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## POTENTIAL OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN SATARA TEHSIL: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Religious tourism occupies a significant position within the broader spectrum of tourism in India, particularly in Maharashtra, where pilgrimages are a primary motivator for travel. Satara Tehsil, nestled amidst the natural splendor of Maharashtra, offers a captivating blend of religious diversity, historical significance, and geographical allure, rendering it a promising terrain for religious tourism development. This paper explores the potential of religious tourism in Satara Tehsil from a geographical perspective, shedding light on its sacred landscapes, pilgrimage circuits, and cultural heritage. The study draws upon both primary and secondary data sources, combining fieldwork, photographs, and census data to comprehensively evaluate the region's offerings. The analysis highlights prominent religious tourist centers, including Sajjangad, Natraj Temple, Sangam Mahuli, Dhawadshi, Yawateshwar, and Tulaja Bhavani Mandir, each contributing distinct spiritual and historical dimensions to the region's allure. With its diverse attractions, Satara Tehsil presents a compelling case for religious tourism development, necessitating infrastructure enhancements in transportation, accommodation, communication, and recreational facilities to fully harness its transformative potential. Through strategic planning and investment, Satara Tehsil can position itself as a destination that not only enriches the spiritual journeys of pilgrims but also contributes substantially to its economic and societal advancement.

***Keywords: Religious Tourism, Satara Tehsil.***

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The most important tourism type is religious tourism which is biggest motivation for the tourism in India as well as Maharashtra. Many peoples are

traveling because of religious purpose therefore this kind of tourism play important role in the development of any region.

Religious tourism, an integral subset of cultural tourism, has emerged as a powerful catalyst for economic growth and social development in many regions across the globe. The confluence of faith, tradition, and heritage creates a unique appeal that draws pilgrims and travelers alike to sacred sites, fostering not only spiritual enrichment but also contributing significantly to the local economy.

Satara Tehsil boasts a rich tapestry of religious diversity, historical significance, and geographical allure that holds immense potential for religious tourism. This paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of this potential, employing a geographical perspective to unravel the unique treasures that Satara Tehsil holds for religious travelers and enthusiasts. Through an exploration of its sacred landscapes, pilgrimage circuits, and cultural heritage, this study aims to illuminate the pathways through which Satara Tehsil can harness and leverage the transformative power of religious tourism for the holistic benefit of its residents and the broader region.

The Satara tehsil is well known for its temples which is having religious importance. Hindu religious places are more in this region which are being a focus for tourist. Sajjangad, Natraj Temple, Sangam Mahuli, Dhawadshi, Yawateshwar, Tulja Bhavani Mandir Shendre is the important religious tourist places are present in the Satara tehsil.

### **STUDY REGION:**

The Satara Tehsil is selected for the present study. Satara Tehsil situated in the Satara District of Maharashtra state of India. Geographically Satara Tehsil lies in between 17° 27' to 17° 49' North latitude and 73° 50'to 74° 10' East longitude. It is surrounded by Wai tehsil to north, Koregoan tehsil to east side, Karad tehsil to north-east side, Patan tehsil to northwest side, and Jawli tehsil to west side. Total area of the tehsil is 22.48 km<sup>2</sup> and the average elevation is 742 meters from mean sea level. Satara tehsil includes 211 villages and 5 cities.

### **OBJECTIVE:**

1. To assess the potential religious tourist centers in Satara tehsil

**DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY:**

The present study is based on the both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through intensive field work by visiting various destinations in the study region. Photographs of various tourist places were taken. Data for base map collected through district census handbook of Satara district. GPS was used for collecting Ground control point in the study region.

Secondary data was collected from district census handbook of Satara district, District Socio-economic abstract as well as published and unpublished materials.

**POTENTIAL RELIGIOUS TOURISM:****1. Sajjangad (Parali):**

Sajjangad (Fort) is situated just 9 kms away from Satara city where Samarth Ramdas took 'Samadhi'(final resting place). Sant Ramdas was famous as teacher of Shivaji Maharaj in 17th century. His thought and works written in books known as 'Dasbodh'.

Sajjangad is a popular place of pilgrimage in Maharashtra many people visited this place. It has been said that during Chatrpati Shivaji Maharaj period Raigad was the capital of Shivshahi while Sajjangad was the spiritual capital of it.

The maintenance of the fort and the Samadhi (final resting place) of Ramdas is taken care by Ramdas Swami Sansthan, a trust which has existed since the time of ShriRamdas Swami. The daily routine of the trustees on the fort includes morning prayers, Abhishek and Puja, MahaNaivedya, Bhajans and reading of the manuscript Dasbodh. The fort is open for devotees from sunrise to sunset. In the afternoon, a trustee of Sajjangad serves a food (as prasada) to the devotees. Recently the Ramdas Swami Sansthan trust has built a dharmashala for the devotees for free of cost stay. Every year during Shiv Jayanti and on the day of Das Navami thousands of devotees gather here and take part in festival.

It is possible to reach the base of the fort by vehicle. From there one has to climb around a hundred steps to reach the gate of the fort. It is exactly 18 km from Satara city. You can hire an auto rickshaw or bus from a famous area of Satara Rajwada.

## 2. Natraj Temple (Khed):

Natraj temple is located in Khed village which is only 5 km away from the Satara city and just off the National Highway NH4 connecting Pune and Bangalore.

This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva Natraj, who is a depiction of the Hindu god Shiva, the cosmic dancer who performs his divine dance to destroy a weary universe and make preparations for god Brahma to start the process of creation.

The temple has four entrances in the four directions and is believed to be a replica of Chidambaram Temple of Chidambaram at Pondicherry. Therefore many south Indian people come to visit this temple who are living in Maharashtra.

## 3. Sangam Mahuli (Kshetra Mahuli):

Satara tehsil has number of religious places around. Some of the temples are 500 to 600 years old. One of such old temple complexes devoted to Lord Shiva is "Shree Kshetra Mahuli". This is birth place of the famous Chief Justice in Peshwa regime, Mr. Ramshastri Prabhune.

Shree Kshetra Mahuli is situated at confluence of rivers Krishna and Venna. There are three major temples of Lord Shiva namely, Vishweshwar, Rameshwar and Sangameshwar. Vishweshwar side is called "Sangam Mahuli" whereas Rameshwar side is called "Kshetra Mahuli".

Vishweshwar Temple built in "Hemadpanthi" style of Architecture. This style of Architecture was developed by one Hemadpant who was minister in Yadav Empire. He developed this specific construction style for temples. Normally, temples have hexagonal or octagonal compound, but this particular temple has heptagonal compound. This is quite uncommon. Six sides are similar but seventh side is different. On seventh side there are 2 stairs to enter the temple area separated by "Deepmaal". Deepmaal is tall structure carved out of one stone with provision for placing oil lamps from top to bottom. Near this temple, "Deepmaal" is about 55-60 feet tall. Oil Lamps are placed on this at the time of Important occasions like "Shivaratri, Ekadashi". All Shiva temples have a small temple of Nandi, a bull on which Lord Shiva is said to travel. "Nandi" faces always Lord Shiva. Nandi temple here is quite big compared to many other similar temples of Lord Shiva.

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To enter the main temple, one has to climb 9-10 steps from river bank and then another 5-6 steps to enter main temple. As we enter “Sabhamandap” we get a very soothing and calm feeling. Stone pillars in the “Sabhamandap” are quite near each other, which gives a feeling that Sabhamandap is very small but in reality it is quite big. Gabhara of this temple is very dark there, which is normal in a Shiva Temple. While entering the Gabhara, we come across a Huge Bell. It is said that the bell was brought to this place by one of Warriors of Peshwa, Chimajiappa after defeating the Portugese in Vasai.

A real big chain running across to join Vishweshwar Temple side to the Rameshwar temple side. As per locals, this chain was used for transporting people from one bank to other when water level is very high in the river.

The Sangameshwar and the Rameshwar temples are bang opposite to each other. The temple architecture for the Rameshwar temple is entirely different. It is also carved out of one stone, as is told to me, but the pattern is totally different. These are very nicely carved out of stone. The Rameshwar Temple is quite small compared with the Vishweshwar Temple. Since, this temple is located at a height, it gives very panoramic view of the Vishweshwar Temple which is there on other side of the river. Statue of Nandi here is very beautiful example of craftsmanship. All the details like eyes, ears even the nails of the toes etc are done with absolute precision. Normally, in all shiva temples, Nandi is always facing Shiva. Here the Nandi is not looking at shiva but a bit towards right side.

The Sabhamandap of the Rameshwar Temple is also quite small compared to the Vishweshwar Temple. Here the main “Pindi” is more beautiful than that of the Vishweshwar Temple and is surrounded by water. In this temple there are two “Deepmals” which are very short compared with those of the Vishweshwar Temple. One of these is in broken condition.

Overall, the entire area of all the temples is very beautiful and it gives immense pleasure after paying visit to such complexes.

#### **4. Dhavadshi:**

Dhavadshi village located 20 Kilometers away from Satara city. This village is famous for religious as well as historical tourist centre. It is known as entrancement of Bhramendra swami and as a birth place of Queen of Jhansi i.e. Rani Laximibai (Jhansichi Rani).

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In this village temple situated at the bottom of 'Meruling' is famous due to the temple and four lakes. Shahu Maharaj has built this huge temple when Brhamendra swami was passed away. This temple is in hemarpanti style and the carved design on the peak is very attractive. This place has an idol of black statue Bhramendra swami. The entrancement of Bhramendra swami is in front of idol. In the campus of the temple there are four constructed lakes. At this place only there is a 'Vaghjai' temple built by Bhramenddraswami.

#### **5. Yawateshwar:**

Yawateshwar village located about 5 km away from Satara city. In the village famous temple is present which is dedicated to Lord Shiva. This temple is surrounded by lush green surroundings because of it is located in the hilly area.

In this temple big 'Pind' symbol of lord Shiva is present with Nandi. The temple has big entrance door and the temple is located below the ground level therefore it is cold in nature in any climate. At the behind the temple there is well carved well is located in square shape with carved steps to reach the bottom of the well.

#### **6. Tulaja Bhavani Mandir (Shendre):**

Thetulaji Bhavani temple is located in shendre village just near to National Highway No. 4 in the Premises of Ajinkyatara Co-oprative Sugar Factory Ltd. Shahunagar, Shendre. This temple Built by Hon. Chh. Abhaysingraje Bhosale (M.L.A) in April 23, 1999. This temple was inaugurated by Prampujya Chaitanya Gagangiri Maharaj.

This Temple has similar statue of Tulja Bhavani as in Tuljapur temple. This temple is totally constructed in black basalt rock. Near this temple there is big garden is located in which rose flower tree is more also there is a one big conference hall has been constructed by the sugar factory.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Satara tehsil is famous for its religious tourist attractions. Sajjangad, Natraj Temple and Sangam Mahuli are the important pilgrimage centers in the study region. Sajjangad (Ramdas Swami Samadhi) is most important religious place in Maharashtra which is located near the Satara city.

Sajjangad and Dhawadshi are having two fold attractions, religious as well as historical which has enormous potential for the development of tourism.

Tourism industry needs to supports form some basic infrastructural facilities for development such as transportation, accommodation, communication, banking and recreational facilities.

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