much water has flowed along its banks, of which most is now unholy effluence, sewage and pollutants. It's a love story that has gone awry. Now, Sadarghat is an emblem of the rape of the river and its banks. With vanishing riverbanks, and even vanishing aquatic life (thanks to our toxic gift to the river), we are close to declaring the river as near as dead. The savaging of Sadarghat is symptomatic of our overall apathy to make our collective lives better, our pathological inclination to commit self-mutilation.

Sadarghat may be the original urban riverbank but now it is one of many. The riverbanks of Dhaka describe a diversity of habitations and territorial conditions along their various edges. They shows a high degree of urbanity at places like Sadarghat, agricultural and wetland landscape at many points east and west of the city, and haphazard built-ups at places like Gabtali and Tongi Bridge area. A broad development plan -- what is described as a master plan -- for Dhaka must consider that diversity. Urban design approaches are much more precise and definitive, and need to respond to specific locales and conditions while at the same time connecting to the larger plan. Sadarghat dearly awaits an urban design intervention that will renovate that area and also at the same time be a catalyst for the overall resuscitation of Dhaka's riverbanks. There are many reasons to target Sadarghat. First of all, it's where it all began; it represents the original vibrancy of the city. If we can show the audacity and boldness to recover the original river landscape of the city and transform it in tune with the spirit of the time, we can certainly re-address the rest of Dhaka's riverbanks. The reason Dhaka's urban ills keep proliferating with no end in sight is because the city has not witnessed any viable and inspiring urban design model. With no alternative in sight, and no visionary example to point to, the only option left for the city is self-mutilation. And that is another urgent reason to consider a major urban design intervention at Sadarghat.

It's not too well remembered now that the first urban design workshop on the Dhaka riverbanks was organised by Chetana Architecture Research Society and The Daily Star back in 1999. Some of the conclusions and propositions made at that workshop are still relevant. At that time, 5 teams of architects worked together for three days on the Sadarghat area and came up with idea plans with drawings, sketches and models. The result was presented at a public forum. The rallying call made at that time was: We need to save the rivers to save Dhaka. Now some ten years later, that cry is still being heard but only that the crisis has

