# NEED FOR CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE CORE – CASE OF KOLHAPUR CITY

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## ABSTRACT

*A unique characteristic of a city is determined by its urban sprawl and urban form. The historic core of a city represents the heritage and cultural system. This is the most dynamic space, exhibiting the layers of heritage, culture, diverse communities, religious values, and traditions. The fabric, activities, and communities are the important tangible and intangible aspects of the core. The sense of space is felt better with these aspects, and this makes it more lively than the newly urbanized part of the city. Kolhapur city is an important pilgrimage center in the state of Maharashtra, as it has the temple of Goddess Ambabai one of the 31/2 Shaktipeeth in the Hindu religion. This temple is the nucleus of the city and is surrounded by the old historic core area of the city. The presence of the temple and other heritage monuments with all intangible activities add dynamism to the core. To understand the cultural system of the city one can visit its heritage core and get acknowledge with the system. The most interesting part is the communities' dependent on the temple complex for their livelihood. These communities are the important stakeholders of the core. With growing urbanization trends there is a decline in the activities of core. As urban trends change land use patterns are changing, people are migrating to more urbanized areas, and occupational communities are no longer working in their fields. This all results in a change in the character of the space and eventually tends to lose the city's unique character. This paper aims to highlight the issues and challenges of the core areas and convey the alarming need to conserve the historic character of the core.*

***Keywords:*** *Historic Core, Tangible - Intangible, Heritage, Urban conservation.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage in Indian essence is 'undertaking a journey to a religious area, or a sacred place that usually illustrates four implications: a path, riverbank, sacred site, and religious territory related to divine activities (Singh et al., 2001). Pilgrimage centers have huge potential for tourism as they have scenic natural settings, Heritage, or other cultural heritage. This increases the tourism potential along with the religious purpose. Hence in this growing urbanization, the infrastructure facilities are increasing in these pilgrimage centers resulting in huge footfall of tourists around the year. Increasing tourist number builds pressure on the existing infrastructure of the pilgrimage city and also leads to the deterioration of tangible and intangible heritage.

Pilgrimage towns have a legacy of spiritual and religious heritage along with the culture and traditions that have passed over centuries. Throughout the years, these towns with their bountiful history evolve their character and create a wonderful image with the temple as the nucleus. It is important that these towns form a live cultural nucleus for the new growing city. This will develop a sense of self-esteem in the residents. The historic town of Kolhapur comprises architectural monuments, temple precincts, processional paths, public squares, palaces, and important nodes and landmarks. This historic setting is decaying due to rapid urbanization. Urban fabric, Urban form, streetscape, and architectural character is changing drastically to suit the demands of the stakeholders. The role of urbanization in preserving the heritage character is ignored.

National Commission on Urbanization (1988) states that the urban conservation would be concern among other things with those components of the urban heritage that, possesses architectural, historical and cultural interest; have a special or distinct essence or charm that provides uniqueness either because of its ambience or because of some activities centered on or associated with the places; constitute a focal point in a city of importance to the social, religious, psychological or spiritual well-being of its residents and are elements that brings out the physical environment of the city. Conservation of old building and spaces preserves the citizen's sense of identity and community. Conservation is an action taken to prevent decay (Feilden, 1994).

## 1.1 Historic Core:

The physical structure of the old city consists of landmark heritage buildings which help in developing collective memory. City around core consists of organically developed neighbourhoods. There is fortified wall around the periphery for the protection. Community

neighbourhoods and typology are the result of the culture of the city. City core has uses like religious, recreational, commercial and educational and mostly these are mixed uses. Residential areas setup is continued on ethnic and occupational pattern which represents cultural living pattern of previous time. Functions, concept, values these are the components which shapes the physical structure of the old city.

The tangible and intangible heritage of core comprises of Heritage buildings, Temple precincts, Palaces, Squares, Communities, cultural events, Festivals, Ecological heritage.

1.2 Urban Conservation:

Urban conservation is concerned with those parts of the built environment that area of architectural or historic significance. This includes buildings, localities, special gardens or landscapes and other structures. (The National Trust of Australia, NSW). Conservation seeks to restore those monuments or spaces that are important for local and national heritage. It sets standards for new developing buildings such that they are complementing to the heritage character. To conclude we can say that conservation is the process of maintaining and managing change to a historic setting in a way that it sustains and where appropriate enhances its significance.

The urban conservation would be concern inter-related with those components of the urban heritage that possesses architectural, historical and cultural interests. Components that have a special or unique quality or charm that provides distinctiveness either because of its ambiance or because of some distinctive activity centered on or associated with the place. Constitute a focal point in a city of importance to the social, psychological, or spiritual well-being of its residents.( https://indianculture.gov.in/reports-proceedings/report-national-commission-urbanisation-vol-iii).

The prime concern of conservation is to protect and renew the historic environment. In the case of Pilgrim centres in order to accommodate the present and future needs of its inhabitants and to revitalize the function of the old city thereby safeguarding and restoring the traditional urban fabric.(Central Public Works Department, 2013) Revitalization is not the wholesome preservation of everything which is old and archaic but contemplates creative use and reuse of older structures and areas in order to facilitate their continued use and up gradation of civic services (Appendino, 2017).

Different Approaches to Urban Conservation are:

Adaptive reuse, Integrated Area Development, Full Commercialization of Historic City Centres, TDR, Modernization of Commercial Activity, Feedback between Increased Land value and Public revenue.

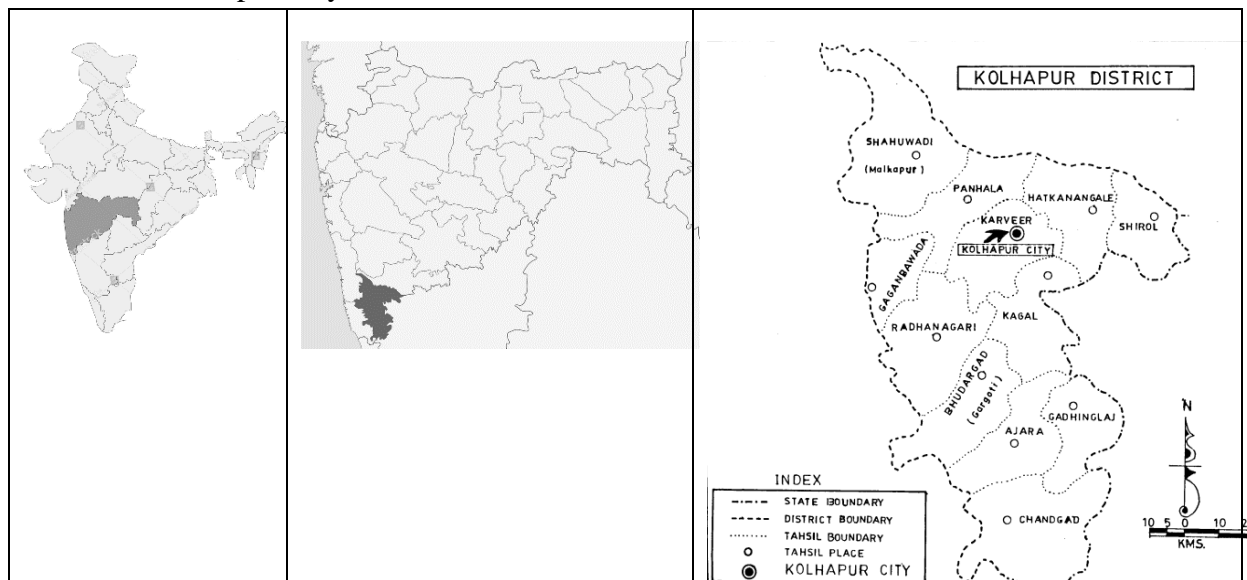1.3 About Kolhapur City:



Fig:1       Geographical       Location       of       Kolhapur       City. (source:  Google.)

Kolhapur city is located in south of maharshtra state governed by Municipal Corporation. Geographical settings of city are 16°42' North Latitude and 74°14' East Longitude and is at an altitude of 650 mts above se level.Major city near Kolhapur is pune which is 240kms by road. Western Coastline os 75 kms away from city. City enjoys moderate temperature changes dropping below 150C in winters and rises above 400C in summer. Wind is generally from western side. Average rainfall is 1025 mm. Kolhapur is one of the economically established metropolises due to the good quality of soil, ample water force and good modes of communication and a united and banking network.

 The city is well connected with Urban Places and market centres both in state of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

City occupies 66.82 sq.kms of area under municipal limit. According to census 2011 population of city was 5,49,283. Kolhapur and its surrounding regions prominently come under the sugarcane belt where the sugarcane is main cash crop. Abundant water force from a timber of gutters flowing through this area, rich land and hardworking people have changed the face of this area giving it a status of the loftiest per capita income in India, also, Kolhapur

has sculpted its name, on the world chart, in product of quality jaggery, tobacco traditional gold garnishment and leather Chappal.

The city resides on the bank of river Panchaganga. It's known as " Dakshin Kashi" on account of the deity" Mahalaxmi" or" Ambabai". Kolhapur is archaeologically an important place in India due to the ancient temple of Goddess Shri Mahalaxmi". The city is famous as a religious place since ancient times. The Ambabai Temple is one of the whole Shaktipeeth from the 31/2 Shaktipeeth in the Hindu religion. Pilgrims in huge number visit temple throughout the year. This number increases up to 2-3 lacs per day during the Navratri festival.

The city of Kolhapur is also known as "Kalapur" because of its rich cultural heritage. City has legacy of Art, Education, Industry and Sports. It also possesses literal as well as mythological significance. The visionary ruler of the Kolhapur state Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (1874–1922) patronised all the cultural resources in the city. He developed the infrastructure of city such that it proved catalyst for all the cultural development. Being a historically and culturally rich city, Kolhapur has a unique character.

The place of "Jotiba" is about 15Kms towards north of the city. The hill station "Panhala" is about 18 Kms towards North West of the city. Both of these places attract a huge number of tourists as well as pilgrims.

2. Tangible and Intangible heritage of the core:

The historic core of Kolhapur exhibits the Heritage monuments, temple precinct, Art and craft communities, talims, sports centers and cultural heritage. Communities along with built heritage provides the canvas for intertwining the tangible and intangible components. Historic core of the city is chosen as it showcases all the heritage setting of the town. Temple complex, Important landmarks and nodes, processional paths and occupational districts.
This is the zest of the cultural heriatge of town. Imageability of this heritage core is highly different from that of one in urbanizing developing core. The level of urbanization is high in karveer tehsil. Hence city of kolahpur is undergoing rapid urbanization. This is being threat to historic core as the imageability is on werge of disapprearance. The character of buildings is loosing, Roads are getting wider and the mobility is harassing the cultural elements of the streets. The landmarks are getting over shadowed by the new urban design elements and are loosing its dominance. Building use is changing at faster rate as everything is getting commercialised, the old residential buildings (vadas) are getting replaced by high rise structures.
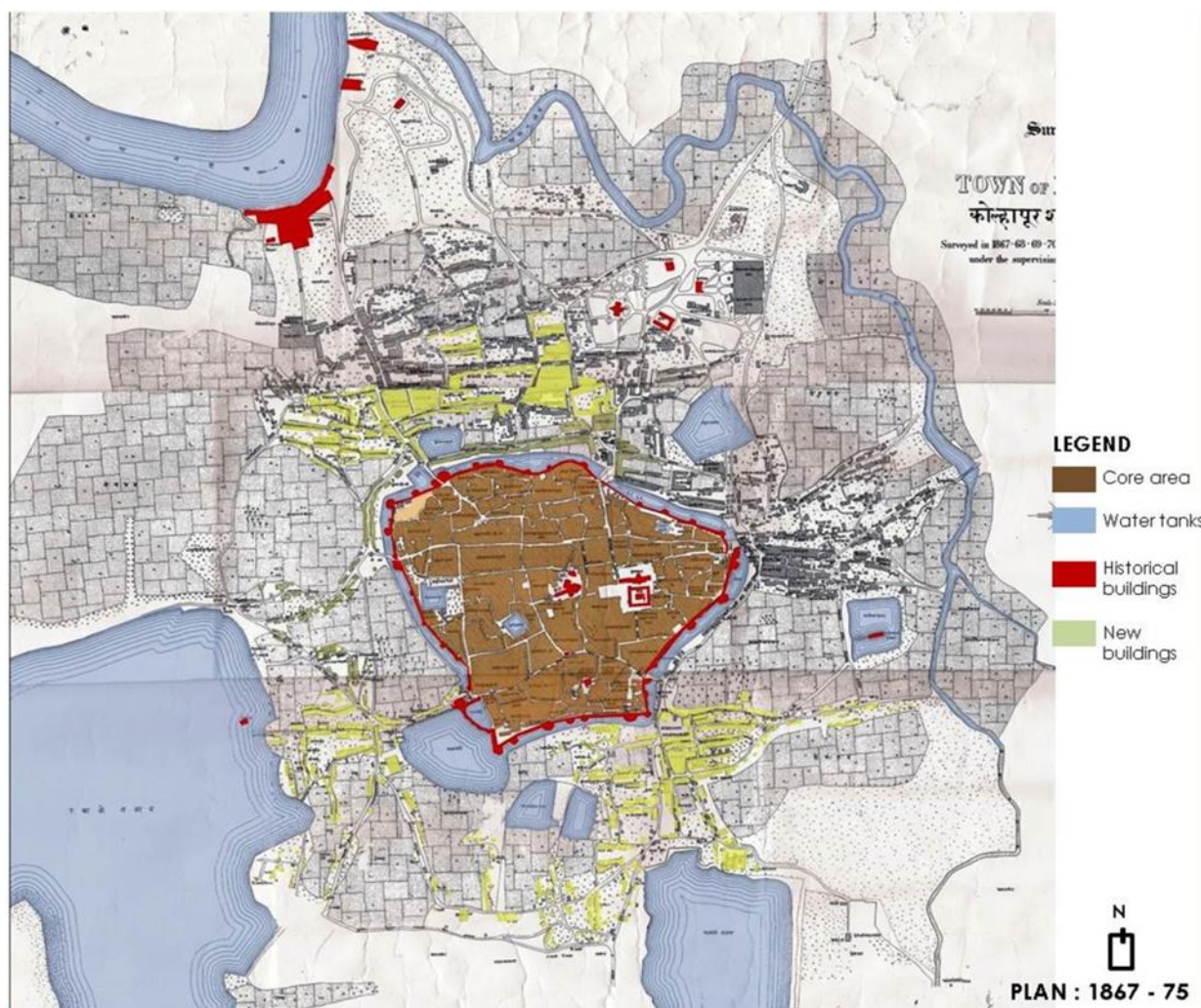
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VOL 8, ISSUE 3  www.puneresearch.com/discovery  AUG - OCT 2023
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Fig:2 Kolhapur map 1867-75                                    (Source:  Mr.Raninga, Kolhapur.)

**2.1 Heritage Monuments:**

The core showcases different glorious dynasties and Eras through the monuments erected. They are the most priced assets of the city. Ranging from the temples to palaces all structures show intricate architectural details and high efficiency in planning. Ambabai temple, Binkhambi temple, Vitthal Mandir, Vishnu temple Kapilteerth mandir are the ancient temples located at the core. Old palace, Pagkhana, Nagarkhana, Rajaram college, Karveernagar wachan mandir, are the structures belonging to royal administrative buildings and institutions. Sports centres like Rajaram club, Khasbaug maidan and Talims are also integral part of the core.

**2.2 Nodes and Landmarks:**

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The then fortification wall had 6 gates which were later demolished for the expansion of the settlements. It was then when all these gate areas were developed as Nodes, and still these six major nodes serve as entry points to the core area. In early period the entry points were noted as 'Ves' meaning threshold of the fortification. Today many nodes are named after the area with 'Ves' as their prefix. 6 major nodes of the core are: 1. Shivaji Chowk. 2. Bindu Chowk 3. Mirajkar tikti (Padmala Ves). 4. Varuntirth Ves. 5. Rankala Ves Chowk. 6. Ganga Ves Chowk. Out of these only Bindu Chowk has some remains of the Fortification wall. Shivaji Chowk has landmark of Chtt. Shivaji Maharaja's Statue, Bindu Chowk has Statues of Mahatma Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Mirajkar Tikti has a island and sculpture dedicated to martyrs and known as Hutatma Shila.

## 2.3 Neighborhood:

Neighbourhood in core are organic in pattern. 12 Balutedar system was observed in early days. A separate sector for each community as per their jobs was assigned. For example, preists lived nearby the temple, Kumbhar (Potter) lived nearby Lake, Chambhar (Cobblers) lived near the area where animal rendering was done (Dhor Galli). Such was the planning of the ancient core. Each sector has narrow lanes organic in patter and still few lanes has structures which are more than 100-year-old and showcase the beautiful architecture of the past era. Even today, Gujari, Chappal lane, Kumbhar galli, Burud galli, Gavali galli are known after their occupation and has their retained their occupation and art.

## 2.4 Art and Culture:

The art of Gold jewelry making is very well known from Kolhapur. Kolhapuri Saaj, Thushi and Wajratik are the most famous designs of the artisans. Food culture is also very famous Misal, Cocktail ice cream, Sangeet chivda, Tambda Pandhara Rassa are the most relished dishes. Wrestling and Mardani khel are the important sports followed. Kushti has a special place in heart of every Kolhapuri. The Akhadas and Talims are the special spaces where the wrestling practices are carried out. The planning and functioning of Talims is yet another a different part of Cultural heritage. Rural boys come to Kolhapur to get trained in Kushti. Other sports observed are Mallkhamb, Bull Fight, Sath Mari, Buffalo Race and Mardani Khel.

## 2.5 Festivals and Events:

At core there is dynamism in the communities living. All the festivals of every community is celebrated by all with equal and great enthusiasm. With temple as the most celebrated place Navratri is celebrated on larger scale. Along with it the Mohram, Eid is also celebrated with great zest at Babujamal masjid. Similarly, Mahavir Jayanti, Ganesh utsav, Shivjayanti are celebrated on large scale. Even today there are pendals seen at nodes and lanes where Ganesh

utsav is celebrated and people showcase their talents by doing stage decorations, Live plays and performing Powadas.

### 3. Need for Urban Conservation in the core:

With growing urbanization there are many changes that occur in the urban fabric of the city. The city goes through various transformations, where maintaining a balance between the heritage monuments and contemporary buildings is crucial. Rapid pace of development leads to high density and increase in commercialization in core areas. Hence a drastic change in land use patterns and land values is observed. This attracts more stakeholders like builder developers to come up with new schemes, merely giving attention to the historic character of the area. This is the major reason for the loss of character.

### 3.1 Heritage Monuments:

Abandoning structures is the most common reason for character loss of spaces, these structures deprived of human interaction and functioning get dilapidated leading to loss of heritage. The development of urban infrastructure is building pressure on core and hence heritage buildings are falling prey to demolition, this only because of lack of knowledge about conservation amongst the stakeholders. There is no standard grading of monuments done hence the activities and function carried out at a particular monument may lead to its depletion. Analysis and documentation of monuments should be done so that the preventive measures could be taken up and the heritage could be preserved.

### 3.2 Nodes and Landmarks:

Increase in the vehicular traffic results in congestion at nodes. The ratio of road widths and the traffic moving is inversely proportionate, hence traffic jams are seen more often. The nodes if analyzed are the major commercial zones of the core, hence the traffic of visitors and local both are observed. Insufficient parking spaces and no dedicated pedestrian lanes also leads to chaos. All the nodes are now working a traffic islands which results in negligence of the landmarks present.

### 3.3 Neighborhood:

With time the organic and congested areas are lacking to cater the needs of the residents. Many are migrating to the newly urbanized areas of the city. If studied one can understand that the percentage of residential buildings has decreased in past decade and commercial, mixed use is rising. This is also affecting the occupational communities of the core as they do not have a proper area to showcase their art. No tourist is aware about such occupational

areas and hence they are getting extinct. Occupation of artisan communities and the character of each lane is now drastically changing with the urbanization.

## 3.4 Art and Culture:

The demand for traditional jewelry and artifacts is decreasing day by day. The artisan's younger generations are now getting engaged in other jobs leading to end of the legacy. There are very few artisans who work on handmade footwear and jewelry. This legacy is the most celebrated one for the city and the most important tangible aspect. Hence conservation and revival of these communities should be done on priority.

## 4. CONCLUSION:

Developed infrastructure facility has led to increase in number of tourists. Kolhapur exhibits the perfect blend of Religious, Heritage and Cultural activities. These are the attraction points for tourists. Today if the importance is given to conservation of the heritage, this tourist footfall will surely be maintained. Kolhapur has a potential to best example of cultural tourism. Hence to promote the city as a Cultural Tourist place, conservation of the Tangible and Intangible heritage is crucial.

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