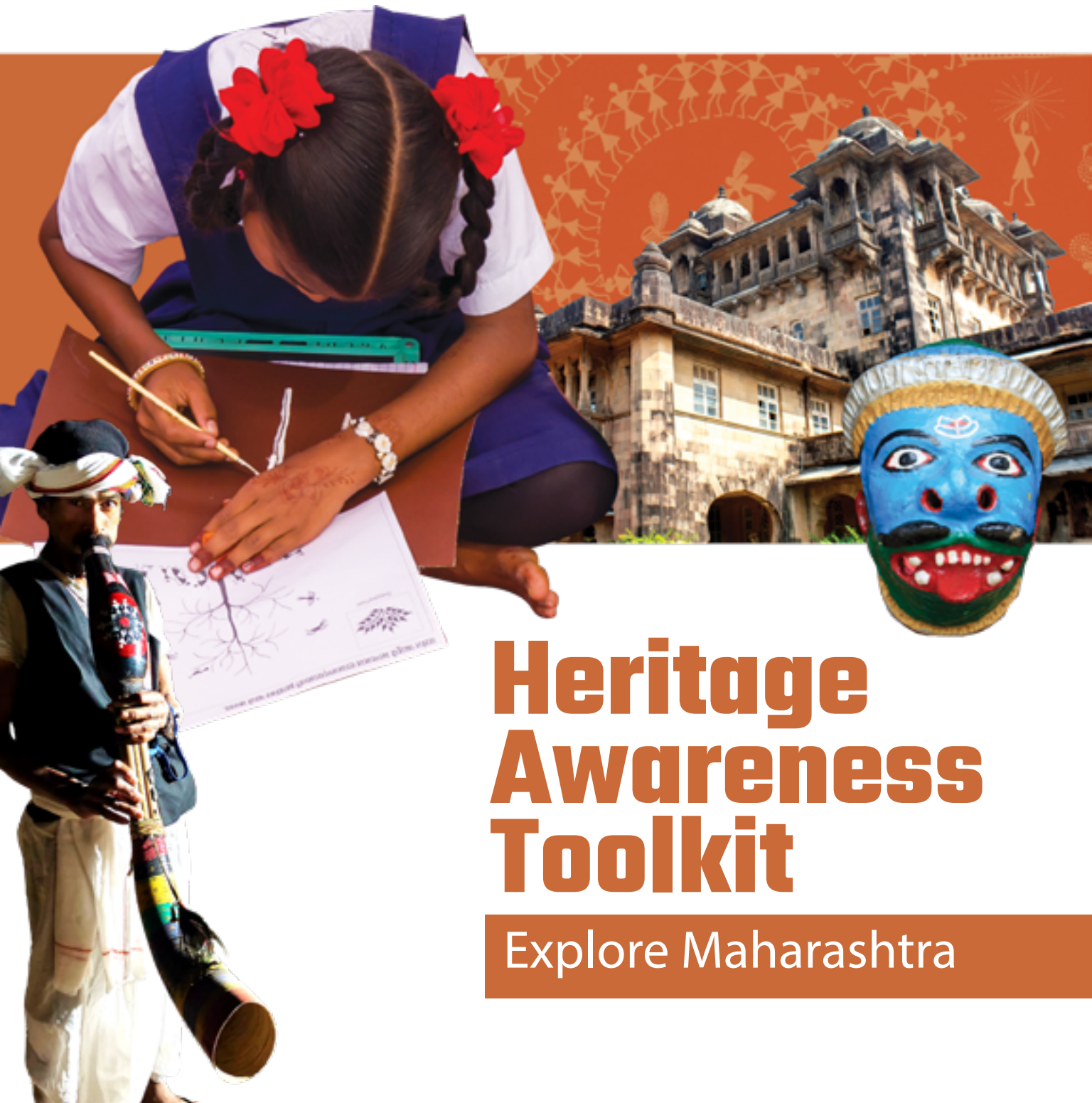




Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation,
Department of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra



Heritage Awareness Toolkit

Explore Maharashtra



Foreword

Heritage is the legacy we inherit from the past, live with in the present, and pass on to future generations. Heritage includes tangible heritage such as monuments, buildings, artefacts and landscapes, as well as intangible heritage like traditions, performing arts, rituals, crafts, and knowledge systems. Heritage is not only about grand monuments; it also includes everyday practices, local stories, oral traditions, food traditions, and ways of life.

Heritage education helps young learners understand their cultural roots, respect diversity, and develop a sense of belonging and responsibility. By engaging with heritage from an early age, students learn to value conservation, sustainability, and cultural continuity, becoming thoughtful custodians of their shared heritage.

This Heritage Awareness Toolkit is developed to support educators in conducting engaging and age-appropriate heritage sessions in schools across Maharashtra by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation. The toolkit offers simple explanations, interactive activities, worksheets, and visual references to help students understand heritage in a relatable manner. Educators are encouraged to adapt the activities based on local context and available time. The toolkit can be used as a standalone session or integrated into subjects such as history, geography, art, and environmental studies.



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CHAPTER 01

What is Heritage?

Heritage consists of the traditions, knowledge, practices, and objects that are passed down from generation to generation, shaping the cultural identity of a community or group of people. Traditional dances are part of our cultural heritage, but so are the stories associated with them. Traditional food is also our heritage, along with the artefacts and foraging practices connected to it. Here is a structured breakdown:



1

Tangible Heritage: Physical objects such as artefacts, monuments, buildings, and even underwater sites.

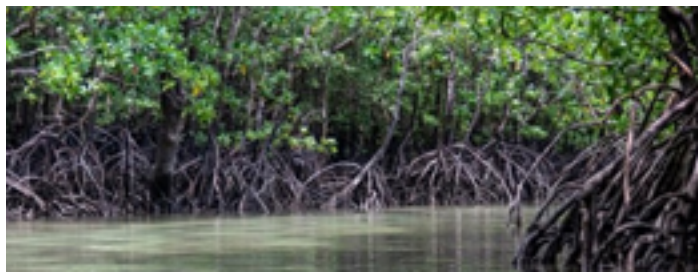


2

Intangible Heritage: Living traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, and specialized knowledge.

3

Natural Heritage: Physical, biological, or geological formations, including cultural landscapes where nature and humanity meet.



Heritage gives us identity. It connects us to our ancestors, our land, and our community. Heritage helps us understand who we are and where we come from.

What is a Geographical Indication?

A Geographical Indication (GI) is a special label for products— like Basmati Rice or Darjeeling Tea — that get their unique quality from where they are made. This label acts as a legal shield, ensuring only local makers can use the name and preventing others from selling fakes. Whether it is a food, drink, or handmade craft, a GI tag protects traditional skills, helps local farmers and artisans earn more, and gives shoppers confidence that they are buying the real thing.

Maharashtra's Key GI Tags:

- Kolhapuri Chappal
- Paithani Saree
- Solapuri Chaddar/
Towel
- Warli Painting
- Dahanu Gholwad
Chikoo
- Jalgaon Banana
- Ambemohar Rice
- Nashik Grapes



Breaking Down Walls: Seeing It All Together

We often think of tangible heritage (like monuments), natural heritage (like forests), and intangible heritage (like traditions) as different things. But it's important to see how they connect.

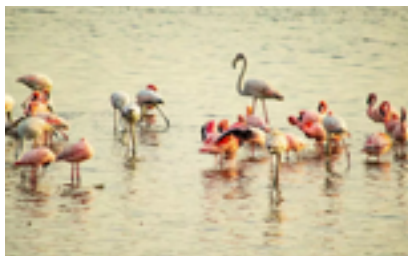
- **The Seen and the Unseen:** Tangible heritage is the physical element, like buildings, monuments, artefacts etc.. But intangible heritage adds the hidden part—the songs, stories, memories, and ways people act that make those buildings special.
- **Nature and Feelings:** Natural heritage isn't just plants, animals, or land. It's deeply tied to our feelings, senses, and everyday lives. For many years, people have shaped and protected nature based on their beliefs, traditions, spirituality and culture. Local communities have special knowledge about forests, rivers, seasons, and medicines, which they learn from their elders and pass on to the next generation.

Case Study: Mumbai



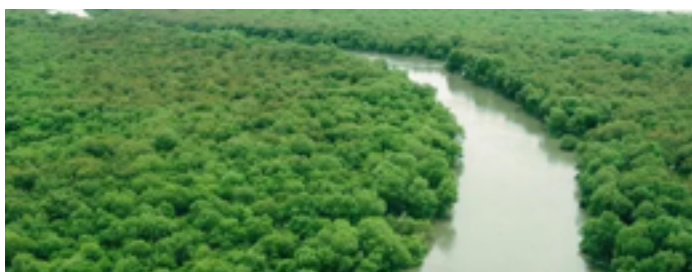
When we visit Mumbai, we often see things as separate “tourist spots.” But for a heritage student, these are all threads of the same cloth. When we travel to Mumbai for a holiday, we see and experience many different things. We visit famous buildings and monuments such as the **Gateway of India**, the **Taj Mahal Hotel**, **Chatrapati Shivaji Vastu Sangrahalaya**, **Siddhi Vinayak Temple**, **Elephanta Caves**, the **UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Victorian and Art Deco ensemble**, and the **Haji Ali Dargah**. These places show us Mumbai’s history and culture.

Not only that, we also enjoy Mumbai’s local food, like **Vada Pav**, **Pav Bhaji**, **Bhel Puri**, and **Misal Pav**, that are loved by both locals and tourists. Mumbai has a rich intangible heritage too. We listen to stories about how Mumbai got its name, its fishing communities, Bollywood, and the hardworking spirit of the people. These stories help us understand the city better.



Along with this, Mumbai has important natural heritage. It has **mangroves and wetlands** that protect the coast, the **Sanjay Gandhi National Park** with forests and animals, and the **Thane Flamingo Sanctuary** where many birds and flamingos come every year.

Thus, Mumbai offers a mix of **history, food, stories, and nature**. Mumbai not just as a city, but as a living example of interconnected heritage.



ACTIVITY 1A

Refer to Activity Handout

Identity and Connection: How Heritage Shapes Who We Are

Heritage gives us our roots — like the mighty banyan tree that anchors the earth and spreads wide to connect everything. It links us to our ancestors, our land (rivers, mountains, farms), and our community. These roots help answer big questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? What makes me proud?



Cuisine and Food Preferences

Our spicy vada pav, sweet puran poli on festivals, or tangy kanda poha — these aren't just food! Over the years these have evolved as a signature of Maharashtrian taste, distinguished yet rooted to our history of cultural diversity.



ACTIVITY 1B

Refer to Activity Handout



CHAPTER 02

India's Treasures on the Global Stage: A Spotlight on UNESCO World Heritage Sites

India is home to 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, making it one of the top countries in the world for heritage. Proudly, Maharashtra has seven of these “global jewels.” This shows that the state is a world leader in history, art, and nature.

The Seven UNESCO Jewels of Maharashtra



Ajanta Caves (1983): Famous for beautiful wall paintings and monasteries carved into rocks over 2,000 years ago.



Ellora Caves (1983): A mix of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples carved into a single mountain, showing how different religions lived together in peace.



Elephanta Caves (1987): Located on an island near Mumbai, these caves feature giant, detailed stone carvings of Lord Shiva.



Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (2004): A magnificent railway station in Mumbai that looks like a palace. It blends British and Indian architectural styles.



Western Ghats (2012): The Sahyadri mountains. They are a "nature hotspot" filled with rare plants, animals, and thick forests.



The Victorian and Art Deco Buildings of Mumbai (2018): A collection of beautiful old buildings in Mumbai that show how the city grew and changed over 100 years ago.



Maratha Military Landscapes (2025): A group of 12 forts that show the brilliant military planning of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Why Does This Matter?

When a site is on the UNESCO list, it means it is important to the entire world, not just to us.

- Global Pride: People from all over the world come to see Ajanta and Ellora to learn about our history.
- Saving Nature: The Western Ghats are protected globally so we can save our clean air, water, and wildlife.
- Inspiration: The Maratha forts show the world how clever our ancestors were at building and defending their land.
- By protecting these sites, we make sure that Maharashtra's "Global Treasures" stay safe for coming generations to see.



ACTIVITY 2

Refer to Activity Handout



CHAPTER 03

India's Living Heritage on UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List

UNESCO recognises intangible cultural heritage as living traditions such as festivals, rituals, arts, and knowledge that are passed from one generation to another. These traditions give people a sense of identity and belonging. India has 16 traditions on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List (as of 2025), showing the country's rich and diverse culture.

Maharashtra's significant contribution to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list is the Kumbh Mela, inscribed in 2017. This massive religious gathering is held on a rotational basis in four holy cities: Nashik (Maharashtra), Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), Haridwar (Uttarakhand), and Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh). Millions of pilgrims gather to take a holy dip in the Godavari River, engage in prayer, and participate in ancient rituals. The festival serves as a powerful symbol of faith, equality, and community bonding.

Some other Indian traditions on the list are:



Deepavali –
the festival of lights



Yoga –
for physical and mental well-being



Kumbha Mela –
massive spiritual gathering



Garba –
a folk dance of devotion



ACTIVITY 3A & 3B

Refer to Activity Handout



CHAPTER 04

Heritage Bearers- Artists & Communities

The true custodians of living heritage are its artists and communities. Across generations, they preserve, practise, and pass on traditional art forms, keeping cultural knowledge alive through performance, craft, ritual, and everyday life.

Maharashtra is home to a rich diversity of indigenous and regional communities whose living traditions are deeply rooted in land, nature, and community life. The art forms and cultural practices emerging from these indigenous, tribal, and artisan communities—carefully sustained over generations—are described in the following section. The intangible cultural heritage elements are not only the objects or performances but the very rich knowledge and skills that are inherited from generation to generation. They show how communities celebrate festivals, mark seasons, worship nature, tell stories, and share knowledge through practice. Together, they help learners understand intangible cultural heritage as a living process shaped by people, place, and collective memory.

In the Palghar and Nashik districts, one can find traditional art and craft practices that tell stories of survival, history and their relation with their revered gods and nature. Many of the Warli themes revolve around the myth of the great flood and how lord Narayan saved the human kind. On the other hand, dances like Kambadi are performed to praise the rain god after a long drought. While the fisherman community still traverses the sea, through their song and dance, they talk about their generational knowledge of nature. These stories, myths and memories are integral part of traditional practices, these dots connect the indigenous communities to ancient history and belief systems.

Traditional Handicraft Practices (Palghar & Nashik)



Warli Art:

Warli is a traditional tribal art form of the Warli community of Maharashtra, mainly found in Palghar, Thane, and Nashik districts. It reflects their daily life, nature worship, farming, festivals, and community living. Made with simple shapes and natural colours, Warli paintings pass on the community's stories, values, and traditions from one generation to another. Warli art is thus a living expression of the culture and identity of the Warli people.

Bohada Mask:

These masks are handcrafted by artisans from Warli, Kokna, Katkari, and Koli tribal communities using paper, cloth, bamboo, and natural colours. Each mask represents gods, animals, spirits, or village heroes. The skill of mask-making is passed down through families and generations.



Bamboo Art:

Gholwad village in Dahanu Taluka of Palghar district is known for its traditional bamboo and natural fibre basketry, practised by local artisans as a living, everyday craft. Using locally sourced bamboo, palm leaves, and other natural fibres, weavers make baskets, trays, storage items, and utility containers. These handcrafted products reflect sustainable living, cultural continuity, and skilled design, while workshops and exhibitions help pass the craft on to younger generations.

Paithani:

Paithani sarees are beautiful handwoven silk sarees from Maharashtra, known for their bright colours, fine gold zari, and nature-inspired designs like peacocks and lotuses. They are traditionally woven by skilled Sali and Koshti weaver communities of Paithan and Yeola, who pass their knowledge from one generation to the next. These sarees have colourful borders and a richly woven pallu made using a detailed tapestry technique.



Traditional Song and Dance Practices (Palghar & Nashik)



Tarpa Nritya

Performed by the Warli, Malhar Koli, and Kokna communities in Palghar district during festivals and harvests. Dancers move in a circle around the Tarpa, a traditional wind instrument, honouring the tribal god Hirwa and celebrating unity and harmony with nature.

Hodi Nritya

A high-energy community dance, seen in Palghar district, performed over three days to honour Mandli Devi, with groups singing and dancing in long circular formations.

Kambade Nritya

A devotional ritual dance performed to worship Narayan Devta, seeking rain and blessings. It involves energetic movements accompanied by songs and rhythmic steps. This dance is famous in Palghar.

Gavari Nritya

A graceful devotional dance from Palghar, performed from Savan to Diwali, honouring the goddess of harvest and land through a combination of song and movement.

Bohada Dance

A ritual performance in which members of the Warli, Kokna, Katkari, and Koli communities wear handcrafted masks to enact mythological stories during festivals and celebrations in Palghar, Nasik and Thane districts.

Pawri Nritya

A community dance similar to Tarpa Nritya, performed during festivals and harvests in Nashik district, accompanied by the Pawri, a wind instrument similar to the Tarpa.

Dangi Nritya

A tribal folk dance mainly performed by the Warli and Kokna communities of Palghar, Thane, and Nashik districts during harvests, festivals, and village celebrations, reflecting agrarian life and a close bond with nature.





Thakar Nritya

A lively community dance from Nasik, performed to the beats of Dhol and Dabba drums, marking the arrival of the monsoon and the beginning of the sowing season.

Thali Badya Geet

A rhythmic song tradition of Nasik, created using a metal plate and stick, producing a meditative sound often described as reflecting the “soul of the forest.”

Dera Geet

A rare and soulful women’s song tradition from Nasik performed during rituals, beginning with deep resonant sounds produced from a water-filled earthen pot.

Dongri Dev Nritya

A sacred ritual dance performed to honour Dongar Mahuli in Nasik, believed to be the protector of hills and forests.

Bagh Pawri Nritya

A dramatic dance form of Nasik, in which performers imitate animals such as tigers and lions, symbolising the deep relationship between forest communities and wildlife.

Nandi Nritya

A narrative dance from Nasik, in which performers embody the cow and enact mythological stories through movement.





Oral traditions

Maharashtra's oral tradition includes folk tales, animal stories, moral narratives, and mythological accounts passed down within families and villages. These stories explain natural phenomena, social values, community histories, and cultural beliefs. Across Maharashtra, these stories also narrate tales connected to villages, rivers, hills, forts, and sacred places, strengthening the link between people, place, and heritage.

- In the Gholwad–Dahanu region, oral histories recount Parsi migration and settlement, describing arrival by sea and peaceful coexistence with local communities. Warli communities share mythological stories linked to nature, forests, farming cycles, and village deities, often reflected in their art and rituals.
- The Koli community of the coastal Gholwad–Dahanu belt preserves stories rooted in the sea and fishing life, telling of marine spirits, fisher bravery, and the people's bond with the ocean. Across Maharashtra, Lokakathās also narrate stories connected to villages, rivers, hills, forts, and sacred places, strengthening the link between people, place, and heritage.



ACTIVITY 4A & 4B

Refer to Activity Handout



CHAPTER 05

Let's make it together

A Heritage Corner or storyboard can transform an ordinary classroom into a vibrant space of discovery and pride—and it begins with all of us coming together. Imagine creating a corner that tells stories of your neighbourhood, your state, local festivals, crafts, languages, food, and everyday life through photos, objects, drawings, maps, and short write-ups. This is not just a display, but a space built collectively by students, where each contribution reflects a unique perspective and shared understanding of the world around them.

What can your Heritage Corner include?

- Photos, sketches, or paintings of local places and traditions
- Everyday objects or replicas reflecting local culture
- Student-written stories, captions, or descriptions
- Maps of important cultural locations
- Festival calendars or seasonal practices

Building a Heritage Corner encourages students to observe closely and ask questions: What makes our community unique? Which traditions are still practiced? Who holds this knowledge? It invites exploration, documentation, and creative expression.

For step-by-step guidance, refer to the Activity Handout provided in this toolkit.

Why is it important?

- Builds pride and awareness about local culture
- Encourages curiosity and participation
- Helps preserve stories and traditions
- Makes learning interactive and engaging

Over time, the Heritage Corner can grow and change with new themes and contributions—becoming a living archive that keeps culture visible, relevant, and valued.



ACTIVITY 5

Refer to Activity Handout



References

- Resources: Visit the website: www.heritagevillagesmtdc.com to learn more, or visit Explore MTDC Facebook and Instagram page.
- Resources: Learn more about India's Cultural Heritage: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/india-IN>
- Resources: Read the story 'Living Heritage Trails of Palghar – Google Arts & Culture' – <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/living-heritage-trails-of-palghar-banglanatak/zwUhlYx8QUgYuA?hl=en>
- Resources: Watch these films on Palghar and Nasik: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEZWZv0nwOV-ebmxj2FXw79Qoeb1EPqRG&si=K8tO1Rsw3j2bAdB>

Contact Us

Share your experiences, stories, activities, and Heritage Corner photographs with us and get featured on our website. Your efforts inspire others to learn, value, and protect our shared heritage.







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