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Map of
Dharma

6-DAY ITINERARY GUIDE FOR VARANASI, AYODHYA, SARNATH, PRAYAGRAJ

@manikthinks

At a Glance

Day 1

Early Morning Ganga Aarti @ Assi Ghat (5 AM)
Sunrise Boat ride along the Ghats
Kaal Bhairav Entry, Temple Visits, Ghat Hopping
Evening Ganga Aarti @ smaller Ghats

Day 2

Early Morning Kashi Vishwanath Darshan
Galli Roaming (free time)
Manikarnika + Harishchandra Ghats
Evening Ganga Aarti @ smaller Ghats

Day 3

Sarnath & Swarved Mahamandir Dham
Evening Ganga Aarti @ Dashaswamedha Ghat
Free Time + depart for Ayodhya in overnight bus

Day 4

Hanuman Garhi & Ram Janmabhoomi
Sarayu River & Ayodhya Tour (takes half a day)
Depart for Prayagraj, stay overnight

At a Glance

Day 5 Prayag Triveni Sangam (Sunrise Boat Ride)
Roam Prayagraj
Depart for Lucknow extended leg/back to Varanasi
Catch flight/train back home

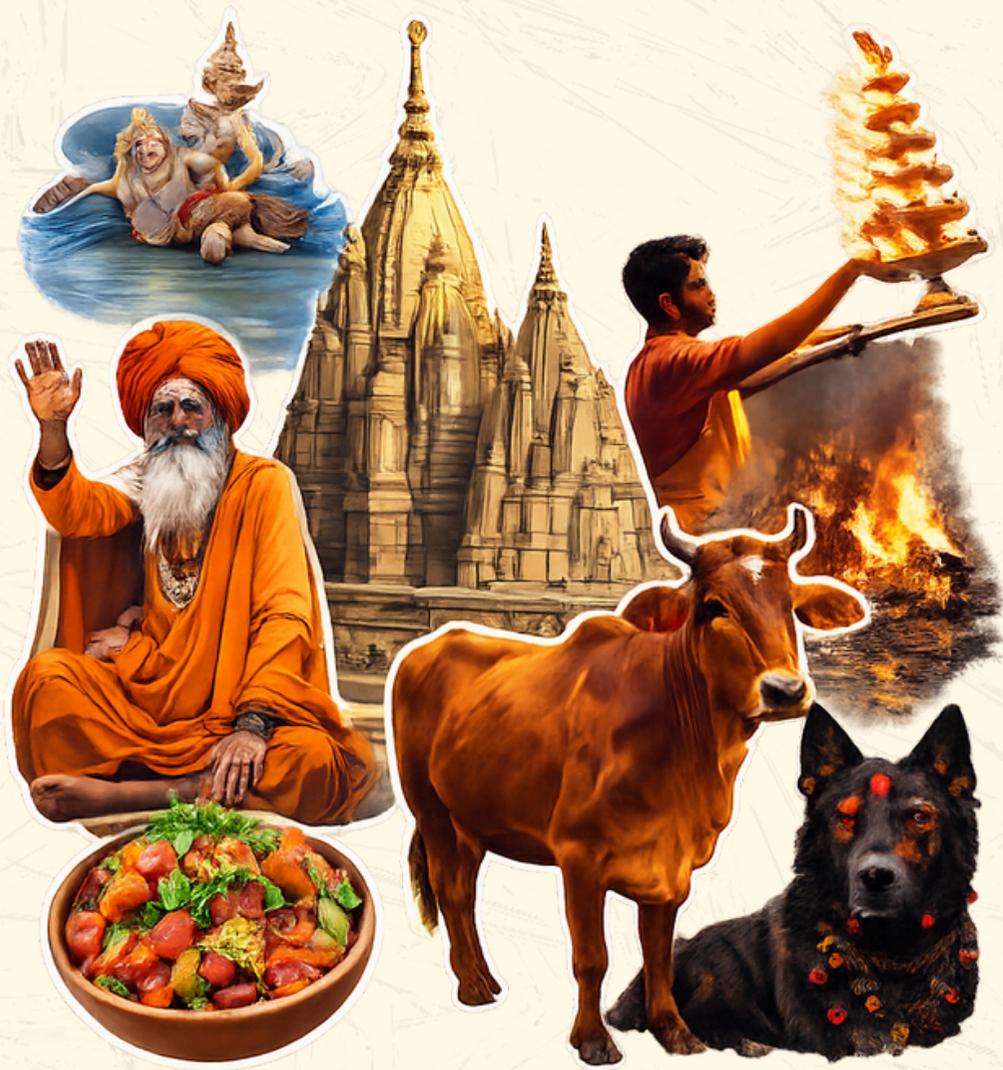
Day 6 Spare day for travel



Kashi calls you, always

Kashi (Banaras/Varanasi) in Uttar Pradesh, is said to sit on Shiva's Trishula. It is a cosmic power centre that exists outside the boundaries of normal time & space.

You are entering a shifting maze of Ghats & Gallis, painted with the chants of Sadhus & trumpets of cows, all flowing into Ganga Ma's warm embrace.



This is not a casual
touristy spot.
It is a soul-shaking
confrontation with the
reality of life & death,
a bold reminder of its
temporariness and your
true Eternal Nature.

Do not rush this trip - take time to sit with it
and you shall assuredly return with purpose.

Where to Stay?

Lal Bahadur Shastri Int. Airport is ~1 hr. away from the main city. The Railway station (at Cantt) is 45 mins. away from the Ghats.

Skip the hotels for **homely Airbnbs near Assi Ghat**. I chose this garden stay ft. the pookiest aunty & uncle (~₹1800 per night).



Kashi Garden Stay

Private room in home in Varanasi, India
2 guests · 1 bedroom · 1 bed · 1 private bath

4.94
★★★★★

Guest
favorite

16
Reviews

What to carry?

Winters get intensely cold. Carry extra layers of warm clothing, jacket & a monkey cap.

You'll do a lot of walking, so carry sports shoes & fully covered track pants/comfy jeans so that you can enter temples.

Keep laptops/workbooks at your room when temple hopping. Mobile phones & smart watches are NOT allowed inside the major temples (small ones allow), so keep them in nearby prasad stall lockers.

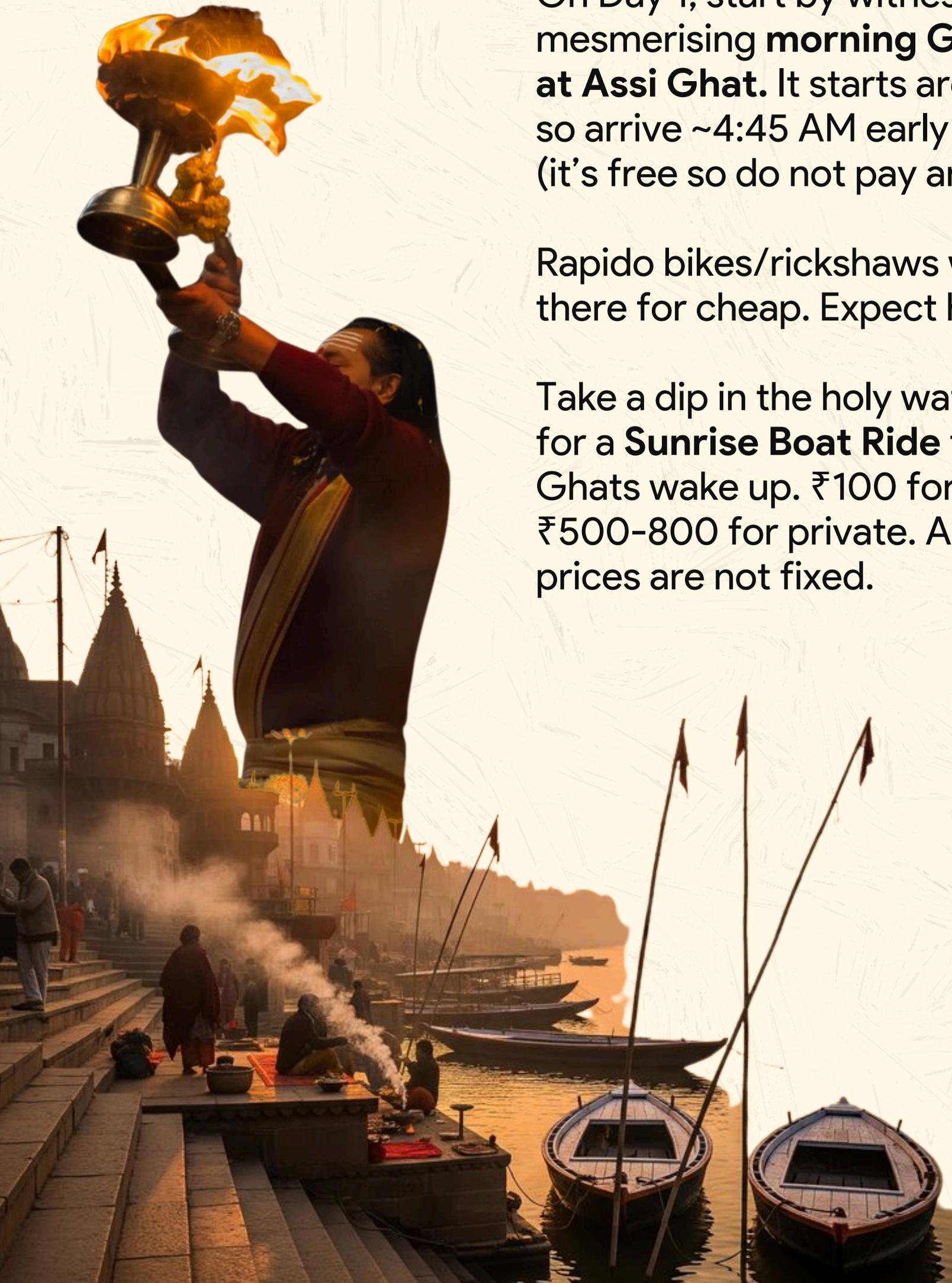


Assi, the sword

On Day 1, start by witnessing the mesmerising **morning Ganga Aarti at Assi Ghat**. It starts around 5-6 AM so arrive ~4:45 AM early for a good spot (it's free so do not pay anybody!)

Rapido bikes/rickshaws will get you there for cheap. Expect heavy fog.

Take a dip in the holy waters & proceed for a **Sunrise Boat Ride** to watch the Ghats wake up. ₹100 for group boat, ₹500-800 for private. Always bargain, prices are not fixed.



Days 1 & 2: Temple Run



After the boat ride, take permission to begin your tour by visiting **Shri Kaal Bhairava, Shiva's fierce form.** He acts as the Kshetrapala or Kotwal, the guardian deity of the region.

The earlier you visit, the lesser crowd you'll get. Move swiftly through the temple premises. Offer dakshina to the priests if you genuinely wish to seek a specific blessing/ritual.

Must-visit Checklist:

- Annapurna Ma Temple (near Kashi Vishwanath)
- Vishalakshi (part of 51 Shakti Peethas, near KS)
- Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple
- Tridev Mandir
- Durgakund Mandir
- Mrityunjaya Mahadev Mandir, Samnaghat
- Ma Kali Aghor Ashram
- Nepali/Kathwala Temple

Catch evening Ganga Aartis @ smaller Ghats.



Get lost, literally

Turn off your mobile data & Google Maps. Begin from any ghat & get lost in the quiet, narrow gallis away from the crowd. The beauty of Kashi is most spectacularly witnessed through its meandering labyrinth.

When I was doing this, I witnessed a black & white doggo standing in the middle of nowhere & I took it as Bhairav Baba's sign, sent to protect & guide me.

Varanasi's Ghats can open up secret spots for open seekers, so wander on!



Embrace Death

On quiet afternoons or at late night, prepare to visit **Manikarnika Ghat** (named after Mata Sati's fallen earring) or the lesser known spot, Harishchandra Ghat.

These are **Maha Shamshan bhumis**, open cremation grounds with constantly burning holy pyres that carry the dead into the afterlife - it is believed that Shiva personally whispers the Taraka Mantra into their ears here to grant liberation.

They have radical, powerful energy, not for the faint-hearted. Empaths may cry, emotional people may feel heavy, so go mentally prepared.

- ⊘ Do NOT click photos/videos, it is extremely disrespectful
- ⊘ Do NOT walk over/near the pyres - respect the place's sanctity
- ⊘ Do NOT chit-chat, stare or stay for long or you may feel drained
- ⊘ Do NOT eat, drink or bathe in the nearby waters



(AI-gen, not real photo)

Kashi Vishwanath

The highlight of every Varanasi Trip ever, Kashi Vishwanath is part of the **12 Jyotirlingas**, the most legendary epicentres in Shaivism.

Go early at 4 AM - any time later than 6 AM might get you stuck in a 2+ hour waiting line.

For Sugam Darshan (faster access), book in advance at: www.shrikashivishwanath.org/



Day 3: Sarnath

To seep into Buddhist tradition, visit Sarnath (45 mins. away) in a toto/rickshaw.

Entry tickets can be purchased online at a very small cost.

Must-see spots in the area:

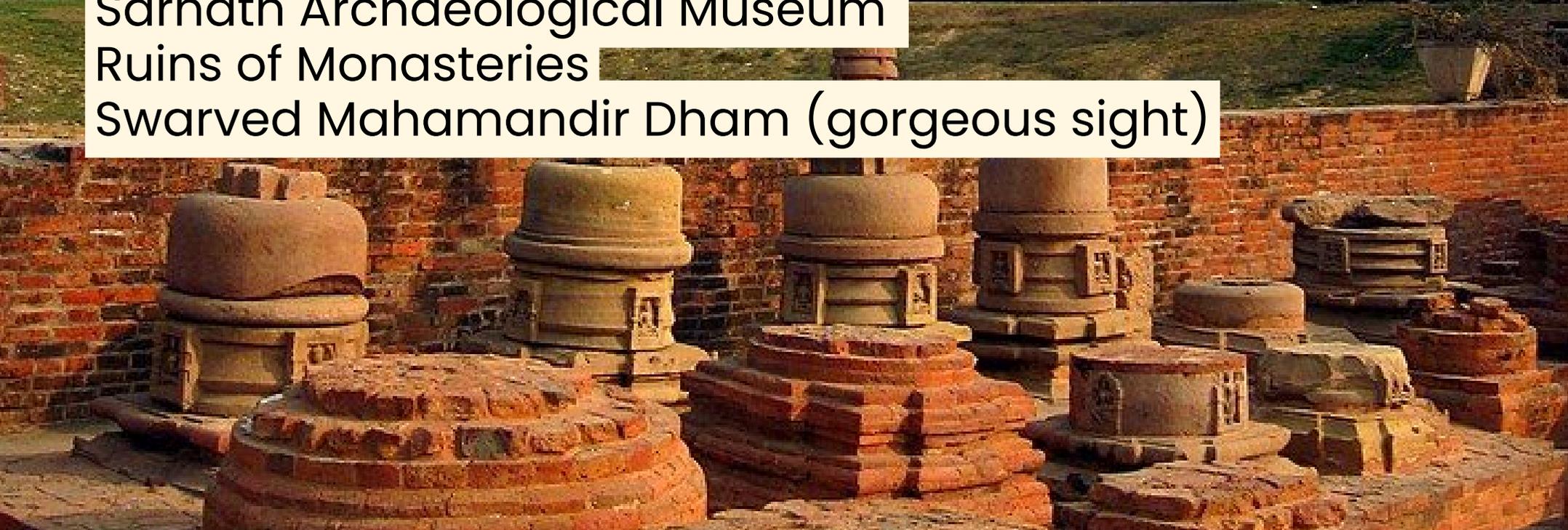
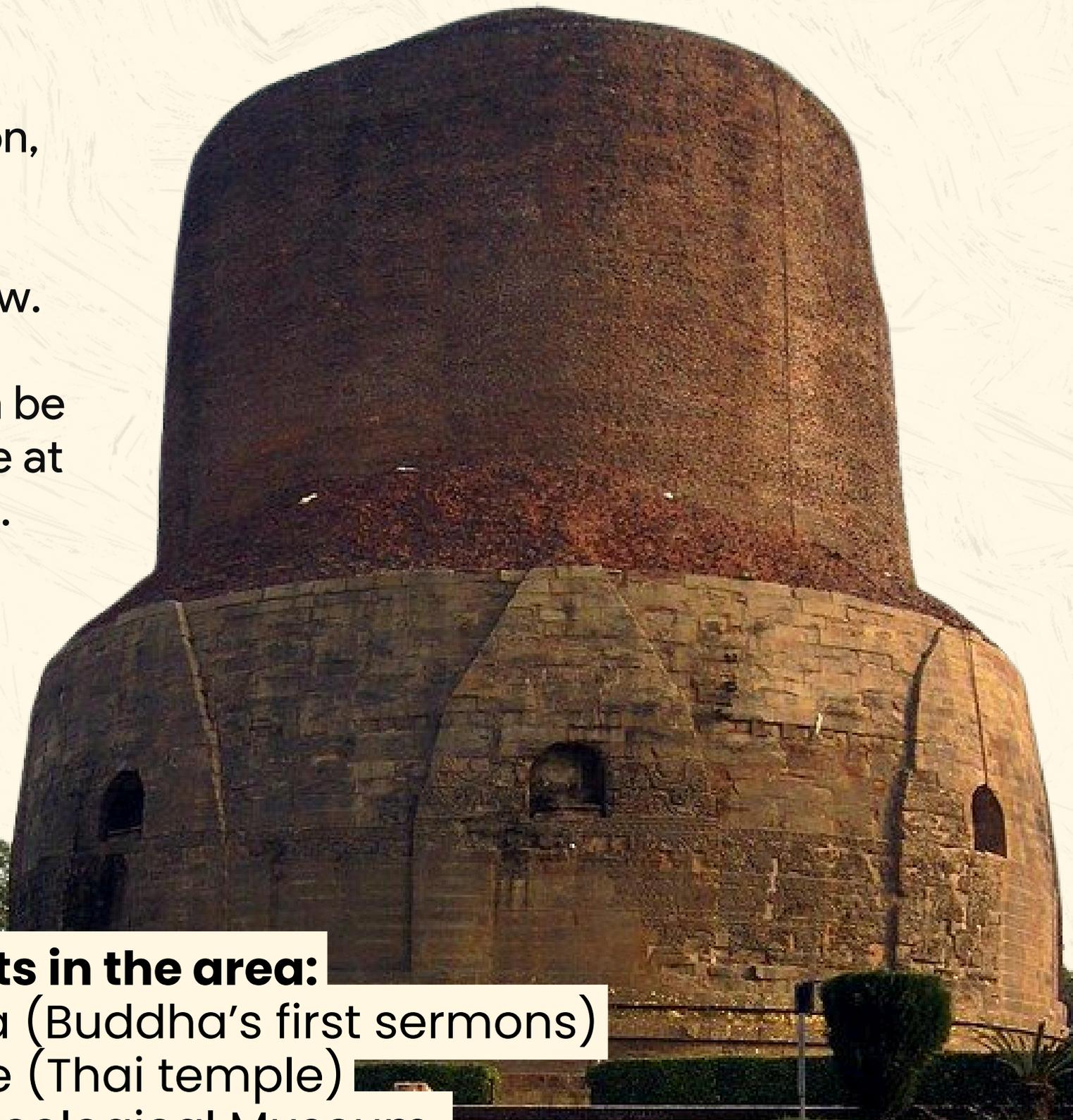
Dhamek Stupa (Buddha's first sermons)

Buddha Statue (Thai temple)

Sarnath Archaeological Museum

Ruins of Monasteries

Swarved Mahamandir Dham (gorgeous sight)



Hello, Dashaswamedh

This can be the ultimate culmination of your Varanasi trip - the magical evening **Ganga Aarti @ Dashaswamedh Ghat.**

It will always be crowded so arrive by 4 PM to get a nearby seat at the stairs.

Or sign up for a double-decker boat seat view for a gorgeous experience (~₹200)

Absorb the powerful Vedic mantras & lose yourself in chanting "Har Har Mahadev!"



After an evening boat ride, depart for the next leg, Ayodhya - buses start from Cantt ~₹600 for AC Sleepers. It'll take you ~4-5 hrs. by road.

Day 4: Chalo Ayodhya!

To find Ram, you must first find Hanuman.

Start your day early @ 5 AM by visiting **Hanuman Garhi**. After a long flight of stairs, you will enter the serene temple up-top.

After praying, sit by the pillars to chant Hanuman Chalisa (carry a printed copy as mobile phones are not allowed) - chanting it has a powerful effect at this location!

Then, proceed to **Ram Janmabhoomi**.



Bolo, "Jai Shree Ram!"

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra is a modern marvel, rooted in a civilizational movement that spans many centuries.

It does live up to all the hype as a must-see wonder, well-maintained & gorgeously built.

Go early before 6 AM but expect a long queue regardless. Use the lockers to keep your mobiles, shoes & smartwatches outside.

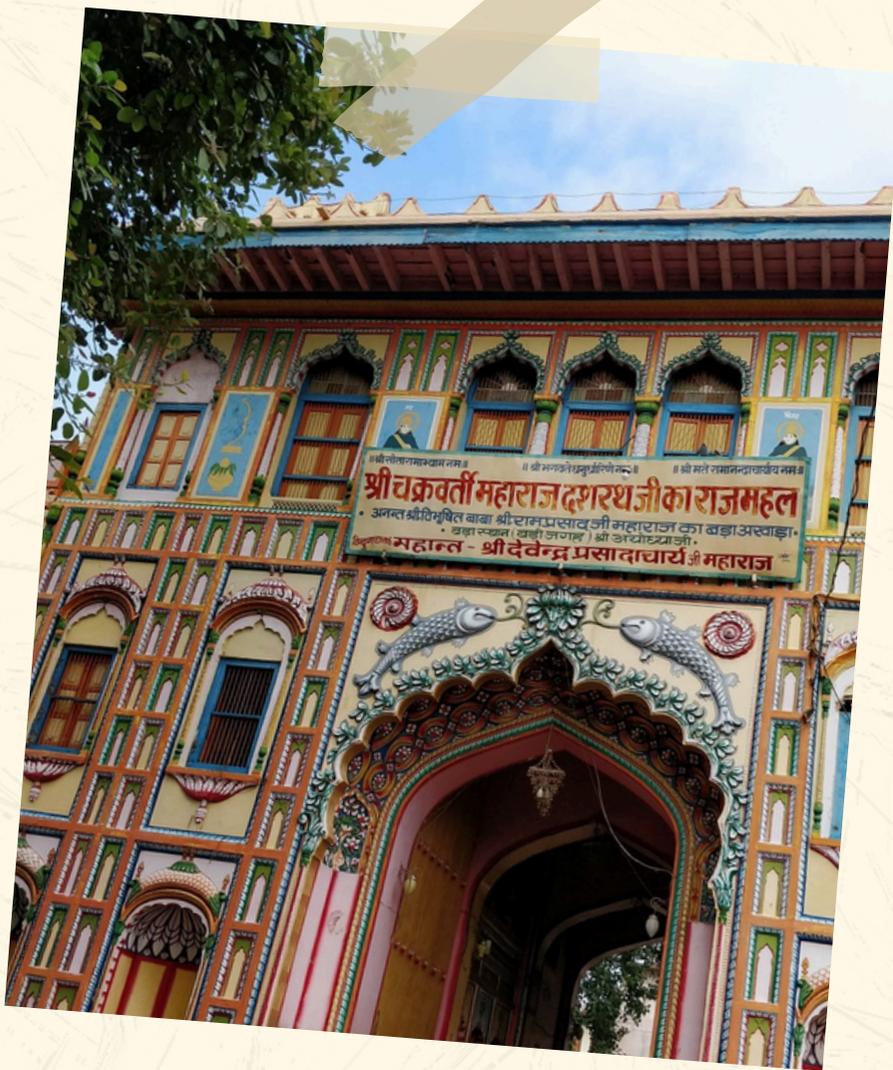
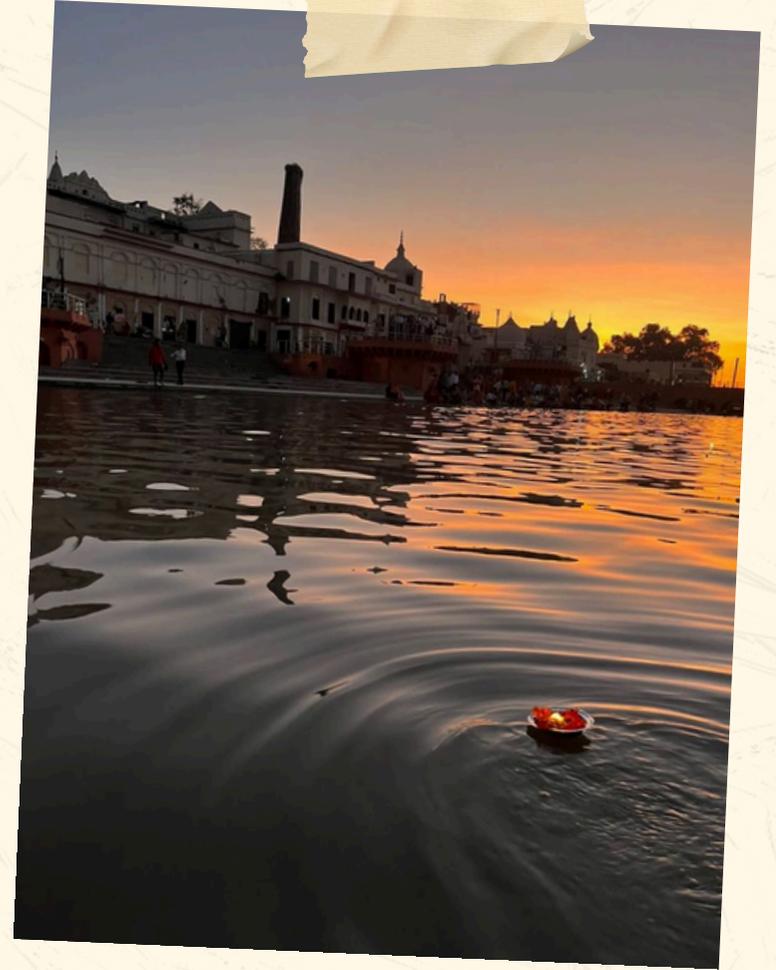


Ayodhya walk

On the pathway to RJ, you can also stop by what is believed to be Maharaja Dasharatha's Royal Palace.

After the main highlight, go towards the quaint River Sarayu - to take a dip in its holy waters & walk along its banks. This is where Shri Ram took Jala Samadhi.

Also stop by the Nageshwarnath Shiva temple nearby & pay a visit to Kanak Bhawan, associated with Sita Ma.



Proceed to catch a bus from Saket Petrol Pump Stop to head towards Prayag for an overnight stay + early morning tour.



Day 5: Triveni Sangam

Once at Prayagraj, start early & hitch a boat ride to witness the **Triveni Sangam**, the meeting point of our three sacred rivers: **Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati (invisible)**.

This confluence is a cosmic intersection of **Prana** (life force), charging up the waters to cleanse karma & grant spiritual strength.



If you have more time, visit the Anand Bhawan Museum and also the Chandrashekhar Azad Park, powerful reminders of the Freedom Struggle.

Approx. Costs

Keep CASH handy (UPI might not work in secluded places)

Flights from BOM may cost <₹15,000 (return)

Stay is ~₹1800 per night

Food/Meals may range from ₹500-1000 per day

Inter-city AC Sleeper Bus Seats go for ~₹750

Total solo trip cost comes up to ₹25-35k (comfortable)

What I ate (food)

Baati Chokha & Sattu Paratha @ Desi Mandapam (so good)

Hazelnut Factory + Starbucks @ Samneghat for coffee

Basic street food & lunch thalis @ veg Bhojanalayas

Sagar Ratna, Coffee House - good dining options

Mistakes to Avoid

Don't accept "VIP darshan" claims (darshan is free)

Avoid crowded rooftop "paid" aarti scams (aartis are free)

Don't hire unsolicited guides at the Ghats

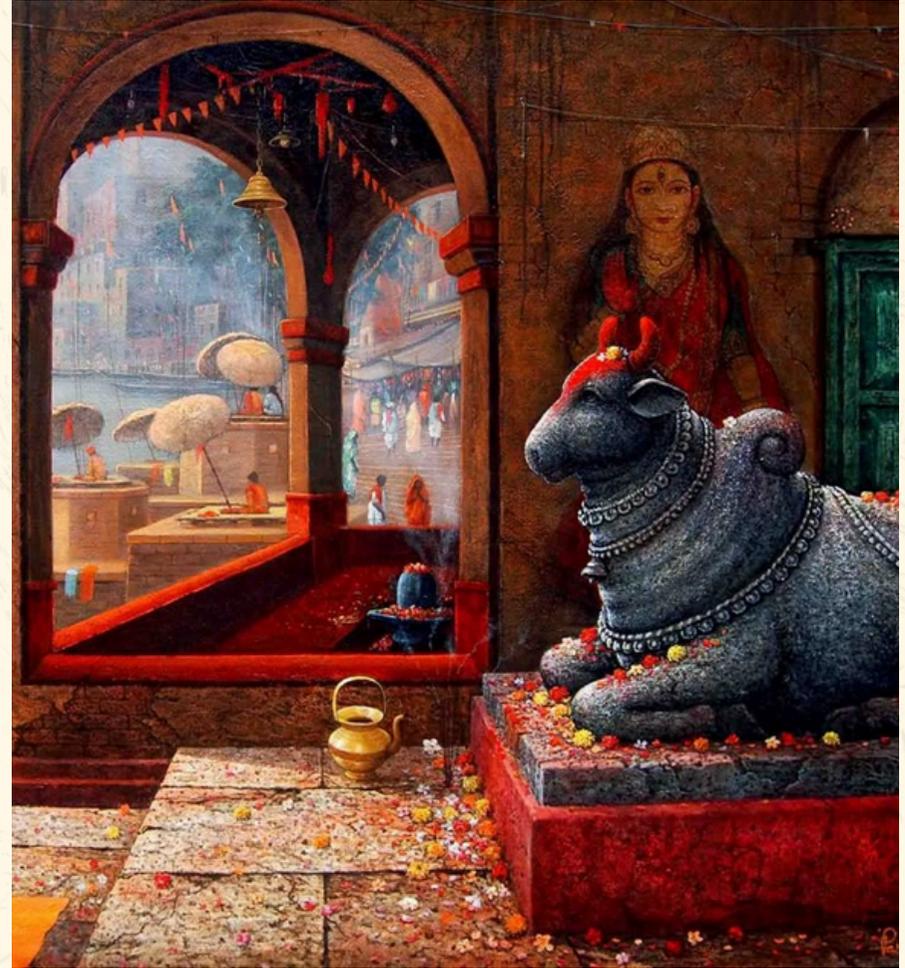
Avoid middlemen at cremation grounds



Day 6: Return Energised

Most seekers enter Kashi with hopes for wild miracles & instant enlightenment.

They've got the brief wrong. Kashi calmly reflects the stark realities that you've been running away from!

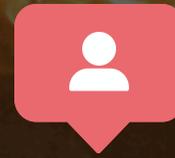


It will show you how short & fragile life is, and yet how beautiful it can become **once you completely surrender to the Divine.**

It is not the end but rather the beginning. So come with a selfless mind & **let the Lights Guide You Home.**

करपूरगौरं करुणावतारं
संसारसारं भुजगेन्द्रहारम् ।
सदा वसन्तं हृदयारविन्दे
भवं भवानी सहितं नमामि ॥

“I bow to Shiva, who is white as camphor,
the embodiment of compassion,
the essence of the world,
adorned with the serpent king,
ever dwelling in the lotus of the heart,
along with Bhavani, his Shakti.”



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Map of
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