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## IMPROVEMENT OF KOLKATA GHATS



# OUTLINE

Hooghly & it's Ghats

Ghats of Kolkata

Restoration & Conservation of the Kolkata Ghats

Nather Bagan

Nather Bagan Ghat

Kumartuli

Kumartuli Ghat

Nather Bagan & Kumartuli Ghats....presently

Immediate interventions towards addressing the critical physical decays

Other Immediate Challenges

Conclusion



# HOOGHLY

## *And it's Ghats*

The Hooghly has always been Kolkata's working river. It connects the city to the world, brings in commerce and prosperity, and shapes its culture and heritage. And the timeless ghats that dot the Hooghly riverfront are the landing posts for this watery highway, witnessing all of Kolkata's historical journey from the start. There were once over a hundred ghats in the city, built by rich zamindars and rulers over the centuries. Many have been abandoned or simply disappeared over time, and there are 42 ghats still active today. These are used for a myriad of activities; for bathing, fetching water, swimming, religious events, festivals, loading and unloading of goods, getting on and off boats or simply to enjoy a breath of fresh air...

If tourists have always romanticized the divine ghats of Varanasi, there are those who have turned a blind eye to the ghats of Kolkata. They are steeped in history as much as the ghats of Varanasi, built by various zamindars centuries ago as private bathing areas for the female members of their family. Some were even built for social reasons, for festive purposes.



# GHATS OF KOLKATA

## *History*


The river ghats of Kolkata are an essential thread woven into the city's historical and cultural tapestry. Nestled along the banks of the Hooghly River, these ghats have fulfilled various roles—religious, social, economic, and practical—since the dawn of Kolkata's storied existence. They echo the city's colonial heritage, spiritual customs, and vibrant river trade. Herein lies a glimpse into the rich chronicles of the ghats in North Kolkata:

### 1. Origins in the Colonial Era

Before the advent of the British East India Company, the Portuguese, Dutch and the French had already discerned the locational advantages of the river Hooghly with its close proximity to the Bay of Bengal and thus established the trading towns of Bandel, Chinsura, Sserampore and Chandannagar.

British East India Company Influence: However, the narrative of many ghats in Kolkata unfolded during their colonial epoch, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. As the British East India Company established Kolkata (then known as Calcutta) as a bustling trading nexus, they discerned the pivotal role of the Hooghly River in commerce. Thus, river ghats were crafted as docking havens for vessels transporting treasures such as jute, spices, cotton, silk, and indigo.





## 2. Spiritual Resonance

**Hindu Rituals and Ceremonies:** The ghats lining the Hooghly River resonate with profound religious significance within the Hindu faith. Many of these sacred steps were erected solely for the purpose of ritual bathing, as the Hooghly is revered as a distributary of the holy Ganges River. For centuries, devotees have congregated at these ghats to conduct daily purifications, offer heartfelt prayers, and partake in vibrant religious festivals.

**Cremation Ghats:** Notable ghats in Kolkata, such as Nimtala Ghat, have long served as sacred cremation sites, grounded in the belief that cremating one's remains by a divine river facilitates the soul's journey to moksha (liberation). These hallowed cremation ghats have been vital to the spiritual tapestry of Kolkata's inhabitants.

## 3. Social and Cultural Nexus

**Ghats as Community Spaces:** Beyond their spiritual essence, the ghats blossomed into vital community hubs. Individuals from all walks of life would converge at these tranquil banks for socializing, cleansing rituals, and even conducting business













**Cultural Events:** Numerous ghats have transformed into vibrant stages for cultural celebrations and festivals. Notably, the Durga Puja and Kali Puja culminate in the ceremonial immersion of idols into the river, a time-honored tradition that has woven itself into the very fabric of Kolkata's cultural heritage for centuries.

#### 4. Economic Role

**Trade and Commerce:** During the colonial era, the river ghats emerged as vital lifelines for Kolkata's economy. They served as bustling docking points for boats and ships, facilitating the flow of goods to and from the city. Essential commodities like jute, rice, and textiles were loaded and unloaded here, destined for international markets. Many of these ghats were intricately connected to warehouses and factories, further amplifying their economic significance.

**Development of Port Activities:** As the Port of Kolkata ascended in prominence, many ghats transformed into vibrant hubs of activity, bolstering the city's trade. Ghats such as Sovabazar Ghat and Bagbazar Ghat became pivotal players in this dynamic riverine trade network.





## 5. Architectural Features

**Colonial and Traditional Architecture:** The architectural styles of the ghats reflect a blend of colonial and traditional Indian designs. The ghats typically feature broad steps (or chabutras) leading down to the water, allowing for easy access. Some ghats also had pavilions, temples, or small shrines where people could pray or take shelter.

**Family-Owned Ghats:** Many of the older ghats were built by prominent Bengali families or zamindars (landlords) during the 18th and 19th centuries. These ghats often carry the names of the families or individuals who sponsored their construction, such as the Sovabazar (Rajbari) Ghat and Babu Ghat named after Babu Raj Chandra Das, husband of Rani Rashmoni. The architectural styles of these ghats often reflected the wealth and influence of the families that owned them.

## 6. Decline and Modern-Day Challenges

**Impact of Modernization:** With the rise of modern infrastructure like bridges and roads, the importance of river transportation declined in the 20th century.





**Environmental Challenges:** Pollution of the Hooghly River, unregulated construction, and siltation have also contributed to the decline of these historical ghats. However, efforts are being made to restore some of them due to their cultural and religious importance.

## 7. Revival and Restoration Efforts

**Cultural Revival:** In recent years, there has been a growing awareness about the cultural and historical value of the ghats in North Kolkata. Restoration projects have been undertaken to revive ghats like Prinsep Ghat and Bagbazar Ghat, ensuring that they remain integral to the city's heritage. These efforts aim to preserve the architecture while also revitalizing the ghats as social spaces.

**Tourism and Public Engagement:** The ghats are now being integrated into Kolkata's cultural tourism. Heritage walks and cultural festivals at these ghats have gained popularity, offering both locals and tourists a glimpse of the city's rich history.



The ghats of Kolkata are living monuments that have played a critical role in the city's historical evolution. From their early importance as centers of trade and religious activity to their gradual decline in the modern era, these ghats have been witnesses to Kolkata's transformation. Today, efforts to restore and preserve them ensure that they remain integral to Kolkata's cultural identity, serving as spaces of spirituality, heritage, and communal life.

**This report illuminates two notable ghats of North Kolkata: Nather Bagan, also known as Benetola Ghat, and Kumartuli Ghat. It weaves together a succinct historical tapestry of both sites, exploring their present usage, current physical condition, and the urgent restoration efforts needed, along with the associated costs. Additionally, the report highlights key considerations that must be addressed in the rejuvenation of these river ghats, steeped in historical significance and heritage value.**



# RESTORATION & CONSERVATION OF THE KOLKATA GHATS

## *Key Considerations*

Restoration and conservation of a Kolkata ghat on Hooghly requires a thoughtful approach that balances cultural, environmental, and practical considerations. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

### 1. Cultural and Historical Preservation

- **Respecting the Heritage:** Most ghats in Kolkata hold historical, religious, and cultural significance. Restoration efforts should focus on preserving traditional architectural styles and materials while rejuvenating the structure.
- **Documentation:** Before starting the restoration, a thorough documentation of the original structure, historical usage, and significance of the ghat is required. Consultation with historians, conservation architects, and local communities.
- **Maintaining Ritual and Cultural Spaces:** Ensuring that spaces used for rituals, festivals, and ceremonies (like bathing ghats, cremation ghats, etc.) are preserved or enhanced while ensuring the safety of users.





## 2. Environmental Considerations

- **Water Quality Improvement:** River pollution is a common issue near ghats. Incorporation of wastewater management and sewage treatment systems to prevent untreated waste from entering the river.
- **Bank Stabilization:** Addressing soil erosion and strengthening the riverbank to prevent flooding or degradation. Use of eco-friendly materials like stone, geotextiles, and vegetation.
- **Ecological Balance:** Ensuring the restoration plan does not disturb local flora and fauna. Inclusion of measures like tree planting or aquatic habitat restoration to support biodiversity.





### 3. Structural Integrity and Safety

- **Structural Assessment:** Checking for damage due to age, water erosion, or human activity. Reinforcing or rebuilding areas that are unsafe, but use of appropriate techniques that reflect the original construction.
- **Accessibility:** Improving access for all users, including the elderly and disabled, by providing ramps, handrails, and non-slippery steps without compromising the traditional design.
- **Flood Resistance:** Design of the ghat to withstand seasonal flooding, including flood-resistant materials and proper drainage systems to reduce damage during monsoons.

### 4. Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Materials

- **Use Local Materials:** When restoring, use of locally sourced, eco-friendly materials like sandstone, granite, or lime mortar to maintain the original design and reducing the carbon footprint.
- **Eco-Friendly Construction Techniques:** Incorporating green design practices, such as the use of recycled materials or low-impact construction methods.



## **5. Public Amenities and Facilities**

- Restrooms and Changing Rooms: Providing modern, hygienic, and eco-friendly public amenities like restrooms, changing rooms, and seating areas without disrupting the traditional environment.
- Waste Management: Installing adequate dustbins and signage to encourage cleanliness. Implementing regular waste collection and disposal mechanisms.
- Lighting and Security: Introducing low-energy, aesthetic lighting for nighttime use, ensuring the area is safe for visitors while maintaining a serene atmosphere.

## **6. Aesthetic Enhancements**

- Landscaping: Enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the ghat with judiciously designed landscape including the street furniture.
- Public Art and Murals: Incorporating local art and murals that reflect the cultural and religious significance of the ghat. This could also involve working with local artists and craftspeople.
- Colour Scheme: Maintaining a colour palette that complements the landscape and the original architectural design and colour scheme of the ghat.

## **7. Community Involvement and Awareness**

- Involvement of the Local Community: Engaging local stakeholders, including religious groups, residents, and local government, in the planning and execution phases. Their input will ensure that the restoration aligns with the needs of the community.

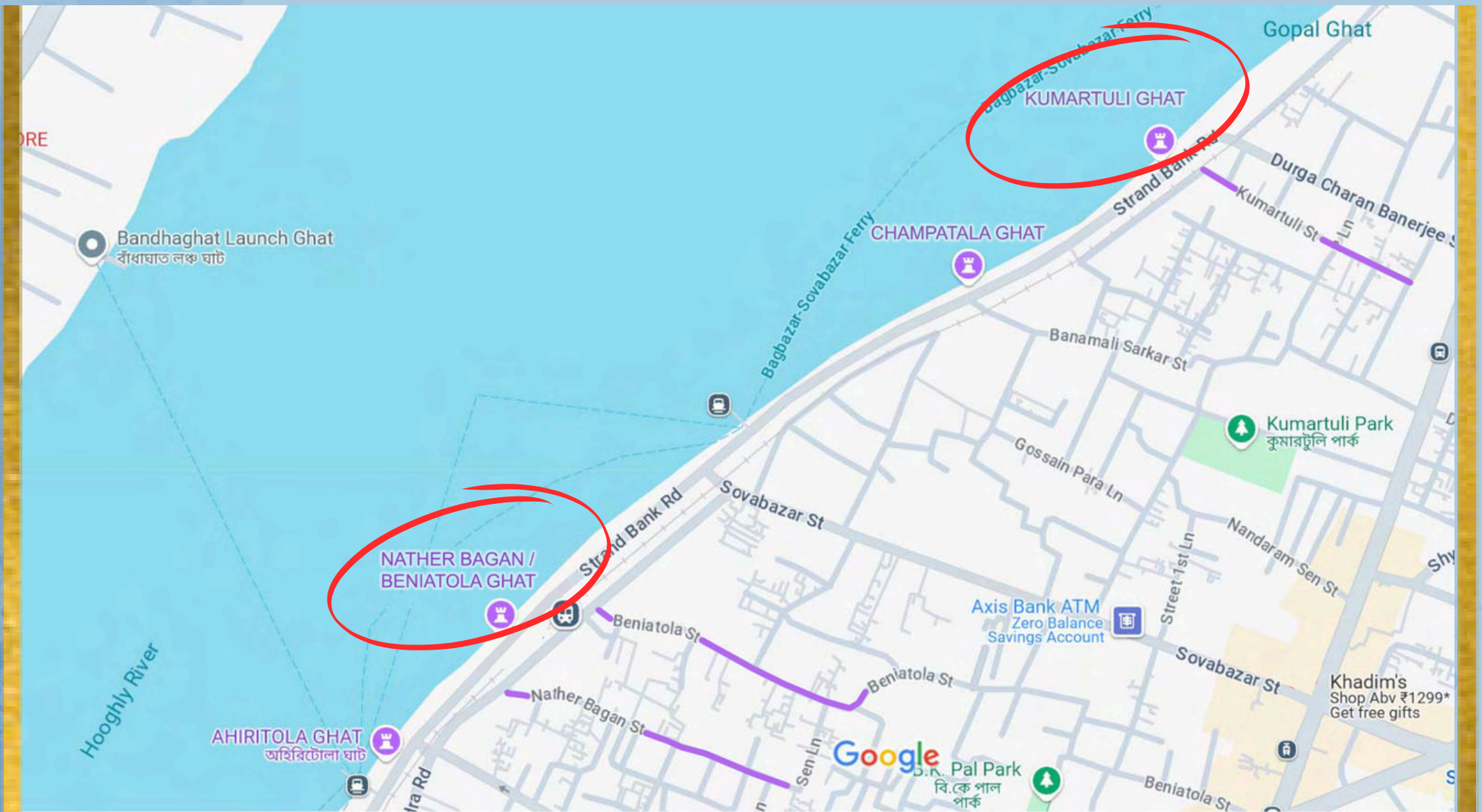


## 8. Maintenance and Long-term Sustainability

- Regular Maintenance Plan: Establishing a long-term maintenance plan, including routine cleaning, inspection, and repair, to ensure the ghat remains functional and visually appealing.
- Community Stewardship: Involving local community members in the upkeep and protection of the ghat. Creating initiatives where locals participate in clean-up drives and maintenance efforts.

This report, however, delves into the pressing physical degeneration challenges facing the two ghats, namely Nather Bagan (or Benetola Ghat) and Kumartuli Ghat, alongside the interventions needed to remedy these concerns. It is anticipated that a comprehensive and far-reaching restoration and conservation initiative will be undertaken in the future, thoughtfully addressing the issues outlined above.







# NATHER BAGAN

The name "Nather Bagan" translates to "Garden of Nath," possibly harkening back to a prominent landowner or clan named Nath, who may have once presided over lush expanses of land, including a garden (bagan) in this enchanting locale. The locality north of Ahiritola Street, and west of BK Pal Park is a storied enclave in North Kolkata, renowned for its vibrant cultural legacy and ties to the city's ancient communities.

Possibly, the roots of the Nather Bagan locality stretch back to the colonial epoch when North Kolkata, or Sutanuti, flourished as a vital part of the British East India Company's burgeoning dominion. It can be assumed that, as Kolkata blossomed under British influence in the 18th and 19th centuries, numerous neighborhoods emerged, transforming the neighborhood into a residential haven for Bengali elites, merchants, and devout communities. Once the very heart of the city's cultural and economic vibrancy, old North Kolkata was adorned with expansive properties, verdant gardens, and traditional abodes, all hallmarks of the area around Nather Bagan.

Steeped in the rich history of Kolkata's colonial past, the area around "Nather Bagan Street" reflects the city's traditional social fabric, spiritual practices, and cultural essence. While it may not bask in the same fame as other historical districts, it remains a vital thread in the intricate tapestry of Kolkata's heritage, encapsulating the architectural splendor and cultural transformations of old North Kolkata. Its historical resonance is further deepened by its connection to the Hooghly River through the Nather Bagan Ghat, a sacred site that has nurtured the religious and social needs of the community for generations.



# NATHER BAGAN GHAT

Nather Bagan Ghat is between the Ahiritola Ghat and Sovabazar Ghat. It is on the Strand Bank Road and next to the Sovabazar Ahiritola Circular Railway Station. Nather Bagan Ghat, gracefully nestled along the banks of the Hooghly River in North Kolkata, stands as a cherished gem among the city's myriad traditional ghats, each a testament to its splendid riverfront legacy. Though it may not bask in the limelight of its grander, more historically renowned counterparts, Nather Bagan Ghat has long woven itself into the very fabric of the local community's daily rhythms, spiritual observances, and social gatherings.

Situated in a region steeped in history, Nather Bagan Ghat serves as a sanctuary for traditional communities, where the river's embrace has nurtured the lives of its inhabitants. Here, the ghat has been a sacred space for daily rituals—bathing, washing garments, and presenting heartfelt prayers to the flowing waters of the Hooghly. Like its fellow ghats throughout the city, it pulses with life during cultural celebrations and religious festivals, becoming a vibrant focal point for the immersion of idols during the revered Durga Puja and Kali Puja.

The name “Nather Bagan” whispers of a bygone era, likely alluding to the garden or estate ("bagan" in Bengali) once belonging to a distinguished local figure or family, thereby enriching its narrative with layers of historical significance.













# NATHER BAGAN GHAT

Nather Bagan Ghat, much like its brethren along the sacred banks of the Hooghly River, embodies profound spiritual importance for the Hindu faithful. The river, revered as holy, offers this ghat as a sanctuary where devotees may immerse themselves in ritualistic waters and raise their prayers to the heavens. During grand Hindu festivals, the ghat transforms into a vibrant epicenter of devotion, beckoning throngs for special prayers, idol immersions, and a tapestry of ceremonial traditions.







# KUMARTULI

Kumartuli, nestled in the heart of North Kolkata, is a vibrant tapestry woven with history and artistry, renowned for its exquisite idol-making. For over 300 years, this enchanting neighborhood has served as the sacred sanctuary for potters and artisans, who masterfully craft clay idols of deities, particularly for the grand celebration of Durga Puja, one of Bengal's most cherished festivals. The treasures born from Kumartuli find their way not only throughout Kolkata but also to distant lands across India and beyond.

As you wander through its narrow, winding alleys, you'll encounter workshops brimming with creativity, where artisans from generations past diligently shape lifelike idols from clay, bamboo, straw, and paint. This artistic enclave stands as a beacon of Kolkata's spiritual essence while drawing visitors year-round, eager to witness the magic of idol creation and soak in the lively ambiance, especially as Durga Puja approaches.

Yet, amidst its artistic splendor, Kumartuli grapples with challenges: space constraints, the tides of modernity, and the pressing need for infrastructure improvements to nurture its artisans and safeguard its rich cultural legacy.











# KUMARTULI Ghat

Believed to have been built by Raja Nabakrishna Deb of Sovabazar, the ghat was originally called Rajar Ghat. A distinct pavilion in cream, the ghat is a standalone quay – a characteristic feature of the ghat. At the top of the pavilion is a board that reads 'Coomertolly Ghat For Bathing'. The pavilion has two grilled entrances from the Strand Bank Road and two on the other side which opens into the river.

On its left there is a changing room, beyond which is a flanked seating area with broad seats for senior citizens. On the right, the patch of land filled with leftover idols and garbage is an eyesore to the aesthetics.

Two sets of stairs descend down either side of the ghat to join the Ganges. At the centre, a neatly paved area with iron railings makes for a beautiful watch-point. In the middle of the pavilion is an unkempt Shiva Temple, probably constructed by the encroachers, blocking the river view from the road.

## History

Originally known as Rajar Ghat, the ghat is said to have been built by Raja Nabakrishna Deb. This was the Raja's private bathing ghat. For the ladies of the family, he had constructed a changing room on the first floor of the ghat which no longer exists. From making of the idols to kalabou snan – all the rituals of Sovabazar Rajbari (palace) Durga Pujas were performed at this ghat. It also included the bisarjan (immersion) of the idols of the Rajbari.



Other than his contributions towards Durga Puja, Raja Nabakrishna Deb had also built a series of rooms for the 'Gangayatris' (moribunds) on this ghat. Due to lack of maintenance, the rooms were eventually brought down.

The ghat has also seen several eminent personalities of yesteryears apart from the royals. It is said that when Ramkrishna Paramahansa showed signs of insanity, Rani Rashmoni had arranged to send him to Ganagaprasad Sen (1824-1896), the most celebrated practitioners of his times, from Dakshineswar for treatment. Ramkrishna would land on this ghat and walk down to Gangaprasad Bhavan, which stood right opposite the ghat. A plaque in the seating area adjoining the ghat is a proof of the same.

According to Krishnapriya Dasgupta, a senior journalist and historian, based on his interactions with the earlier generations of the Sens, when the ladies of Gangaprasad Bhavan went to the ghat for bathing, the railway tracks were closed for passage of trains. He also narrated an interesting history on how the ghat got its name. Calcutta saw its first ever "Sharadiya" Durga Puja in the year 1757 with the ceremonial Durga Pujas of the Sovabazar Rajbari. It is said that after emerging victorious in the Battle of Plassey, Robert Clive had rewarded Nabakrishna Deb with the district of Sutanuti. To celebrate the occasion, the Raja had relocated the potters of Gobindapur (now Maidan) to Sutanuti. The kumors were regular potters making clay pots and utensils who were given a dedicated area at Kumartuli on the banks of the Ganges. On the Raja's orders, they began to make idols of Goddess Durga and thus began the tradition of Durga Puja in the city.

The strategic location helped the potters to collect the special clay (etel mati) from the the Ganges which was used in the making of the idols. Other raw materials used in the idol making such as the straw (dried hay) was stacked on boats, while the bamboos were tied to the boats and allowed to float on water. These materials were thus loaded from distant villages and unloaded at the Kumartuli Ghat to facilitate idol making.





Initially, the Pals of Calcutta were involved in the making of the idols. As Durga Puja gained impetus, more and more pujas were being performed. The demand for the idols gradually increased. Potters from Krishnanagar migrated to Calcutta via the riverine and joined the Pals at Kumartuli. Eventually, the Rudra Pals of Dhaka also arrived at Calcutta to live in Kumartuli and hence the name.

### **Life at Ghat**

The pavilion of the ghat is used by the devotees who come to take a dip in the holy river. Some are seen busy with their daily chores while others spend some quiet moments standing on the paved quay.

Walking down a few steps northwards, is the other part of the ghat. Here you will come across a broad flight of stairs running down from the road to merge with the water. As you stand on the red sandstone stairway, bamboo stacks are seen floating on the water and piles of hay being unloaded from boats.



# NATHER BAGAN & KUMARTULI GHAT ...presently

While both Nather Bagan and Kumartuli Ghat remain active site for religious and daily activities, they like many other smaller ghats in Kolkata, faces issues such as neglect, pollution, and encroachment. The ghat's condition reflects the larger challenge of maintaining these sites in a rapidly modernizing city. Nevertheless, it continues to serve as a functional and culturally important space for the local residents.

Physical degeneration of these two river ghats have manifested in several ways, ranging from structural decay to environmental and ecological damage. Here are some key signs:

## 1. Structural Damage

- **Cracked or Eroded Steps:** The steps leading to the river may show cracks, wear, or complete erosion due to prolonged exposure to water, foot traffic, or poor maintenance.
- **Displaced or Missing Stones:** Stones used in the construction of the ghat have come loose or are missing at many places.
- **Leaning & Damaged Walls:** Many walls along the ghats are showing signs of leaning and most of the walls need re plastering in many places and a thorough cleaning and colouring







## 2. Soil Erosion and Bank Degradation

- **Visible Silt Accumulation:** Excessive accumulation of silt at the base of the ghat can block the flow of water and make the steps slippery or unusable.
- **Unstable Embankments:** There are signs of slipping or collapsing embankments due to water flow or lack of vegetation to hold the soil.

## 3. Water Quality Deterioration

- **Water Pollution:** Poor water quality around the ghat is a clear sign of degeneration, often indicated by murky water, foul smells, visible trash, or excessive algae growth.
- **Presence of Debris:** Accumulation of garbage, plastics, near or on the ghat, affecting both aesthetics and public health.

## 4. Vegetation Overgrowth or Loss

- **Overgrowth of Invasive Plants:** Excessive growth of weeds or invasive plant species on the ghat or along the riverbank, indicating poor management.
- **Loss of Native Vegetation:** Decrease in native plants and trees, which help prevent soil erosion and provide shade, may indicate poor ecological health.







## **5. Surface Deterioration**

- **Slippery or Algae-Covered Surfaces:** The ghat steps have become dangerously slippery due to moss or algae growth, especially in humid or monsoon seasons. This can make the area unsafe for people.
- **Staining and Discoloration:** Stains caused by water damage, pollution, or organic matter have given the ghat a neglected and worn-out appearance.

## **6. Decreased Accessibility**

## **7. Neglect & Loss of Aesthetic Appeal**

- **Visual Pollution:** Excessive signage, banners, or advertisements around the ghat area have detracted from the cultural and historical ambiance.

## **8. Community and Public Health Indicators**

- **Littering and Poor Waste Management:** The presence of unmanaged trash and waste left by visitors, locals, or nearby activities have rapidly degraded the condition of the ghat and river.
- **Decline in Usage:** Fewer people using the ghats due to safety concerns, pollution, or lack of upkeep is a significant social indicator of physical degeneration.

















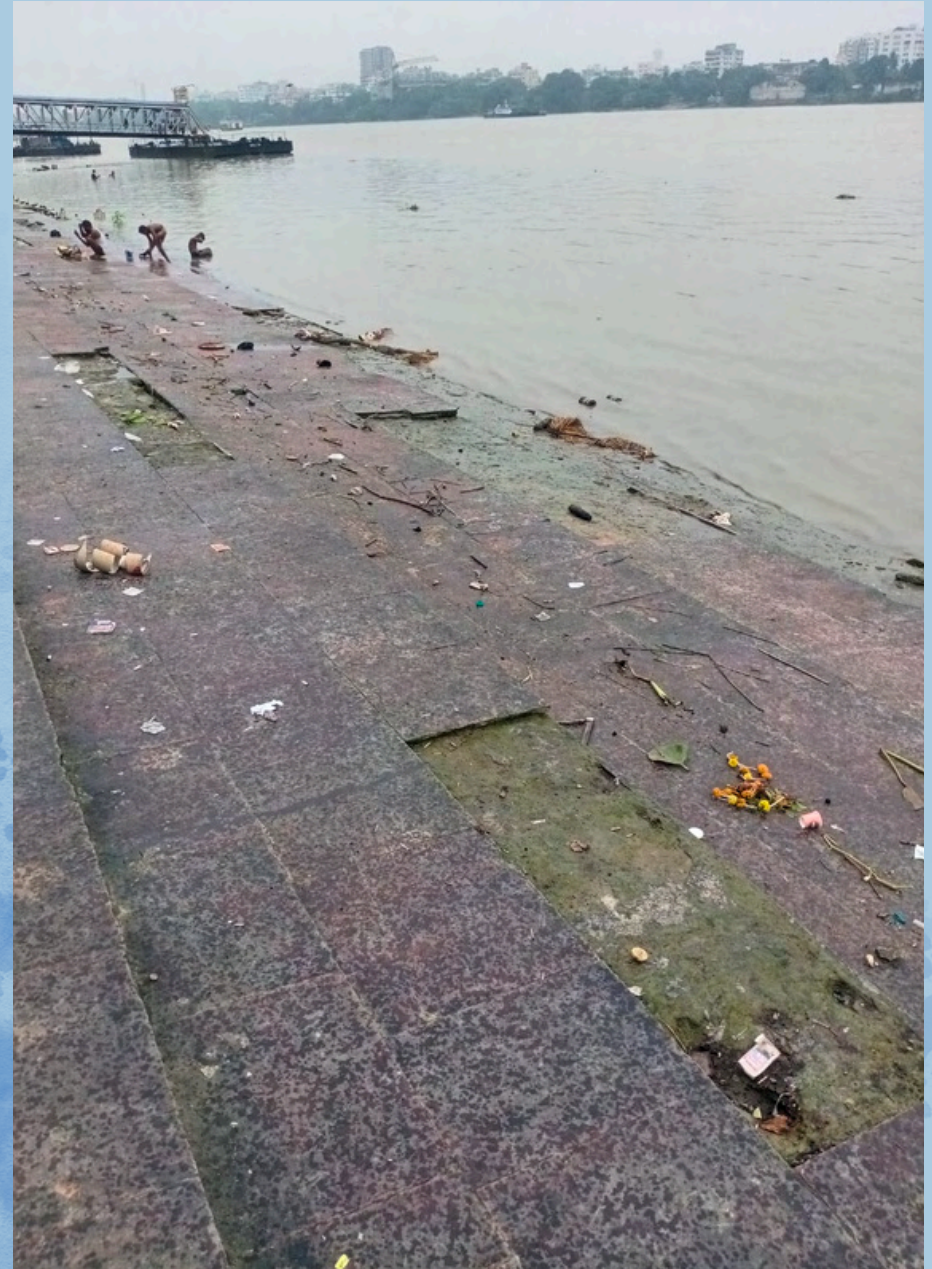




























Menu	
• NORMAL MASALA MADIRE	30
• BUTTER MADIRE	40
• CHEESE MADIRE	50
• CORNER MADIRE	40
• DEL MADIRE	60
NORMAL SANDWICH	40
CORNER SANDWICH	50
CHEESE SANDWICH	60
CHEESE CORN SANDWICH	70
JAM BREAD	20
BUTTER BREAD	20
• NORMAL MASALA PASTA	40
• RED SAUCE PASTA	70
• WHITE SAUCE PASTA	70
• CHEESE PASTA	80
• CORNER PASTA	50





# **IMMEDIATE INTERVENTIONS TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE CRITICAL PHYSICAL DECAYS.....**

*and the cost involved*



# KUMARTULI GHAT

DESCRIPTION OF WORKS TO BE DONE	ESTIMATED AMOUNT
CLEARING UNDESIRED VEGETATIONS	13500
CEMENT CONCRETE WORK AT RIVER GHAT	18500
DISMANTLING DAMAGED STONE SLAB FLOORING	120000
NEW RED SAND STONE (MANDANA) FLOORING IN GHAT STEPS	830000
REPAIRING JOINTS OF EXISTING STONework	62000
CLEANING THE EXISTING SAND STONE GHAT SURFACES	200000
REPAIR OF EXISTING BRICK MASONRY WORKS	80000
DISMANTLING DAMAGED STEEL RAILINGS AND OTHER INSTALLATIONS	1000
MASONRY AND STEEL PAINTING	250000
NEW STEEL WORK	25000
GS ROOFING WORK	25000
REPAIRING CEMENT CONCRETE PAVER BLOCK PATHWAY	18500
ELECTRICAL WORK	100000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>SAY 17 LAKHS</b>



# NATHER BAGAN GHAT

DESCRIPTION OF WORKS TO BE DONE	ESTIMATED AMOUNT
CLEARING UNDESIRED VEGETATIONS	24000
CEMENT CONCRETE WORK AT RIVER GHAT	48500
DISMANTLING DAMAGED STONE SLAB FLOORING	160000
NEW RED SAND STONE (MANDANA) FLOORING IN GHAT STEPS	1090000
REPAIRING JOINTS OF EXISTING STONework	210000
CLEANING THE EXISTING SAND STONE GHAT SURFACES	420000
REPAIR OF EXISTING BRICK MASONRY WORKS	310000
DISMANTLING DAMAGED STEEL RAILINGS AND OTHER INSTALLATIONS	2500
MASONRY AND STEEL PAINTING	340000
NEW STEEL WORK	123000
ELECTRICAL WORK	150000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>SAY 29 LAKHS</b>



# **OTHER IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES**



# SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL & MANAGEMENT

Waste and garbage accumulation at both these ghats is a growing concern, posing a significant threat to both the environment and public health. These two ghats, both of which are historically and culturally significant sites for religious rituals, community activities, and tourism, are increasingly being marred by improper waste disposal.

## Sources of Waste:

1. **Ritual Offerings:** Religious offerings such as flowers, garlands, and food items are often disposed of directly into the river. While biodegradable, these items are frequently mixed with non-biodegradable materials like plastic bags and wrappers.
2. **Tourism and Commercial Activities:** Large numbers of pilgrims and tourists, along with vendors and small shops around the ghats, generate significant amounts of plastic bottles, food packaging, and other litter.

The accumulation of waste at ghats contaminates the river water, leading to high levels of pollution and harming aquatic life. It also disrupts the aesthetic and spiritual experience for devotees and visitors. Moreover, the presence of garbage affects public health.







# UNREGULATED WASHING AND CLEANING IN THE GHAT

Unregulated washing and cleaning activities at all the ghats of Kolkata, including both the Nather Bagan and Kumartuli ghats are a significant contributor to water pollution. These river ghats are frequently used by local communities for washing clothes, bathing, and cleaning utensils, largely due to the easy availability of water and the long-standing belief in the river's sacred and purifying properties.

## Issues and Impacts:

1. **Chemical Pollution:** Detergents, soaps, and other cleaning agents used during washing release harmful chemicals such as phosphates and surfactants into the water. These chemicals disrupt the natural ecosystem, harm aquatic life, and degrade water quality.
2. **Organic Waste:** Clothes and utensils are often washed using organic items like ash or mud, but along with these, residue like food scraps, oils, and dirt is also introduced into the water, contributing to nutrient pollution.
3. **Physical Waste and Litter:** The use of synthetic cleaning materials and plastic packaging often results in residual waste being left behind on the ghats or washed into the river, adding to the plastic and solid waste pollution.
4. **Health Hazards:** The contaminated water poses a health risk to people who use the ghats for bathing or drinking, leading to skin infections and waterborne diseases.







# UNDEFINED ZONES FOR VARIOUS DAILY USES AND ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THAT FOR BATHING

Demarcating zones for various uses at both these river ghats is essential for maintaining environmental sustainability, enhancing public safety, and preserving the sanctity of these culturally significant areas. River ghats serve multiple purposes, ranging from religious rituals, bathing, and washing to tourism activities. Without proper zoning, these varied activities can interfere with each other, leading to pollution, safety hazards, and disruption/chaos.

## Benefits of Demarcation:

- Segregating activities such as bathing, washing clothes, and offering rituals helps prevent the mixing of pollutants like detergents, chemicals, and waste materials in the river.
- Separate areas for bathing and swimming can be marked to avoid dangerous spots with strong currents or deep waters, reducing the risk of accidents and drowning.
- Demarcated zones for religious rituals prevent overcrowding and enable devotees to perform their practices without any disturbance
- Creating specific spaces for tourists and visitors helps manage foot traffic, preserving the cultural and spiritual ambiance of the ghats.
- Such zoning allows for better planning of amenities, waste management systems, and infrastructure, contributing to cleaner, safer, and more organized ghats.







# CONCLUSION

Initiatives and programs (both public and private) should be launched to address the above issues highlighted in this report, for Nather Bagan and Kumartuli ghat. Sustained community involvement, government intervention, and stricter management policies are needed. Without a proper restoration drive, an infrastructure upgrade plan beside a sustainable management plan involving all the stakeholders, upkeeping and maintenance of these two culturally rich sites remains a formidable challenge. However, this report has made an effort to identify the key challenges these two ghats are facing and has highlighted the first set of restoration initiative that can be undertaken

It is believed that the restoration of these two river ghats is not merely a beautification project but a crucial step towards preserving the cultural heritage, ensuring environmental sustainability, and improving community well-being.

By implementing the suggested restoration steps—including proper zoning of uses and activities and an immediate waste management, these ghats can be transformed into cleaner, safer, and more vibrant public spaces. The success of these initiatives relies on active collaboration between government bodies, local communities, and stakeholders, coupled with public awareness drives.

A well-restored ghat serves as a living example of how tradition and modernity can coexist harmoniously, promoting spiritual practices, tourism, and environmental health.



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