

# Delineating Sacred Landscapes: Community Voices from Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad

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The story of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad is about water and history. It is about the manner in which the presence of water underwrites the existence of historic sites, settlements and communities in this arid region of Marathwada, deep within the Deccan plateau. Water, through its quicksilver ability to change form while retaining its essential nature, is a common thread moving across the land, underground and overground, crossing the boundaries of the sacred and the profane, traversing the margins of religion and community. It defines the landscape of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad.

This essay explores the role of water in the making of a historic landscape from different perspectives, as an essential resource present in nature, as an instrument for the application of evolving technologies of management and as a ritual element, embodying sacredness through its power to heal and cleanse. The voices of the local communities express their relationship with water through beliefs and practices, myths and memories that identify the particular role the element played in their lives over centuries. Section I outlines the landscape at Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad and introduces Landscape Archaeology as an appropriate approach to exploring the themes of the study. Section II provides an overview of historical events and process that have unfolded in the region over the past millennium. Section III examines the role played by two institutions, the Grishneshwara temple and Takaswami ashrama, in highlighting the aspirations of community members. Water is an important trope in defining local identities as they enmesh and separate within the social fabric. Section IV explores the role of myths and legends in generating trans-regional linkages as also fixing primordial identities of sacred sites. Finally, Section V deals with a deep and detailed interaction with a knowledgeable community member, who uncovers

multiple layers of the regional landscape and reveals ways of knowing and understanding the technological, political, social and spiritual context of the sites and their setting. Water is a vehicle for carrying forward this understanding through generations, an instrument for defining the region's identity.

Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad has been a historically active region for well over a millennium, infused with the dynamism of changing dynasties, the convergence and interaction of diverse communities, energised by myths and miracles, made lively by the streams of pilgrims that flowed in and out of the temples and *dargahs*. The presence of water has formed a backdrop for these political and cultural phenomena, a necessary resource to sustain the region's dynamism. The interplay between water and people has manifested in the form of myths, rituals, structures, architecture, institutions and belief systems. These are the 'texts' that enable us to read the 'Water History' of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad.

## I. The Landscape at Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad

The district of Aurangabad is situated in north-central Maharashtra, in the Marathwada region, covering an area of about 10,100 sq. kms. It is bordered by Nashik to the west, Jalgaon to the north, Jalna to the east and Ahmednagar to the south and comprises twelve *talukas*, of which Khuldabad, within which lie the historic sites of Ellora and Daulatabad, is one. The district is part of the Upper Godavari river basin and drained by two major tributaries of the Godavari, the Shivna and the Purna. It slopes towards the south east, consisting of plateau highlands in the north, evolving into gently undulating plains to the south finally reaching the riverine plains of the Godavari. The land is covered by a rock type known as Deccan Trap, a form of basalt composed of pre-historic lava flows resulting from ancient volcanic activity. Rainwater collects in the vesicles and joints that are plentiful in this

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rock, forming the essential reserve of groundwater that has sustained settlements over millennia. (The rock-cut cisterns of the historic caves is simply a human device to emulate the natural process). In addition, the slope and contours of the hills and plateaus create catchment areas for collection as well as replenishment of ground water, leading to specific patterns of irrigation and water usage by local human settlements through history. This arrangement of geological, geographical and climatic processes is a finely balanced bio-network involving a fundamental interaction between human activity and the environment.

How do we approach the landscape of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daulatabad? How do we define its spatial boundaries, its core(s) and hinterlands and the political, social and religious networks that connected it with other parts of the sub-continent and beyond? How do we study the historical transformation of settlements in the region, their structural remains depicting evolving technologies and usage patterns in alignment with political and cultural changes over time? The answers to such questions may open more avenues of enquiry than they may lead to conclusions. However, the constant process of questioning the notion of landscape and its manifest physical characteristics is important as it will initiate an approach and methodology for contextual studies of the Indian historic sites.

The idea of landscape has undergone considerable evolution since its earliest roots in agricultural history in Europe, in which it denoted a defined space acted on by human agency, developing as a man-made system functioning to serve human communities.

Landscape as a representational form in literature and painting still depicts a space that is acted on and lived within, but can be viewed in more abstract terms. Its significance in terms of local ecologies and human economic endeavours remains, but is overlaid by a history of human engagement with physical, ecological and ritual elements in the environment. Such a record of human interactions through space and time can be viewed as a palimpsest, where material and cultural transformations carry the imprint of past associations and activities. In other words, Cultural Landscapes are spaces focused on people, and the experiential, social, epistemological and emotional dimensions of their existence. An archaeology of Cultural Landscapes, or Landscape Archaeology, is an emerging field concerned with how people visualised the world, how they engaged with one another across spaces, how they chose to manipulate their surroundings and how they were subliminally driven to do things in accordance with their locational surroundings.<sup>1</sup> Landscapes can be *ecological*, as in people construct frames of knowledge to know the world that they inhabit, *institutional*, wherein

space is structured and behaviour normalised through codified social practices, and *territorial*, as spaces for contestation.

Adopting the Landscape Archaeology approach enables a multi-dimensional understanding of the rich and textured landscape of Ellora-Khuldabad-Daultabad. It allows an examination of the numerous sites, settlements and structures that dot the countryside as well as the historical events, myths, legends, community memories and oral traditions that link them in a dynamic narrative. The vertical unfolding of historical processes, dynastic succession, inflows of communities, ideas and technologies over nearly two millennia has resulted in the horizontal growth of layers of human remains, villages, temples, dargahs, fortifications and wells, tanks, *baolis*, taking shape as a palimpsest. Such a layered record of human activity, underwritten by the relationship between time and space, can only be captured on the scale of a landscape. The material and structural remains must be read as historical layers, in relation to one another along with their connectivities and disjunctures.

Viewing the landscape through the lens of water, one is able to identify the vocabulary that enabled communities to engage with their environment. Water as an essential resource requiring technological innovations of management, as a ritual element possessing the ability to heal and cleanse, it is an embodiment of community memory and identity in the region.

## II. Evolution of the Ellora Micro-Region: Factors Underpinning Historical Development

The Ellora cave complex may be dated between the sixth and thirteenth centuries AD. By this time, there had been considerable stylistic and doctrinal evolution within the sphere of Buddhism. A seven hundred year old tradition of rock-cut Buddhist monasteries and *chaityas* culminated in the Mahayana phase at Ajantha. After the decline of Ajantha, Ellora rose to prominence as a thriving nucleus of artistic, religious, political and economic life.<sup>2</sup> The Buddhist structures at Ellora, excavated between early seventh-end eighth centuries AD, depict a high level of evolution of technique and philosophy, consisting of institutions of learning and *viharas* for habitation. The paucity of inscriptions indicates patronage by non-local entities like merchant guilds and commercial networks, on whose map Ellora was certainly located.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, from the sixth century onwards, the increased political significance of local ruling dynasties and feudatory chiefdoms (*samantarajas*) as part of the process, termed by Kulke, Burton Stein and others as 'forming nuclear areas of sub-regional power'<sup>4</sup> led to a resurgence of Puranic Hinduism that absorbed local

autochthonous cults and placed them in the Brahmanical pantheon. Berkson informs us that Cave 21, built around 550 AD, is the first structure symbolizing resurgent Hinduism in the complex. The regional rulers thus legitimized their authority by building monumental structures at key places of pilgrimage. Thus while Ellora grew in significance between the sixth and tenth centuries AD, its development indicates multiple interconnected processes of interaction between the different faiths.

The patronage of these excavations is interesting in its multidimensionality. Ellora's location along an important trade route of the Deccan, the Dakshinapatha, made it an important region for merchants and traders, many of whom belonged to the Buddhist community. Hence, it is no coincidence that Buddhist merchant guilds were important donors for the Buddhist caves. The scarcity of inscriptions in the caves also indicates the lack of patronage by local rulers and their feudatories, and indicates far-flung patterns of patronage such as by the Palas of Bengal, famous for their sponsorship of Buddhist sites. The appearance of donative inscriptions appears during the reign of the Rashtrakutas, especially with respect to the building of Kailasa and the mobilization of Brahmins and other social groups to gain political legitimacy for the dynasty.

Thus Ellora as a site and a micro-region evolved as a result of three influential processes: merchant guilds providing support and patronage for the Buddhist structures, the consolidation of their authority by the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas through patronage to local cults and pilgrimage places, and the geo-political significance of the site along important trade routes.<sup>5</sup>

In 1296 AD, Alauddin Khilji's Deccan campaign was aimed at procuring tribute and enabling political alliances with the Deccan dynasties, including the Yadava ruler of Daulatabad, Rai Ramchandra. Amir Khusro wrote extensive eulogies of the wealth acquired from the Deccan by the Delhi Sultan. The shift of the Delhi Sultanate capital from Delhi to Devagiri/Daulatabad by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in 1327 AD caused a significant demographic shift in the region. Approximately one thousand four hundred Sufi saints are believed to have arrived and settled in and around Daulatabad during this period. Despite the Sultan's decision to reverse his move and return to Delhi, many families chose to remain or move to other Deccan cities like Gulbarga. Amongst them were several Sufis who had accompanied the Sultan's entourage and had decided to put down their roots in the Deccan. The event facilitated the spread of North Indian culture, language and lifestyles into the south. It also enabled the greatest influx of Islam that the region had witnessed thus far, and established cultural and political

connectivities between Western and Central Asia and the Southern states via the corridor of Delhi.<sup>6</sup>

Ellora also had strong associations with the family of Shivaji, the Maratha leader. Verul village was significant as the home base for the family of Shahji Bhonsle, as the latter's father Maloji was the village Patel under the Nizamshahis of Ahmadnagar. The Bhonsles migrated here from Pune, and through agricultural revenues, became wealthy enough to own horses and arms, which enabled them to enter the service of the Ahmednagar Nizam.

The plateau overlooking the Ellora caves was possibly a site for a pre-Yadava township that included the settlements of Sulibhanjan and Kagzipura. There are a number of tanks like the Surya Kund, Pariyon ka Talab, Pangra Talab and Dharma Talab in the area, as well as temples and the remains of edifices from the Chalukya, Rashtrakuta and Yadava periods. Under Aurangzeb, the town of Khuldabad (meaning "heavenly abode") was fortified and became a major Sufi centre; the Mughal emperor is buried there along with his family, within the tomb complex of his spiritual teacher, Pir Zainuddin Shirazi.

The Holkars of Indore controlled the region of Ellora including the caves till they were taken over by the Nizam of Hyderabad in the middle of nineteenth century. During the rule of the Holkar queen Ahilyabai, various public works were carried out including the restoration of Ghrishneshwar temple. This placed Grishneshwar on a common platform along with other important temple sites including Varanasi and Bodh Gaya, and built up its significance as a site of national significance, simultaneously reinforcing the status of the Holkars as a pan-Indian power.

According to J.B. Seely, an early British traveler in the region, the Holkars maintained a large establishment at Ellora in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> They used to rent the caves for religious purposes and raised funds by collecting an entrance fee. This practice seems to have continued till the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1951 the Government of India declared the Ellora caves to be monuments of 'national importance'; two years later they came under the control and supervision of the Archeological Survey of India.<sup>8</sup>

### **III. Birth of a River: Sustaining the Community**

The four of us were huddled in a gutter beside the winding road that led to the great reservoir on top of the hill of Mhaismal. Yusuf pressed his hand against a dark patch on the earthen wall of the bund. A few drops of moisture trickled through his fingers, joining a thin stream that ran through the gutter. He turned a sweaty face towards

me. 'Madam idhar haath rakhneka.' (Madam, keep your hands here). I placed my hand upon the imprint of his. A few seconds later, I felt it. A faint beat under my fingers as drop after drop trickled out – the earth's pulse. 'Ahaa! Dekha? Pataa laga na?' (Ahaa! See? Now you know). Sabir laughed as he scooped a handful of cool clear water from the gutter and splashed his face. 'This stream will join others as it comes down the rocky slopes of Jogeshwari,' Yusuf pointed out. 'By the time it drops over cave 28 and falls into the Sita ki Nahani (the local name for a pool near the Ellora caves), it has become the Yelganga.'

The Yelganga, the eponymously named river after which the settlement, and the caves at Ellora/Yelura are named, is more than a local water body. It is a major artery conveying the lifeblood of the community's identity. As it flows past the *ghats* (series of concrete steps leading to a water body) of the Grishneshwar temple in Ellora village<sup>9</sup>, its water sanctifies the *vyotirlinga* (radiant representation of Shiva) in countless *abhisheka* (ritual washing/consecration/anointment) ceremonies, being considered to be as pure as the Ganga. Funereal ceremonies are performed on the *ghats* of the Yelganga, considered to be equal in sacredness to the *ghats* of Kashi<sup>10</sup>. It joins the river Shivna, a major tributary of the Godavari, at Lakhni village in Khuldabad.

Today, the Yelganga resembles a sewer, comprising a chain of festering pools covered with green scum and overflowing with garbage as it meanders through the village. Kachru Jadhav and his friend and neighbour, Yusuf Shaikh, both residents of Verul village, inform me that as children, they used to swim across the river at the Grishneshwar *ghats*, the water was deep enough to cover their shoulders. They complain bitterly about the present dessication of the river channel. The reason for this could be an *ashram* (hermitage) that has recently appeared upstream of the village. This establishment known as Shantigiri *ashram*, consumes large quantities of river water to irrigate its kitchen gardens and orchards. It is believed have the patronage of political leaders as well as a large group of well-connected devotees. The appropriation of essential water resources by powerful and politically connected institutions, *ashrams* and temples among them, is a common practice particularly in regions of endemic water scarcity such as Ellora.

An alternative practice for the redistribution of water is seen in the Takaswami *ashram*, an establishment adjacent to the Ellora cave complex. Kachru informs me that about seventy-eighty years ago, a *sadhu* arrived in Ellora from Cuddappah in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>11</sup>

Finding an abandoned unfinished cave with a large cistern attached to it, he revived the water body and maintained it, providing drinking water to the pilgrims that passed by on the pedestrian path up the escarpment

to Mhaismal. In time the cave complex became known as the *ashram* of 'Takaswami', the master of the *taka* (cave cistern or tank). The *sadhu* has long since passed on, but the *ashram*, now a large and well-endowed establishment run by his disciples, is very popular amongst the residents of Ellora village. Many residents of Ellora, including Kachru, are associated with it, offering '*shram dana*' (manual labour) in the fields and gardens of the *ashram*, or by taking care of the numerous cattle that have been donated by devotees. 'I feel very peaceful while working here,' Kachru tells me. "Every morning I reach here by 5 o'clock and work in the fields for two hours. It makes me feel wonderful all day!"

The two *ashrams* depict contrasting relations with the local community, primarily on account of the nature of their usage of local water resources. The Shantigiri establishment consumes the upstream waters of the Yelganga but is not so well networked within the social and cultural life of the village. The Takaswami *ashram*, on the other hand, appears to have reached deeper into the daily functioning and lives of the residents by mobilising them to participate in various activities. Furthermore, the philanthropic nature of the swami's *sewa* (voluntary service) in providing drinking water to pilgrims via his maintenance of the abandoned cistern, answers a felt need in the arid region, regarded as a supreme service. This quality resonates in all the *ashram's* activities, and has built up a substantial reserve of goodwill in the community, which extends its support to the establishment.

#### IV. The Ability to Heal and Cleanse: The Curative Properties of Water

'One day the Sheikh saw a group of fairies flying overhead. Owing to their arrogance, they did not bow down before Hazrat and continued on their way. The Sheikh decided to punish them and, using the force of his power (*taaqat*), captured them and imprisoned them in the waters of the lake (*talaab*). Their essence infused the water, imparting healing properties to it. It came to be called *Pariyon ka Talaab* (the lake of the fairies) after the fairies imprisoned in the water. Barren women, after a dip in the lake, become fertile...'<sup>12</sup>

Sheikh Jalaluddin Ganj-e-Rawan is believed to have been the first Sufi saint to have settled in Khuldabad, about eight hundred years ago. Originally from Baghdad, he was given an *asa* (walking stick) by his teacher, Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, who asked him to keep walking eastwards. 'You will reach your *muqam* (destination) when the *asa* sprouts leaves,' the teacher said. Sheikh Jalaluddin walked all the way to India and when he reached Sulibhanjan, the miracle occurred and the stick sprouted leaves. A gigantic tree, believed

to be the descendant of the miraculous *asa*, is found in the courtyard of the *dargah*. Thousands of devotees, Hindus and Muslims, throng the compound during the annual *Urs* (death anniversary) of the saint in February. Hundreds of women bathe in the Pariyon ka Talaab in the hope of offspring. Legend has it that once a eunuch mocked the saint and bathed in the lake. A son was born to him, and to prove the veracity of the story, the *khadims* point out the graves of both the eunuch and his son in the *dargah* (shrine/tomb) compound.

The motif of the healing power of water is also present in the numerous myths surrounding the Sivalaya *tirtha*, the sacred pool near Grishneshwar temple in Ellora village. The pool is believed to pre-date the temple structure, and is referred to in an eighth century Rashtrakuta inscription<sup>13</sup>, a historic allusion that enables us to locate it within the complex narrative of the region's past. In fact, it is possible that the pool, with its association with the healing properties of its waters, is the source of the region's link with sacrality. Other sectarian structures, including the temple and the cave complex, may have coalesced around this primordial sacred water body subsequently. Over time, the entire region could have grown and acquired the persona of a pilgrimage centre, sacred to the multiple diverse communities that settled there.

The *Verul Mahatmya*<sup>14</sup>, a nineteenth century text encompassing much older myths and legends, narrates the story of a king named Ela, who was afflicted by a terrible skin disease owing to Rishi Gautama's curse. His wife, queen Manikavati, begged the sage to withdraw his curse. Relenting, Gautama advised the king to seek out a pool in the forest where water flowed from the hooves of a cow, and on its banks, pray to Lord Brahma. When the king found the pool he bathed in it and found his skin condition much improved. After praying to Brahma, he was completely cured. He named the pool Brahmasarovar and the region, under Ela's patronage, came to be known as Elura.

Another myth relates the story of Ghusma, a Brahmin's wife, who was a devotee of Lord Shiva, and daily offered 101 clay *lingams* to the deity. When her co-wife, Sudeha, murdered her young son and flung his body into the Brahmasarovar, even then Ghusma did not interrupt her daily prayers. Pleased by her devotion, Shiva restored the boy to life and he emerged from the waters of the Brahmasarovar, alive and well. The *tirtha*, thus, is associated with miraculous life-giving powers and even today, is an important focal point of the pilgrimage centre that is Grishneshwar.

The two sacred water bodies, Pariyon ka Talaab and the Shivalaya *tirtha*, draw thousands of pilgrims from across the country and beyond. The presence of water, as

a miraculous element with healing properties in this case, imparts a sense of sacrality to the land that permeates the identities of the communities living in their vicinity, regardless of their religious affiliations. For instance, both Kachru and Yusuf, Hindu and Muslim, are equally knowledgeable about the myths, legends and ritual practices associated with the *talaabs*, temples, *ashrams* and *dargahs*. In addition, pilgrimage is a primary economic driver in the region, and the livelihoods generated through association with sacred activities and institutions benefit all communities.

## V. Discovering Malik Ambar's 'Pipeline': Community Knowledge in Daulatabad

He sat at the edge of Mavsala *talaab* (pond/reservoir), tinkering with a motor that he was using to pump water through a pipe that extended into a small settlement about five hundred metres away. I walked past him on the embankment, searching for any historic structure that would indicate the use of medieval water technology and support my research on the water catchment areas that fed into the hydraulic systems of Daulatabad fort, two kilometres away. Feeling the futility of my search, I was about to give up, when I heard him call out. 'What are you looking for?' Surprised, and a little irritated, I turned around, ready to start patiently explaining, in simple Hindustani, that I was searching for 'old structures' for collecting water... '*Malik Ambar ki pipeline dhoondh rahi hain na, Madam?*' (Are you searching for Malik Ambar's pipeline, Madam?) I stared at him in amazement. How could he know who Malik Ambar was, much less his hydraulic initiatives? B.D. Shah rose to his feet, a tall stooping farmer in a faded *kurta pyjama*, a thatch of white hair above a weatherbeaten face. 'Come. I will show you.'

Over the next three hours, under the spell of his rich Dakhani Urdu accent, the dry, rocky, featureless countryside around us slowly transformed into a technologically structured, strategically designed system for collecting and transporting water from the Mavsala reservoir to Daulatabad fort. Every slope had a role to play, piles of rocks revealed themselves to be hydraulic valves with larger inlets and smaller outlets to generate water pressure, random-looking streamlets and gutters aligned themselves seamlessly into a surface water collection arrangement. Scattered lumps of lime concrete turned out to be the remains of ceramic pipes embedded in a stone wall hidden from sight by thorny bushes. An innocuous looking waterfall fed into a system of aqueducts and emptied into the Abpashdara, an enormous reservoir created by a check dam at the edge of the Daulatabad fort wall. The icing on the cake was a tiered pavilion built into the stone scarp adjacent to the waterfall – images of royal

ladies sitting there enjoying the spray from the cascading water, rose before me.

The entire system was embedded in a sloping dyke, about five hundred metres wide, with tall rocky escarpments that ran from Mavsala to Daulatabad. As we walked across the floor of the dyke, Shah pointed to the trees. 'Look, these are fruit trees. Mango and Sitaphal, Jamun and Guava...' Sure enough, the little jungle that we were in was actually an orchard, a *Bagh*, planted by Malik Ambar to protect his water system. As we munched on a few stray guavas from the three hundred year old garden, Mr. Shah went on in a gentle monotone. 'The *marfat* (caretaker) for the upkeep of this orchard was given to the ancestors of my neighbour, Murlidhar Sonavale. No one comes here. Only some Bhils with their buffaloes. They dig a hole next to that stream over there. In an hour or so, the hole gets filled with clear water from the stream (percolating through the soil). They drink the water and move on, leaving the rest for others who will come. You see the holes? We call them Jheeras.'

How did he know so much about this place, I asked him. 'This is my home. When I was a boy, my friends and I used to play in the waterfall. We used to climb up to the top and come sliding down through the water. We believed that behind the water was a cave full of the Nizamshahi sultan's treasure. It was protected by thorny bushes and poisonous snakes,' he smiled. 'You see that big *Pipal* tree over there? The Bhils believe it is the *dargah* of Jalali Baba. The Baba's shadow (*saaya*) protects this place. Sometimes when you pass the tree, you get the fragrance of flowers. That means the Baba has blessed you.'

Shah's knowledge of the region's history was impressive, full of facts and information that was associated with textual knowledge and professional expertise. Standing on the banks of Mavsala reservoir, he stated that the tank had been built by the Yadavas when they ruled in Devagiri (Daulatabad), and the steps or *ghats* dated to that period. He affirmed that the first stage of fortification at Devagiri was by the Yadavas, for which purpose craftsmen were brought in from Iran. He recounted the legend of the siege of Daulatabad Fort by Alauddin Khalji during the reign of Raja Ramachandra Rai, wherein the latter finally capitulated following the capture of his son, Sankara Deva by the Khalji forces. According to him, the Talab was built to provide water to Devagiri Fort.

One may argue that B.D. Shah was an exceptionally knowledgeable source of information about local history, and that his interest and ability to process and analyse historic phenomena was unparalleled amongst community members. The experience opened certain doors to understanding the significance of a shared past to the residents of a historic region. It demolished

a certain academic arrogance that was inherent in my approach as a researcher, premised on the fact that access to textual sources and publications would impart greater analytical depth and clarity to my arguments. The ability to holistically view landscapes and functioning systems within the context of layers of usage, effects of scarcity, changing patterns of practice and behaviour, is what Mr Shah revealed to me. Additionally, he had a fine understanding of the workings of technology and could see the systemic functioning of disparate parts of a whole. Finally, he had the rare ability to communicate his vision, enriching it with his lived experience and understanding of the landscape. I was indeed lucky to find him on the bank of the reservoir that morning.

## Conclusion

A contextual understanding of the landscape is the most valuable contribution that local communities bring to the table. Often, individual views have to be understood in terms of particular agendas and associations and cannot be generalised to speak for all. For instance, Kachru is associated with the Takaswami *ashram* and therefore is positively disposed towards it. However, the larger pattern to be seen here is that the *ashram* is known for a seminal act of charity, that of the conservation and distribution of water to pilgrims. That is the primary factor underpinning its general goodwill amongst the community.

Myths and legends may be read as expressions of community memory, aspects of a regional identity that define the area's significance vis-à-vis wider networks of sacrality linking pilgrimage centres across national and even continental boundaries. The myth of Sheikh Jalaluddin Ganj-e-Rawan creates linkages with Baghdad, considered one of the epicentres of Sufi Islam. The Yelganga is compared to the Ganga, the epitome of sacred waters. The trope of the magical healing properties of water in the case of the Sivalaya *tirtha*, however, depicts a more localised version of sacrality that is primordial in nature. Thus, water as an element, a symbol and a carrier of memory is an apt medium of expression of community identities as also an instrument for defining a landscape.

## NOTES

1. Bruno David and Julian Thomas, eds., *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*, New York: Routledge, 2016, "Introduction": 'Landscape archaeology concerns the intentional and the unintentional, the physical and the spiritual, human agency and the subliminal...Landscapes implicate social order and gender...rhythms of work and play, daily routines'.
2. Carmel Berkson, *Ellora: Concept and Style*, New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1992.

3. There is a reference to Ellora merchants in a donative inscription at Sanchi, see Geri Malandra, *Unfolding a Mandala: Buddhist Cave Temples of Ellora*, New York: SUNY Press, 1993.
4. Eschmann, Kulke and Tripathi *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1981.
5. Carmel Berkson, *Ellora: Concept*, 1992, pp. 31-32.
6. Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden. Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Centre* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 114-118.
7. J.B.Seely, *The Wonders of Ellora or the Narrative of a Journey to the Temples or Dwellings Excavated out of a Mountain of Granite at Ellora in the East Indies*. London, 1824.
8. T.V.Pathy, *Elura: Art and Culture*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, New Delhi. 1980, p. 5.
9. Grishneshwar is one of the twelve *vyotirlingas*, most sacred of Saivite pilgrimage places. Its presence on this pan-regional pilgrimage network makes this a significant sacred site with an area of influence extending well beyond state and regional boundaries.
10. Conversation with Pandit Deepak Mishra, priest and trustee at Grishneshwar temple, 2009.
11. Prior to improved railway and air connectivity and the building of modern highways, Ellora was well integrated with a peninsular network of routes and circuits linking the various pilgrimage centres with one another. The route from Simhachalam in Andhra Pradesh to Ellora was a well-established path traversed by pilgrims, sadhus and other travellers that constituted the regional traffic in these areas. Travel was mainly done on foot, thus making the pilgrimage an arduous experience. Interestingly, a large population of regional tourists that come to Ellora today are from similar regions in Andhra and Telengana, indicating that the old pilgrimage circuits are still alive and flourishing.
12. Conversation with *khadims* at the Dargah of Sheikh Jalaluddin Ganj-e-Rawan in Sulibhanjan, Khuldabad
13. S.K. Dikshit, 'Ellora Plates of Dantidurga', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXV, 1940, pp.25-31.
14. *Verul Mahatmya of Vinayakbuwa Topre*(1902), Aurangabad: Shri Hari Ganesh Bapat Publishers, (Reprint 1971)