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**TITLE: Water Management Systems in the coastal area of Ratnagiri
taluka, Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra: with sp. Ref. to Water tanks
near the Temples.**

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ABSTRACT

Water, being the most essential element, has an important place in human life and thus its resource and management have been major concerns of the human societies from ancient times. In this context water management systems in 11 villages near the coastal area of Ratnagiri taluka, Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra were surveyed through archaeological explorations. The survey revealed a number of varieties of wells, tanks, and water channels. A large number of these water tanks were found located within the vicinity of the various temples in the surveyed villages. The study aims to bring into light the relation of water management systems and the temples in the research area. For this purpose five different temples were selected and the water tanks near these temples were studied. These large water tanks near temples were basically built for religious purposes. It reveals the role of culture in the building of these various water tanks near the temples. Another interesting fact is that the location of these water tanks and their architectural features depict the social customs, cultural relations as well as the economic conditions prevalent in the area during that period. This is an attempt to explore the factors behind the occurrence of these structures near the temples and to understand the historical and cultural context of these structures and to find out whether any of these water bodies could be recharged for the benefit of the society today particularly in the coastal area where there is scarcity of sweet water .

INTRODUCTION:

Water, being the most essential element, has an important place in human life and thus its resource and management have been major concerns of the human societies from ancient times. The political, social and economic conditions play a significant role in the management of water in any particular area. Culture, customs and traditions as well are closely related to management of certain water systems in Indian society and hence we find that temples and water tanks are closely related to each other. Temples form an integral part of Indian culture. Certain rites and rituals and customs require the use of water and thus lead to construction of water management systems within the vicinity of these temples.

STUDY AREA:

The district of Ratnagiri ($15^{\circ}36' N$ and $18^{\circ}5' N$, $73^{\circ}5' E$ and $74^{\circ}36' E$) is a part of the greater tract known as the Konkan. Geographically it is the southernmost district of Maharashtra state. The study area is rocky, rugged country with elevated plateaux and intersecting creeks. It is composed of fifteen talukas and mahals.

In the above context, 11 villages of coastal Ratnagiri taluka, Ratnagiri district in Maharashtra, were surveyed. Namely, Ratnagiri, Someshwar, Pavas, Ganeshgule, Kasheli, Kalbadevi, Shirgaon, Pomendi Budruk, Kurdhe, Kolambe and Mavlange.

Among these explored villages five temples were selected and the water tanks located within the vicinity of these temples were studied.

WATER SYSTEMS:

The explorations carried out in the surveyed villages revealed a number of water management systems. These include wells, step wells, water tanks and water channels. The water tanks are rectangular structures built of laterite stones, with a partition wall in between, steps and a slope, with certain variations.

To understand the relation between the temples and the water tanks, five different temples were selected and studied. These are:

1. Someshwar temple, Someshwar
2. Temple of Bhairavdev, Ratnagiri
3. Kanakaditya temple, Kasheli
4. Ganesh temple, Shirgaon
5. Rameshwar temple, Kalbadevi

➤ **SOMESHWAR TEMPLE:**

The Someshwar temple, in the village of Someshwar, is 5 km south of Ratnagiri. A large rectangular water tank is located near this temple. It has a high partition wall running north-south. There is a slope, L-shaped, on the north-east side. On the 3rd and 13th layer is a platform on all four sides of the tank including the western side of the partition wall. The portion on the eastern side of the partition wall has almost dried up, and the L-shaped slope is clearly visible. On this side, all the walls are straight without any steps or buldging stones. In the north-west wall of the tank, the wall opposite to the partition wall, there are small steps from the 5th layer onwards. From the 4th layer we see buldging stones (3 stones on one layer at a specific distance)

At the southern side of the tank, adjoined to it is a small rectangular well with steps towards the western direction. The eastern and southern walls have platforms at the 5th and 14th layer. It has 14 steps on the western wall. On both sides of the 6th step are broad platforms.

➤ **TEMPLE OF BHAIRAVDEV:**

This temple of Bhairavdev is located in the Ratnagiri village. On the eastern side, in front of the temple, there is a water tank. The rectangular tank is divided with a high partition wall, running north-south. The western, northern and the southern wall on the left side of the partition wall have narrow staircase with 10 steps each located almost in the centre. On the walls, 9 layers are straight; there is a platform on the 10th layer and steps from the 11th layer with bulding stones on all the three sides till the 17th layer. The 18th, 19th and the 20th layer have plain steps.

On the right side of the partition wall, the northern and southern walls are plain; there is a platform on the 10th layer and 16th layer. The total visible layers are 18. from the 11th to 15th layer, there are slightly bulding stones at some distance till the 18th layer. On the eastern wall, there is platform on the 10th and 16th layer, but the other layers are plain without any bulding stones. In the centre of this wall, there seems to be a slope, but now it is broken.

➤ **KANAKADITYA TEMPLE:**

The Kanakaditya temple, in the village of Kasheli, belongs to the Silahara period. Kasheli is situated in between Ratnagiri and Rajapur around a distance of 30-32 km. A copper plate stating the donation by Silahara king Bhoja (dated 11/06/1191) is found in this temple. There are two circular wells within the compound of the temple and a water tank outside the compound.

This water tank is rectangular in shape. There is a slope on the western side. There is an outlet on the northern wall near the slope for the excess water to drain out. A partition wall runs north-south. On the southern wall at the eastern side of the partition wall, an arch is seen. Earlier there were steps to it, but now they are closed. The upper construction, at the

entrance of the slope and all the four sides, is new. In all 13 layers are visible and above them there are 5 layers which are newly built.

➤ **GANESH TEMPLE:**

The village of Shirgaon is situated 4 miles to the north of Ratnagiri. Near the Ganesh temple, in this village, is a water tank. The tank is rectangular, with a partition wall running east-west. There is a slope from the western side. There are steps on the eastern and northern wall. On the eastern wall, there is platform on the 9th layer and the steps start from the 10th layer. Six steps are visible. On the northern wall, platform is on the 12th layer. 17 layers are visible. The steps are not visible since they are covered with vegetation.

➤ **TEMPLE OF RAMESHWAR:**

The temple of Rameshwar is in Kalbadevi, approx. 6 km north of Ratnagiri. The water tank located near this temple is octagonal in shape. There is no partition wall. There is a slope on the southern side, with a platform of 1m. On the 8th layer, on all seven sides, there is a platform. The 9th and 10th layer is visible.

RELATION OF TEMPLES AND WATER TANK:

The study of these water tanks clearly indicates certain cultural factors.

According to the Indian culture, one has to take a dip in water and purify himself before entering any temple and this leads to the construction of water tanks near these temples. Or rather, many a times, the temples are constructed near the water source, since water source is not readily available everywhere.

The water tanks, near the temples, in Ratnagiri depict certain peculiar architectural features. Almost every water tank, near the temples, has a partition wall in between. In certain cases, there are steps on one side of this partition wall and slope on the other side. This indicates that one side of the partition wall was used by human beings and the other portion with the slope must be meant for animals. Thus there was division of the same tank, for the utility by man and animals, separately.

In certain tanks, there are steps on all sides and a partition wall in the centre. Or in some cases, there are steps and slope on one side and only steps on the other side of the partition wall. This might be indicating the caste differentiation i.e. casteism in the society. One portion could be meant for the upper caste and the other portion for the utility of the water by the people of other low castes and in case of the slope, as a provision for access by animals as well.

But in many cases, the partition wall is not quite high and hence during rainy season, the water could get mixed. But still these partition walls were built in these water tanks located near the temples, depicting the socio-religious conditions in the particular area.

Not all temples have water tanks located near them. Hence it could be that as per the economic conditions, religious importance and the availability of water resource these temples and water tanks were built.

Further study of these water management systems in the coastal area of Ratnagiri, will be carried out through my doctoral research, wherein further inferences and conclusions can be drawn out as well as other interesting factors could come into light.

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