



### IMPACT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM ON COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS: A CASE STUDY OF PUNE CITY

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#### Abstract:

*This study examines the impact of cultural heritage tourism on community livelihoods in Pune city. It examines how cultural heritage sites and traditional practices contribute to the economic and social well-being of local communities. The study adopts a qualitative and survey-based approach to gain in-depth insights from those directly involved in the cultural heritage tourism sector. The researcher has visited 15 cultural heritage sites and conducted interviews of the respondents accordingly. Participants, including local artisans, small business owners, tour guides, and heritage workers, responded structured questionnaires. In addition, further data were supported by participant responses and document analysis, which added significance to the depth of understanding of how cultural heritage tourism has impacted community livelihoods in Pune city. The findings revealed that cultural heritage tourism strengthened livelihoods through cultural empowerment and employment generation in handicrafts, hospitality, and guiding services. On the other hand, if it is not managed properly, this type of tourism certainly reflect negative consequences such as neglecting, degrading, and interfering with community values and social relations, leading to the destruction of cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Tourism, Community Livelihoods, Economy, Pune City.

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#### Introduction:

India has a rich cultural heritage coupled with diverse natural resources. Given their importance, many of these cultural and natural sites have been inscribed as World Heritage Sites. As of 2025, India has 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These include cultural, natural, and mixed sites. Of these, Maharashtra has seven World Heritage Sites (six cultural and one Natural).<sup>[5]</sup> These sites are

representative of the state's rich heritage, ancient and medieval art & architecture- caves, forts, and colonial public buildings -and natural landscapes. Cultural heritage tourism, a rapidly growing segment of the global tourism industry, involves traveling to experience the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. Heritage resources are material and immaterial elements found in both rural and urban environments that attract tourists. (Esichaikul and



OPEN ACCESS (Chen et al., 2021). Cultural tourism has been seen as a useful tool for developing countries and regions for its contributions to increasing household incomes, strengthening the power of community and residents, improving community well-being, and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage (Đukić & Vukmirović, 2012; Angeloni, 2013; Salazar, 2016). It is widely recognized for its potential to foster economic development, preserve cultural assets, and promote cross-cultural understanding. In the context of developing nations like India, heritage tourism is often viewed as a critical strategy for regional development, offering a pathways to diversify local economies and generate employment opportunities, particularly for communities residing near heritage sites. India, with its millennia-old civilization, Cultural Heritage Tourism (CHT) is defined as "travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage, and special character of a place" [6]. It is a multi-faceted concept that encompasses both tangible heritage (e.g., historical sites, monuments, artefacts) and intangible heritage (e.g., traditions, festivals, cuisine, and local knowledge) [7]. The core motivation for this type of tourism is the desire for authentic cultural experiences and learning.

The concept of Community Livelihoods extends beyond mere economic income. It is best understood through the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which views a livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets (including natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital), and activities required for a means of living [8]. A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, without undermining the natural resource base [9]. Therefore, the impact of CHT on livelihoods must be assessed across multiple dimensions:

possesses an unparalleled wealth of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. [1]

Pune City is the cultural capital of Maharashtra and a significant centre of the Maratha Empire, offering a rich tapestry of historical forts (e.g., Sinhagad), palaces (e.g., Shaniwar Wada, Aga Khan Palace), and traditional urban structures (*wadas*). These sites form the core of a burgeoning heritage tourism sector. However, the mere presence of heritage assets does not automatically translate into equitable benefits for the local population. The success of cultural heritage tourism is increasingly measured not just by visitor numbers or revenue, but by its sustainable and positive impact on community livelihoods [6]. Conceptualizing Cultural Heritage Tourism and Community Livelihoods:

- ❖ **Economic Capital:** Direct and indirect income, employment, and business opportunities.
- ❖ **Human Capital:** Skill development, education, and health improvements.
- ❖ **Social Capital:** Community cohesion, networks, and participation in decision-making.
- ❖ **Cultural Capital:** Preservation and revitalization of local traditions, arts, and crafts.

### Cultural Heritage Tourism in the Indian Context:

In India, CHT is a cornerstone of the national tourism strategy. Research has highlighted the immense potential of India's diverse heritage, but also the systemic challenges. Studies on heritage sites across India, such as those in Rajasthan and Goa, point to the need for better infrastructure, effective marketing, and, most importantly, a shift towards community-centric tourism models [17]. The focus on "pro-poor tourism" and "responsible tourism" has gained traction, emphasizing the need to maximize the benefits for the poor and ensure local ownership [18]. Specifically concerning urban heritage, research often focuses on the challenges of conservation in rapidly developing cities.



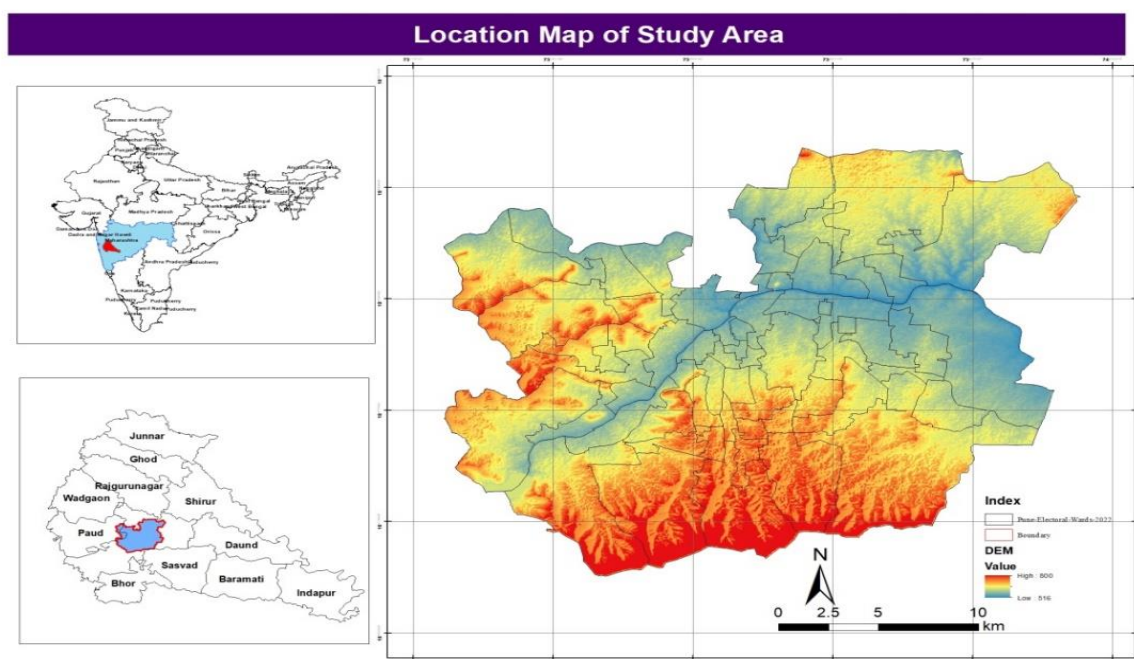
The case of Pune, with its blend of historical Maratha architecture and modern IT hub status, presents a unique context. While some studies have examined the conservation efforts at specific sites like Shaniwar Wada <sup>[19]</sup> or the potential of heritage walks <sup>[20]</sup>, there is a notable gap in research that systematically evaluates the direct and indirect impact of these activities on the livelihoods of the communities residing in the immediate vicinity of these heritage zones. This study aims to bridge this gap by applying the multi-dimensional livelihood framework to the specific urban context of Pune City.

### Study Area:

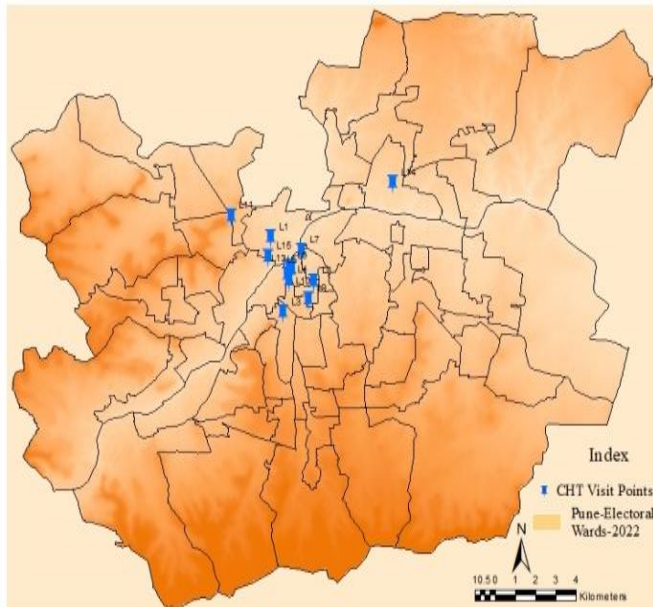
Pune has been a city that has been ruled by the *Rashtrakuta*, *Satavahana*, and *Yadava* dynasties successively, and as such, it possesses an eclectic mix of history and culture. Rajmata Jijabai and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj founded the city. Greater infrastructural development took place when the

Peshwas came into prominence. When the Peshwa Empire fell in 1818, the British occupied Pune and its surrounding areas.

Pune is nestled on the Deccan plateau and sits on the leeward side of the Western Ghats, with an average elevation of 560 meters above sea level. The city is strategically located at the meeting point of the *Mula* and *Mutha* rivers and is positioned between latitudes 18°25'00" N and 18°37'00" N, as well as longitudes 73°44'00" E and 73°57'00" E. The Mula and Mutha Rivers flow through the heart of the city, carving out an asymmetrical valley. Meanwhile, the *Pavna* and *Indrayani* rivers run along the north western edge of the urban area. The highest spot within the city is *Vetal Hill*, which reaches an altitude of 800 meters above mean sea level, and just outside the city, the impressive *Sinhagad Fort* stands at 1300 meters above sea level.



**Fig. 1 Study Area Location Map**



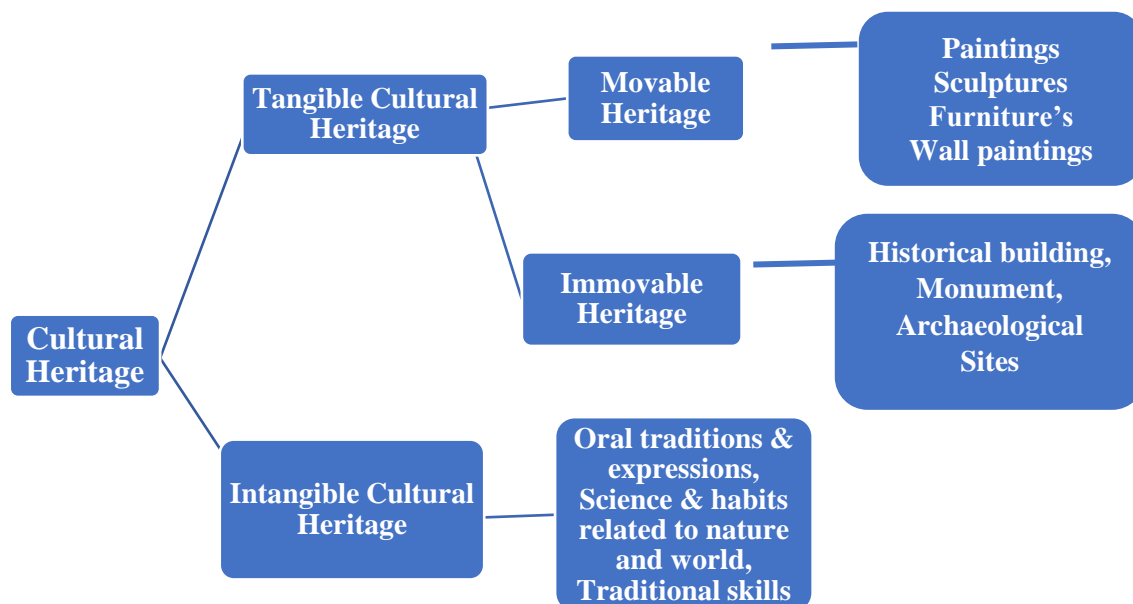
**Fig. 2 Cultural Heritage Tourism Site's Map**

Location Points	CHT Location Name
L1	Pataleshwar Temple
L2	Jangli Maharaj Temple
L3	Siddhivinayak Ganesh Temple Sarasbag
L4	Vishrambagh and Tulshibagh
L5	Nana Wada
L6	Shaniwar Wada
L7	Kasba Peth Ganapati Temple
L8	Keshari Wada
L9	Mahatma Phule Wada
L10	Tambdi Jogeshwari Temple
L11	Chaturshrungi Temple
L12	Sinhagad Fort
L13	Lal Mahal
L14	Aga Khan Palace
L15	Shri Nageshwar Temple

An urban infrastructure for the town was created in 1858 when the Municipal Corporation was established. The Pune Municipal Corporation was established in 1950 in the city of Pune, which holds historical and cultural importance. This corporation worked effectively and conscientiously to bring back normalcy during the ensuing years, especially after the disastrous flood of *Panshet* in 1962. From an administrative standpoint, the PMC divides its territory into several wards and *prabhags* (electoral divisions) to facilitate effective local governance. With the aim of creating a tourism environment in the city, the PMC set up a

Heritage Management Department. This department has identified and completed several major projects and has prepared a list of historical sites in the city.

UNESCO divided the cultural heritage into two categories: the tangible and the intangible cultural heritage. Fig.3 The tangible cultural heritage is divided into immovable heritage and movable heritage. Immovable Heritage includes historical buildings, monuments, and archaeological sites.<sup>[5]</sup> According to the classification made by UNESCO, this research surveyed 15 such Immovable cultural heritage tourist sites in Pune city.



**Fig.3 Cultural Heritage Classification from UNESCO**

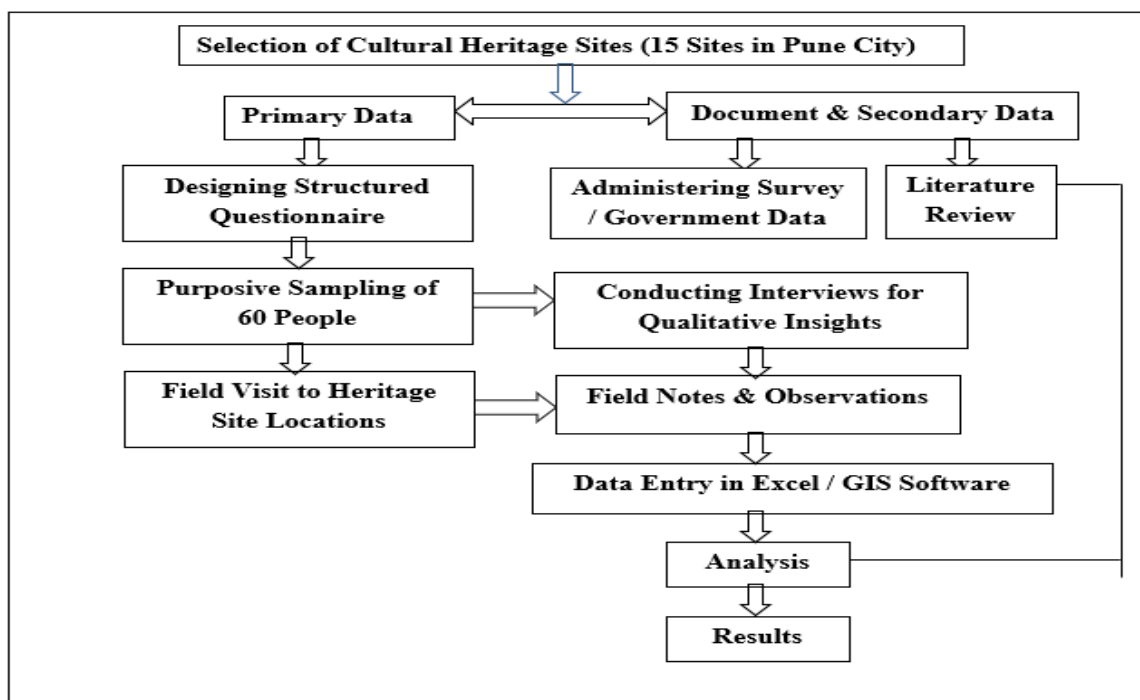
### Data Sources and Methodology:

#### Data Collection:

The primary data collection methods used in the present work is confined to in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Document analysis has been conducted to complement the data collected to obtain better information about cultural heritage resources. The data for this study has been obtained through a combination of in-depth qualitative and survey-based methods to gain comprehensive insights into the understanding of impact of cultural heritage

tourism on community livelihoods in Pune City. Primary data obtained through a structured questionnaire survey administered to respondents at fifteen selected cultural heritage sites. A purposive sample of sixty participants, including product vendors, local artisans, tour guides, small business owners, and heritage workers, has been worked out. Their perceptions regarding income generation, employment opportunities, cultural preservation, and community well-being has been obtained using a questionnaire consisting of closed-ended.





**Fig.4 Flow Chart of the Methodology**

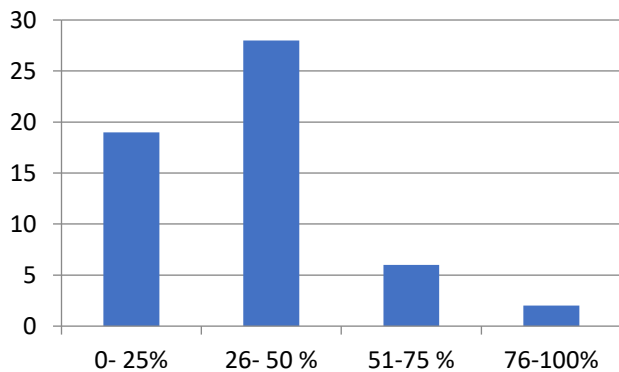
**Methodology:** The present work covers the cultural heritage tourist sites within the Pune Municipal Corporation area of Maharashtra. The information pertaining to the research topic has been obtained through literature review and published literature, reports collected from various libraries, institutions, government departments, etc. The present work mainly focused on field based on sample survey, photographs, a questionnaire survey along with GPS survey etc. The researcher has adopted a case study approach for which primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed accordingly. In order to understand respondent's views the questionnaire has been designed accordingly and incorporated both open and closed-type questions.

### Data Analyses and interpretation:

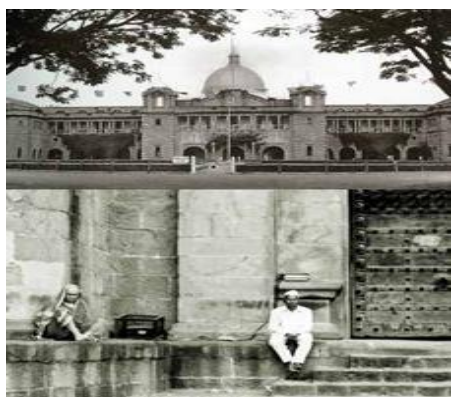
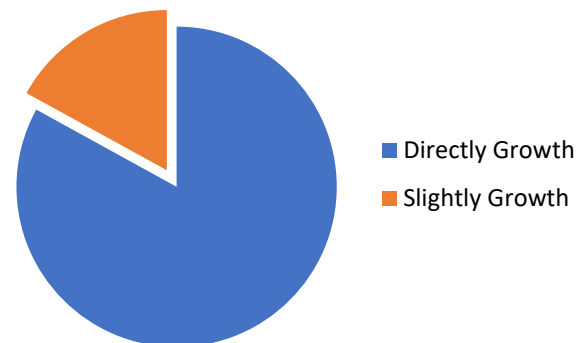
The data made available through Google Forms has been processed in Microsoft Excel and results were obtained, it is observed that there is a strong positive correlation between tourism and the income of local vendors and small businesses operating in the heritage

sector of Pune. Around 93.2% of respondents are of the opinion that increasing tourist numbers are directly linked to an increase in the number of customers. Similarly, the level of income also reflects the same trend. 75% of respondents remarks that it has certainly increased, while 23.3% are stating that it has improved slightly. It is certainly clear around 83.3% of people are experiencing the benefits of tourism. The findings confirm that businesses located near heritage sites, good road network, Aesthetic value of tourist places, etc. reporting certain increase in sales. The PMC Heritage Walk reinforced this correlation, with over 60% of respondents reporting an increase in income upto 50%. Income improved due to the high tourist influx during the tourist season and festivals has been benefitted by nearly 81.7% of participants. Vendors operating fast-moving food and beverage businesses recorded the highest increase. Tourism plays a key role in improving livelihoods by increasing the number of customers, sales volume, and daily income.

**PMC Cultural Heritage Walk benefited income in %**



**Cultural Heritage Tourism on income growth in %**



**Fig. 5 Some Cultural Heritage places in Pune City**



### Results:

The results of the interviews and Google Forms questionnaire revealed a positive impact of cultural heritage tourism on community livelihoods. The survey concluded that 83% of the local people get economic benefits from this tourism, while the remaining 17% people get less benefit. These 17% people do business in such cultural heritage places where it is mandatory not to sell any goods. For example, Aga Khan Palace, Mahatma Phule Wada, Keshari Wada, Nana Wada, etc. In the primary interview data, it was observed that several ancient cultural sites in Pune also form part of important centers for spiritual and emotional belief among local communities. These include the Chaturshruni Temple, Tambdi Jogeshwari Temple, and Siddhivinayak Temple at Sarasbag. The regular flow of tourists and devotees with deep devotion provides a continuous economic return to the small and big shopkeepers operating in the area. This research paper reveals that the Pune Municipal Corporation benefits the city by collecting tourism fees from certain historical sites, including Shaniwarwada, Lal Mahal, Nana Wada, and Sinhagad Fort. The primary data also indicates that foreign tourists, scholars, and researchers frequently visit these cultural heritage locations in Pune, highlighting their significance and continued appeal.

### Discussion and Conclusion:

Based on the present research work, Pune's cultural tourism sites stabilize the local economy. After completing the research work, it is understood that Pune city has been a cultural and commercial centre since the Peshwa era, as evidenced by its ancient markets, cultural heritage tourism sites, and the major market, which attracts shoppers. For example, more foreign tourists visit places like Tulshibagh, Pune Camp, MG Road, FC Road, etc., and buy goods, which makes more profit for the sellers. From an environmental point of view, it is seen that on one hand,

the development of cultural heritage tourism is beneficial, but the excessive crowd of tourists is harming the environment. For example, Chaturshruni Temple and Parvati Temple are tourist places on hilltops, these hills are being deteriorated and somewhat losing their natural beauty due to overcrowding. Cutting down hill base and setting up shops is unlawful activities is harmful to the environment. Similarly, a large number of businessmen are seen at Sinhagad Fort. The businessmen have adopted a policy of levelling the base of the fort, which is causing problems such as landslides at Sinhagad. Tourism is a business that needs to be done in harmony with nature, rather than endangering tourist destinations.

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