

Saint Gobain Scholarship – Phase 2 Report

Sahyadri Ranges Revival

Taking Base Case Of Rajmachi Plateau.



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Executive Summary:

UNESCO defines Cultural landscape as "Combined works of nature and of man that illustrate the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment, and of successive social, economic, and cultural forces, both external and internal." Cultural landscapes provide a sense of place and identity; they map our relationship with the land over time; and they are part of our national heritage and each of our lives. Protection of Cultural landscapes is important as they can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain or enhance natural values and biological diversity in it. These protected landscapes hence become an important asset to achieve the 17 goals of Sustainability recognized by UN and can become an important asset to counter Global Climate change.

Sahyadri ranges today stand as one of the finest testimonies in the world, with a wonderful blend of diverse cultural and ecological fabrics. It forms and even today shows the interdependencies of nature, man, and his cultural systems. Sahyadri ranges are known for its beautiful landscapes, adventure activities, and the strong historical associations of Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Marathas with the forts and defence systems. These ranges are the northern part of the Western Ghats, spreading around 1,600 km across the western part of the Deccan Peninsular along the Arabian Sea coast, from Gujarat to Kerala. Geographically, these ranges play a very important role in connecting Konkan to the Desh. Also, being situated along the western coast, these ranges receive heavy rains, hence creating a very distinct cultural landscape. These assets are finely recognized by international forums like UNESCO; the region is recognized as a World Natural Heritage Site; and it is also recently in the process of getting a serial nomination for its military landscape. Even with these recognitions and diversity, somewhere it is losing its identity, and as a result, the communities living here since ages and the people who are the backbone of this landscape suffer. The economic growth of Maharashtra as a market and capital hotspot has resulted in rapid urban development in the neighboring cities, which has hit these sensitive regions, causing issues of encroachment, lack of management and planning, cut down of natural resources, lack of economic developments, etc., creating a huge threat to this unique setting. As a result, the people and communities from these regions are migrating to urban settlements for a better lifestyle, leaving behind the culture and traditions that directly or indirectly formed the identity of these regions.

Hence, there is an urgent need to revive the cultural identity of the Sahyadri ranges and preserve their sacredness. Through this grant, the project aims to create awareness amongst the communities living in these regions by educating them and further spreading this awareness among tourists and visitors. The project takes the base case of the Rajmachi plateau as one of the sites in the Sahyadri ranges, which creates a boot start, and in later phases could be replicated to other parts of the Sahyadris ranges.

The vision of the project is to take this project to each and every heritage site in the Sahyadri ranges and work for these communities living in these valleys of the Sahyadris. Following the footsteps of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who understood the advantage and unique setting of these ranges and made it as the backbone of Maratha Kingdom and established a "Swarajya" protecting the local communities "Rayat" and training them to defend their own land as "Mavlas" (Maratha Soldiers from Sahyadri ranges are locally known as Mavlas). Our Mission is to reestablish the identity of these ranges who once stood pride, through spreading awareness amongst the local communities and the visitors visiting the place.

Methodology:

The methodology shows the overall process of the project. The highlighted ones are the completed phases. The phases completed are the first three stages of the chart; others have been mentioned with the exact phase they belong in.



Phase Information:

The Phase 2 focused on collecting the onsite information in form of documentation and community interactions. Hereby attaching some from the site visits:



View of Udhewadi village and surrounding Sahyadri ranges from Manranjan fort.



Fanasrai village on way to Rajmachi plateau and view of the two forts Shrivardhan (left) and Manranjan (right) taken from the plateau.



Lakshman Umbare, senior person in the village



Subhash Ware, Police Patil of the village



Khandu Datu Ware and family



Tukaram Umbare, Sarpanch of village



Babar Panga Sawant



Ram Maruti Janghe and his wife

Having interaction with these people of the village always gives new spirit and enthusiasm to work ahead in the project. A good insight on the overall development of the village and stories while working with G.N. Dandekar and Mukund Gondhlekar for upliftment of the place shows how far they have struggled.



Communities and their daily routines, struggling with basic necessities. Majority people living there are elderly and the most of the young generation are in nearby urban cities and towns for better living.



Traditional cooking method on "Chula" made out of mud. Traditional construction systems with use of mud, jungle bamboo, wood, stones and due to recent storms the country tiles/Mangalore roofing is replaced with these sheets.



Verandah floored with cow dung finish and kata for seating, backyard extended roof for storage of large amount of wood and other ancillary things is common in these traditional houses.



Tourism and cattle farming are the major occupation of these people with majority of people now depend on the income through tourism. Farming was practiced before but due to various challenges they had to stop. Now due to this strong context, tourism has been important aspect for income.



Construction of the RCC framed structures are seen growing around this traditional art of construction. (Udhewadi village with backdrop of Manranjan fort)

Heritage Documentation:



Various iconography spread across the Plateau, adding up to its cultural value.



These stone are found in large no. on the plateau known as Samadhi shilla



4 Major temples built along large period across the plateau, (1. Gondeshwar, 2. Hanuman, 3. Bhairoba, 4. Hanuman and Ganesh)



Kondhane Buddhist caves showcases one of the finest rock cut architectures of Maharashtra.



The fortified military landscape of the whole plateau astounds with the layers and magnificent construction of these fortifications across the plateau with the two citadels Shrivardhan and Manranj. Various elements like double layered bastions, triple layered fortifications, uniquely designed loopholes and concealed gateways showcases the uniqueness of this fort.



The fort has a well-planned water system in form of various tanks and lakes which even today satisfy the needs of the villagers and tourists.

Plan of Action:

The further is the cost distribution of Phase 2:

Sr No.	Phase 1	Amount (Rupees)
1.	Site Visits to Rajmachi and context	10,450/-
2.	Use of tools	5000/-
3.	Visit to some other sites for case study	4,600/-
Total:		20,050/-

In Phase 3, we would be starting analyzing the content documented so far, also we would be start preparing contents for panel design as these contents would be cross verified by experts. These Panels then would also be shared with the Ethos team for their comments. Then Phase 4 will finally look at the execution of these panels on site. The Phase 3 and 4 plan of action is as follows:



The further is the cost distribution required for Phase 3:

Sr No.	Phase 3	Amount
1.		
2.		
3.		
Total amount -		

