



A GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF RANJANGAONGANPATI RELIGIOUS TOURIST CENTRE IN SHIRUR TAHSIL OF PUNE DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

R. S. Jadhav

Abstract:

Tourism as the tertiary economic activity promotes to raise the socio-economic development of any village or area. Religious and cultural centres are the most famous, attractive pilgrim age centres from ancient period in India. As results such religious centres are being developed as pilgrims holy places. Ranjangaon Ganpati is one of the famous places of Ashtavinayak Shrines and well known as a religious heritage of Shirur Tahsil. It is located on latitude 18° 45' 11" N and longitude 74° 14' 25" E at an altitude of about 600 m above the mean sea level. It lies on SH 60 Pune-Aurangabad Highway. Due to locational factors, transportation facilities and Ranjangaon MIDC, the continuous flow of pilgrims is attracted towards this pilgrims place. This present work attempts to assess the trend and flow of pilgrims, attractions, facilities and the development of this tourist place.

For the present paper primary data is collected through interviews of pilgrims, florists, hotel and lodge owners, security, Shri Mahaganpati Trusty members and questionnaire surveys. The secondary data is gathered from the Shri Shiketra Ranjangaon Ganpati Devasthan Trust. GIS softwares are employed to prepare the base map of the study area. Cartographic and statistical techniques are used to compare the trend of pilgrims.

It reveals that the number of pilgrims is continuously increasing and that is not only from the nearby villages but also from the other districts and states. The flow pilgrims is very high Pre Ganesh Chaturthi (Three days before Ganesh Festival locally known as Muktdwar) and during Ganesh Festival, Angaraki Chaturthi, Navratra Mahotsav, Diwali and Christmas vacation. The average number of daily visitors is near about 15,000 in this Mahaganpati holy place. The remarkable development in case of facilities, attractions is observed from 2013. As a result, it is converted from 'C' grade to 'B' grade pilgrims centre in Pune District.

Key Words : Pilgrims, Heritage, Attractions, Flow of pilgrims.

Introduction:

Tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. Shirur Tahsil is one of Tahsils of Pune District which had the historical heritage. Alegaon Paga, Vadhu Budruk, Inamgaon, Pabal, Talegaon Dhamdhere are historical pilgrims places. Asia's famous pot holes is the natural wonder in river Kukadi at Takali Haji. Morachi Chincholi, Bhambardeare agro-tourist attractions of Shirur Tahsil. Ranjangaon MIDC is the fastest developed MIDC in Shirur Tahsil and this is also the recent attraction for industrial sectors. All religions have their Holy places and places of worship. Such places are called by different names like Devalaya (House of God), Temple, Church, Masjid and Gurudwara which mean a building for religious prayers and house for communal worship (KVSJ Jawahar Babu, 2013). Ranjangaon Ganpati and Ramling (old Shirur) are famous religious heritage of Shirur Tahsil.

Study Area:

Ranjangaon village has derived its name from the famous Mahaganpati is one of the Ashtavinayak shrines of Maharashtra. The previous name of this village was Manipur and it is regarded as a famous swayambhoo statue.

Location map of Ranjangaon Ganpati, Shirur, Dist Pune

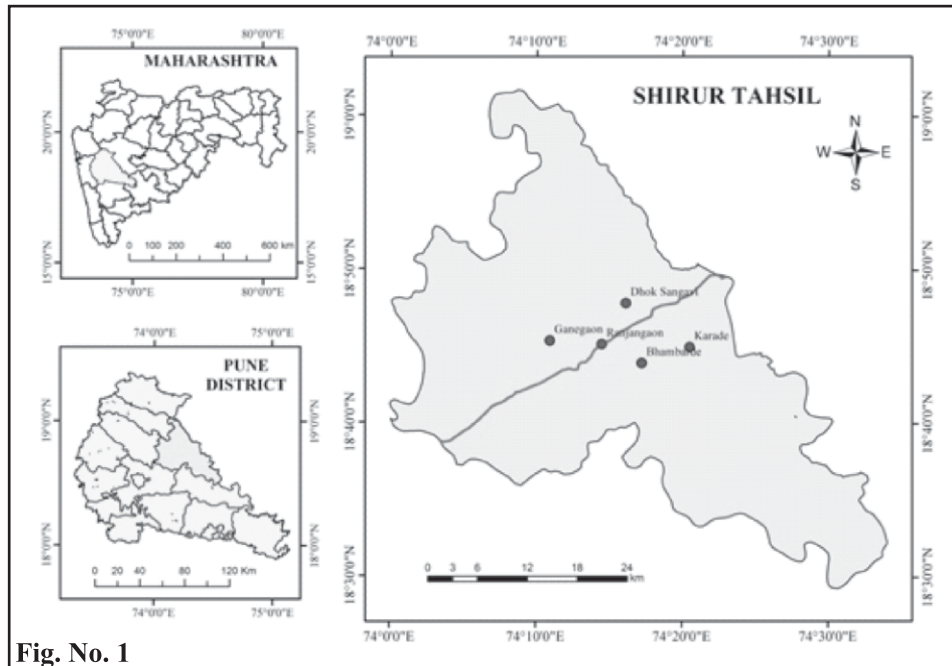


Fig. No. 1

Ranjangaon Ganpati cultural and religious pilgrims place is selected for this research work. It is included in Shirur Circle, Tahsil Shirur and located on $18^{\circ}45'11''$ N and longitude $74^{\circ}14'25''$ E at an altitude of about 600 m above the mean sea level. It is situated on SH 60 and only 51 km from Pune, 35 km from Theur (one of the Ashtvinayak Ganpati Temple), 70 km from Ahmednagar and 240 km from Mumbai etc.

Objectives:

1. To study the flow of pilgrims in the year 2013 at Ranjangaon Ganpati religious centre.
2. To study the attractions of Ranjangaon Ganpati tourist destination.
3. To assess the development of the study area from 1992 to 2013.

Methodology:

For the present paper primary data is collected through the interviews and questionnaire surveys. An interview of florists, lodge and hotel owners, security, Shri Mahaganpati Trusty, pilgrims etc. were taken to know the period, flow, trend of pilgrims. Distribution of Mahaprasad, data of Abhishek, parking vehicles and collection of parking, data of donors, collection of shoe stand have been taken into consideration to find out the number and flow of pilgrims. The secondary data is obtained from Shri Shektra Ranjangaon Ganpati Trusty office. GIS software is employed to prepare the base map of the study area. Cartographic techniques are used to compare the trend of pilgrims.

Discussion:

Ganpati is widely worshipped deity in the Hindu pantheon. Ganesh is widely revered as the remover of obstacles and the God of intellect and wisdom. Ranjangaon Mahaganpati is one of the Ashtavinayak shrines of Maharashtra, celebrating eight instances of legends related to Ganesha. Ranjangaon Mahaganpati is portrayed, seated on a lotus, flanked by his consorts Siddhi and

R. S. Jadhav

Ridhi. The temple dates back to the period of PeshwaMadhavRao. The temple of Mahaganpati is very close to the centre of the town Ranjangaon. The temple was erected during the rule of the Peshwas. PeshwaMadhavrao had constructed the Garbhagriha, the sanctum to house the swayambhoo statue. The temple faces east and it was designed in such a way that the morning sunrays would fall directly on the deity. It has an imposing main gate which is guarded by two statues of Jay and Vijay. The deity is seated and flanked on both sides by Riddhi and Siddhi. The trunk of the deity turns to the left. There is a local belief that the real statue of Mahaganpati is hidden in some vault and this statue has ten trunks and twenty arms. But there is nothing to substantiate this belief. Religious tourism also referred as faith tourism, is a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage and missionary purposes. (Potdar, 2011).

Trend of Pilgrims at Ranjangaon Ganpati :

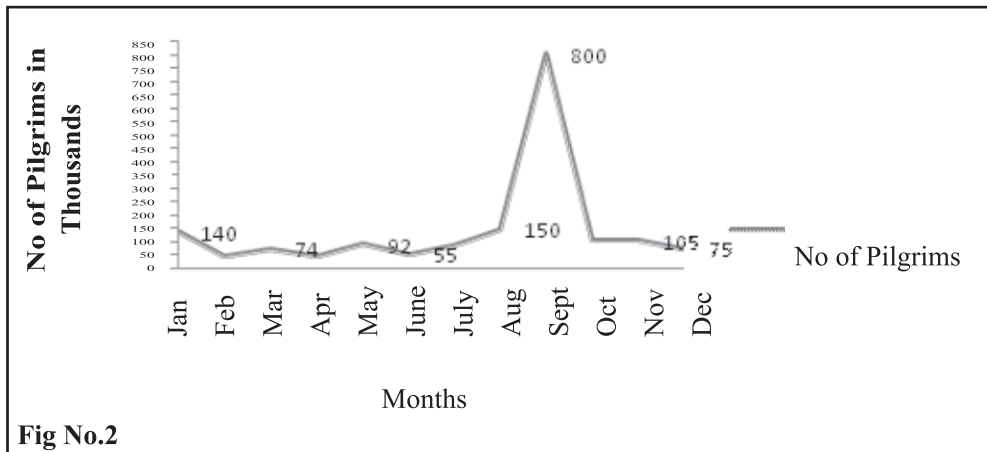
According to World Tourism Organization about 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year. Ranjangaon Ganpati tourist place is located on SH60 and well connected to Pune and Ahmednagar. Ranjangaon MIDC is the Asia's fast developed MIDC which is located just 2 to km from this pilgrims place and well connected by roads. As results this tourist place has become attractive pilgrimage centre. Table no. 1 reveals the month-wise flow of pilgrims on the various occasion and festivals in the year 2013.

**Table No. 1
Festivals and the flow of Pilgrims or Pilgrims in 2013**

Sr. No.	English Calender	Indian Calender	Occasion or Festival	No. of Pilgrims
1	January	<i>Poush, Margshirsh</i>	SankashtiChaturthi, VinayakChaturthi, Ganesh GranthParayan (7days)	1,40,000
2	February	<i>Magh</i>	Magh Fair (Ganesh Jayanti 5days),	50,000
3	March	<i>Magh, Falgun</i>	SankashtiChaturthi (2 days), Mahashivratri VinayakChaturthi	74,000
4	April	<i>Chaitra</i>	VinayakChaturthi, Hanuman Jayanti, SankashtiChaturthi	48,000
5	May	<i>Vaishakh</i>	PushtipatiVinayakChaturthi, AngarakiSankashtiChaturthi	92,000
6	June	<i>Jaishtha</i>	VinayakChaturthi, Jaishtha Fair (3 days), SankashtiChaturthi	55,000
7	July	<i>Ashadha</i>	VinayakChaturthi, AshadhiEkadashi (3 dyas), SankashtiChaturthi	80,000
8	August	<i>Shravan</i>	VinayakChaturthi, SankashtiChaturthi, Month of Shravan	1,50,000
9	September	<i>Bhadrapada</i>	3 days before Ganesh Chaturthi Ganesh Festival (10 days)	8,00,000
10	October	<i>Ashvin</i>	VinayakaChaturthi, Navratra	1,10,000
			Mahotsav, Angaraki SankashtiChaturthi, AshvinKojagiriPournima, Dasera	
11	November	<i>Kartik</i>	VinayakChaturthi, SankashtiChaturthi, Kartik TripuriPournima, Diwali Vacation	1,05,000
12	December	<i>Margashirsh</i>	VinayakChaturthi, DattaJayanti, SankashtiChaturthi, Natal Vacation	75,000

(Source :RanjangaonGanpati Trusty Office and Researcher, 2013)

Month-wise Flow of Pilgrims in 2013



As per the data of 2013, the flow of pilgrims was highest in the month of September (Bhadrapada) mainly preGanesh Chaturthi and Ganesh festival to take darshan directly in sanctum Santorum of Mahaganapati Temple. Four sisters of Ganesha are from the villages Bhambarde, Karde, Dhoksangvi and Ganegaon, so the maximum number of pilgrims is from these villages and nearby villages, Pune, Ahmednagar and urban areas.

Fig no. 2 depicts that the maximum flow of pilgrims was in the whole month of Shrawan mainly on Monday and Vinayaki and Sankashti Chaturthi. The month of October also recorded maximum pilgrims on the occasion of Vinayak Chaturthi, Navratra Mahotsav, Angaraki Chaturthi, Ashvin Kojagiri Pournima and Dasera festival. It was observed that approximately one lac pilgrims visited here in the month of November (Kartik) Vinayak Chaturthi, Sankashti Chaturthi, Kartik Tripuri Pournima, Diwali festival and vacation. In 1992, the average number of pilgrims was only 1500 per day and they were from the nearby villages. But now in 2013, the average number of pilgrims reached to nearly 15,000 per day and they are of all age groups, individually to groups, and from the nearby villages, cities, various States of India. In the month of January and August, the number of tourists reached upto 1,40,000 to 1,50,000 on the occasion of Sankashti Chaturthi, Vinayak Chaturthi, Ganesh Granth Parayan (7 days) and Shrawan. Many students trips, women's self help groups trips visited in the month of December and January.

Attractions of Ranjangaon Ganpati:

Nagarkhana, Diwankhana, Wooden Meeting Hall, Yadnya Mandap, Golden and Silver Plates show the artistic outlook of Peshwa's architectural grandiosity. Decorative entrance and Swan and garden are the main attractions of this holy tourist place.

Nagarkhana contains Athrvahall for meditation and museum of Ganesha's images. Drum is beaten from here every morning and evening. Diwankhana shows the Maratha architectural characteristics and it is built for the residence of devotees and for the cultural programmes. Wooden Hall is constructed by Sardar Kibe from Indor 400 years ago. This hall is also a special attraction for pilgrims. Ganpati Atharvashirsh is inscribed on golden plate of 4 x 3 feet by using 4 kg gold. Samarth Prayer is inscribed on a silver plate containing 9 kg silver. Both these plates are put in wooden hall. This is the first of its kind in Asia. Yadnya Mandap is built in the south-east direction according to

R. S. Jadhav

architectural requirements. Swanand Garden is the first garden of Shirur Tahsil especially built for the pilgrims. Art gallery of Lord Shiva and Ganesha explain the story of Ganesha. Devsthan trust domesticates 6 Deshi cows in Goshala (cattle house) and milk of these cows is used only for the Abhishek purpose.

Facilities:

Darshan Mandap, Bhaktnivas (32 rooms), Halls, Prasadbhavan, Art Gallery, Krshitirth Hall, Shoe-stand, Supply of mineral water and electricity, Ring road, Vehicle Parking, Shopping Centres and Medical facilities are provided by the trust of this tourist place.

Table No. 2 depicts the development of different facilities in 1992 and 2013. In 1992, this tourist centre had only six rooms for pilgrims accommodation, hall, small shops (Taparis) of florists and Swanand Garden. From 2013, well-equipped accommodation facilities (Bhaktnivas) is provided in temple campus by the trust on a reasonable charge. There are toilet and bathroom attached 32 rooms and pilgrims can book the rooms by phone. Daily two times free prasad distribution (afternoon and night), whole day Sabudana Khichadi distribution is started on Chaturthi and special occasion. Prasad Bhavan with dining tables and accommodates 500 to 600 pilgrims at a time. Darshanmandap for a systematic queue arrangement is available here to take the darshan of God Ganpati. Mineral water and electricity are also offered 24 hours. Most of the pilgrims are from rural area and farmers, so the CD's of developed techniques in farming activities Dairy Farming, Horticulture, Goat farming etc. is presented continuously in Krushi-irth Hall. The trust organizes yearly free awareness programs and special camps for youths with a special social purpose. Devsthan trust provides free medical emergency services for the pilgrims. Flowers, Prasad, Photos, Toys shops shopping centre is provided by the Ranjangaon Ganpati Trust and Ranjangaon Grampanchayat on a large scale. Concrete metallic ring road joins the SH 60 to control the traffic and pilgrims crowd.

**Table No. 2
Facilities at Ranjangaon Ganpati Tourist Centre in 1992 and 2013:**

Sr. No.	Item	Year 1992	Year 2013
1	Rooms for pilgrims Accommodation	6 rooms	32 rooms
2	Halls	1	04
3	Florists Small Shops	12	-
4	Florists Permanent Shops	00	10
5	Shopping Centre	-	42
6	Prasad Hall	-	01
7	Free Prasad Distribution	-	2 times
7	Mineral Water Supply	-	02
8	Free Medical Facilities	-	Daily
9	Modak Sales	-	Daily
10	Vehicle Parking	-	02
11	Darshan Pass	-	Daily
12	Silver coins of Mahaganpati (5/10/15 grams)	-	Daily
13	Ring Road	-	01
14	Swanand Garden	1	01
15	Art Gallery	-	01
16	Krushir Tirth	-	01
17	Awareness Programs, Special camps for youth and Maha Ganpati Awards	-	yearly
18	Goshala(Cattle House)	-	01
19	Total Workers	4	58
20	Pilgrims/ pilgrims Digital Counting System	-	01
21	Website	-	Yes, Going on

R. S. Jadhav

Mahaganpati, Darshan pass is specially served to the pilgrims by paying the fees on the special occasion. Two separate Vehicle parkings are provided for two wheeler and four wheelers. Separate shoe stand is also provided at the entrance of the temple by paying 1 Rs. per shoes. Three special counters of Modak sales and silver coins sales are served for the pilgrims.

Tourism is the source of income, employment and amenities for the population of many areas (Shinde, 2011). It creates many employment opportunities for the local people. Total 58 male and females are working in shoe stand security, parking security, modak and coin sales counter, cleaning, accommodation and all above services. Many local people are also engaged in different type economic activities such as florists, hotels, lodges, shops of Mahaganpati photos and decorative things, other shops etc. Location of Ranjangaon Ganpati MIDC also supports to develop this pilgrimage tourist centre. As results, this 'C' grade cultural tourist centre nowadays transformed into 'B' grade tourist centre with best infrastructural facilities and development.

Conclusion :

1. The maximum pilgrims visit here in the month of September on the occasion of pre Ganesh Chaturthi and Ganesh festival.
2. It is a pilgrimage tourism centre of Shirur Tahsil. The pilgrims of various age groups, classes visit at Ranjangaon Ganpati Temple during the period of special occasions, festivals and Diwali and Christmas vacation. Pilgrims are from the nearby villages as well as from different urban areas and other states.
3. Ranjangaon Ganpati is one of the famous holy pilgrims centre with different attractions and facilities. The special attractions of this tourist place are decorative entrance, Art Gallery, Swanand Garden, Darshan Mandap, Krushitirth centre etc.
4. From 2013, Prasad hall, mineral water supply, free medical check-up facility, Darshan Pass, Modak and silver coins sales counter, etc. facilities are provided to the pilgrims. Various special free and payable facilities are provided to the pilgrims. It is well developed religious and cultural heritage than the other Ashtvinayak shrines.

Suggestions: Separate bio- processing plant should be applied for the nirmalya processing. Beggars should not be occupied the entrance of the temple.

References:

1. **Chawla R (2006)** “Impact of Tourism” Sonali Publication New Delhi. R.No. 17.
2. **KVSN Jawahar Babu (2013)**, “ Tourism to Tirupati – An Empirical Study”, IRACST-International Journal of Research in Management and Technology (IJRMT), ISSN : 2249-9563, Vol. 3, No. 1,
3. **N. Jayapalan (2001)** “An Introduction to Tourism” Atlantic Publisher and distributor, New Delhi.
4. **Shinde, S. D. (2011)** : “ Problems of Pilgrimage Tourism : A Case study of Pandharpur (Maharashtra), Maharashtra Bhugolshastra Parishad, Vol XXXVIII, No. 1, ISSN 0971-6785, Pp127-131.
5. **Vikasvedh (1988)**, Chandmal Tarachand Bora College, Swastik Mudranalaya , Pune.
6. **Potdar, M. B. (2011)** : “ Satisfaction level of Tourists at Religious Tourists places in Kolhapur District , Maharashtra Bhugolshastra Parishad, ISSN 0971-6785, Vol XXVIII, No. 1, Pp 100-104

***Dr. R. S. Jadhav**
C. T. Bora College,
Shirur, Dist. Pune, Maharashtra .