

Importance of Cultural Heritage in Planning Development of Temple Town: Case – Trimbakeshwar, Maharashtra

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Abstract:- Trimbakeshwar is well-known for its Trimbakeshwar Jyotirlinga Temple, making it a very renowned temple town. The town of Trimbak has excellent connections to Nashik. Trimbakeshwar's spiritual significance and appealing geographical surroundings go hand in hand. Trimbakeshwar has a rich historical background. According to legend, the region was formerly known as Amrak or Tri Amrak before taking on its current name. Trimbakeshwar has an air of timelessness, whispering tales of bygone times because of its historical relationship.

The core of this study lies in understanding the complex relationship between the cultural aspect, built environment and the human experience within Trimbakeshwar. I have examined the existing development patterns, the rituals performed, and the behavior of the pilgrim crowd. This analysis allowed me to identify areas for improvement, particularly in the spatial quality surrounding the temple.

The term "urban revitalization" describes a set of initiatives meant to restructure the current city system, especially in regions that have lost favor because of social or economic issues. This research investigates the potential creation of a town that aims to improve the temple town's overall experience via the lens of urban design interventions.

This research goes beyond mere physical design. By understanding the cultural and social fabric of Trimbakeshwar, the rituals practiced there, and the needs of the pilgrim crowd, the proposed solutions aims to create a space that fosters a deeper connection between existing culture, visitors and the sacred essence of the city.

This paper looks at how socio-cultural practices in the town act as alternate sources to celebrate history. The study aims to manifest tangible and intangible attributes in its built form to enhance and knit together older and newer developments.

I. INTRODUCTION

Trimbakeshwar, nestled in the foothills of the Brahmagiri Mountains in Maharashtra, India, is a unique urban entity. It transcends the typical classifications, serving as a temple town, a pilgrimage destination, and a place of residence for a local community. This paper delves into the multifaceted character of Trimbakeshwar, with a specific focus on its development trajectory, the rich tapestry of rituals practiced within its sacred confines, and the experiences of pilgrims who undertake the journey to visit the Trimbakeshwar Temple.

➤ *Aim*

The aim of this paper is to understand the role of cultural history, rituals in revitalizing of the core area of trimbakeshwar town, rethinking the cultural integrities of a historic urban center and to achieve a multifaceted understanding of Trimbakeshwar city and propose probable solutions to enhance the experience of the city.

➤ *Objective*

- To integrate both tangible and intangible attributes of Trimbakeshwar into the understanding the city. This will involve considering the historical significance of the city, cultural identity, the cultural importance of rituals, and the spiritual experience of pilgrims.
- To understand the characteristics of the pilgrim crowd visiting the Trimbakeshwar Temple, focusing on their activities, needs, and movement patterns.
- To analyze the diverse rituals performed within the city, exploring their significance and impact on the spatial organization.

II. ABOUT TRIMBAKESHWAR

Trimbakeshwar's geographical setting is as captivating as its spiritual significance. The city sits at an elevation of approximately 720 meters, embraced by the majestic hills of Brahmagiri, Nilagiri, and Kalagiri. These hills not only lend a picturesque backdrop but also hold immense importance, with the Brahmagiri marking the origin of the holy Godavari River. The interplay of sun, rain, and clouds paints a mesmerizing canvas over Trimbakeshwar, making it a haven for nature enthusiasts and spiritual seekers alike.



Fig 1: Google Map of Trimbakeshwar
Source - Google Earth Pro

III. ESSENCE OF TRIMBAKESHWAR CITY

The very essence of Trimbakeshwar revolves around the awe-inspiring Trimbakeshwar Shiva Temple, which houses one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. Unlike other Jyotirlingas dedicated solely to Shiva, this unique Jyotirlinga embodies the divine trinity – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva – represented by its three faces. The temple's captivating black stone architecture and intricate sculptures further enhance its spiritual aura. However, concerns regarding the erosion of the linga due to water usage serve as a stark reminder of the delicate balance between devotion and preservation.



Fig 2: Trimbakeshwar Temple

Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/trimbakeshwar>

IV. A CITY RESONANT WITH FAITH: FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

Trimbakeshwar's religious significance extends beyond the Jyotirlinga, manifesting in the vibrant festivals celebrated throughout the year. The city comes alive during Mahashivratri, a festival dedicated to Lord Shiva. Every twelve years, Trimbakeshwar transforms into a center of pilgrimage fervor during the Kumbh Mela, attracting devotees from all corners of the country. Palkhi sohla of trimbakraj takes place every Monday, and nivruttnath yatra is one of the major event taking place every year.

➤ Mahashivratri

The biggest festival of this temple is Mahashivratri. On Mahashivratri day, a large fair is held here in February-March, which draws hundreds of devotees from all over India. This festival is celebrated every year to worship Lord Shiva. It is observed as Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati's marriage anniversary.

In addition, Mahashivratri is commemorated as the day Shiva rescued the world from the poisoned pot. Prayers and an all-night "Jaagaran" vigil are part of the festivities. Offerings of fruits, sweets, colourful flowers, and milk to Lord Shiva. Some people perform all-day fast with Vedic worship Lord Shiva. In Trimbakeshwar temple, "Om Namah Shivay," the sacred mantra of Shiva is chanting throughout of day on the occasion of Mahashivratri.



Fig 3: Trimbakeshwar Temple
Source – Author

➤ Palkhi Sohla Of Trimbakraj

Every Monday, auspicious to Lord Shiva, Palkhi Sohla is celebrated in the Trimbakeshwar Temple. Trimbakeshwar Purohit Sangh organizes Palkhi rituals. It is decorated with different colorful flowers. The lingas are covered by a golden crown, which comes from the age of the Pandavas. This Crown is well decorated by many rich precious gems, consisting of rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. This Crown is placed on the linga. Lord Trimbakeshwara Idol with the Crown is established in the Beautiful Palkhi (Palanquin) and available for Darshana of Devotees. Devotees follow the Palkhi with Joy, and a procession is made in the Honour of Lord Trimbakeshwara.

Each Monday around 4 pm, the Palkhi is made from the Main Temple of Trimbakeshwar and starts procession up to Kushavarta Tirtha. During Palkhi, rangolis are made by the Devotees in the Path along with the Temple of Trimbakeshwar to Kushavarata. Dhol, Nagara, Shehnai music is played during the procession. As the Kushavarta Kund has religious importance, the main puja of the Shiv Linga will perform on the Kushavarta Kund. They perform Puja, Abhishek to the Shiv Linga with Kushavarta Kund water. Guruji applies sandalwood paste to Lord Shivas Lingas, and puja is over with Maha-aarti. Palkhi tradition has been going on since the times of Nansaheb Peshwa. Many devotees have come to take a Darshan of Palkhi. They offer flowers to the deity to please them and get their blessings.



Fig 4: Trimbakraj Palkhi Sohla

Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/trimbakeshwar>

➤ *Simhastha (Kumbha Mela)*

It is stated that a drop of amruth (nectar) fell in Trimbakeshwar during the churning of the ocean. Because of this, thousands upon thousands of devotees swarm to celebrate Kumbhamela here once every twelve years, when they take a bath in the sacred Triveni Sangam of the Godavari, Varuna, and Aruna rivers. Over a 12-year period, this religious holiday is observed four times. The location of the Kumbh Mela alternates between four holy sites on four rivers: the Ganges at Haridwar, the Shipra at Ujjain, and the Godavari Prayag at Nashik.

Trimbak Kumbh Mela is another name for the Nashik Kumbh Mela. For most visitors to the Kumbh Mela, the main attraction is the terrified bath. At the Trimbakeshwar Shiva Temple and the Ram Kund in Nashik, devotees take a terrified bath alongside the Godavari River.

Many devotees are coming from all over the world to attain Kumbh Mela at Trimbakeshwar. Trimbakeshwar looks more beautiful in the monsoon season, with the backdrop of lush green scenery, and the Sahayadri valley and mountain remain unpolluted even today. The Trimbakeshwar Temple remains open from 5.30 am to 9 pm.

Other prominent festivals include Ramnavami, Guru Purnima, and Vijayadashami, each adding to the city's rich tapestry of religious expression.

Trimbakeshwar is a city where faith intertwines with history, nature complements spirituality, and every corner whispers tales of the past. As we delve deeper into the intricacies of this captivating city, the following chapters will explore the urban fabric of Trimbakeshwar, delve into the challenges it faces, and propose a vision for its future development.



Fig 5: Procession at the Time of Simhastha

Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/trimbakeshwar>



Fig 6: Procession at the Time of Simhastha

Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/trimbakeshwar>

➤ *Origin of Ganga-Godavari*

Five rivers originate from the five peaks of Brahmagiri, which are considered by the Puranas as Panchamukhi Shiva. Out of these five mouths, Gautami Ganga originates from Brahmagiri, Ahilya from Sadyojata, Vaitarana from Vamadeva, Banganga from Aghora and Ram-Ganga from Tatpurusha. Although Godavari originates in Brahmagiri mountain, its continuous flow can be seen from Chakratirtha in Beze village, 14 km from Trimbak. Until then, her game of hide and seek continues. As the Godavari originates on the Brahmagiri, a small spring flows uninterruptedly in a tank under an Audumbara tree near the western extremity of the Brahmagiri mountain range. Further from the interior of the hill, the stream is first seen at Gangadwar on the eastern side and then at Kushavart in the village.

The Godavari River, which covers almost 10% of India's total land area, is the country's second-longest river after the Ganga. It drains the country's third-largest basin. Trimbakeshwar, Nashik, Maharashtra, is the source of it. Draining the states of Maharashtra (48.6%), Telangana (18.8%), Andhra Pradesh (4.5%), Chhattisgarh (10.9%), and Odisha (5.7%), it flows east for 1,465 kilometers (910 mi). The river eventually drains into the Bay of Bengal via a vast distributary system. [1]

With a maximum area of 312,812 km² (120,777 sq mi), it is among the largest river basins in the Indian subcontinent; the only rivers with greater drainage basins are the Ganga and Indus. The Godavari, also known as the Dakshin Ganga (Southern Ganges), is the greatest river in peninsular India in terms of length, catchment area, and flow. [2]

➤ *Akhada*

Along with civil culture, a class of Sramanas, Parivrajakas has existed in large numbers in India since the Vedic period. Adya Shankaracharya created a large religious empire in India by establishing a religious system. Shankaracharya revived the ten branches of the Advaita doctrine of Shaivism. They are famous as Dashanami.

After the fanatical invasions of Allauddin Khilji and Feroze Shah Tughlaq, a religious assembly held during the Kumbh Mela decided to take up arms and called upon all to unite. Over time, the word 'Akhand' is believed to have come to mean 'Akhada'.

➤ *Tantrik Pooja Rituals*

Trimbakeshwar Temple is famous for performing rituals like Narayan Nagbali, Kaal Sarp Dosh Puja, Tripindi Shardh, Rudra Abhishek, Kumbh Vivah, and Mahamrityunjay Jaap. It is believed that performing rituals at Trimbakeshwar will be more beneficial than performing at any other place. All pujas are performed by Purohit Sangh Guruji. They are local Guruji of Trimbakeshwar town having legal Birthright to perform pujas in Trimbakeshwar Temple.



Fig 7: Area Where Rituals are Performed
Source – Author

➤ *Location Map*

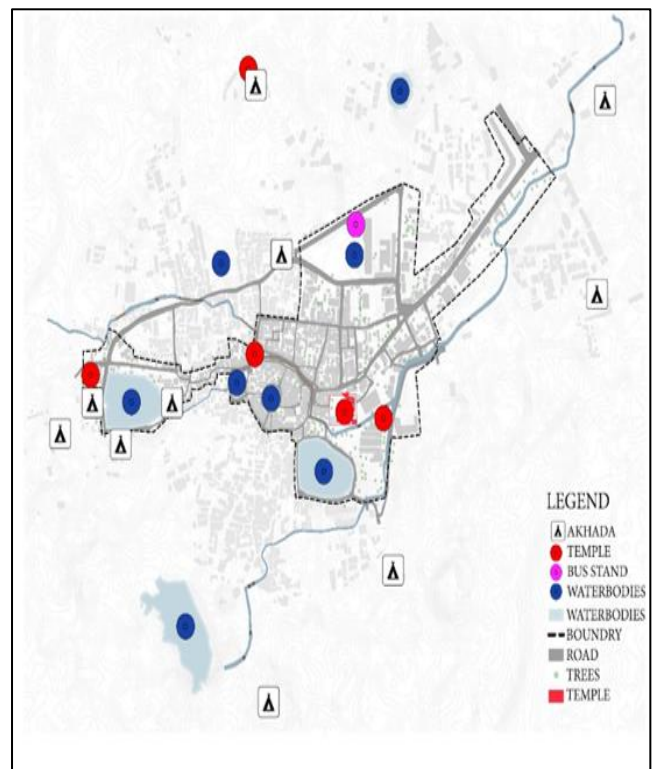


Fig 8: Location Map of Trimbakeshwar
Source – Author

The map illustrates the distribution of water bodies, temples, monuments, and Akhadas within the Trimbakeshwar area. Eleven Akhadas are strategically positioned around the city's periphery. The presence of natural and man-made lakes adds to the region's water resources. The Ahila Dam, located near the Godavari River's origin, further enhances the water body network. The map highlights the central positioning of four to five prominent

monuments along the city's main spine, while the abundant water bodies, including Kushawar Tirth, Gangasagar Lake, and Gautam Lake, are concentrated within the city. The Godavari River gracefully traverses the city's heart.

➤ *Building Character-*

The architectural fabric of Trimbakeshwar is characterized by sloping roofs and a distinctive window typology. These windows, often full-height and divided into four equal panes, provide unobstructed views of religious processions. Intricate cornices and ornamented railings adorn many buildings, showcasing the region's rich architectural heritage. The widespread use of basalt stone in construction reflects the local geology and contributes to the city's unique character.

➤ *Analysis of Annual Footfall Mapping*

- Approx. average annual footfall – 25000/day
- Approx. average footfall at the time of kartik poornima festival- 200000/ day
- Approx. average footfall at the time of mahashivratri festival - 500000/day
- Approx average footfall at the time of nivrutinath yatra - 300000/day
- Approx average Footfall at the time of simhastha (kumbh mela) -1800000/day

V. CONCLUSIONS

Research interpretation can result in the formulation of intervention strategies, which can be summed up as follows.

➤ *Interventions Design Vision: Rejuvenating Trimbakeshwar - A Pilgrimage Reimagined*

The design vision for Trimbakeshwar city is one of rejuvenation, where urban design interventions create a more enriching pilgrimage experience while celebrating the city's unique identity. This vision embraces a multi-pronged approach.

A well-defined corridor can be developed around the Trimbakeshwar Temple, prioritizing pedestrian movement and fostering a sense of tranquility. The religious offering zone can be redeveloped to better accommodate the diverse rituals performed within the city. The Godavari River's previously closed water channel can be reopened for public access. This will provide infrastructure for cultural activities which are existing and also promote more cultural activities related.

Design guidelines can be established to ensure all interventions respect and preserve the city's historical identity. This will result in retaining Cultural identity in the form of architecture and urban infrastructure.

The design can transcend functionality, aiming to capture the intangible essence of Trimbakeshwar. This design vision strives to create a Trimbakeshwar city that seamlessly blends the past and present, the sacred and the secular. By prioritizing the pilgrim experience, fostering a sense of

community, respecting the city's unique heritage, and reconnecting with the natural world, this project aims to create a vibrant, sustainable, and spiritually enriching urban environment.

VI. DESIGN STRATEGIES

This project envisions a multifaceted approach to revitalize Trimbakeshwar city, focusing on enhancing the cultural enrichment and pilgrim experience while preserving its unique character. Here's a breakdown of key design strategies which can be applied as intervention:

A. *The Sacred Corridor:*

- **Pedestrian Priority:** Implement traffic calming measures or designate specific sections as pedestrian-only to prioritize walking within the corridor.
- **Public Realm Enhancement:** Incorporate strategically placed seating areas, shaded walkways, and landscaped gardens offering respite and comfort to pilgrims.
- **Integration of Amenities:** Seamlessly integrate essential services like public restrooms, drinking fountains, information kiosks, and potentially pilgrim storage lockers within the corridor design.
- **Universal Design:** Ensure the corridor is accessible to all by incorporating ramps, tactile paving, and accessible toilet facilities.

B. *Revivified Ritualistic Zone:*

- **Space Allocation:** Conduct a detailed study of rituals and their spatial requirements. Allocate dedicated areas for specific rituals, ensuring adequate space and minimizing congestion.
- **Ritualistic Elements:** Integrate water features for ablutions, designated performance spaces for specific rituals, and symbolic architectural elements that reflect the spiritual significance of the zone.
- **Connectivity and Flow:** Design the redeveloped zone to seamlessly connect with the main corridor, ensuring smooth movement and accessibility for pilgrims transitioning between rituals and temple visits.

C. *Reconnecting the City Fabric:*

- **Strategic Road Rerouting:** Analyze traffic patterns and identify opportunities to reroute roads, improving connections between key areas and reducing congestion near the temple.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Streetscapes:** Enhance sidewalks by widening them, incorporating street furniture for rest and shade, and prioritizing pedestrian safety through crosswalks and traffic signals.
- **Pedestrian-Only Zones:** Implement designated pedestrian-only zones in key areas, particularly around the temple complex and market areas, to create a more human-scaled and vibrant environment.

D. Unveiling the Godavari's Embrace:

- **Riverfront Promenade:** Develop a scenic promenade along the Godavari River, offering pilgrims a space for reflection and connection with the sacred river.
- **Ghat Enhancements:** Improve existing bathing ghats by incorporating non-slip surfaces, handrails, and changing facilities for safe and dignified ritualistic use.
- **Ecological Restoration:** Implement measures to address river pollution and promote ecological restoration of the river and its surroundings, ensuring long-term sustainability.

VII. PRESERVING IDENTITY AND SHAPING THE FUTURE

➤ *Design Guidelines:*

Establish clear design guidelines for new development and renovation projects within the city. These guidelines should:

Promote the restoration and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, encouraging the use of traditional materials and techniques.

Require new developments to complement the existing architectural heritage in terms of scale, massing, materials, and overall design aesthetic.

➤ *Facade and Roof Type Guidelines:*

Develop specific guidelines for building facades and roof types.

Facade guidelines could encourage the use of traditional materials like local stone, wood, and plasterwork, with color palettes that complement the existing streetscape.

Roof type guidelines could promote the use of traditional forms like sloping roofs with locally sourced terracotta tiles or clay shingles.

This project should adopt a holistic approach, ensuring all interventions are designed in a cohesive manner. Consider: By strategically implementing these design strategies, the project can create a transformed Trimbakeshwar city that celebrates its rich heritage, enhances the pilgrim experience, and fosters a vibrant and sustainable urban environment.

REFERENCES

- [1]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godavari_River
 [2]. <https://www.toppr.com/ask/question/why-is-the-godavari-river-also-known-as-dakshin-ganga/>