowing pathway also signifies the the free flowing nature of the deltaic geography of Bangladesh, which helps contextualizing the overall design expression.

The pattern of deltaic waterways of Bangladesh is translated into the site.

**Spot Section: Exhibition Gallery and Reconciliation Space**
Axonometric Diagram Showing Different Zoning and Functions In & Around the Site