

PILGRIMAGE-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN GONDAVALE, SATARA DISTRICT: A GEOGRAPHICAL ASSESSMENT OF SHRI BRAHMACHAITANYA GONDAVALEKAR MAHARAJ SAMADHI TEMPLE

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 19th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: Gondavale, Pilgrimage Tourism, Samadhi Temple	Tourism is an emerging field of geographical study, especially where cultural and spiritual values influence local development. Gondavale, a pilgrimage location in Satara district, Maharashtra, is known for the Samadhi temple of Shri Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj, which attracts thousands of devotees annually. This research analyses the physical, social, and economic base of Gondavale and evaluates tourism facilities available for pilgrims. Data collection is based on field observation, survey, secondary sources and published reports. The study concludes that pilgrimage tourism significantly contributes to local livelihood, employment generation, and infrastructure improvement. However, accommodation, sanitation, and information systems require further strengthening for sustainable tourism development

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in regional development, especially where religious and cultural factors attract large population movement (**Singh, 1986**). Pilgrimage centers hold geographical significance as they influence population flow, settlement structure, and economic opportunities. Gondavale in Satara district is one such rural pilgrimage destination shaped by the spiritual legacy of Shri Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj (**Sharma, 2006**). The presence of the Samadhi temple has transformed the village into a religious hub, generating employment and enhancing social cohesion. According to **Satara District Gazetteer (2021)**, pilgrimage-driven economy has increased small-scale activities such as lodging, food stalls, transport services, and religious article shops. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse tourist facilities, socio-economic characteristics, and the cultural importance of Gondavale from a geographical perspective.

STUDY AREA

Gondavale is a pilgrimage-oriented rural settlement located in **Man tahsil of Satara District, Maharashtra**, forming part of the semi-arid eastern region of the district. Geographically, it lies at approximately **17°64' N latitude and 74°57' E longitude, (Fig. 1)** surrounded by low undulating slopes of the Deccan basaltic plateau. The region experiences moderate to low rainfall, hot summers, and fertile but moisture-dependent black cotton soil supporting crops such as jowar, bajri, wheat and pulses.

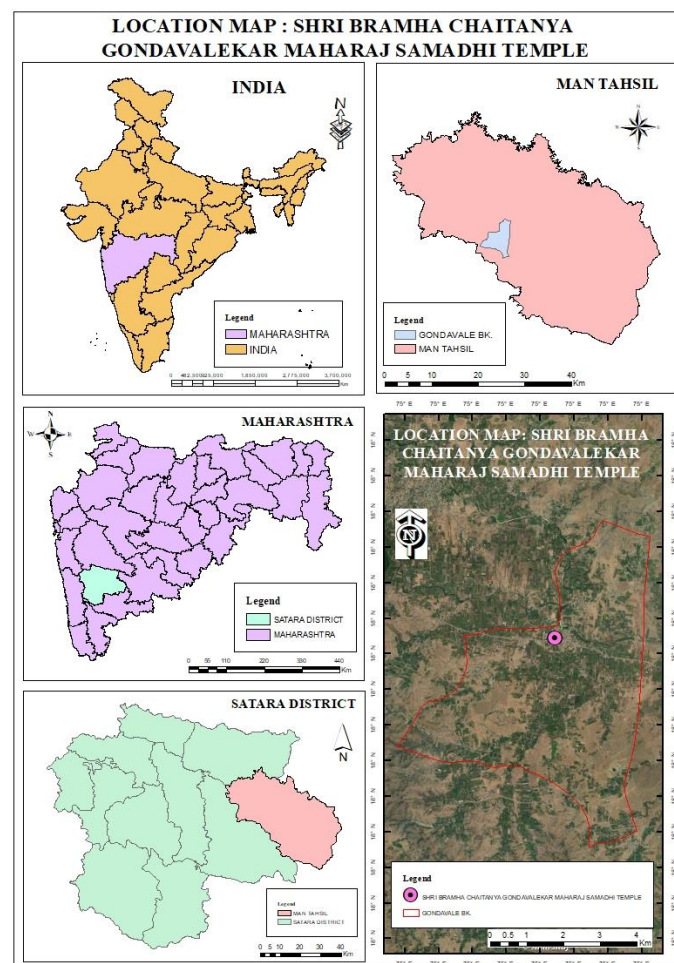


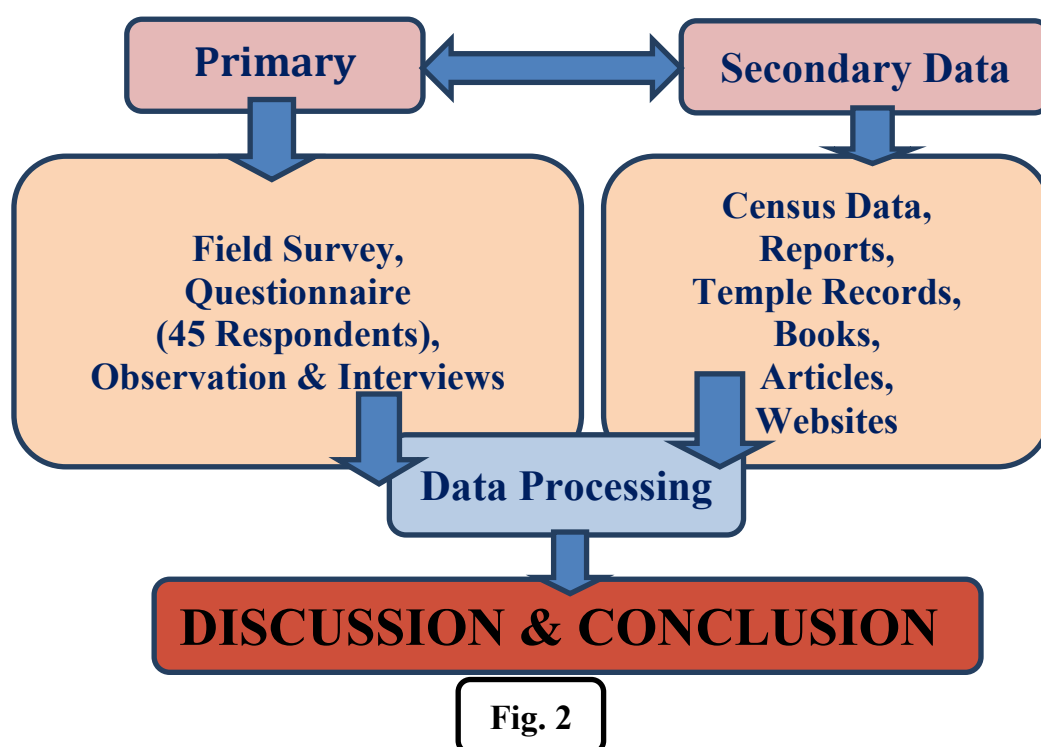
Fig. 1

The village is well connected to Satara, Mhaswad and Malharpeth through road networks, which facilitates regular tourist flow. The spiritual and cultural identity of Gondavale is centered on the **Samadhi Temple of Shri Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj, (Fig.1)** which attracts pilgrims throughout the year and plays a vital role in shaping social behaviour, economic activities, infrastructure development and seasonal population movement. Thus, the location, climate, soil and cultural heritage together define the overall geographical character and tourism potential of Gondavale.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the physical–social–economic characteristics of Gondavale village.
2. To analyse tourism facilities and their impact on local development.

METHODOLOGY



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The research conducted at Gondavale reveals that pilgrimage-based tourism has become a strong driver of rural development. The village demonstrates an integrated relationship between physical setting, social structure, cultural heritage, and economic progress. The presence of Shri Brahmachaitanya Gondavalekar Maharaj Samadhi Temple has significantly shaped the environment, influencing livelihood patterns, visitor flow, resource utilization, and overall quality of life. The findings based on field observation and secondary sources indicate clear changes in the regional economy, infrastructure, and social behaviour as a result of religious tourism.

The physio-geographical base of Gondavale forms the foundation of its tourism sustainability. The semi-arid climate, moderate rainfall, gently sloping Deccan terrain, and fertile black soil collectively support agriculture and grazing activities. These conditions enable farmers to cultivate jowar, bajri, wheat, gram and fodder crops, while livestock farming acts as a secondary support system for rural households. Seasonal water sources such as small streams, wells and tanks help balance agricultural

dependency, although water scarcity remains a periodic challenge. The geomorphology and natural features therefore sustain basic livelihood and facilitate landscape-based tourism.

From a social perspective, the village reflects strong cultural identity rooted in devotional practices, Nama-Smaran tradition, and community rituals. Daily bhajans, aartis and spiritual gatherings create a devotional atmosphere that strengthens social unity. Festivals such as Gurupournima, Ram Navami and Guru Punyatithi attract mass gatherings and enhance interaction between locals and pilgrims. Literacy rates have been improving due to educational awareness, yet higher education opportunities remain limited, compelling students to travel to nearby towns. The spiritual character of the place acts as a binding force, reducing social conflict and promoting cooperative community behaviour.

Economically, the village demonstrates a mixed pattern of primary, secondary and service-based livelihoods. Agriculture remains dominant, yet tourism has introduced new employment opportunities such as lodging services, religious product stalls, eateries, private rooms, flower shops and transport services. Many households depend partially or completely on pilgrimage-based income. Women and youth are especially benefited as they participate in prasad distribution, catering, sale of religious goods, and volunteer services. Thus, the study confirms that the physical, social, and economic background of Gondavale directly supports pilgrim activity and shapes the village's development trajectory.

Tourism infrastructure in Gondavale shows steady growth, supported largely by temple trust initiatives and community participation. Transport facilities are moderate to good, with regular buses, jeeps and private vehicles connecting the village to Satara and Mhaswad. However, peak season congestion demands organized parking zones and traffic regulation units. Accommodation facilities are available through dharamshalas, guest rooms and private lodges, but the capacity is insufficient during large festivals. Many visitors rely on rented accommodation or community arrangements, which highlights the need for investment in lodging infrastructure.

Annadan (free meal distribution) is one of the strongest components of tourism services in Gondavale. Thousands of visitors receive free, hygienic meals daily, which reflects the spiritual ethos of devotion and service. Drinking water taps, cleanliness drives, and security arrangements are well maintained, especially during major events. Sanitation and waste management are satisfactory during normal months but require temporary expansion when pilgrim density increases. Information flow through signboards, volunteers and temple announcements is functional, yet digital screens and mobile-based guidance can greatly improve navigation and crowd movement.

The impact of tourism on socio-economic development is clearly visible. Local trade has expanded, employment has risen, transport demand has increased, and small businesses have multiplied. The temple acts as a growth catalyst, improving public facilities and transforming the village into a vibrant commercial-religious hub. Tourism has also strengthened social consciousness — people participate in charitable work, annadan programs, cleanliness activities and community discipline. Thus, the available facilities directly influence tourism growth and contribute significantly to the local

economy and social upliftment.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Gondavale is a developing pilgrimage center where tourism strongly supports socio-economic growth. The Samadhi Temple acts as the nucleus of settlement activity, employment creation, and cultural preservation. To enhance sustainability, improved accommodation, digital information systems, sanitation facilities and medical emergency units must be implemented. Expansion of market planning, vehicle parking spaces, and eco-friendly waste strategies will strengthen Gondavale as a model religious tourism destination in Maharashtra.

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