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Enhancing The Socio-Cultural Aspects of Pilgrim Town: Case of Nashik

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Abstract: ***"This research paper aims to explore strategies for enhancing the socio-cultural aspect of Nashik city as a pilgrim town. Also focuses on enhancing the experience of religious tourist coming to the city core for performing various religious activities and visiting temples on Godavari ghat. However, the city faces several challenges in terms of its socio-cultural aspect, which can affect the religious tourism experience of visitors.***
The research findings suggest that enhancing the socio-cultural aspect of Nashik requires a comprehensive strategy that includes preserving cultural heritage, promoting local products, and involving local communities in tourism development also, experience can be enhanced by improving the infrastructure of the public places as public place plays vital role in terms of user experience. The findings from this research will contribute to the development and preservation of Nashik's socio-cultural fabric, ensuring its sustainable growth as a pilgrim town.
Keywords: **Socio-cultural, Religious tourism, Pilgrim town, Ghats of Godavari, Public places.**

I. INTRODUCTION

It is situated on the banks of the sacred river Godavari and holds great significance in Hindu mythology. Nashik is mentioned in various ancient texts, including the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which makes it a revered pilgrimage destination for devotees. Apart from its religious importance, Nashik has a rich socio-cultural heritage that is deeply rooted in its festivals, arts, and traditions.

The city has a rich cultural heritage and is known for its religious significance, historical monuments, and festivals. Nashik is home to several important religious sites, making it a popular pilgrimage destination. The Kumbh Mela, held every 12 years, is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, attracting millions of pilgrims from across the country. The Trimbakeshwar Temple, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India, is another important religious site in Nashik. Nashik is a melting spot of different cultures and traditions.

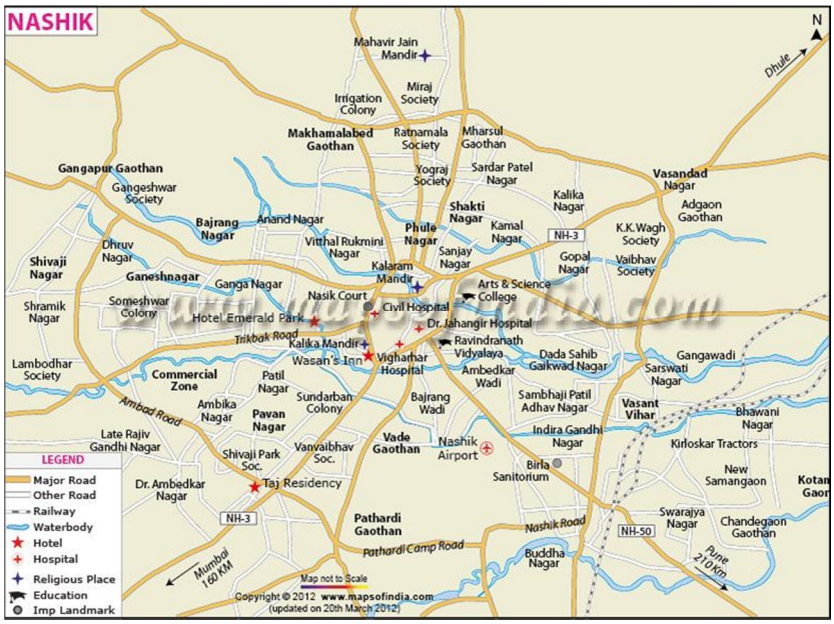
The city has a rich tradition of music, dance, and art, which is reflected in its festivals and fairs. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to collect data from various respondents, including pilgrims and local stakeholders. The study analyses the existing socio-cultural aspect of Nashik and identifies factors that influence the religious tourism experience. In conclusion. The city's historical significance, religious sites, cultural diversity, and socio-economic impact make it an ideal tourism location. The study of Nashik as a pilgrim destination can provide valuable insights into the religious landscape of India, the impact of cultural tourism on the local economy, and the role of pilgrimage in Indian society.

A. Background

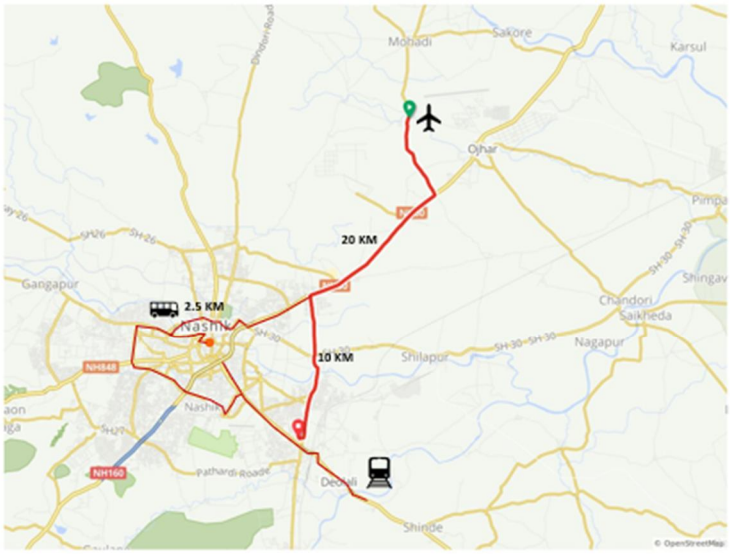
Nashik is a vibrant city in northern Maharashtra. Tucked away between the 9 peaks of the Deccan Plateau, this city has a lot of historic, mythological, cultural, and social significance. The river Godavari flows through the city dividing it into two parts, mainly the left and the right bank. Each bank is associated with a different era of time and has its own cultural and architectural characteristics.

Apart from religious significance, the Godavari Ghats have also played an important role in the social life of the people of Nashik. The ghats are a popular gathering spot for locals and tourists alike. People come to the ghats to relax, spend time with friends and family, and participate in various cultural events. The ghats also provide a space for informal trade, with vendors selling flowers, religious offerings, and other items.

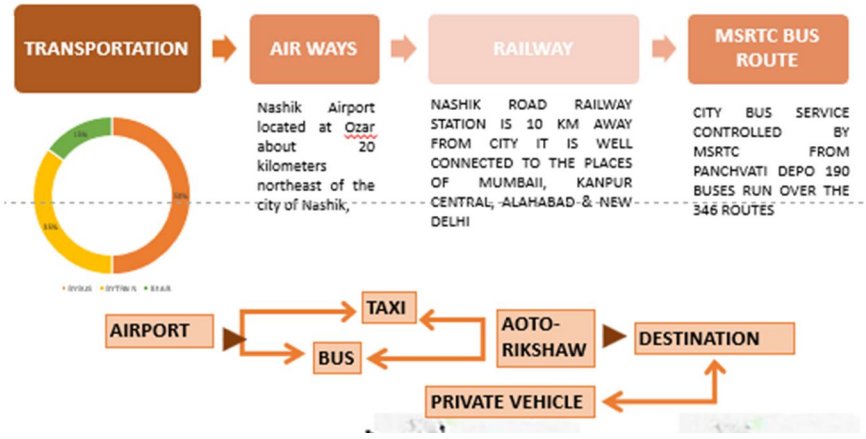
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http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-s4ZaRU37r_Y/UCk-4EWwhwI/AAAs/fr40A092A5o/s1600/nashik+(1).jpg

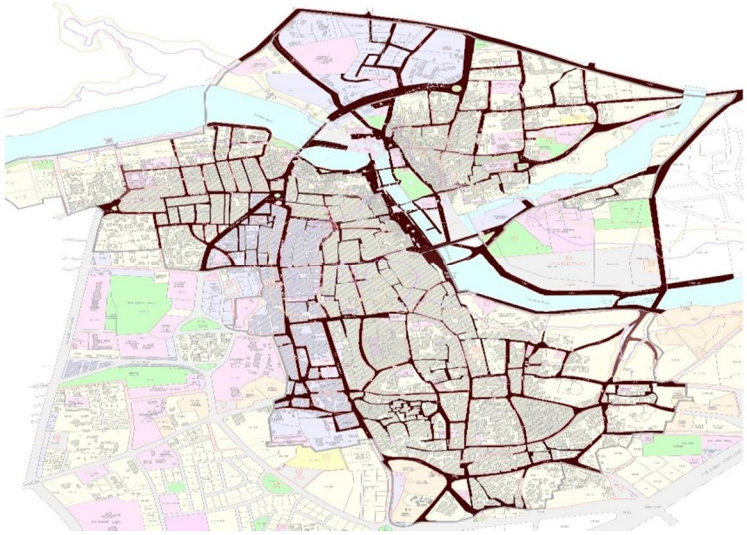


Map showing Nashik nearby transport facilities



B. Study Area

Study Area The city of Nashik is situated in the State of Maharashtra, in the northwest of Maharashtra, between 19°54“40” North latitudes to 20°05“08” North latitudes and between 73°41“08” East longitudes to 73°54“22” East longitudes. It is connected by road to Mumbai (185 kms.) and Pune (220 kms). Nashik is regional center of northern Maharashtra and is very famous for its grapes growing. The city has become the centre of attraction because of its beautiful surroundings, cool, calm and pleasant climate. Nashik has a personality of its own due to its mythological, historical, social and cultural Importance. The city is vibrant and dynamic on the industrial, political, social and cultural fronts.



Development plan of gauthan area Nashik, Maharashtra
(https://nmc.gov.in/assets/admin/upload/download/06_Nashik.pdf)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Mythology

According to mythology and religious scholars, it is believed that when Gods and demons were having fight over the Amrut (nectar of life), then Lord Vishnu flew away with the pot of nectar spilling drops of nectar at four different places; these are where the Kumbh Melas are held. The Kumbh Mela is one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, attracting millions of pilgrims from all over India and beyond, around 60 million people visited Nashik to take part in the festivities. This festival happens every 12 years of interval. Lord Rama, the King of Ayodhya, Stayed in Nashik during his 14 years of exile. At the same place Lord Laxman, by the wish of Lord Rama, cut the nose of “Shurpnakha” Also, Trimbakeshwar Temple is an ancient temple of Lord Shiva and identified as one of the divine 12 Jyotirlinga. The holy river Godavari originates near Trimbak.



Ghats of godavari
(https://www.thehotelguru.com/_images/49/b3/49b3d2e2f5760b4d04d4adae928c3381/nashik-s1180x560.jpg)

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B. Significance of Town

1) Historical Importance

Nashik has a rich cultural and historical significance, dating back to the ancient times. The city has been mentioned in various ancient texts, including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It was also an important centre for Buddhism during the Mauryan period.

2) Religious Significance

Nashik is home to several important religious sites, including the Kumbh Mela, which is held every 12 years and attracts millions of pilgrims from across the country. The city is also home to several temples, including the Trimbakeshwar Temple, which is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India.

3) Cultural Diversity

Nashik is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions. The city has a rich tradition of music, dance, and art, which is reflected in its festivals and fairs. The study of Nashik as a cultural town can provide insights into the diversity of Indian culture.

4) Socio-economic Impact

The cultural and religious significance of Nashik has a significant impact on the socio-economic development of the region. The city's tourism industry is one of the major contributors to its economy, and the study of Nashik as a cultural town can provide insights into the economic impact of cultural tourism.

III. TOURISM

A. Global tourism

Tourism is recognized as an effective tool for economic development of nations by generating employment, earning highest revenue through foreign exchange, and acting as a means for upward social mobility through interaction with cultures from elsewhere in the world. Tourism at its business prospect is a dynamic and competitive industry which requires adapting culture toward the customer changing needs and desires. Customer satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are the main particulars which should be focused in tourism business.

B. Tourism in India

India’s rich cultural, historical, religious and natural heritage provides a huge potential for development of tourism and job creation in the country. Travel and tourism is the largest service industry in India. It provides heritage, cultural, medical, business and sports tourism. The main objective of this sector is to develop and promote tourism, maintain competitiveness of India as tourist destination and improve and expand existing tourism products to ensure employment generation and economic growth. In this section, it provide information about various tourist destinations, modes of travel, accommodation and approved travel agents.

C. Tourism in Maharashtra

Maharashtra is located along the western coast of India. The state boasts of thickly forested hills and valleys that are home to diverse flora and fauna, ancient caves, and a rich cultural heritage. Maharashtra is also known as the hub of the Indian entertainment industry or Bollywood as it is commonly called. The state has major tourist destination in India. According to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 5,078,514 foreign and 119,191,539 domestic tourists visited Maharashtra in 2017. This tourist-friendly state offers a wide range of accommodation options including heritage hotels, luxury resorts, budget properties, and homestays.

D. Tourism in Nashik

Nashik is a famous holy and religious city in the Indian. Nashik is a beautiful city and a cool place. It is also famous for its lovely climate. There is no city in Maharashtra with a climate better than Nashik city. Nashik has a lesser amount of air and traffic pollution. Beautiful nature and pleasant climate are the USPs of Nashik. Apart from it, Nashik is also well known as “Wine Capital of India” resulting in visits by rich class in large number. Being as a highly industrialized town; Nashik City gets lot of visits from business travellers. Nashik is one of the four places where the Kumbh Mela is held every twelve years.

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But, lack of basic amenities and lethargic approach resulted in Nashik being not highly rate by tourists. Nashik has constantly underperformed in the field of tourism compared with other cities in Maharashtra

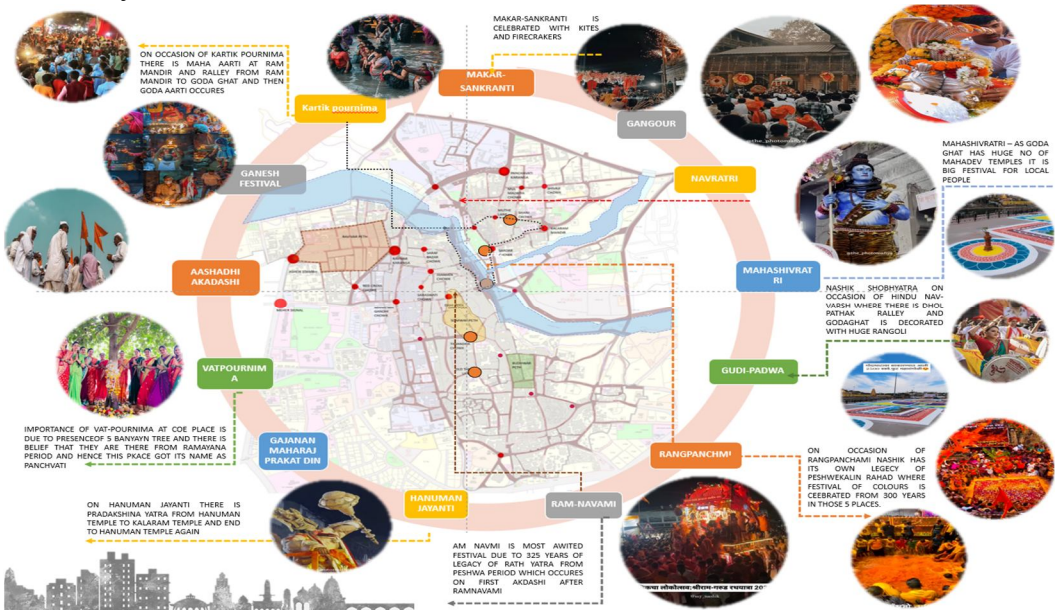
E. Religious tourism in Nashik

Tourism in Nashik is practiced since past. Thousands of pilgrims visit Nasik every year. Nashik is famous known for its religious tourism since past in the history like the Kumbh Mela which comes after every 12 years. This is the destination for thousands of pilgrims. It is not only biggest pilgrim centre for the Hindus but for many religions like Buddhist, Jain's, Sikhs, Muslims and Parses. Besides this type of tourism other tourism like the agro- tourism, educational tourism, nature tourism and many more to add but what is need of time is one should have certain strategic plan for practicing tourism in Nashik and that has to be Sustainable Tourism, so that it should not cause damage either to the tourist nor to the tourist places.

IV. SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT OF PILGRIMAGE DESTINATIONS

All the knowledge and values shared by a society, the tastes in art and manners that are favoured by a social group which shows culture of that city. Society acts with time and place reflects the present culture of the city. The activities of everydayness and temporal of festivals, religious processions etc. influences the lifestyle of the people and public building, places and spaces. Culture is a full-fledged economic sector that – as any other – generates impacts on the urban environment, ranging from direct and indirect expenditure to employment generation. Cultural industries are typically labour-intensive; their organisation model is rather the network interaction of micro and small producers. Moreover, cultural production is highly contextual and idiosyncratic. For these reasons, city centres are privilege spaces for cultural production and consumption (Scott 2001, Heilbrun 1992). Cities provide ideal workspace for artists and cultural managers; and the local economy comes to thrive of it, establishing a symbiotic relation with culture. Firstly, culture generates substantial "intangible" or non-pecuniary economic effects. It has a soft function of animation and enhancement of the quality of life, which is an increasingly important element of a city's competitiveness. It stimulates human creativity, and the capacity to innovate. New symbolic meanings and values become inputs to innovative production concepts and processes. the possibilities of culture related occupations and processes of next level transformations with keeping references of collective memories starts to flourish like tourism, cultural festivals etc. A city can market itself as an ideal location for people and firms, and a preferred cultural destination for tourists; its unique, original cultural mix can become a recognisable brand. Culture contributes in more balanced and sustainable urban development. Culture is part and parcel of urban revitalisation projects in degraded urban areas. It provides a personal development and social interaction among weaker groups, and gives to "excluded" individuals a chance to their own start businesses or to catch up socially. The relation between a community and its culture extends to concerns of safety and social harmony.

A. Nashik As A Festive City-



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V. INTANGIBLE ACTIVITIES OF NASHIK CITY

A. Kumbh Mela

Nashik is one of the four cities in India that hosts the Kumbh Mela, a major Hindu festival that takes place once every 12 years. During this festival, millions of pilgrims from all over India come to Nashik to take a dip in the holy waters of the Godavari. The festival lasts for about a month and is a major attraction for tourists.

B. Ganga Dussehra

This is a festival that is celebrated in Nashik and other parts of India to mark the day when the River Ganga (also known as the Ganges) descended from heaven to earth. The festival is celebrated by taking a dip in the river and performing various religious rituals along its banks.

C. Ganesh Visarjan

This is a festival that is celebrated in Nashik and other parts of India to mark the end of the 10-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival. During this festival, large processions carrying idol of Lord Ganesh are taken to the river and immersed in the water, symbolizing the return of Lord Ganesh to his heavenly abode.

D. Boat Rides

Boat rides along the River Godavari are a popular activity in Nashik, and visitors can enjoy the scenic views of the river and its surroundings while cruising along its waters.

VI. CHALLENGES IN ENHANCING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT OF NASHIK

While Nashik has a rich cultural and religious heritage, there are several challenges in enhancing its socio-cultural aspect. One of the major challenges is the lack of infrastructure and facilities for tourists and pilgrims. The city needs better roads, transportation, accommodation, and sanitation facilities to cater to the increasing number of visitors.

Another challenge is the preservation of historical and cultural sites. Many of the city's heritage sites are in a state of neglect and require restoration and maintenance. The authorities need to take steps to preserve these sites and promote their cultural significance.

The socio-economic impact of tourism on the local community also needs to be addressed. While tourism generates revenue and employment opportunities, it can also lead to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and displacement of local communities. The authorities need to ensure that tourism development is sustainable and benefits the local community.

Finally, there is a need to promote cultural diversity and inclusivity in Nashik. The city has a diverse population, and efforts should be made to celebrate and promote the different cultures and traditions. This can be done through cultural events, festivals, and educational programs.

In conclusion, enhancing the socio-cultural aspect of Nashik requires a holistic approach that addresses infrastructure development, heritage preservation, sustainable tourism, and cultural diversity. By addressing these challenges, Nashik can become a model for cultural tourism in India.

VII. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TOWN

1) Planning, development and implementation of heritage sensitive infrastructure
2) Service delivery and infrastructure provisioning in historic city core areas.
3) Preserve and revitalize heritage wherein tourists can connect directly with city’s unique character.
4) Develop and document a heritage asset inventory of cities - natural, cultural, living and built heritage as a basis for urban planning, growth and service provision & delivery.
5) Implementation and enhancement of basic services delivery with focus on sanitation services like public conveniences, toilets, water taps, street lights with use of latest technologies in improving tourist facilities/amenities
6) Local capacity enhancement for inclusive heritage-based industry
7) Create effective linkages between tourism and cultural facilities and also the conservation of natural and built heritage
8) Urban heritage adaptive rehabilitation and maintenance, including appropriate technologies for historic buildings retrofitting

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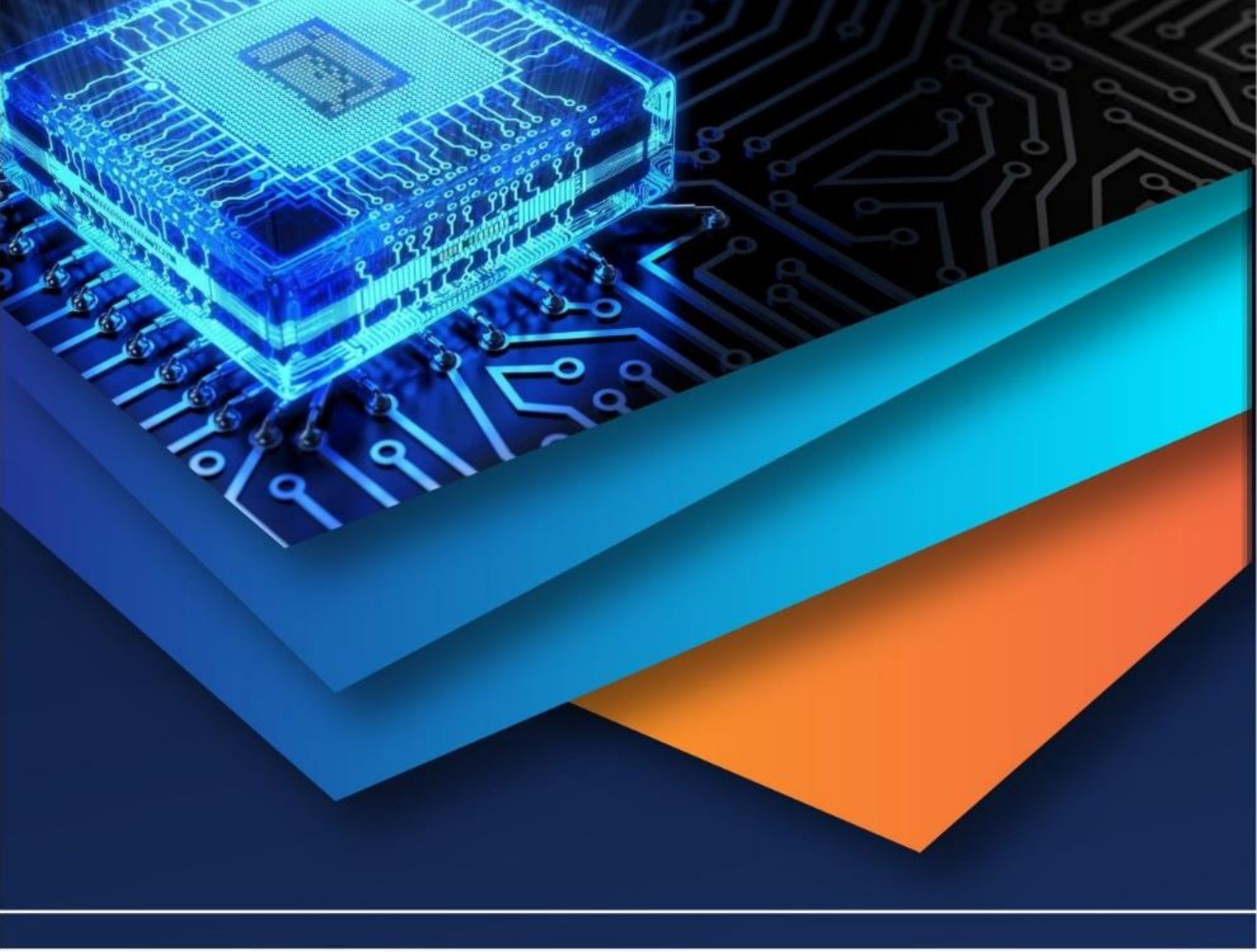
VIII. CONCLUSION

Nashik's socio-cultural fabric is deeply rooted in its religious heritage, festivals, and art and culture scene. By implementing strategies to enhance these aspects, Nashik can preserve its rich cultural legacy while ensuring sustainable growth. Revitalizing public spaces, creating cultural districts, and promoting traditional arts and crafts are some of the ways through which Nashik can enhance its socio-cultural core area. By doing so, Nashik will continue to thrive as a prominent pilgrim town and a hub of cultural vibrancy.

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