RISING OUT OF THE WRATH
The Post-disaster Religious landscape of Kedarnath valley, India
In June 2013, Uttarakhand (Northern India) faced unusual heavy rainfall, series of cloud bursts and glacial lake outbursts all within 4 days leaving the sacred valley of Kedarnath completely ravaged. The sacred holy river, Ganges, swept with it pilgrims, inhabitants, houses and flora/fauna creating a havoc in the valley. For days many people were stranded in forests without food, water and inappropriate clothing. The 3000-year-old temple at Kedarnath survived the major event without any damage. For the Genius loci of the place was so affected that the pristine aura of the valley was transformed into a construction site with silt, boulders, and dilapidated structures. Therefore, the effects of the disaster leaves; the nature, the pilgrimage, and the landscape on its last legs.

The governments efforts turned a blind eye towards the situation of the brittle landscape hence the design focusses consciously on the aspect. Tapping into the dynamic processes of sedimentation and erosion that take place in the valley to strengthen the landscape were adopted. The spaces on the island are carved out of the existing site material (debris) with provision for safe access routes, public facilities and religious elements. The seasonal economy was also a major challenge and therefore the design includes community participation in the construction process as well. All these design developments combine together to achieve spatial enhancements for the valley sustainability by including concepts to energy harvesting through traditional techniques like watermills and multi-crop plantation.

Awareness and education was also a major part of the design and hence play plays in the religious landscape of the valley; a larger audience can be reached to spread the word for climate change and global warming. This will aid in a start to changing the culture and educate the local community to take a larger effort for protecting the fragile nature. Awareness and education are a key component, therefore the materials used in the design and the surrounding landscape were selected to be a sustainable and renewable. The awareness and education is specifically delivered through the use of traditional techniques like watermills and multi-crop plantation.

Hence the objective of this thesis was to capitalize on the hydrological flows and pristine aura of valley of Kedarnath to establish the framework for restructuring the valley ridge. The restructured landscape will give rise to a generative landscape due to accretion that will stabilize the fragile nature of the valley and reinvigorated the cultural, economical and social life of the communities.

Keywords: Resilience, Sense of Place, Carving, Collaborative participation