

**ANALYSING POTENTIAL OF WORLD HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION
FROM CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE OF ASHTANG PLACES
OF RIVER GODAWARI**

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Abstract

The ancient Indian Hindu culture describes its inseparable relation with every regional culture, with climatic conditions, the individuality of humankind, while following the ways of tenacity for the elevation of the soul, and the diverse cultural elements united under one big roof of the Indian-ness. This culture teaches to worship nature around us with the vision of its conservation, for example, the mountains, valleys, hills, rivers, lakes, trees, animals, etc. Among these elements, rivers are also assigned a motherly place as a lifeline of society. Through the worship of a river as a deity, along with festivals and rituals planned on the river banks, which will lead to the conservation of the river banks and surroundings, along with the river. With this background, the linkages between each river, the celebrations on the bank of rivers, and the tangible manifestations of these intangible cultural resources into Temples, Ghats, Ashram, Math; can be well understood. The conservation of one aspect affects another and vice-e-versa. Hence, it should be handled together and not as a separate process.

गंगेच यमुनेचैव गोदावरी सरस्वती | नर्मदे सिंधु कावेरी | जलेस्मिन् संनिधम् कुरु || (Narad Puraan, Adhyay 27)

Indian Hindu social beliefs assign a special place to the above-mentioned seven sacred rivers. This is the reason that the settlements, temples, traditions, and rituals are supported by strong historical evidence and mythological narratives. This research studies the cultural footprints around the Godawari River Banks from the perspective of heritage conservation and primarily evaluates ancient cultural resources on the scale of heritage potentials and significance. The study can be carried forward up to a World Heritage Site nomination. The authors are aware of the fact that the WHS nomination is a very in-depth and multi-layered, long process. But, checking the possibilities at preliminary levels is the first step towards the same. Hence, a primary reconnaissance is done through this research. There is a noticeable increase in religious tourism, driving the major economy of the region. This religious tourism affects the culture of

the region due to an increase in footfall and other infrastructural developments followed. A comprehensive approach to formulating the guidelines for the region is needed. On this background, research demands the study of hundreds of places on both banks of the River Godawari, which is practically not very feasible considering the limitations of resources like time, working assistants, etc. Hence, to delineate the research study, the 8 places from both the banks, which are also known as *Ashtang* Places (8 bodily parts of the personified deity, River Godawari), are chosen as a sampling. The combination of descriptive and analytical methodologies is adopted, including secondary data references of ancient scriptures like *Mahatmya* related to Godawari, Bharatiy Sarita Kosh, guidelines by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Conservation guidelines and manuals by Sir John Marshall, Bernard Fielden; and primary data collection from the *Ashtang* Places by visiting and interviewing the stake holders of cultural properties, filling inventory formats, etc.

The paper aims to conduct primary surveys for the feasibility of the cultural heritage potential of the *Ashtang* Places of the River Godawari. If the study concludes with positive findings, this research will serve as a base for conducting in-depth studies in the future towards establishing the significance of cultural landscape perspective around the River Godawari at the International level, based on globally accepted guidelines with authentic surveys and analysis.

Keywords: *Ashtang* Places of Godawari River, cultural landscape, cultural values and significance, world heritage site nomination criteria

Highlights:

Conserving the living heritage, along with the tangible footprints of the past, on riverbanks in the Indian subcontinent is essential, as these cultural resources are under continuous urban development. Getting a world heritage nomination or at least getting the attention towards initiating the process of WHS nomination can definitely help in the authentic conservation processes of the region around the River Godawari, which is one of the most sacred rivers of the Indian subcontinent, as per the Hindu Mythology and religious assumptions.

Hence, the authors have conducted the research to analyse the potential of fulfilling the WHS nomination criteria based on the study of internationally accepted values and significance. Based on the outcomes of this research, the in-depth dossier preparation of the Conservation Management Plan can be taken into account as a way forward to this research.

I. Introductory Information of the River Godawari:

The geographical information about the Godawari River Basin area is as below – (S.M.Bhalerao 2007)

- One of the most sacred Rivers from Indian Subcontinent, as per the Indian Mythology.
- Also known as *Vridhh* Ganga (वृद्ध गंगा), *Dakshini* Ganga (दक्षिणी गंगा)
- River basin area covers 6 states presently, as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh
- Fountainhead of the river is at Trimbakeshwar, Dist. Nasik, Maharashtra

- Confluence with Sea: Rajmahendri, Andhra Pradesh
- River length - 1465 km

II. Methodology:

The research was designed with descriptive methodology, which included secondary data from a literature study, and primary data from the *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari. Secondary data comprises norms and guidelines related to the Heritage component of tangible-intangible cultural resources, Godawari Mahatmya by Daasganu Maharaj, and scholarly research on cultural studies. Primary data collection included reconnaissance studies of *Ashtang* Places and nearby important areas with tangible- intangible cultural heritage studies. The secondary and primary data together were analysed to assess the potential of the cultural landscape perspective of Astang Places of River Godawari for world heritage site nomination.

2.1 The Tangible – Intangible manifestation of “Nature & Culture” in the Indian Hindu tradition related to Rivers:

The blending of culture with nature around river banks can be seen through many examples. A few commonly noted examples of natural phenomena reflected in cultural traditions and rituals related to the rivers are given below –

- In the monsoons, when the river gets flooded, as per the values of femininity and motherhood assigned to the river, the floods are considered as the menstruation period of the river, and bathing, going closer to the banks, is prohibited. As the floods lower down, the river worshipping is done with *Khan-Shreefal-Oti* (a piece of cloth with coconut, rice/wheat – a very common ritual followed throughout India with a more or less similar procedure for a married woman whose husband is alive – *Sawashn/Saubhagyawati* woman). The underlying reason for security can be clearly understood from this tradition to safeguard all from the risk of flood, ebb, and flow.
- The confluences of two or more rivers are considered to be very auspicious places. Acquiescence for a river, as the flow of life and positive energy, can be the reason behind this acceptance. If one river is a continuous source of life, then a confluence means the multiplying of positive energy sources. Hence, these places are recognized as a *Tirthsthana* (Sacred places with *Tirth* – holy water being an inseparable part of the place). E.g., Prayag – Uttar Pradesh State (Confluence of River Ganga and Yamuna), Kaleshwaram – Telangana State (Confluence of Godawari and its tributary Pranahita), Chanod – Gujarat State (Confluence of Narmada and its tributary river Orsang). These are traditionally very elevated places, but even at a smaller scale, any confluence of rivers is always considered a sacred place for worshipping, like *Shradhha-Karma* (Ancestral worshipping), the salvation and tenacity are specifically performed for the ancestors, soul elevation, etc.
- The places where the river takes a curved turn and flows ahead are spiritually and socially important ones. The ancient civilizations situated on the confluences, or in the crescent shapes, are famous. For example, Omkareshwar – Madhya Pradesh State, on the banks of River

Narmada, Paithan – Maharashtra State, on the banks of River Godawari. The scientific reason behind this prosperous social life can be the fertile lands, sufficient availability of water, etc.

➤ The river worship and rituals performed on the banks, means and materials for worship are intangible cultural resources. Whereas, the built forms, like steps and Ghats, facilitating easier reach to the river water, Temples and Ashrams are the manifestations of intangible to tangible cultural resources related to the natural resource i.e., river.

➤ One more example of Nature–Culture blending is from Brahmagiri Mountain, which is an estuary of the River Godawari. The hill ranges of Brahmagiri are established, sacred places, and aboriginal communities from the nearby regions worship the whole hillock of Godawari River estuary as Shree Shiv-Lingam or Lord Shiva's habitat as of Mount Kailas in Himalayas. The *Pradakshina* - circumambulation of Brahmagiri Hill is an ancient tradition as devotees perform circumambulation to the deity from the temple *Garbh-Grih* - sanctum sanctorum. The complete set of ecology, flora, and fauna of these Brahmagiri hill ranges is considered an inseparable part of the sacred-scape and conserved with equal devotion by the *Adivasi* people of the region. It is a social belief that Shree Trimbakeshwar Temple at the foot hill of Brahmagiri, which is one of the 12 JyotirLingas¹ from the Indian subcontinent, is the architectural manifestation of Brahmagiri Hill, i.e., Lord Shiva's habitat.

2.2 Parameters to understand values and significance of Cultural Heritage: (Fielden 2003)

Sir Bernard Fielden's book entitled "Conservation of Historic Buildings" speaks about the values of cultural resources which are globally accepted for their cultural heritage potential, and help in establishing the significance of the same. The values are explained with examples from the Godawari River Valley.

- **Cultural Values (Sub-divided into 6 categories)**

Human settlements and cultural varieties carry importance in the process of evolution. There are some special specimens that reveal many aspects of the period. The remains that can be materialized and evaluated on the basis of time and place are always important in the process of authentic scientific evaluation. The remains or specimens of cultural values have the following categories.

- Architectural values

The built forms are reflections of society in terms of political, cultural, climatic conditions, patronage, cross-cultural blending, art forms, etc. Hence, the specimens reflecting these carry

¹ 12 Jyotirlingas are Lord Shiva's most auspicious and sacred places where it is believed that the Jyoti – Radiance has taken the form of ShivaLingam. These places are - Somnath in Gujarat, Mallikarjuna at Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh, Mahakaleswar at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, Omkareshwar in Madhya Pradesh, Baidyanath at Deoghar in Jharkhand, Bhimashankar at Pune in Maharashtra, Rameshwaram in Tamilnadu, Nageshwaram near Dwaraka in Gujarat, Viswanath at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, **Trimbakeshwar at Nashik in Maharashtra**, Kedarnath in Uttarakhand, Grushneshwar at SambhajiNagar in Maharashtra.

architectural values. E.g., Trimbakeshwar Temple near the estuary of Godawari, Nasik district, Maharashtra.

- Archaeological values

The Archaeological specimens are very important in the study of human evolution and thus carry Archaeological values. E.g., Paithan Excavation Sites, Nabhi Sthan – ShankhTirth, where fossils from Pleistocene period are found.

- Antiquity values

Man-made objects from the given period are direct specimens in studying the techniques and technologies, material, art form, belief systems, etc., and hence, are very important. E.g., Vijay Stambh at Paithan.

- Aesthetic values

The entities having extraordinary aesthetic art forms in terms of color, technique, artistic values, etc., are important values related to the entity. E.g., Stone carvings from Kedareshwar temple, Kushawart.

- Historical Values

Any specimen representing some important mile-stone from the past carries historical values. E.g., A historical war in 1763-64 between Nizam of Hyderabad and Shreemant Madhavara Peshwa had happened at RakshasBhuvan near Paithan.

- Ecological / Landscape values

The examples of some special land-forms and ecological conditions playing role in the larger picture of surrounding, etc., carry ecological / landscape values. Eg. The whole river basin area with biodiversity

- **Use Values (Sub-divided into 3 categories)**

The values related to practical approaches like economy, use, function are considered in the following categories.

- Functional Values

Any historical area representing some specific important function carries functional values, e.g. Age old traditional spaces like Trimbakeshwar, Manjarath, where the same functions are still continued.

- Economical Values

The age old urban pockets playing role in commodities and commercial activities, carry economical values. E.g., Religious tourism importance of the places assigns economical values.

- Socio-Cultural Values

Community spaces and festival gathering areas carry socio-cultural values.

- **Emotional values: (Sub-divided into 3 categories)**

All the *Tirthsthanas* have some mythological references and narratives. The rituals, means of worship, and local assumptions depend upon these narratives. If these are studied, they will help in understanding the continuity and spiritual and associational values of the places.

- Continuity values

The ancestral traditions, social behavioral patterns, age-old art form practices, and traditional knowledge system approaches, carry continuity value. E.g., Pushkaralu religious gathering from Rajmahendri, Andhra Pradesh, etc.

The Continuity Value is one of the most important in the process of Indian Cultural Heritage significance valuation due to its age-old continuity from ancestors to their descendants.

- Spiritual values

The places carrying spiritual importance, like 12 Jyotirlinga, 4 Dham-yatra, etc. All the Tirthsthanas from Hindu Indian Culture carry these values, which are applicable to Godawari Bank places also, in more or less importance as per the places' other values.

- Associational values

Association of some important event, saints or heroic personality from history or mythology, and similar aspects, assigns associational values to the places, objects, and areas. E.g., Paithan from Maharashtra is very famous due to its association with great saint Eknath Maharaj, along with its other values like Archaeological, historical, etc.

These values are explained with simple examples above. The study tried to compare and check these values to *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari for the primary feasibility testing of cultural heritage potential of the places.

2.3 Cultural Heritage property Listing:

Under the provisions of the AMASR Act, 1961, the ASI protects monuments, sites, and remains of national importance. The parameters are applied to the monuments and sites and tested before getting added into the cultural heritage listing. The places, monuments and sites are added in the list with three gradings – Grade I (Most Important), Grade II (More Important), Grade III (Important). Grade I important entities are the ones which need to be conserved with maximum care and so do the other two in descending order. This listing is done at different levels. National level listing is done by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) head office at New Delhi with different circles working under it. State level listing is done by State ASI with the same hierarchy. The responsibility of conserving heritage monuments and sites starts from the local governing bodies up to the national level Central ASI under Ministry of Culture, Government of India. There are NGOs like INTACH which also work for conservation and maintain their list of heritage properties, based on similar criteria. The list of heritage properties at that level is maintained by these stake holders and conserved accordingly. For example, the temple of Goddess Jogeshwari - a Gram-Daivat of Pune is important at that city level, the Sinhgad fort, one of the important forts of Chh. Shivaji Maharaj is important at Maharashtra State level, and the Raigad fort, the first capital of Independent Maratha reign, is of national importance; protected by respected authorities.

For the sake of explanation, the example of Trimbakeshwar temple precinct at the Foothill of Brahmagiri, the estuary of River Godawari in Nasik District, Maharashtra, is taken. The study is done on the basis of primary data collected by the authors as a historian and conservation architect –

Table 1: Study of assigning values based on significance of Trimbakeshwar Temple Precinct

If we count 3 points for the most important values, 2 for more important, 1 for important, and 0 for not important then maximum total points are 12 categories * 3 = 36 points and lowest will be 00.		
Based on these points, 01 to 11 – (Grade III) Heritage listing 12 to 23 – (Grade II) Heritage listing 24 to 36 – (Grade I) Heritage listing		Note: The authors are aware of the fact that assigning points as per the values and significance have to be based authentic and scientific primary surveys and analysis supported by extensive research. Here for the sake of understanding, process is simplified.
Values (Significance of Trimbakeshwar Temple Precinct)		Points
Cultural Importance	Architectural values: Bhumija style temple architecture with intricate carvings and sculptures dated back up to 12th CE with many historical layers, interventions and patronage	3
	Archaeological values: Detailed study needed supported by excavation findings. As of now, the Archaeological studies don't add much value.	1
	Antiquity values: Sculptures, carvings, idols of the deities (It will be decided on iconography,	2
	Aesthetic values: Temple proportions and details	3
	Historical Values: historical timeline with interventions and patronage of NanaSaheb Peshwas 18th CE, Devi Ahilyabai from Maheshwar 19th CE etc.	3
	Ecological / Landscape values: The Brahmagiri hill ranges worshipped as a homage to Lord Shiva as of Mount Kailas from Himalaya	3
Use Values	Functional Values: Religious functions, rituals and activities for ancestors are very important as per Hindu traditions	3
	Economical Values: Religious tourism	3
	Socio-Cultural Values:	3

	Socio- cultural gatherings throughout the year and on the largest scale on every 12 years during KumbhMela (intangible WHS nominated cultural aspect)	
Emotional Values	Continuity Values: Religious functions, rituals and activities for ancestors are still in place from the centuries	3
	Spiritual Values: High Religious and ritual values	3
	Associational Values: Mythological association of Sage Gautam, Lord Shiva and River Godawari – a Southern version of River Ganga from the North.	3
According to this chart, total of 33 points assign the Grade-I category to Trimbakeshwar Temple precinct in the Heritage Listing. The conservation responsibilities are very high for the Grade-I structures. It is not only related to the actual precinct, but the surrounding areas are also very important in the process of conservation to maintain the smooth continuity of culture in the future. The surrounding areas consist of other supporting cultural resources like open gathering spaces, Kund, DharmaShala, <i>Purohit/Pandit</i> residences, wells etc. related to the precinct. If the open space shrinks, so do the socio-cultural gatherings. In the process of conservation of intangible cultural resources, all the supporting cultural resources play a key role in the continuity factor. Hence, identification and listing of these cultural resources are of equal importance.		

2.4 *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari

The *Ashtang* places of the river Godawari are described in Godawari Mahatmya by Daasganu Maharaj written in 1921. As per the description, places of *Jaanu* (Knee) and *Kati* (Waist) are geographically shuffled. There is definitely a scope for checking these places and finding the missing points, if any, in these locations. However, the objective of this research is not to check the geographical location, but to test the possibility of cultural heritage potential and significance of the places as per international guidelines and norms. Hence, without going into geographical details, the authors will carry out a study of these *Ashtang* Places.

• **Godawari Janmotsav (Birth Anniversary of River Godawari):**

The mythological story of River Godawari talks about the descent of River Ganga on Brahmagiri Mountain by Sage Gautam for the welfare of Southern India. Hence it is also called as Gautami Ganga or Southern Ganga (*Gautami / Dakshini* Ganga). This auspicious day is believed to be *Maagh Shudhh Dashami*. On this day, the celebrations are arranged on all the river bank places at a lesser or greater scale. A Holy bath is taken and worship of the river is

done. The mythological stories of river births in Hindu Culture are interesting; like the descent of auspicious Ganga from the Heaven to the Earth by Bhagirath, birth of River Narmada from Lord Shiva's perspiration, and so on. Narmada *Janmotsav* is celebrated on *Maagh Shudhh Sapatmi (Rath-Saptami)*. On this day, the River Narmada is worshipped with *Otti* and *Saree*. Here, a notable aspect is that all the *Sarees* which are to be devoted to the river are knotted together at ends and are driven in the river water from one bank to another through a boat. The *Sarees* are rolled on a wheel, kept on one bank and get released as the boat moves ahead towards another bank. This is a very blissful event for devotees of River Narmada. Once all the *Sarees* are taken on the other bank, these *Sarees* are donated to the needy *Adiwasis* and *Kumarikas* (virgins). The Ganga *Janmotsav* is celebrated on *Vaishakh Shudhh Saptami*. The Ganga *Aarti* at the evening on the banks is very famous and mesmerising. The ways of celebrations are different for different rivers but worship and the Holy bath in the river water are the common factors. These events attract tourists with religious perspectives.



Figure 1: Google Map showing the locations of *Ashtang* Places on the Godawari River Banks with the Place names and numbers added by Author in Devanagari Script.

Data below is collected from the field visits to the places by co-author Dr. Arunchandra Pathak and places are included in the Gautami Mahatmya by Shri Daasganu Maharaj:

1. *Shirsh* (Head) Brahmagiri, Tahsil - Trimbakeshwar, Dist. Nasik, Maharashtra :

The fountainhead place of River Godawari is known as Shirsh, meaning the Head of the personified deity, River Godawari. The fountainhead is on the Brahmagiri Mountain and at the foothills of it, is the Trimbakeshwar Temple. Trimbakeshwar is famous at national level due to its religious importance for *Shaiv KumbhMela* –WHS designated socio-cultural event falling into the category of intangible cultural aspects.

The place is culturally very important due to one of the 12 JyotirLingas and its religious rituals like Naarayan NaagBali, PitruPoojan, Shhradh Vidhi and related traditional activities at larger scale than any other places. Holy swim in the Kushawart Kund is considered to be very sacred. The place is a habitat of many Sadhus' *Aakhada*² and Ashram, Yadava period (10th – 11th CE) Saint Chakradhar Swami's residential place, and many other Ashrams in the vicinity add to the importance of the place.

Under the rule of the Peshawa from Maratha reign (mid-17th – 18th CE), the original Yadava Period temple, destroyed by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb (early 17th CE) was rejuvenated. The Nandi Mandap, precinct, fortification wall, the well, and Stone DeepMala was added during this period. Nanasahab Peshawa also donated a 3 Headed - Silver crown bejeweled with precious stones and diamonds to Trimbakeshwar ShivLinga.

The *Samadhi Sthan* of NivruttiNath – elder brother and Guru of Dyaneshwar Maharaj makes this a very important place to the Nath Sect followers.

Nearby main place/s – Nasik: The devotees visit Trimbakeshwar via Nasik, which is one of the major cities situated on the banks of River Godawari. The city is famous for Baudhha Rock cut caves (locally known as Pandav Leni), Vaishnav KumbhMela, RamKund, KalaRam temple (by Rangarao Odhekar in 1782) (Shiv Dnyansagar n.d.), NaaroShankar Temple, Sundar Narayan Temple, Kapileshwar Mahadev temple, etc. Asthi-Visarjan (Immersion of ashes of a dead body as per Hindu Tradition) in RamKund is assumed to give salvation to the soul of dead person.

*Satyagrah*³ by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar (March, 1930) (Shiv Dnyansagar n.d.) for the entry of untouchables into the Kalaram Temple, and *Satyagrah* by Pandurang Sadashiv Sane Gururji (November, 1946), assigns historical values to this place.

2. Mukh (Mouth) Puntamba, Tahsil - Rahata, Dist. Ahamadnagar, Maharashtra:

Punatamba, a Mukh Sthan among the *Ashtang* Places of Godawari, is the *Samadhi Sthan* of Yogi ChangaDev Maharaj. The river basin area is very wide and scenic here. Because of the wider and stronger river flow, a vortex is formed in the river vessel. Based on the construction techniques of the Ghat, it seems to be from 17th – 18th CE, but clearer evidences need to be found with more studies. This place was known for its scholars, and the references of writing many texts by Shastri-Pandits who migrated to Kashi from Punatamba are found. It is of importance to the Mahanubhav Sects.

² *Aakhada*: Place of Practice where followers of the sect reside, stay, and get training for Indian martial arts or spiritual practices.

³ *SatyaGrah*: Famous Indian freedom struggle movement initiated by Mahatma Mohanchand Karamchand GandhiJi.

There are two Khandoba Temples, Bhairav Temple, Balaji Temple, Yadnyasen Devi Temple, KartikSwami Temple in the town. Kartik Purnima is an important day from the perspective of religious tourism, as thousands of pilgrims visit the temple on this day.

3. *Kanth (Throat) Paithan, Tahsil - Paithan, Dist. Aurangabad, Maharashtra:*

Paithan is well known because it is the homeland of the great Saint Eknath Maharaj from *Warkari*⁴ Sect. Eknath *Shashthi* ceremony and gathering of thousands of Warkari for the same, is one of the key aspects of tourism development of Paithan. Next to Kashi, Paithan was very famous for Vaidik tradition, education and scholars. Paithan is also famous due to the incident of Ved-Pathan from the mouth of male buffalo⁵ in the biography of Saint Dyaneshwar Maharaj. The town is honored by the auspicious stay of Adya Shree Shankarachary, Kalakachary etc. Paithan, whose earlier name was Pratishtan, was the capital of Satavahana Period from 75 BCE to 230 CE. It was one of the major centers on World Trade Routes of the period. The references of Paithanaka (then Paithan) residences are seen on the rock edicts number 05 & 13 of Emperor Ashoka. The scholar, Gunadhya Pandit from Satavahana period, composed Badd-Katha (Bruhat-Katha बृहत्कथा, meaning a large story) of 7,00,000 lines in Paishachi (पैशाची) Language.

From the archaeological excavation sites in close vicinity of Paithan, early Stone Age, mid-Stone Age, Pre-Historical and medieval period human settlement evidences are found.

There are many Ghats of different scales. Among these, Naag-Ghat is one of historical importance. 12th CE rock edicts, VenuGopal Math, Auspicious place for Jain Tirthankar due to Shree 1008, MunisuvratNath Digambar Jain Atishay Tirth Jain Kshetra, VijayStambh, SheshShai Vishnu Murti, Kaalbhairav Murti, UgraNarsimvha Murti, Vijayee Pandurang from daily worship of Eknath Maharaj, Samadhi Sthan of Eknath Maharaj on Ghat, KaliyaMardan Temple along with many more Maths and Ashrams are few of the places to name from Paithan. Godawari *Janmotsav* is celebrated at very large scale in Paithan.

Near-by main place/s – RakshasBhuvan

RakshasBhuvan is historical place at 35 km distance from Paithan. A war was fought here between Shreemant Madhavarao Peshawa and Nizam of Hyderabad in 1763-64. The Marathas, under the leadership of the Peshawas, won the battle and regained their reputation and confidence from the tremendous loss at the War at Panipat in 1761.

⁴ Warkari: A sect of devotees of Lord Vitthal from Pandharpur, Maharashtra initiated by Saint Dnyaneshwar, NivruttiNath, Sopandev, Muktabai, Namdev, Janabai, GoraKumbhar, ChokhaMela, etc. in 13th CE. It was revived and continued by Saint Eknath Maharaj and Tukaram Maharaj in 16th Century CE. The devotees walk to Pandharpur every year and worship Vitthal-Rakhumai on Ashadh - Shuddh Ekadashi.

⁵ A story of recitation of Ved Mantra by a male buffalo (रेडा in Marathi) by the great Saint Dnyaneshwar Maharaj from Alandi, Pune in early 13th CE. Saint Dnyaneshwar was challenged by Brahmin Community to prove the *Adwait* (unison) between him and a male buffalo with a same name to prove *Adwait* of all the souls. Hence he kept his right hand on buffalo's head and due to the supernatural powers of Saint Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, it recited Ved-Mantra in the presence of hundreds of audience in Paithan. Hence that place become very important and famous.

The Shani and Navgrah (Saturn and other 9 planets) temple, worshipped by Lord Rama while travelling Southwards, is famous in Paithan. Also the Ganesha temple and Shree Dattaguru Temple established by Peshawas in 17th CE are places one should visit in Paithan.

4. *Hruday (Heart) Manjarath, Tahsil - Majalgaon, Dist. Beed, Maharashtra:*

Manjarath ghats are very old, but spacious. A large scale ShivLinga and the temple ruins from the Yadava Period can be seen here.

The confluence of Godawari and its tributary river Sindfena makes this place very auspicious. It is also called as Abjak-Tirth (अब्जक तीर्थ)

Mythological story of the place: Lord Hanuman's father was Kesari Gandharv. He had two wives named Anjani (Hanuman's mother) and Aardraki. Both were converted to a monkey and a cat, respectively, due to a curse. When Aardraki took a holy swim in this confluence, her curse was lifted and she returned to her original form. With this thread, a cat sculpture can be seen near the feet of Bhagawan Trivikram's idol. It is the local assumption that, to get rid of the sin from cat killing, one should come here and worship. Hence, it is called as Marjar-Tirth; which has changed to Manjarath.

The place also has an archaeological excavation site. Hence, it carries archaeological values.

Near-by main place/s – PurushottamPuri

15 km away from Manjarath, PurushottamPuri has Vishnu Temple, Laksheshwar Temple, Temple remains and timber structure from Yadava Period. The copper plate by RamchandraRay Yadava from 15th September 1310 mentions about PurushottamPuri. This is a large scale socio-gathering place for the devotees in Adhik Maas.

5. *Nabhi (Navel) Shankhtirth, Tahsil - Mudkhed, Dist. Nanded, Maharashtra:*

The most important aspect of ShankhTirth is Nrusimvha Murti from 12th CE. As per the geological timeline, fossils of conch from Pleistocene are found from this place. Mahadeva Temple from the Yadava Period can be seen here.

Near-by main place/s – Nanded, Basar

Nanded is as important as Kashi to the Punjabi Sikh community due to the Samadhi of their last human guru, Guru Govind Sigh. The spacious Ghats, YogNrusimvha Idol, forts, are few of the tourist attraction places from Nanded. Vishnupuri Kaaleshwar temple and the largest Saraswati temple from Baasar are few of the attractions for tourists. Baasar is developed as a tourist place by Telangana Govt.

6. *Kati (Waist) Manthani, Tahsil - Mandal Manthani, Dist. KarimNagar, Telangana:*

Kati-Sthan Manthani reflects the tradition of Mantra Pathan. Repeated chantings of Vaidik Shlokas has been a tradition here, since centuries. Adya Shree Shankaracharya had appreciated Manthani's tradition of *Ved Pathan* i.e. reciting *Vedas*. The name of the place at that time was MantraKoot. 8 to 10 temple remains from 12th Century CE can be found in this area. These temples include Shileshwar, Sidhleshwar, Gautameshwar, Saraswati Aalayam, Ramalayam,

Gopijan Vallabh, Bhiksheshwar VaradaRaj, Omkareshwar, Anjaney, mahalaskmi, Lakshminarayana, Shree Dattaguru, Vinaayak from the period.

In the Gautameshwar Temple, the SabhaMandap is connected to 3 GarbhGruha which is known as Tridala Style of temple; which is not very commonly seen. One of the entrance gates has VenuGopal sculpture with other mythological stories at the lintel level. It shows that along with the ShivLinga, Vishnu and Shakti were also worshipped here in the early days. At the Godawari – Pravara river confluence at Kaleshwar, two ShivLinga on one platform are seen, which is also not very common.

The devotees and pilgrims believe that, 3 Tirth (Brahm Tirth, Vishnu Tirth, Rudra Tirth) exist in the Godawari here and hence take holy swim with devotion.

7. Jaanu (Knee) Dharmapuri, Tahsil - Mandal Dharmapuri, Dist. KarimNagar, Telangana:

Dharmapuri is the one of the oldest human settlements from Andhra Pradesh. An archaeological excavation site is nearby. Ugra-Nrusinha, Yog-Nrusinha, Satyawati Devi, Ramlingeshwara Temple with 20 ft. tall Columns, Mandapa and the precinct, Kalyan Mandapa with intricately carved stone columns, Brahm-Pushkarani are few of the places which are worth visiting.

On the Ghats of DharmaPuri ancestral worship i.e. DashKriya, Shradhh-Karm are done. This place is known for the largest Vaidik and Sanskrit *PathaShala* institute from Telangana state. Few of the ancient scriptures written on TaalPatra (specific leaves with ancient text written on it, treated with ancient techniques) are preserved by some Vaidik Brahmins till date. They have to be converted into digital forms for longer life and reach.

8. Charan (Foot) RajMahendri, Tahsil - Mandal Rajmandri, Dist. Purv Godawari, AndhraPradesh:

The most important feature of RajMundri / Rajmahendri is a religious socio-cultural gathering known as Pushkaralu. A development plan for Rajmundri has been prepared and implemented with the vision of Pushkaralu as the focal point. Under this plan, rejuvenation of temples, huge Ghat constructions, bridges, infrastructural facilities for tourists are developed by the Andhra Pradesh government. The last Pushkaralu was celebrated in 2015. For this event, the largest Ghat in Asia was constructed, considering the estimated number of visitors.

KotiLingeshwar Temple in Rajmundri was first built in 10th CE by Chola King Rajeshwara. Mythology talks about the story of establishment of KotiLingeshwar by Lord Rama, before going to Lanka to fight the Demon king Ravana and free his imprisoned wife Seeta from Ravana's custody. This temple precinct is occupied with hundreds of different scale ShivLinga. The narratives say that those were established by heavenly gods-goddess, traders and tourists passing from the Rajmundri port in ancient times for their safe journey.

The temple of Seeta-Raam from the same precinct has another name, as Uma-Rama KotiLingeshwar Temple.

VenuGopal temple, Anjaney Raam temple, KanakDurga temple, Shrungeri Sharada Peeth, large-scale Saraswati temple (currently under construction), are few of the places, tourists should visit in Rajmundri.

Near-by main place/s – Bhadrachalam, Daksharam, Peethapuram:

The great devotee of Lord Rama named Kancharela Gopanna was living in Bhadrachalam in 17th CE. He is also known as *Prati*-Raamdas Swami (Another Raamdas). He has a special place in Carnatic Classical Music.

DakshRamam temple is about 50 km away from Rajmundri. The original temple was built during 9th and 10th CE by Chalukya King Bhima. The temple architectural elements reflect Chalukya and Chola style. The ShivaLinga in this temple is exceptionally heightened and is worshipped by the devotees from a separate gallery near it.

Peethapuram is known as the birth place of the first incarnation of Shree DattaGuru in *Kaliyug*⁶, i.e. Shreepaad Shree Vallabh. Because of the strong association with Shree Gurudev Datta, Pithapuram is very famous among the devotees of Datta-Sampraday.

The above mentioned information about the *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari highlights the fact that the emotional, spiritual, intangible and cultural importance of these places is undoubtedly rooted in society. The yearly number of pilgrims, devotees and tourists for the Ekanaath Shashthi in Paithan, visiting Pushkaralu in Rajmundri is increasing. Other than these special occasions, tourists visit these places, along with nearby tourist destinations. However, that is not sufficient to prove the cultural heritage importance of the places at international levels. The tangible aspects of these spaces need to be handled sensitively. Also, conserving them without losing their authenticity and values is equally important. Or else, the insensitive approach and lack of awareness with tourism increasing day by day, may harm the heritage potential of the places.

The authentic documentation of the places is the first stage and tool to start the process. If historical evidence is not found, the analytical in-depth study of the documented data, based on materials, construction techniques, design elements, iconography etc. helps the researcher to decide the period, historical layering, patronage details, etc. about the heritage property. For example, the KotiLingeshwaram temple from Rajmundri was first built by Chola King Rajrajeshwara. So, finding evidence about the same, understanding the historical layering of different periods, interventions and changes till date, plays a prominent role in establishing the values and significance of the heritage property along with the intangible cultural aspect. With the same reference, if the present built form is renovated in the contemporary period, the timeline layering can be searched and studied for its existence. Threads from historical

⁶ As per Hindu mythological believes, there are 4 Yugas i.e. huge scale of time measurements which indicates the behavioural patterns of human kind. All the religious texts mention about these periods in some or other kind. Those are SatyaYuga/KrutYuga where all people follow rules and truth, TretaYug where some kind of ill behaviour enters in human nature but the virtuous are more powerful and in greater number than evil, Dwapar-Yuga where evil becomes powerful and starts spreading over goodness but goodness is in command, KaliYuga where evil becomes more powerful, dominates goodness and human sufferings increase.

specifications, the continuity factor with ways of worshipping, religious gatherings, add to the cultural significance of the built form.

Specifically constructed 1128 Km long Rajmundri Ghat before 2015 Pushkaralu [Economic Times, 14/07/2015] is a modern structure but the inspiration behind the construction makes it a culturally valuable resource, irrespective of its period.

When a cumulative group of heritage properties are under consideration for World Heritage Nomination, a common thread is expected among these. (Ex. Art Deco and Vistorian Gothic Ensemble from Mumbai included in UNESCO WHS Nomination in June 2018) (UNESCO, Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai 2018). All the factors may not apply to individual structures, but they should be considered together. The values may vary from case to case. In the case of *Ashtang* Places of Godawari, the association of personified deity, cultural continuity, etc. is the common thread with individual places' values and its significance can be studied.

III. Results and Discussions:

3.1 Applying WHS nomination Criteria by ICOMOS in the case of Ashtang Places of River Godawari:

ICOMOS describes a total of 10 criteria for the WHS nominations regarding their cultural and natural properties. First 6 criteria are for cultural (tangible – intangible) heritage properties, with the remaining 4, being for natural heritage properties. There can be mixed heritage properties with cultural and natural importance. The properties must satisfy any one or more criteria to fit into the consideration. The process of dossier making for nomination, actual selection and maintaining the status after selection, are critical steps to follow. However, for the sake of reconnaissance, the author has tried to test the applicable criteria in case of *Ashtang* Places of Godawari.

Criteria 1: to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; (UNESCO, The Criteria for Selection 1992-2022)

Trimbakeshwar Temple precinct, Manthani, Rajmundri temple architectural specimens are one of its kind to be considered under criteria 1.

Criteria 3: to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; (UNESCO, The Criteria for Selection 1992-2022)

The Brahmin Guruji who performs *Pitru-Poojan* (ancestral worship rituals) on the banks of Ganga and Godawari (being Southern Ganga) has maintained an ancient *Vanshawali* (the names of ancestors from every family) since centuries and tells it to the visitors coming for *Pitru-Poojan*. This is a very unique and rare tradition which has continued since centuries. It is mainly seen at Prayaag-Ganga Bank - UttarPradesh, Varanasi – Ganga Bank – UttarPradesh, Trimbakeshwar – Godawari Bank – Maharashtra etc. 300-500 years old hand written *BhurjPatra* (भूर्ज पत्र) manuscripts from Trimbakeshwar, Nasik region, are very famous. These

documents have to be well preserved, to avoid any loss, in digital formats. Similarly, Godawari/Gautami-Mahatmya from medieval period, 300 years old SinhiGuru Mahatmya, the oldest references of KumbhMela religious socio-cultural gathering from 6th CE Pulkeshi Harshwardhan King make the River Bank live cultural tradition exceptional.

Criteria 6: to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria); (UNESCO, The Criteria for Selection 1992-2022)

Live Cultural Heritage traditions like *RudraAbhishek*, *Naarayan NaagBali*, *DashKriya* & *ShradhhaKarm Vidhi* are performed with equal importance, actual processes, and are an inseparable part of ancient Indian Hindu socio-cultural life.

Criteria 8: to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; (UNESCO, The Criteria for Selection 1992-2022)

Conch fossils with right trunk have been obtained from the navel place, ShankhTirth; extinct tributary vestige have been found near *Kati* Places Manthani; stone-age weapons from river bed; the proofs of early settlement marks through ash layers indicating the initial human settlements, make the group of places eligible for criteria 8.

Criteria 10: to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation. (UNESCO, The Criteria for Selection 1992-2022)

The sanctuary at Nandur - Madhyameshwar, Siberian bird sanctuary at Naath-Saagar reservoir, Peacock and other birds' habitat at Jambhul island, 45m Kuntala waterfall, the sanctuary near river Pranhita – Godawari confluence with teak wood jungle famous for Cheetah, tiger, bear, 4 horned deer; Tarwai jungle with sanctuary, the hot water springs at Bhadrachalam on the banks of River Godawari, make the places eligible for criteria 10.

Getting a nomination in World Heritage Sites is a topic which cannot be covered in one research article. But the awareness has to be increased for our cultural places, from the perspective of conservation and urban infrastructural development. If the social inclination, perspective and checking possibilities can be achieved, the objectives of the research will be closer to their aim. Listing places with values and significance is equally important, based on the understanding with a SWOT analysis⁷ of the places. The analysis should focus on individual places, along with the group considerations. A complete holistic approach is needed in the making of a

⁷ SWOT Analysis based on holistic studies that includes S-Strength, W-Weakness, O-Opportunities, T-Threats to the subject of study area.

Conservation Management Plan with religious perspective. In the inclusiveness for the values and significance, the stakeholders, legislative frame-work and capacity to preserve WHS nomination, are checked for the applying state party (the nations who apply for the nomination).

3.2 Preliminary guidelines for the religious tourism aspect for *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari:

The development plan of any place of religious importance should be formed, inkeeping with the contextual references of the place. The infrastructural development should happen with respect to the tangible and intangible heritage significance. The following aspects, with a focus on tourism, are worked out on the basis of analytical study of primary and secondary data collected from the places.

- The religious gatherings or famous temples/precincts are supported with a particular mythology or narratives which also provide guidance about the ways of worship, means, material required, etc. The infrastructural development should take place in consideration of this background information; the absence of which may affect the development adversely.
- Anjanery Temple complex, Kokamthan, DevGaon, VadJai, Aapegaon of Vidnyaneshwar, Ukkad Gaon, Dhaarasur are the places famous for Yaadava Period temples on the Godawari River banks. These places will certainly carry a significant place in the tourism development planning of the area.
- The socio-cultural importance should be preserved in contemporary development.
- Remote areas, away from urbanization, should be handled sensitively before providing contemporary developments.
- Interpretation centers and museums, which portray intangible cultural aspects and meaning to History, Sociology, archaeological studies, etc. should be developed and maintained. This information should be presented considering tourists as well, in addition to researchers and scholars.
- Infrastructural development like roads, entrances, water supply, parking, electricity, sanitary rooms, rest rooms, etc. should be planned in order to maintain the sanctity of the place.
- Modern aspects like light-sound show, audio-visuals, boating facility at possible places, modern gardens, etc., should be planned without hampering the cultural significance of the area for maintaining national-international tourists' interest.
- Information should be displayed and advertised with the help of modern techniques and digital means, so as to attract more youth to these places. It will not only attract tourists, but also help generate revenue.
- Should reach conservation committees from national and international platforms, so as to get scholarly advice and funding options.
- Employment generation for local communities at different levels; creating alternative options for them.
- A platform for local artisans to strengthen their economy. Blending the new functions and festive modes with the existing ones to attract more tourists. Eg. Sawai-Gandharv Festival

in Pune, Diwali Paadawa classical singing programs, etc. Organization of these events; motivate cultural, musical, sports, and art form activities.

- Easy availability of information about tourist places in nearby vicinity of the religious precinct will boost the area positively.
- Conceptually grouped places will help the overall development and planning for the tourists. Eg. AshtVinayak (अष्टविनायक यात्रा), 12 Khandoba Temples and precincts, (12 खंडोबा देव)
- The places on the Godawari banks are famous for different values. E.g. If the development plans are prepared for Paithan without the consideration of Naath-Shashthi festival, gatherings of *Warkari*, etc., they will fail eventually. The conservation of tangible heritage of 10-12th CE temples from ShankhTirth and intangible heritage of Warkari visiting the places every year, is of equal importance while considering and projecting the cultural heritage aspects to scholars and aspirants.
- Souvenirs in the form of card pictures, paper weights, display pieces, magnets, and gift articles prepared from the designs of heritage resources, like a miniature of Paithan TirthSambh, Kushawart Kund, Nrusimvha idols, VenuGopal sculpture designs, Sheshshai Bhagavan Vishnu etc. The idea of making souvenirs is not new, but always welcomed by tourists as a memory of the place before leaving. The motive behind these is not limited to employment generation and economic considerations, but also plays a role in the advertisement of the place.

IV. Conclusion:

The aim of the research was to carry out a reconnaissance study of *Ashtang* Places of River Godawari, with the vision of assessing cultural landscape and heritage potential values. Another objective was to make the readers aware of the facts about the same. The paper explained Godawari River Basin area – *Ashtang* Places of the River references for earlier human settlements, architectural remains from historical periods, along with tangible-intangible cultural resources identified with significance and values for the places. In the fast changing contemporary period, the means of conservation processes, especially documentation techniques, retrofitting technologies are getting evolved with digital documentation. Cultural heritage is more than just a precinct-level architectural heritage; the living values are of equal importance. Godawari River *Ashtang* places' significance has been highlighted for both the approaches through this study. The religious tourism aspect related to cultural heritage is also taken into account. Points for the future planning of religious tourism are also penned down. The way forward for this research is to carry out in-depth documentation, data collection, and rigorous analytical studies for the listing of the places, along with the awareness and project building towards listing of the activities.

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