

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF INCONSPICUOUS TEMPLES IN PANCHVATI NASHIK

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Introduction:

Panchavati, located in the northern part of Nashik in the state of Maharashtra, is one of the most important religious and cultural centers in western India. The name Panchavati literally means “a garden of five banyan trees,” derived from the Sanskrit words *Panch* (five) and *Vati* (banyan trees). According to Hindu tradition, this area is associated with the exile period of Lord Ram.

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Need and importance:

This study aims to provide a historical survey of such lesser-known temples in Panchavati and highlight their importance in understanding the religious landscape of Nashik. As described in the epic Ramayana. Due to the large number of temples in this area, Nashik is sometimes referred to as the “Banaras of Western India.”

Objectives:

- To identify inconspicuous temples in Panchavati.
- To study the historical development of lesser-known temples in Panchavati.
- To study of inconspicuous temples religious significance.

Scope and Limitation:

The study is geographically limited to temples in Panchavati.
It primarily emphasizes cultural, historical, and aspects.

Literature review:

- Deshpande (2005), in his work on the history of Nashik, highlights the city’s evolution as a religious center. He emphasizes the importance of temples along the Godavari River but primarily focuses on prominent sites.
- Sarda (2015) examines temple traditions in Panchavati and provides insights into ritual practices and festivals. His work largely centers on well-known temples such as Kalaram Temple.
- Varsayan (2019)-The book serves as a detailed documentation of 36 specific heritage sites located in and around the holy city of Nashik.
- Bharat.l.Gadhakh cultural sites as tourist magnets A geographical analysis of visitor motivation in Nashik
- Dr.R.R.Mishra Tourist challenges in cultural tourism a case study of Nashik pilgrimage destination

- Thus, while existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the religious and architectural significance of Panchavati, it lacks focused research on inconspicuous temples. This highlights the need for a dedicated historical survey to document and analyze these neglected yet culturally significant sites.

Research Methodology:

Descriptive and historical survey method is used by researcher.

Population and Sampling :

The population for the present study includes all inconspicuous (lesser-known) temples located in Panchavati. Sampling techniques –**Snowball sampling** is a non-probability sampling technique.

○ Steps in Snowball Sampling

- Identify initial participants (priests, local expert, Local residents,)
- Conduct interviews
- Ask participants to suggest other relevant contacts
- Continue the chain until adequate information is gathered

10 temples selected for this research.

Sample -Selected Temple –

- Uma Maheshwar Temple
- Til bhandeshwar Temple
- Sandyavarchi devi Temple
- Dev Mamledar Temple
- Ahilya Ram Temple
- Prachin Goraram Temple
- Parasari Godavari Temple
- Ardhnareshwar Temple
- Kashi Vishweshwar Temple
- Pateleshwar Temple

Data Collection Tools:

- Primary Sources
- Field visits to temples in Panchavati.
- Direct observation of temple rituals.
- Interviews with priests, Local experts, devotees,
- Joining Heritage walk

Secondary Sources

- Books on history of temple in Nashik.
- Research articles and journals.
- Online archives and heritage websites.

- Visit to Archaeology and Museums office in Nashik
- Collecting information from libraries

Data Analysis technique-

- Content Analysis used by researcher.
- Analysis of:
- Interview responses
- Field notes
- Historical information

Finding:

1. The study revealed that Panchvati has a large number of small, inconspicuous temples that are often overshadowed by famous sites like Kalaram Temple and Sita Gufa. These temples hold significant historical and cultural value but receive limited attention.
2. Many temples were found to be centuries old, but proper historical records, inscriptions, or written documentation are either missing or poorly maintained. Most historical information is preserved through oral traditions shared by priests and local residents
3. Despite being lesser-known, daily पूजा (worship), rituals, and occasional festivals are actively conducted. Local communities maintain strong faith and emotional attachment to these temples.
4. Limited Government and Institutional Support
5. Tourists visiting Nashik mainly focus on major religious attractions. These inconspicuous temples are rarely included in tourism guides
6. Small in size, these temples contribute significantly to
7. Local religious identity
8. Cultural continuity
9. Spiritual practices of the community

Conclusion:

The inconspicuous temples of Panchvati are hidden heritage assets that reflect the deep-rooted cultural and religious traditions of the region. However, due to neglect and lack of awareness, they are at risk, making documentation and preservation essential.

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