

**Academic Year 2022-23**

**Department of English**

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022

The Principal & IQAC Co-ordinator  
A. V. College of Arts, K. M. College of Commerce.  
E. S. A. College of Science  
Vasai Road (W).

**Subject: Permission to hold conduct survey of folk stories of Vasai taluka**

Dear Sir

We, at the Department of English wish to conduct a survey at the college level, according to the details given below:

**Topic:** Survey of Folk stories of Vasai Taluka

**Participants:** Students of SYBA A/F

**Objectives of the survey/ activity:**

1. To familiarize students with the unique local stories of the Vasai taluka
2. To acquaint students with the rich cultural heritage of the region which is fast disappearing due to rapid urbanization
3. To record some of the legends, fables, traditional knowledge of the local people

**Timeline of activity:** December 2022 to January 2023

Survey is for: Students

Other colleges involved: No

**No. of participants:** 06

**Expected expenditure:** Rs. 2000/-

**Source of funding:** College

We will be grateful to you if the permission to organize the seminar/ webinar or conduct survey or activity is granted.



Thank you. I am,  
Yours faithfully,

Mate

(Sign of the Head of Dept./ Convener/ Chairperson)  
Name: Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar-Katre

Recommended by:

Mate

IQAC Co-ordinator

**IQAC CO-ORDINATOR**

MDYAVARDHINI'S  
VADYAVARDHINI'S

A. V. COLLEGE OF ARTS

K. M. COLLEGE OF COMMERCE,

E. S. A. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE,

Vasai Road, Dist. Palghar - 401 202

M

Principal

**Principal**

A. V. COLLEGE OF ARTS

K. M. COLLEGE OF COMMERCE

E. S. A. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

VASAI ROAD, DIST. PALGHAR-401202



## NOTICE

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022

### Department of English

The Department of English is planning to conduct a survey of local stories. This is a call to students to involve in the survey to enhance their knowledge about the rich cultural heritage Vasai has. Please meet the Head of Department to register your names for the activity on or before 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

Akshu

Co-ordinator  
of activity

Akshu

IQAC  
Co-ordinator

[Signature]

Principal



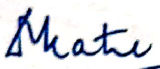
## Post-Activity Report

Academic Year 2022-23


<b>Department</b>	English
<b>Title of survey</b>	Survey of Folk stories of Vasai Taluka
<b>Date</b>	December 2022
<b>In collaboration with:</b>	NA
<b>Objectives of the seminar/ webinar/ workshop/ guest lecture/ survey/ activity:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To familiarize students with the unique local stories of the Vasai taluka</li><li>2. To acquaint students with the rich cultural heritage of the region which is fast disappearing due to rapid urbanization</li><li>3. To record some of the legends, fables, traditional knowledge of the local people</li></ol>
<b>Brief description of survey/ activity:</b>	Vasai Taluka is full of ancient sites that come with stories, mythical and legendary. With urbanization, these are rapidly losing out to the internet. The Department of English felt it necessary to document as many such stories as it could for posterity. It also aimed to connect students to their roots in the region. For this, therefore, it encouraged students to visit villages around the college, interact with villagers and record their stories. Detailed reports were made of each visit with photographs and videos.
<b>No. of Beneficiaries:</b>	<p>1) Students: 06</p> <p>i) College: Male: 3      Female: 3</p> <p>ii) From outside college: None</p> <p>2) Staff:</p> <p>i) College: Male: 2      Female: 1</p>



	ii) From outside college: None
<b>Outcomes of the survey:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased knowledge about Vasai and its culture and literature</li> <li>2. Connection with the culture and literature of Vasai</li> <li>3. Enriching experience for a lifetime</li> <li>4. Introduction to an ancient local culture</li> <li>5. Gaining information on riveting facts, stories, myths about the region.</li> <li>6. Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.</li> </ol>
<b>Feedback analysis of students:</b>	Attached


  
**HEAD,**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
**VIDYAVARDHINI'S**  
**A. V. COLLEGE OF ARTS,**  
**K. M. COLLEGE OF COMMERCE**  
**E. S. A. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE**  
 Vasai Road, Dist. Palghar - 401 202.



  
**PRINCIPAL**  
**A. V. COLLEGE OF ARTS**  
**K. M. COLLEGE OF COMMERCE**  
**E. S. A. COLLEGE OF SCIENCE**  
**VASAI ROAD, DIST. PALGHAR-401202.**

# Feedback Analysis for SYBA Projects on literature and culture of places in Vasai Taluka

6 responses

 [View in Sheets](#)

Accepting responses

Summary

Question

Individual

## Who has responded?

### Email

prashila.khalapfaf21@avc.ac.in

aditya.mohitefaa21@avc.ac.in

deepika.prajapatifaf21@avc.ac.in

pooja.dasfaf21@avc.ac.in

ansari.qasimfaa21@avc.ac.in

nusratullah.shaikhfaf21@avc.ac.in

## Name

6 responses

Prashila D Khalap

Aaditya Mohite

Prajapati Deepika Ratibhan

Pooja Mahendra Das

Kasim Ansari

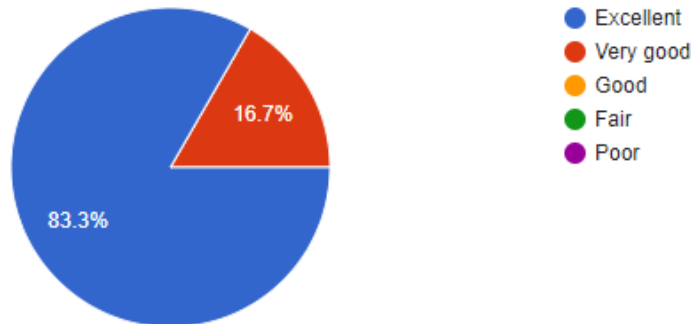
Nusratullah Shaikh

# Feedback Analysis for SYBA Projects on literature and culture of places in Vasai Taluka

How was your experience visiting ancient sites/ villages in Vasai Taluka?

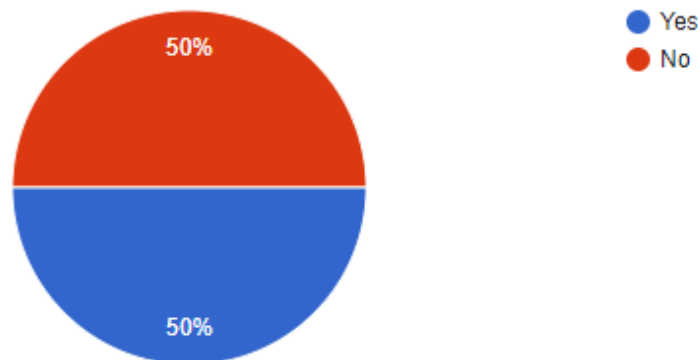


6 responses



Had you heard about the connection of the places you visited with olden times before your visit?

6 responses



If you had heard/ known the stories, from whom did you hear them?

3 responses

I had heard about Vajreshwari's story from our building neighbour granny.

From local peoples of vasai taluka.

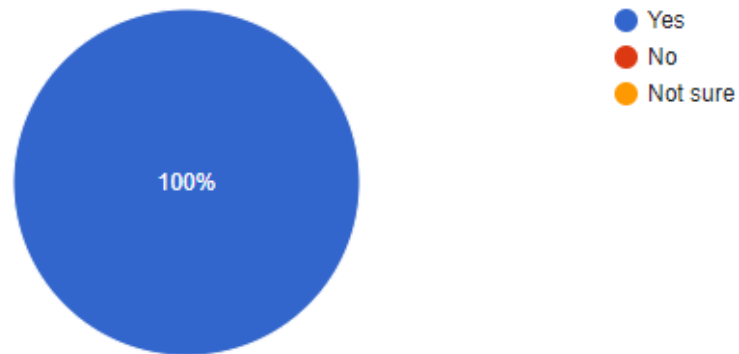
In our surroundings...many people are there with their immense story about the areas.



## Feedback Analysis for SYBA Projects on literature and culture of places in Vasai Taluka

Has your visit enriched you?

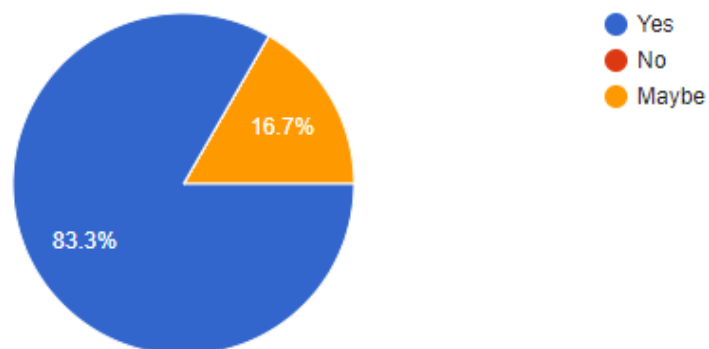
6 responses



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Do you think that these stories need preservation?

6 responses

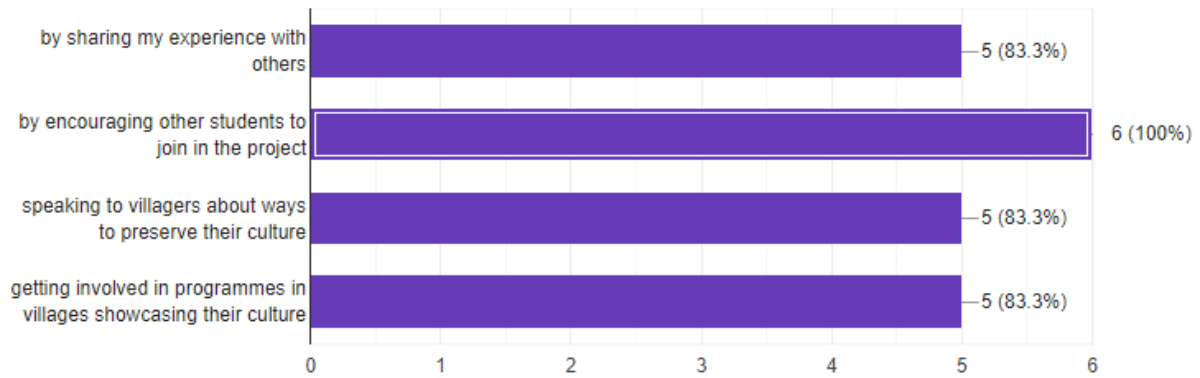


## Feedback Analysis for SYBA Projects on literature and culture of places in Vasai Taluka

How would you like to contribute spreading awareness about these stories?

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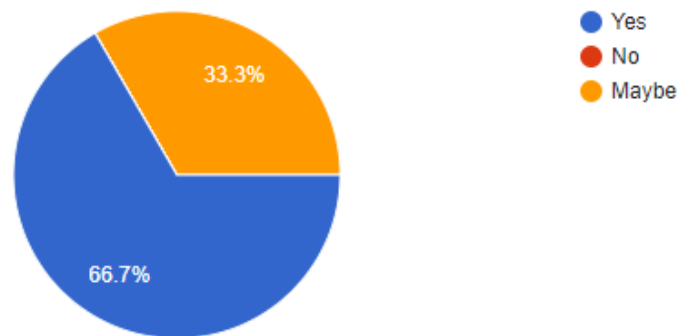
6 responses



Do you think that the experience of visiting ancient sites/ temples/ villages changed you as a person?

[Copy](#)

6 responses



*Vidyavardhini's Annasaheb Vartak College  
Vasai (West)*

SYBA 2022-23  
Department of English

College Project

Title:- Discovering the local literature and  
culture of Vasai :- Bhuigaon

Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre  
Head, Dept of English

**Students involved in the project :-**

Qasim R Ansari  
Nusratullah N M Shaikh  
Deepika R Prajapati  
Prashila D Khalap  
Aaditya A Mohite  
Pooja M Das



*Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*  
*SYBA Project*

**Project Title :- The story of Bhuigaon**

**Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre**

We, the following students of SYBA from Annasaheb Vartak College, had gone for a cultural field visit wherein we tried to discover some of the cultural based stories in Vasai Virar area. This is an initiative to attempt to preserve our culture and tradition and we collected two stories of the Bhuigaon village Goddess. The purpose of the project is to research, collect and preserve them in written form in English.

The following students were involved in the field visit:-

Qasim R Ansari  
Nusratullah N M Shaikh  
Deepika R Prajapati  
Prashila D Khalap  
Aaditya A Mohite  
Pooja M Das

**◆ OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

- ✚ To imbibe the cultural ethics of the locale
- ✚ To spread the awareness of the culture among the people
- ✚ To find a way to preserve the native tradition of the villages
- ✚ Experimental and relational learning through active learning experience
- ✚ Useful application of the inquiry-based learning approach
- ✚ To develop technical competency

**◆ OBSERVATIONS**

On our 4th visit, we visited the village, Bhuigaon which is located in Vasai (West). There we met Mr. Prakash Joshi, who is a native resident there. He has been residing there as one of the Samvedi Brahmins. He along with his mother gave us immense information about the culture.

✚ Culture:-

Samvedi culture is incurred in Bhuigaon and its periphery. It has two types of people, viz., the Samvedi Christians and Samvedi Brahmins. As a traditional wear, the Samvedi Brahmin women tend to wear nauvari (nine yard saree) and men wear jhabba and dhoti on special occasions.

Some of the rituals and practices of the Samvedi Brahmins were presented to us by Mr. Prakash Joshi. Even though the village is influenced by urbanization, they are still tied to their traditions and culture.



Water boiling through the traditional method



Two ladies of the few natives of Dahanu Tribes migrated to Bhuigaon for occupation

#### ✚ Marriage ritual:-

From the ancient times till now the Samvedi Brahmins have been practicing this ritual in a particular way. First of all, during the haldi ceremony before the marriage, the groom's turmeric is given to the bride and hers is sent to him. Another ritual exists where the groom takes all the ornaments with him that are to be worn by the bride to the bride's home.

The marriage takes place at the house itself and after its completion the marriage knot is again tied in the village temple. Simultaneously during the wedding, Samvedi cultural songs are sung by the locals in Kadodi language which is also known as Samvedi language

#### ✚ Economy of village:-

The biggest economic contributor of the village is agriculture and secondly, dairy-cattle. In agriculture, mostly daily vegetables and orchard farming is practiced. Dairy cattle as an occupation has been going on from the past till date in the villages and the milk is sold in the neighbouring markets like the Nirmal peeth (market).



Picture of the backyard of Mr. Joshi's home





Below are some photos of fields of the village



✚ About the village :-

The village has the population of about 6000 to 7000, which comprises a mix of Brahmins, Christians, Bhandaris, tribals and sub-Brahmins. One can only distinguish the religion by looking at the photo placed above the door of every house in the village. The tribals in the village live around Kumbhir Talav, where they have built their Lord Shankar's temple. The tribals of Talasari and Shirsad came to this village to work as laborers and after coming here for a few months they settled in the village by building their own padas and there are three to four tribal padas in Bhuigaon. There is also a Math of Swami Samarth in the village and the Adi Shankaracharya temple in Nirmal with its own significance

Swadhyay is conducted here since a long time, Param Pujya Pandurang Athawale who received the Magsaysay Award is no more in this world but his programme of spreading Bhagavad Gita all over the world is still running and one of his Swadhyay centers is still running in Bhuigaon.



### ✚ Village festivals

Generally, all the festivals of the year are celebrated in the village but the jatra (procession) of village Goddess of Bhuigaon is the most important one. It is carried out every year on the occasion of Devi's Vardhapan and every one in the village dresses up in traditional clothes and the procession goes to every part of the village.

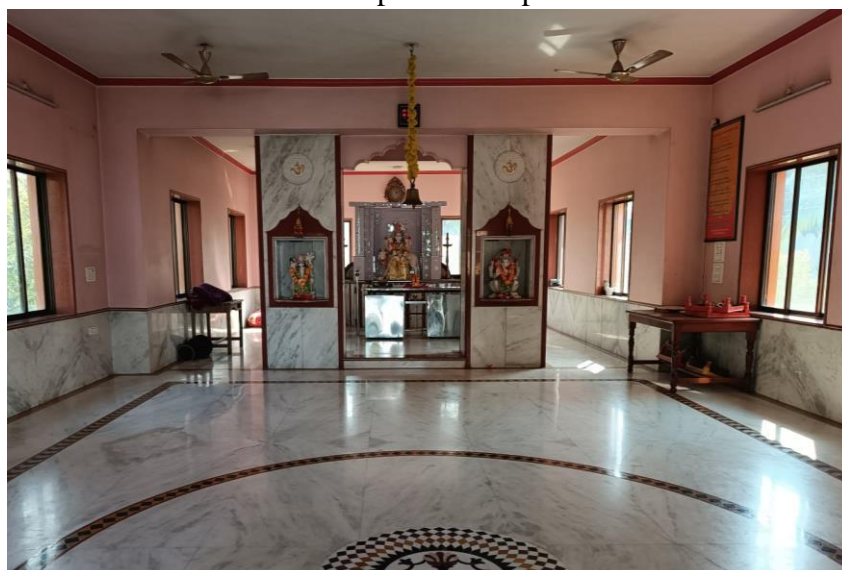
### ✚ The story of Village goddess

The first Kuldevi (Village goddess) was Santoshi Mata when she resided here; it is said that she was a caretaker of children of the village. The villagers used to go to work on farms and kept their children at the temple with some milk for them to drink and when they came back in the evening the children were safe and sound and had drunk the milk given to them. It is said by the villagers that the Goddess herself took care of the children kept at her temple.

The second story is also of the Goddess Santoshi in which she leaves the village. From the past when the temple was built women didn't have any jewellery to wear on any occasion so they used to borrow it from the goddess and return it after the programme or event was over.. This was done every now and then and the jewellery came back to the goddess every time they were taken by the villagers. But, one day a woman took all the jewellery and never returned it. This infuriated the goddess who decided to leave the village and never came back. Now as Santoshi Goddess had left the village they had built another temple of Goddess Champavati who has now become their village goddess from then on.



Champavati Temple



The temple from the inside



The goddess

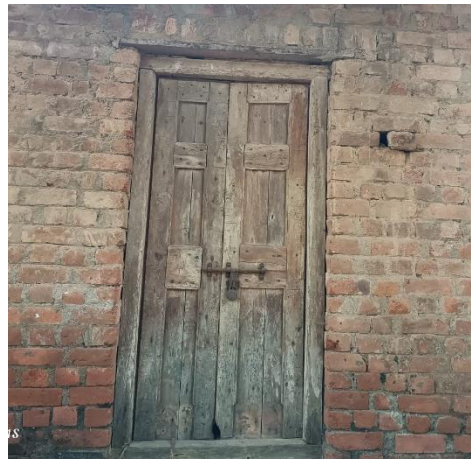
+ Some clicks of the tribal houses in the village







Drying cow pies for use as biofuel



Traditional doors found typically



A photo with Mr. Joshi along with his mother and a local tribe came from Dahanu by origin.



✚ Some local flowers in the village



◆ **OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT :-**

- Increased knowledge and critical thinking.
- A culture enriching experience of a lifetime
- Acquisition of knowledge of the ethnicity of Bhuigaon.
- Gaining information on ancient stories about the region.
- Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.

*Vidyavardhini's Annasaheb Vartak College  
Vasai (West)*

SYBA 2022-23  
Department of English

College Project

Title:- Discovering the local literature and  
culture of Palghar :- Dahanu

Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre  
Head, Dept of English

**Students involved in the project :-**

Deepika R Prajapati  
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Prashila D Khalap  
Qasim R Ansari  
Aaditya A Mohite

*Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*  
*SYBA Project*

**Project Title :- Some details of Dahanu culture**  
**Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre**

We, the following students of SYBA from Annasaheb Vartak College, had gone for a cultural field visit to wherein we tried to discover some of the cultural based stories in Vasai Virar area. This is an initiative to attempt to preserve our culture and tradition and we collected some stories of the village in Dahanu's periphery namely Dharamkata, Kasa and Ganjad. The purpose of the project is to research, collect and preserve them in written form in English.

The following students were involved in the field visit:-

Deepika R Prajapati  
Nusratullah N M Shaikh  
Pooja M Das  
Prashila D Khalap  
Qasim R Ansari  
Aaditya A Mohite

◆ **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

- ✚ To imbibe the cultural ethics of the locale
- ✚ To spread the awareness of the culture among the people
- ✚ To find a way to preserve the native tradition of the villages
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- ✚ Useful application of the inquiry-based learning approach
- ✚ To develop technical competency

◆ **OBSERVATIONS**

➤ A gist of Dahanu

Dahanu village is of the recent times Palghar district. The village is situated in the scenic environment of the Arabian sea and the bay formed by it. Right there by the bay lies many Koolru house along with little mansions on the side with a surrounding of teak and mango trees. The original inhabitants of Dahanu are Adivasi, Malhar Koli and Mitna (Machi) community. Along with fishing in the sea the livelihood of the local people is based on horticultural income like coconut and chickoo.

➤ Some facts of Dahanu

A long time ago dairy catling was also abundant here, so the old name of the village was "Dhenugram"(Cow's village). Due to the depth of the seabed here, the new emerging 'Vadhvan bandar' is also located next to it.

Since Gujarat is on the periphery, there are large number of Gujarati speakers here, even Marathi Gujaratis could be found both living unitedly. One of the riveting fact about the place it that on global level most of the chickoos are exported from Dahanu Taluka. About fifty thousand tons of chickpeas and coconuts are harvested here almost daily. There is also a thermal power plant here which supplies uninterrupted power to the whole of Mumbai.



All religious festivals are celebrated here with enthusiasm and people of all castes and religions live unitedly. After the Parsis landed at 'Navsari' by sea, a large number of them settled on this coast. And got mixed with the cultural environment here. Koli songs, tarpa dance, tribal dance, garba, dandiya are definitely seen here in festivals and festivals along with modern DJs. Dahanu also has a fort on the bay to make it historic, which was formerly owned by the Portuguese. It was later conquered by the Marathas in a treaty.

➤ The commencement of the visit:-

Dahanu was totally a new place for us, there we met one of the local villager, Mr. Ramesh Parshuram Arekar, who told us some features about Dahanu village and also listed some names of some villages of Dahanu for visits.

He stated that, the Saatvi gharana resides, Mahalakshmi Mata resides in the upper part of the temple. It is a community that resides on the foothills of the Mahalakhmi temple mountain and they had pleased the goddess with their devotion .

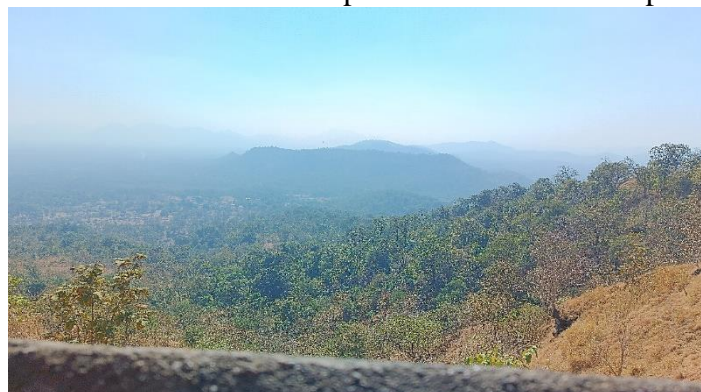
There was a pregnant woman who wanted to have darshan of Mahalakshmi but that pregnant woman could not go up, so Mahalakshmi Mata said wait, I will come down and give you darshan by myself and she did so, whenever the devotee is not able to climb up to have darshan of Mata mother herself gives darshan to him below, so a temple had been established below as well.

It is said that Dahanu's Mahalakshmi, Virar's Jivdani and Karle's Ekvira Mata are three sisters out of which the eldest sister is Goddess Mahalakshmi. The fact that why almost all the goddess lives on the mountain is because in earlier times the demons followed the goddess so she used to live on the mountain where she can live freely without fear of demons.

It is also said that on Vadhvan Bandar Rama has made a pind of King Dashrath (Father of Rama) when he was in exile. The pind is still present there.



The Mahalakshmi temple located on the hilltop



View from the hilltop

➤ Story of Bhimbandh of Kasa

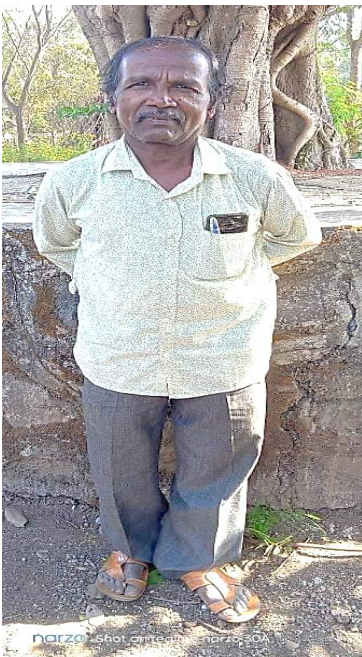
People also say that Bhim bandh which is located across the Surya river was built by Bhima. During the exile, when the Pandavas were roaming around, Bhima proposed to Mata Mahalakshmi for marriage, but for marriage, Mahalakshmi Mata asked Bhima to overcome a challenge.

He said that the water flow of Surya river should be on my side (Mahalakshmi Gad), for this make a dam which should be ready in one night and this challenge was accepted by Bhima and he started preparing to build the dam. Mahalakshmi Mata saw that Bhima was about to finish building the dam before dawn. So in order to avoid the marriage with Bhima Goddess Mahalakshmi transformed herself into a cock and gave a crow before the dawn to show as if its dawn already. Listening to the crow Bhima thought that he was unsuccessful in completeing the condition that was put in front of him by Goddess, so regretfully keeping the dam unfinished he leaves the place. Even now the dam is still unfinished and carries some remains of Bhima's existence but due to the side effects of nature by time the remains have started to disappear.

➤ The one who popularized Warli Art

Sadashiv Mhase, the one who gave us information regarding Warli art, is the son of Late Padmashri Jivya Soma Mashe (1934-2018). Jivya Soma Mashe was an artist of the Dahanu, who popularised the Warli tribal art form.

According to Sadashiv Mashe his father had represented their tribal art culture "Warli Painting" globally. This art got its name after their society "Warli". He represented Warli painting on various theme like the stories of tribal Warli society. He had made 22 Warli painting on such a theme and presented at exhibition at Jahangir Art gallery with the help of Bhaskar Vinayak Kulkarni, because he had no idea how to do it as he was an illiterate person.



Mr. Sadashiv Mashe

There at the Jahangir Art Gallery 22 tribal themed paintings were kept for exhibition for 1 month, later these paintings were taken by Craft Museum in Delhi, at that time those paintings were made on chart paper. Now they make warli painting on canvas, they put two backgrounds on that canvas, they make base by mixing cow dung fevicol together. They use only two colors to make the paintings, for terracotta painting mostly ocher is used, for white color we use poster colors, however traditionally we use rice flour for white color and today even at the time of marriage, when making a wedding chowk, only rice flour has to be used for whstever color you want in it.

Even today when they go to make Warli painting in foreign countries, they do not use poster color there because they want to secure their tradition and we want to show them the actual Warli paintings, so they use orcher and rice flour there too for colouring purpose. Once in Japan too, when he had been invited to showcase their culture so there too instead of using poster color and brush, they used the traditional orcher, rice flour, bamboo stick and date fork.

➤ Folk stories of Warli peoples

Every year there's a God in their pada where all elders on a particular day annually gather and tell some traditionally passed stories one by one and all this goes on for the whole night these stories are the ones that gives them inspiration or the themes to make warli paintings for a particular subject or topic. One of those stories goes as follows, "This trees, plants and the whole forest were all destroyed after the holocaust. Seeds were not found anywhere on the whole earth for planting and growing new saplings. There was only water all over the place the land was submerged into water.

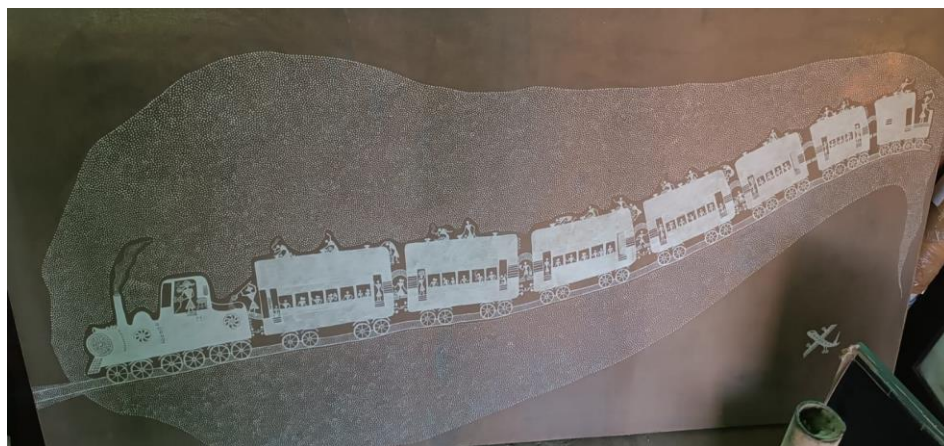


After sometime the water subsided and only ants were visible while walking and the ants were the ones carrying seeds. The seeds were nowhere to be found anywhere even by the gods. But those seeds were found with those ants.

Then the Lord Narayan went to request ants to “give us that seed.” But ants did not want to give, because the seeds were stored by the ants for their families. Nevertheless, on the request of God, the ants gave them some seeds and then God grew trees and plants all over the earth from that seed. So this cause makes our family deity God Narayan and had entered to our Warli Samaj. Because they are worshiped at many places. It is said on this earth that Lord Narayan is an impostor and a fugitive.

Another story of Lord Narayan regarding his acceptance as the family deity. Once, Lord Narayan arrived a bit late for a meeting of gods Lord Narayan arrived a bit late. As a punishment for being late all gods decided that he should be beaten up and so he was beaten up. Even that was not enough for the gods so they suspended Lord Narayan forever from attending any meeting of gods. That’s why he left the meeting and came to the place where the Warli’s resided, the Warli society accepted him and started worshiping him as their only deity.

Some clicks of Warli Paintings :-









### ➤ Fest

On the day of Makar Sankranti, from all the houses in the pada, one person from each house comes and all of them select the direction for hunting. There is a trick in this. After that someone takes a net, someone takes an arrow and someone takes a slingshot for hunting. Then some sticks are kept at one place there and four-five people stand on the side. The sticks are kept as an option to make predictions. And then any one is told to pick up one stick. And whichever stick he would pick up, people go out to hunt in that direction. Rabbits, wild boar and deer are all hunted.

Usually, their diet is normal, but on Diwali they make a special dish of “rice”. When it rains, two people in the house are the ones who follow the diet. They worship “rice” until the second crop is harvested. Everyone eats only after offering rice in worship. On the day of Diwali, that rice is dried and then they all sit together to eat. Rice is given on everyone’s palm to eat. Then after listening to the tune of Tarpa, people go to the forest. This programme continues for at least 3 days.

### ➤ Traditions of the Warli’s

Men wear the langot or loincloth and among the women, the married ones take the *pallo* on their shoulders and those who are not married don’t. Unmarried girls cannot even wear green bangles and cannot tie black knots around their neck because it is considered as mangalsutra in tribal society. This knot in the neck is removed only after the death of the husband. And that too is removed by pulling the black thread only by holding the hand of the dead husband.

Also, a “Rawali” puja is done, in which nature is worshipped. This puja is for 3 days in which only men are allowed to go; ladies are not involved in this puja. There, in the forest, “Savari” goddess is worshipped. This has been going on for generations. This puja happens at the time of Dussehra.

### ➤ About Warli painting

People of many communities like Warli Malhar Koli and Thakur make Warli paintings. But they all have different customs. For instance, making nude paintings is strictly prohibited in the Warli community, but the other two communities make nude paintings.

At the time of marriage, “Chowk” is written in both the houses of marriage. “Palgut” goddess is written for the goddess. People of the Warli society did not know “painting”. They knew only “chowk” but when Bhaskar Vinayak Kulkarni, who was a resident of Malhad, came to see such a chowk in marriage. Then he saw Savasni Bai (married women) writing a Chowk.

After seeing that lady, he thought of putting up this art on a global level by presenting it in the Delhi’s Crafts Museum where every year artists from every state come to showcase their special talents in the field of arts. So he wanted to take that lady and 3-4 people with her. But the ladies were persuaded not to go there by themselves. Then people suggested that if Jivya Soma Mashe, he goes



with them then only the ladies could go. Then Jivya Soma Mashe took five people. It was Jivya Soma Mashe himself who started making different paintings there.

Pleased with his work, he was again called to Delhi in the second year. There he made Warli paintings on different themes. After this, Jivya Soma Mashe was sent from India to the exhibition in Germany and he was accompanied by a group of 24 artists.

Some pictures of a school in Ganjad:-





Some photos of the local vegetation: -



◆ **OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT :-**

- Increased knowledge about local culture and critical thinking capacity.
- A culture enriching experience for a lifetime
- Acquisition of knowledge of the ethnicity of Juchandra.
- Gaining information on riveting stories about the region.
- Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.

*Vidyavardhini's Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*

SYBA 2022-23  
Department of English

College Project

Title:- Discovering the local literature and culture of Vasai :- Juchandra

Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre  
Head, Dept of English

**Students involved in the project :-**

Aaditya A Mohite  
Prashila D Khalap  
Pooja M Das  
Qasim R Ansari  
Deepika R Prajapati  
Nusratullah N M Shaikh



*Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*  
*SYBA Project*

**Project Title :- The story of Goddess Chandika**  
**Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre**

We, the following students of SYBA from Annasaheb Vartak College, had gone for a cultural field visit to Juchandra wherein we tried to discover some of the cultural based stories in Vasai Virar area. This is an initiative to attempt to preserve our culture and tradition and we collected one story of the Chandika Goddess. The purpose of the project is to research, collect and preserve them in written form in English.

The following students were involved in the field visit:-

Aaditya A Mohite  
 Prashila D Khalap  
 Pooja M Das  
 Qasim R Ansari  
 Deepika R Prajapati  
 Nusratullah N M Shaikh

◆ **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

- ✚ To imbibe the cultural ethics of the locale
- ✚ To spread the awareness of the culture among the people
- ✚ To find a way to preserve the native tradition of the villages
- ✚ Experimental and relational learning through active learning experience
- ✚ Useful application of the inquiry-based learning approach
- ✚ To develop technical competency

◆ **OBSERVATIONS**

Juchandra is a small village located in the periphery of Naigaon East. This village is known for its Chandika Devi Temple which is located in Bapane. During the visit of Chandika Devi Temple, we had a talk with the priest and the local people. Through the talk with them. We got to know about the two historical stories related to the Temple.



**The front stairway to the temple**



**Backyard of the temple**



**A small temple at the entrance of the stairway**





**The entrance of the temple**

### **Historical Story According to the Priest**

The temple in here is Swayambhu; it has come on its own. The area in here is called as Dandakaranya and it is also called as Parshuram Bhoomi. The place in here has got popular due to Pandavas worship and the goddess's blessings bestowed upon them. As there are '51 Shaktipeeths' in India, one of them is here in the form of Chandika temple.

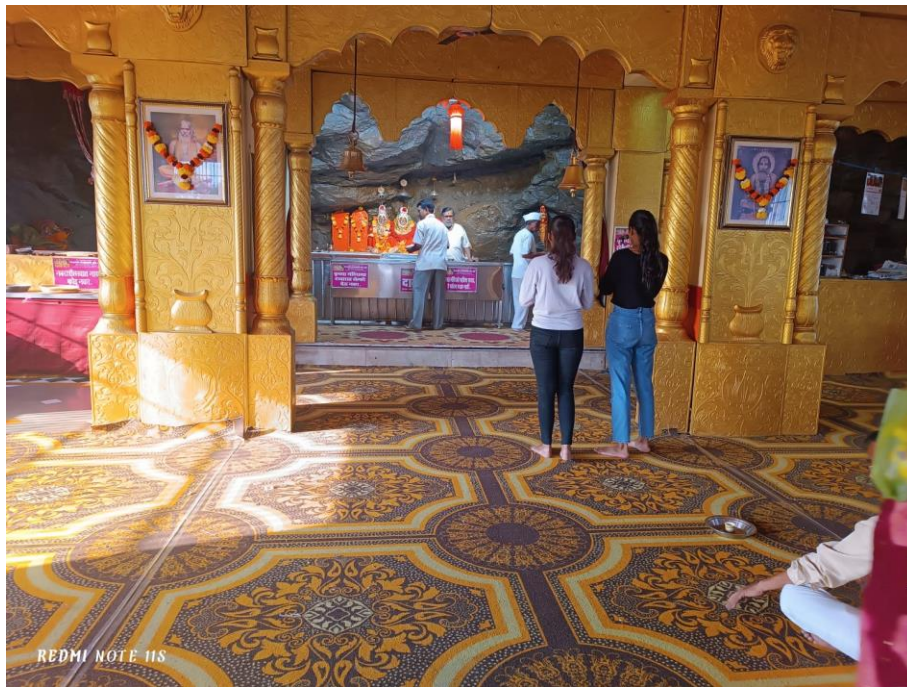


**A click of Chandika Temple**



**The goddess's**





### Story by some local people

Goddess Chandika, Kalika goddess and Mahishasurmardhini goddess these three reside here along with Lord Ganpati. These three goddesses are also considered as "Adimaya." In this Kalyug these Aadimaya (or Aadimaayaa) powers have supremacy so the devotee can reach God only by their grace.



**The architecture of the doors of the temple**

Some boards were displayed on the top of the walls which are as follows along with its translation :-



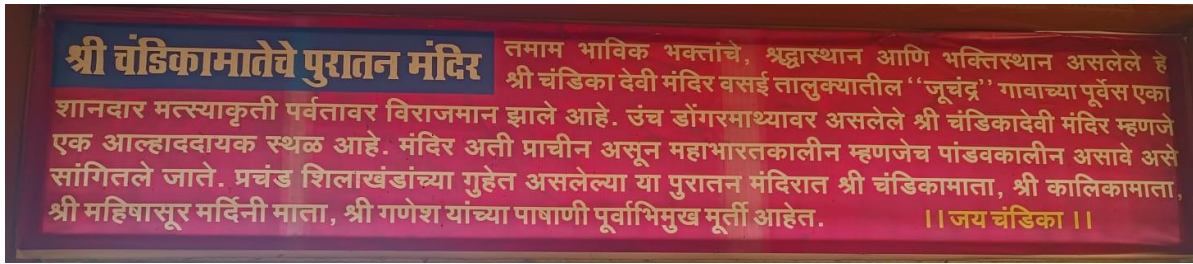
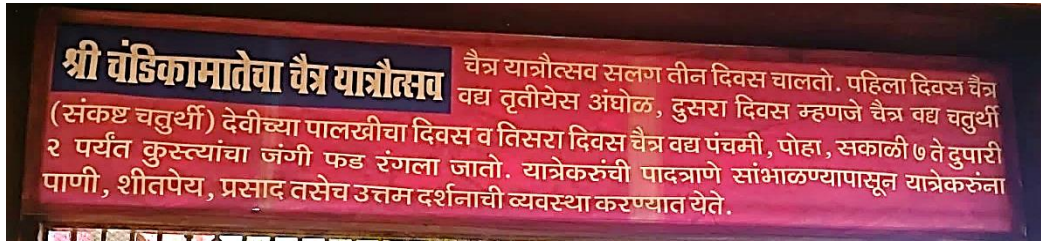
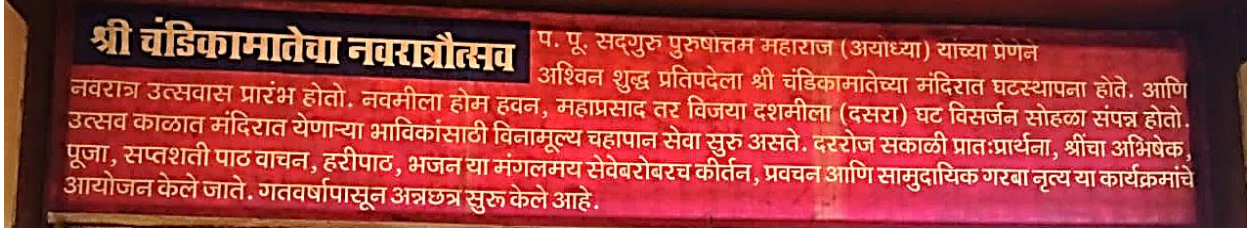
Shri Chandikamata is famous for answering the call of her devotees quickly, fulfilling their desires of devotees. Shri Chandika, Shri Kalika and Shri Mahisharsurmardhini Mata are incarnates of Shri Jagdamba's Rudravatar. They are here to exterminate the Asuras and destroy the wicked and can be seen together only in Sri Chandikamata temple located on the Girishikhara of Juchandra village. That is why this temple is unique in Maharashtra.

The two boards below describe the two festivals that are celebrated every year at the temple.

One states that by the grace of Sadguru Purushattam Maharaj (Ayodhya) Shri Chandika Goddess Navaratrautsav is celebrated from Ghatastaphna on the Ashwin Shuddha Pratipada in the temple of Shri Chandika Goddess and the Navratri festival begins. Homa Havan, Mahaprasad is held on Navami and Ghat Visarjan ceremony is completed on Vijaya Dashami (Dussehra). Free tea service is available for the devotees visiting the temple during the festival. Every morning, programs are organized including morning prayer, Shri's Abhishek, Pooja, Saptashati reading, Haripath, Bhajan along with auspicious service such as kirtan, discourse and community garba dance is been held. Free food service has been available for the past few years on auspicious days in the temple.



The second board states that Chaitra Yatrautsava lasts for three consecutive days. The first day is Chaitra Vadya Tritiya Bathing, the second day, Chaitra Vadya Chaturthi (Sankashta Chaturthi) is the day of Devi's palanquin and on the third day, Chaitra Vadya Panchami, Poha, the battle of wrestlers is staged from 7 am to 2 pm. From taking care of the pilgrims' footwear, providing water, cold drinks, prasad and good darshan are arranged for the pilgrims.



This board states that the Ancient Temple of Shri Chandikamata is situated in the east of the village "Juchandra" in Vasai Taluka. A place of worship and a place of devotion for all devotees, this magnificent temple is seated on a mountain. Shree Chandikadevi Temple situated on a high hilltop is a pleasant place. The temple is very ancient and is said to be of the Mahabharata period i.e. Pandava period. This ancient temple located in a huge boulder cave has stone east facing idols of Shri Chandikamata, Shri Kalikamata, Shri Mahishasurmardini Mata and Shri Ganesha.



A click with the temple priest who gave the information

During the visit we also saw a temple known as "Gaavdevi Temple." After asking a few people there, we got to know that the temple known as "Gaavdevi" is mostly present at every small village. It has been said that Gaavdevi protects the village from the negative power.



**The click of the idol of Gaavdevi**

**◆ OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT :-**

- Increased knowledge and critically thinking capacity.
- A culture enriching experience for a lifetime
- Acquisition of knowledge of the ethnicity of Juchandra.
- Gaining information on riveting stories about the region.
- Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.



*Vidyavardhini's Annasaheb Vartak College  
Vasai (West)*

SYBA 2022-23  
Department of English

College Project

Title:- Discovering the local literature and  
culture of Vasai taluka:- Umrале

Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre  
Head, Dept of English

**Students involved in the project :-**

Prashila D Khalap  
Pooja M Das  
Deepika R Prajapati  
Nusratullah N M Shaikh  
Qasim R Ansari  
Aaditya A Mohite



*Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*  
*SYBA Project*

**Project Title :- Stories of Umrle**

**Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre**

We, the following students of SYBA from Annasaheb Vartak College, had gone for a cultural field visit to Umrle wherein we tried to discover some of the cultural based stories in Vasai Virar area. This is an initiative to attempt to preserve our culture and tradition and we collected some local stories of Umrle. The purpose of the project is to research, collect and preserve them in written form in English.

The following students were involved in the field visit:-

Prashila D Khalap

Pooja M Das

Nusratullah N M Shaikh

Qasim R Ansari

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◆ **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

- ✚ To imbibe the cultural ethics of the locale
- ✚ To spread the awareness of the culture among the people
- ✚ To find a way to preserve the native tradition of the villages
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◆ **OBSERVATIONS**

➤ **A gist of Nallasopara**

Nallasopara is a treasure trove of culture and tradition. The diversity that thrives in Nallasopara can be counted upon by its castes, creed, culture and its rich heritage from ancient times. One of the most interesting fact about this suburb of Palghar district is its ancient names during which this region was called 'Shurparka' that means 'land of the brave' and this can be found in various stone inscriptions found at Nashik and Jamkhed. Even from the economic point of view, from the times of Gautama Buddha, Nallasopara has been an influence in the field of trade and commerce, the evidence of which could be considered by the number of ports that are built in the province.

## Places Visited

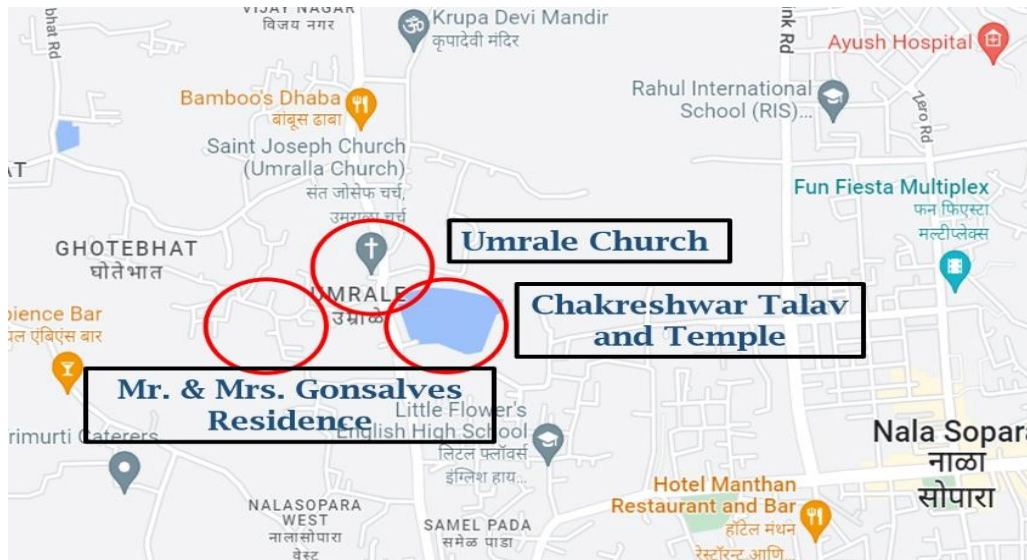


Image taken from Google Maps

### ➤ Umralla Village :- A brief

On our first visit to Umralla village which is located in Nallasopara (West), we met a resident, Mr. John Gonsalves and his wife and gathered some information about the village. In our discussion with the couple, we came to know many things about their culture, their history, the economic condition of the village, living conditions, dialect and festivals of this village.



**A view of Umralla village**



**Mr. and Mrs. Gonsalves House**





**A click with Mr. and Mrs. Gonsalves**

### ❖ **Religion**

The people in Umrале mostly follow Christianity due to forced conversion by the Portuguese missionaries as well as the prevailing discriminating caste system which was practiced in India from ancient times. Added to this, was the lack of awareness among the people. The result was a mix of a Hindu (Maharashtrian) and Christian traditions since even after converting to Christianity they still continued to practice their own culture (Kupari).

### ❖ **Their culture**

Umrале is a village rich in culture. The residents of the place have always made efforts to keep their culture alive till date and are also doing their best to preserve it in future as well. The natives have tried to keep their ancient language alive by speaking Kupari, also known as Kadodi.

### ❖ **Kupari Language**

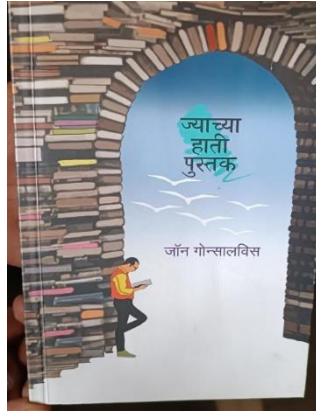
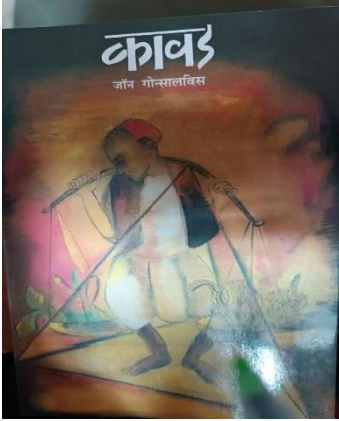
Even after urbanisation, the people of Umrале continue to communicate in their language Kupari, with respect even now, though due to the influence of the English language, most of the new generation have adopted English rather than their own language.

Kupari as a language today, is used by people from Bhuigaon to Arnala along with Brahmins of that area. Kupari word is derived from 'Kumpari'. It consists of Kadodi Christians and Samvedi Christians, which are a Roman Catholic Brahmins subgroup among the Christians (Bombay East India Community) of the Konkan. Kadodi ancestors were a mixture of Samvedi Brahmins, Goan Konkani Brahmins and Portuguese New Christians because of the intermarriages that had occurred previously.

### ❖ **Festivals**

The celebration of their annual cultural festival is mainly for a week and is known as "Kupari Sanskriti Sohala (Mahotsav)". It is celebrated from 26<sup>th</sup> December to 1<sup>st</sup> January; its very first celebration was at Wagholi-Nanda. In this ceremony, folk songs related to their culture, one act play (Ekanki), and also various fine arts and numerous poems, sayings and prose are performed. In the year 2022, this program will complete fifty years.

## ❖ Written Literature



The history of Kupari culture is very ancient and this has been recorded in the book "Kavad"(cultural book) by Mr. John Gonsalves.

There is a book of Lalit Katha based on Umrale village culture also. It includes stories from the interactions of the inhabitants found in their ancient history.

### Two of Mr. Gonsalves books

"Roopwant Phule(On Mother Mary)", "Jyacha hathi pustak (To increase reading culture)" are also some books by him. 'Pashyarank' is a regional annual book of their village.



A photo of Mr. Gonsalves with his book

## ❖ Traditional Attire



Image source:- <https://www.mymahanagar.com/mumbai/festival-of-visiting-kupari-culture/153056/>





Traditional men's clothing for festive occasions, consists of dhotar, kafja(jacket), red cap on the other side women tend to wear nauvari (nine yard), red saree and choli and povala ornaments.

Image source: <https://vasaikupari.blogspot.com/2010/07/vasai-culture.html>

### **Traditional attire of Kupari culture**

#### ❖ **Wedding rituals**

Though they follow Christianity they still believe that their roots lie in typical Hindu culture and so, along with the exchange of rings they even wear Mangalsutra and even the marriage mandap is made by using banana stalks, marigold flower decorations and mango stems

#### ❖ **Standard of living:-**

The living conditions of the settlers in Umralla village are very simple and humble because the population is mainly farmers and there is a lot of natural richness.

#### ❖ **Cultivation: -**

They have large scale cultivation of rice, banana and seasonal mangoes as well as flower farming using various methods. They cultivate, on a large scale, flowers like Tagar, Jai, Jui, Sonchafa, as well as holy Basil.



**A field of Umralla**



**Mango tree**



**Banana tree**



### **Tagar**

Rice is grown in the monsoon season. Farming is very beneficial to the settlers here. Flower cultivation in winter is very important for their trade. There are many methods of farming and trade is promoted using these methods. The people being mostly farmers, the people here are physically very healthy, and because of their life time farming, the people of the place love to live and interact with nature in various ways.

### ❖ **Place of worship**



**St. Joseph Church, Umrle**

The establishment of the St. Joseph Umrle Church basically was done for the welfare of the people more than 40 years ago. There was no place of worship for the people till then and they had to cover long distances just for the prayer, so in order to provide them a facility they decided to build a church in the area.

### ❖ **Cultural Story:-**

Two interesting culture related stories as told by Mr. John Gonsalves' elders and passed on to the next generation in the form of oral tradition.

### **To serve your pets**

There is a story which is now being followed as a tradition that whenever some family has to go out of town for some days, the members of the house should first serve some food to their domestic animals (dogs, chickens, cats, cows, etc) and see that they are looked after in their absence. The belief behind this is that if this is not done, the animals will curse their owners for keeping them hungry and they themselves will go out for some reason. If we look at the logical reasoning behind



this is that when a family is out for some days their animals should be cared for and not die of hunger and thirst.

### **The curse of the cattle**

It is said that whenever a girl gets married and after some days when she wishes to go back her mother's house, she has to first perform all the household chores, including washing, cleaning, clearing the clutter, etc. and before leaving, she has to give water to the domestic animals at home. So, according to the story, one girl does the same and works for the whole day, but she gets irritated and serves the domestic animals the water which had cow dung mixed in it. As the water was not pure the animals refused to drink it and the lady is cursed by them and before reaching to her mother's house, she is killed on the way itself by an accident.

### **❖ Kupari Culture Phrases:-**

1. **गुबड्याला फुड :-** Tit for tat. Karma gets back, that is, whatever we do will come back to us in some or other form.
2. **भादव्यात लोळली अश्विनात तळली :-** A daughter-in-law who takes rest in the month of Bhadrapad in her mother's house, works to an infinite level when she returns to her in-laws house in the month of Ashwin as in that month farming has to be done. So it is like she gets "fried" while working in the heat.
3. **हाकोटे भेटू :-** Just a normal greeting in Kupari language wherein it means 'Let's meet tomorrow morning' but now it is rarely used due to overburden of the other influencing languages like Marathi and English.

### **➤ Chakreshwar Talao and Temple**

Sopara, according to religious texts, epics, and myths, is believed to be Shurparka, which was established by the 6th avatar of Vishnu – Parshurama. Parshurama also brought various Sanskrit Vedics (ancient sacred writings written in ancient Sanskrit) to teach people. He also shielded the place with his Parshu (axe). Sopara is hence referred to as Parshuramteertha.

Chakreshwar Talao is important for various reasons. Hindu followers believe that the Chakreshwar Talao came into existence because it was dug by Krishna's chakra. Today, the main reason for the importance of Chakreshwar Talao is because of the adjoining Chakreshwar Mahadev Mandir. It is also been said that the water of Chakreshwar Talao is as pure as Ganga.



According to the myth, the area around and the Konkan belt was created by Parshurama. It is believed that Parshurama shot an arrow into the sea upon which the sea subsided giving birth to a fresh new piece of land for the Brahmins and this is the land of Nirmal. The entire legend is recorded in a late Sthalapurana by the name of *Nirmal Mahatmya*. This Purana covers various descriptions of Parshurama and his conquests around Nirmal or Sopara. It also describes how Parshurama created 2 Teertha's here – Nirmal and Vimal.

It is believed that there came a time when the temple was assaulted and burgled. The trespassers plundered the temple and a large number of the idols were crushed and tossed into the lake. Quite a long while later the idols were recovered from the lake and set up in the present structure of the temple.



Chakreshwar Temple



Brahma Idol

The temple compound wall had a row of stone carvings of different Hindu deities. Legend says that they were all retrieved from the lake. The original temple was destroyed by the Portuguese who destroyed most of the temples in the Bassein area after they took it from Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat.

Temples of Brahma are rarely erected and there are very few temples of Brahma making Chakreshwar temple one of its kind. The Brahma idol here is a standing *sammukha* image, wearing a *jata-mukuta*. Among three of his faces which are seen, only the middle one has a beard. The god holds the *akshamala* and the *sruva* in the lower and upper right hands, and the *kamandalu* and the *pothi* (unbound book) in the lower and upper left hands. He wears a long garland reaching below his knees. On either side of the god appears a female figure carrying a bundle of *kusa* grass. His vehicle, the swan, is on his left, and an attendant on his right. It is, by far, the most impressive idol ever one might have seen.







### **Goddess Gajalaxmi**

Some other prominent symbols in the compound are one of Gajalaxmi - Goddess Laxmi with elephants on her sides. The elephants are portrayed as sprinkling water from their trunks on the Goddess. Another beautiful symbol is that of Hari Hara - a mix of Shiva and Vishnu. The principle temple likewise has a couple of idols and one that catches attention is that of a shapely woman holding a parrot in the hand. It is a genuine perfect piece of art.

◆ **OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT: -**

- Increased knowledge and critically thinking capacity
- A culture enriching experience for a lifetime
- Introduction to an ancient local culture (Kupari)
- Acquisition of knowledge of the ethnicity of Nallasopara.
- Gaining information on riveting facts, stories, myths about the region.
- Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.

◆ **REFERENCES:-**

As on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022

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<https://www.ishtadevata.com/temple/chakreshwar-mahadev-mandir-nala-sopara-palghar/>

<https://www.inditales.com/sopara-port-tirtha-mumbai-heritage/>

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*Vidyavardhini's Annasaheb Vartak College  
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SYBA 2022-23  
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College Project

Title:- Discovering the local literature and  
culture of Vasai taluka:- Vajreshwari, Ganeshpuri  
and Akaloli

Name of the Guide:- Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre  
Head, Dept of English

**Students involved in the project :-**

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Prashila D Khalap

*Annasaheb Vartak College*  
*Vasai (West)*  
*SYBA Project*

**Project Title: - Stories of Vajreshwari, Ganeshpuri and Akaloli.**

**Name of the Guide: - Dr. Deepa Murdeshwar ~ Katre**

**VAJRESHWARI**

We the following students of SYBA from Annasaheb Vartak College had gone to a field visit at Vajreshwari wherein we tried to discover some of the cultural based stories in Vasai-Virar province. As an initiative we are trying our best to preserve our culture and tradition and had collected some local stories of Vajreshwari. Trying to revive the essence of our culture. The purpose of the project is to research, collect and preserve them in written form.

❖ **The following students were involved in the field visit: -**

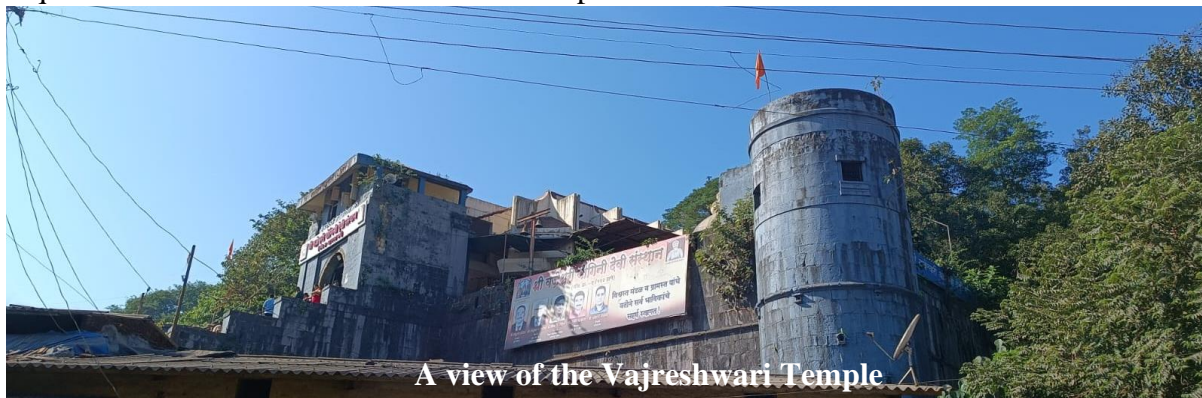
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◆ **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

- ✚ To imbibe the cultural ethics of the locale
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- ✚ To develop technical competency

◆ **INTRODUCTION: -**

Vajreshwari is a village situated near the Tansa river, famous for the Vajreshwari temple and hot water springs. It is a beautiful temple made of black stone located on a small hill and requires one to climb a series of about 50 steps.





The primary deity of the temple, Vajreshwari also spelled Vajreshvari, also known as Vajrabái and Vajrayogini, is considered an incarnation of the goddess Parvati or Aadi-Maya on earth. Her name literally means "the goddess of the Vajra". Built like a fort on top of a hillock, it has an aura about it. The stone dome of the hall reflects the power of the Maratha rulers who built the temple.



The presiding deities are Mahalakshmi, Vajreshwari, Renuka, Kalika and Parashuram (one of the few places with a prominent idol for Parashuram). This temple is 1000 years old and depicts the Shikhara style of architecture. On the Shikhara of the temple, it is said that there are the sculptures of gods of the four directions, i.e., north, south, east and west. Also, outside the temple there is an idol of God Hanuman as it is said that he is considered to have the role of being a 'dwarapal'.



An outside view of temple



Hanuman idol outside temple

### Mythological story about Vajreshwari Temple

According to Indian mythology there are four eras (Yug)

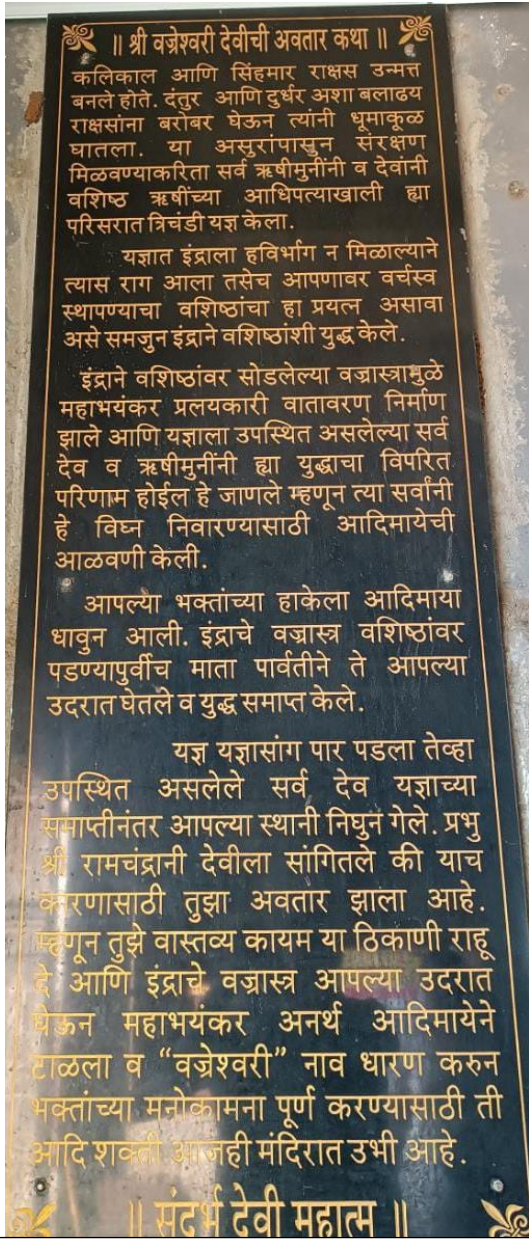
- Satyug (सतयुग) = In this era Lord Vishnu had taken the reincarnation (avatar) as Narsimha. King Harishchandra, the ancestor of Lord Rama was also present in this era.
- Tretayug (त्रेतायुग) = In this era, Lord Rama's story existed.
- Dwaparyug (द्वापरयुग) = In this era, Lord Krishna's story existed.
- Kalyug (कलियुग) = The time of the present.



Image source:- <https://images.app.goo.gl/TGRTpL6eiL3koeb37>

As written in the stone inscription it is said that in the area of Vajreshwari there used to reside two demons, Kalikal and Simhamar, and they both used to deliberately troubling the natives in there for the sake of attention. One day, they reached the peak and along with them they took the other two powerful demons, like Dantur and Durdhar, and tried to destroy the village. In order to get protection from these asuras, all sages and gods performed Trichandi yajna in this area under the leadership of sage Vashishtha.



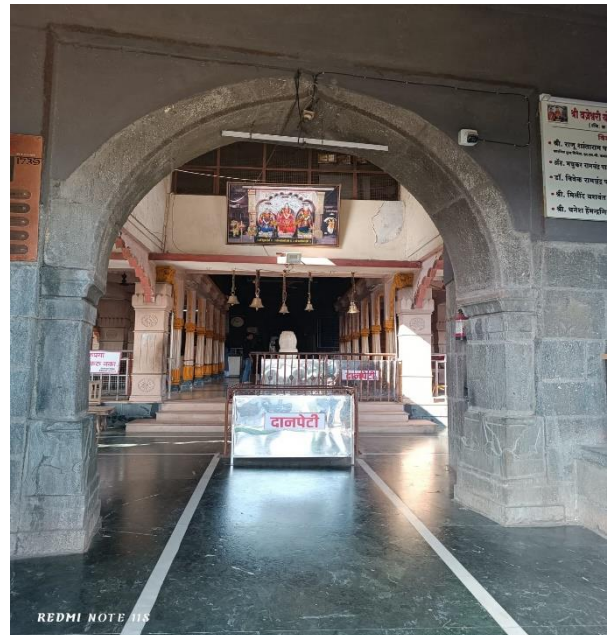


The marathi inscription taken as reference for the mythological story of Vajreshwari

All the gods had been invited to the yajna but erroneously the god, Indra was left. He got angry because he did not get a share in the sacrifice and thought that it was an attempt by sage Vashishtha to dominate him, so Indra fought with Vashishtha. In extreme anger he tried to destroy the village by throwing a 'Vajrastra'.

The Vajrastra released by Indra on Vashishtha created a terrible cataclysmic(disastrous/dreadful) atmosphere and all the gods and sages present at the yajna realized that this war would have an adverse effect upon the village, so they all invoked the Adimaya (Parvati) to avert this uproar. Adimaya ran to the call of her devotees and before Indra's Vajrastra could fall on Vashishtha, Mother Parvati took it in her womb and ended the war.

After the yajna was performed, all the gods present, left to their places. Prabhu Ramchandra requested Devi Parvati that since she had reincarnated here by the call of her devotees, she should make her abode in this place forever. Since the Vajrastra of Indra was stopped by the great Adimaya by taking it in her belly, she was called by the name "Vajreshwari" and that Adishakti still stands in the temple to fulfill the wishes of the devotees. According to our sources, the story of Vajreshwari was in Tretayug because it is related to Maharishi Vashishtha and Vashishtha was the Guru of Lord Rama also it has been said that the Rameshwar temple and the hotspots (also known as kunds) which are located near to Vajreshwari were also created by Lord Rama.



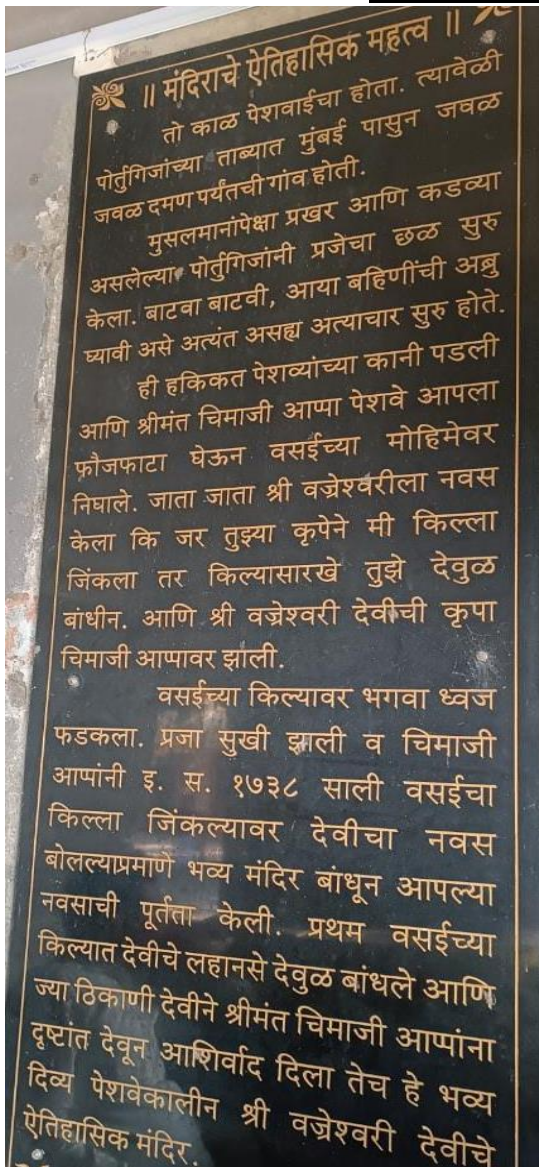
Inside view of the temple





### Backyard of the temple

### Historical significance story of the temple



The marathi inscription taken as reference for the historical story of Vajreshwari

The historical story of the formation of the temple lies in the times of the Peshwa. At that time, the Portuguese were in power and had possession of the villages from Bombay to Daman.

The Portuguese were fierce and cruel towards the natives of the land and started persecuting them. The women of the villages were subjected to immense torture, harassment and many more humiliating ways.

This matter came under the observance of the Peshwas and Chimaji Appa Peshwe also known as Chimaji Balaji Bhatt went on a campaign to Vasai with an army for a war with the Portuguese. On the way he vowed to Shri Vajreshwari that if, by her grace he conquered the fort, he would build her temple like a fort. Shri Vajreshwari Devi bestowed her blessings upon Chimaji Appa.

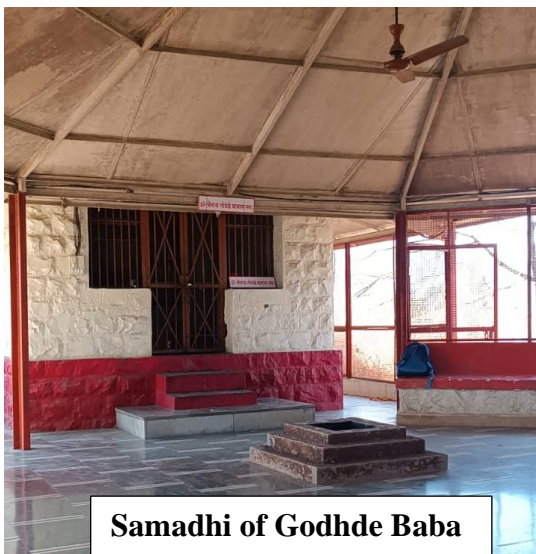
The battle ended and the saffron flag was hoisted on the fort of Vasai. The people were happy due to Chimaji Appa's victory. After conquering the fort of Vasai in the year 1738, he fulfilled his vow by building a grand temple as promised by him to the goddess. So as a first step he built a small temple of Vajreshwari goddess in the Vasai fort itself and after moving from there he had built this majestic fort like temple here in Vajreshwari.





A photo above the entrance of the temple's inner sanctum (garbh griha)

### **The story behind Godhde baba**



**Samadhi of Godhde Baba**

It is said that once Goddess Vajreshwari had come to the village in disguise as a beggar. She roamed around the village to see if the villagers help this poor beggar or not. Nobody in the village looked at her; they did not even ask her for water, due to her appearance, unknown to the fact that she was the goddess herself. Godhde baba helped her out. He served her very well and took care of her. Seeing this affection, as against the cruelty of the villagers, the goddess cursed the village. She cursed that all the villagers would face drought in the month of Chaitra – Vaishakh during the times of jatra. Even today this curse is believed to be still there, since even today the village faces drought during Chaitra month and all the water sources dry up.

Another story of Godhde baba was told to us by an Australian monk whose interview we took which is written in detail below. It is said that once Godhde baba was climbing up the mountain along with goddess Vajreshwari but suddenly the goddess told Godhde baba to continue climbing and warned him to not stop and turn around but after some time he did because he was not able to hear the sound of the bangles that goddess had worn and when he turned around, he found that the goddess had way back behind and he was above her. The goddess then, told him to settle there itself. This is the reason why Godhde baba's samadhi is above Vajreshwari temple, as a mark of respect for his devotion and service.

### **Lifestyle and economy of Vajreshwari**



**Housing in Vajreshwari**





**Balance used in previous era for giving donation according to the weight of a person**

The population is mostly rural along with a touch of urbanization in it. The settlements around here are of traditional village style made up of Mangalore tiles, single floored houses. As time passed even the village went through evolution getting itself a better version in all the sectors and fields converting old-style housing into cement houses.

The progress of the financial sector became phenomenal making it move towards urbanization due to increased tourism and the existence of a cultural heritage site. As it is said “Progress calls people” and the same happened, and soon, the village became popular by time. Another contributor to progress was the schemes started by the government for their betterment. Now, Vajreshwari exists as a mixed lifestyle village.

Source of Income: -

✚ Talking about the source of income, the biggest contributor is tourism that flourishes in the region due to the temple, also the other things that count upon it such as the hot springs there, the nearness to nature that one can experience should also be considered.

✚ The secondary source is agriculture, especially floriculture, horticulture

The amount of agriculture used to be large in the past but now due to the decreasing amount of rainfall, they mostly do cultivation in the rainy and winter seasons; in the rainy season kharif crops are cultivated – rice being prominent and in winter, flower cultivation is preferred. One of the other reasons for the decline in the agriculture industry is due to the low number of employees and massive urbanization. People started moving towards the city for employment as Mumbai from here was just 2 hours away making it an attraction for locals to work there rather than in the village as a farmer.



**Local hawkers near the temple**



Educational opportunities have increased in a large way - leaving the village's originality and incorporating modernity in the villagers too since people, when educated, tend to go out of the village zone towards the city.

Earlier, there was no television to watch as the waves used to be obstructed by the mountains but now each and every house has a television of its own. There are better transportation facilities and convenient lodging facilities for tourists. It is said that Vajreshwari village is a gifted village. Basically, there are seven gifted villages, the first one is Vajreshwari, the second, a village in Bhiwandi, followed by Andher, Madge, Raiman, Ganeshpuri, Akaloli. The original land in this place is in the name of the goddess and nobody can own the land in someone's name except the goddess so people here take land on lease. An agreement is made of the land. The land related affairs are basically handled by the village panchayat and also by the trust of Vajreshwari Devi.

### INTERVIEW OF AN AUSTRALIAN MONK (SWAMI TURIYANANDA)



**Swami Turiyananda**

While we were in the Vajreshwari temple, we came across an Australian monk (Swami Turiyananda), and sought to interview him in order to know the reason for him being here and taking up sanyas. The interview goes as follows:

1. Where are you from?

I come from Australia.

2. What was the point of attraction to Vajreshwari?

My grandmother was from here and Nityanand Baba was his Guru's Guru and there's a connection of Nityanand Baba here with the temple. I had some profound experiences here.

3. What do you find special about this place?

The powerful shakti, presence of the divine mother.

4. Do you believe in the presence of the divine mother?

Yes, I had experienced it.

5. Can you share your experience that you had?

Especially during the aarti we could experience the shakti coming out of the ground when they come and wave around the dhoop in four directions. There is an experience of God's presence there in all four directions, I feel a lot of energy, devotion and shakti.

6. The clothing change of yours?

I have taken sanyas here in Ganeshpuri 10 years ago.

7. So how long are you living here?

Only 1 month now but previously I had come for 6 months.

8. So how did you get so connected with this place just in one month?

Last time I had come for 6 months in 2019 but I had been coming every 2 years or more since the last 15 years.

9. Do you know any stories about this place?

Apart from the story of Bhagavan here, I know about the Vajreshwari Goddess that came from the side of Mandakini Mountain and something like that, I heard some stories.

10. Can you share any of the stories from your experience?

No, I don't have those stories very fresh in my mind.

What I remember is about the Goddess coming here and she was following some Godhde baba, they were climbing along the mountain but suddenly goddess told Godhde baba to continue climbing and told him to not to stop and turn around, but after some time he did because he was not able to hear the sound of the bangles that goddess had worn and when he turned around, he found that the goddess was way back behind and he was above her. The goddess told him to settle there itself. This is something I heard about.

11. What idea made you take up Sanyas?

Well, my guruji asked me to take sanyas and then I said yes.

12. What excites you to become a Sanyasi leaving a wonderful life and coming here?

Well, I was very devoted to the ashram for 8 years and then developed my effort to choose this path of becoming a Sanyasi. I actually love Indian culture. It has made a big impact upon the world, the teachings of the saints, the spiritual practice, the inner world has penetrated all of the western culture. There is a depth of experience here from the sages that is very precious, you know.

13. So being here for the last 15 years have you read any of the epics of Indian Culture?

We mostly study the Bhagavad Gita.

14. Any other culture that takes you towards India more?

I am not sure about it.

15. How was your experience when you came to India for the first time?

First time I had visited in 2002, i.e., 20 years ago before I had the awakening so I was not much into Shakti and spiritual presence but I had the feeling of coming home and being welcomed by the Mother, you know and even on the first day I had spent few hours in Delhi everyone there was so loving, welcoming and looked after me and then from the train I was travelling for 3 days. I made lots of friends and you know, I was invited to visit people's homes and so on and I felt like no where in the world actually I had been welcomed as here.



**A click with Swami Turiyananda**



## GANESHPURI AND AKALOLI

Vajreshwari, Ganeshpuri and Akaloli are all villages located in the periphery of each other. These three villages are connected to each other in some or other way which is mentioned below.

### Ganeshpuri

Ganeshpuri, a village which became famous for its 7 hot springs as well as the for the samadhi of Nityanand Baba that is located in here. The village Ganeshpuri gets its name as, said to us by locals due to the placement of Ganesh idol by Nityanand Baba.

The 7 hot springs in here are named after the 7 travellers who came for shelters and it is often known as साती आसरा by the natives, so the hot springs(kund/कुंड) are named after them, which goes as follows: -

1. Chandra kund – cures all body aches
2. Surya kund - cures all body aches
3. Subhash kund - for healing skin disease due to the sand present in it.
4. Navnath kund
5. Gorakh kund
6. Indra kund
7. Bharat kund

The people who visit here often say that there is a particular smell to the water in the kund which arises due to mixing of water with the lava that is inside the Mandakini Parvat.



**A click with Mr. Bhagvan Desle the one who gave information**



**Swami Nityanand Temple**

### Nityanand Maharaj Story

Swami Nityanand Maharaj's Samadhi is in Ganeshpuri. A story of Nityanand Maharaj is said that once when he was travelling on a train, he was caught by a TC without ticket due to which he was dropped off the train at Kannur station. To the surprise of all, the train didn't move, its engine had stopped, after trying and failing each time they understood that the person whom they had dropped off was not a common man and told him to get back to his place, after which the train started and reached its destination safely. The coach in which Nityanand Baba had travelled is considered as special and that whole coach has been brought at Ganeshpuri beside the Samadhi Mandir.

It is said that Nityanand Maharaj lived in Akaloli for 8 years near Rameshwar temple. The room where He lived is still there intact as it was and its photos are shown in the Akaloli village part of the report. After living there for 8 years He went to Vajreshwari for 2 years and then decided to live in Ganeshpuri till His last breath. People here believe that He is a yogi who used to meditate in Mandakini Mountain.

### Akaloli

Akaloli is a village located in the periphery of Vajreshwari. A small village with immense significance, there are right now, 4 kunds here, but earlier, there were a total of 5 kunds, each having its own importance. Also, the Rameshwar temple here carries a great importance, the story of which goes as follows: -



Swami nityanand's room where they lived for 8 years



Nityanand baba's idol and paduka





**A click of the Akaloli kund**

### **The story of Rameshwar Temple (Akaloli)**

Rameshwar temple is an ancient temple. Its establishment dates back to the time when Rama was in his exile period wherein in, he himself had visited here. When Rama was here, he himself had placed the Shivalinga here with his own hands. Rama used to consider Lord Shiva as his diety and him being his believer, making the temple name as Rama’s God/Eshwar so it is known as Rameshwar. Even here, in this temple there is an idol of Hanuman as the “dwarapal”.



**Rameshwar Temple’s click**



**Dwarapal and shivlinga in Rameshwar Tempe**





### The four kunds of Akaloli



According to an ancient tale it is said that Lord Rama, Sita and Laxman had visited Akaloli during their 14 years exile (vanwas). When they were here Sita (Rama's wife) wished to have a bath and in order to fulfill her wish, Rama shot an arrow into the ground and water came gushing out from that area and after which it was named as kund (hot spring). There were altogether five kunds named Ram, Laxman, Sita, Hanuman and Shiv. The surprising fact here as well is that whoever takes bath in this kund all their ailments are cured. All the pains, aches just are cured due to the magical properties that the water here beholds. The villagers said that earlier the water used to be so hot that even rice used to get cooked in it. Till now the mystery continues, even researchers were not able

to figure out the reason for the warmth that the water carried and the heat being the same throughout the years. The source of the water in the kund is still mysterious and no matter what the climatic condition be the water never dries up. The water in the kund joins the river.

#### ◆ OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT :-

- Increased knowledge and critical thinking capacity.
- A culture enriching experience for a lifetime
- Acquisition of knowledge of the ethnicity of Vajreshwari, Ganeshpuri and Akaloli.
- Gaining information on riveting facts, stories, myths about the region.
- Overcoming peoples' belief in myths regarding the hot springs(kund) rather than scientific reason.
- Enthusiasm to do some more projects like this.

#### ◆ REFERENCES :-

As on date :- 12 Dec 2022, 8.13 pm

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajreshwari\\_Temple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajreshwari_Temple)