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SPIRITUAL TOURISM IN PUNE CITY

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Pune city's location helps a lot to make a city favorable for the spiritual tourism as the city lies on the confluence of the two rivers i.e. Mula and Mutha, and for the development of the religious places the river confluence i.e. Sangam is very significant from the religious point of view as this geographical nature of the Pune considered as the auspicious in the religion and help to enhance the holiness of the city. As most of the sacred places in India are on the confluence of the rivers, hence the confluence of Mula and Mutha river plays pivotal role in the spiritual life and history of Pune.

Poona City – Head quarter of Poona District, situated in 180 31'N. and 730 51'E., on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, 119 miles south-east of Bombay, and a terminus of the Southern Mahratta Railway; 1,850 feet above the level of the sea, and, in a straight line, about 63 miles from the coast. The name seems to be derived from the Sanskrit Punyapur, or cleanser, probably referring to the holy meeting of the Mutha and Mula rivers. It is the military capital of the Deccan, and June to October the seat of the Government of Bombay.¹ In prehistoric times, like the rest of the Deccan, Poona is said to have formed part of the Dandakaranya or Dandaka Foreset.² The earliest mention of its name occurs in a cooper plate inscription of the Rashtrakuta King Krishna I dated A.D. 758, where there is reference to the Poona Region (Punya Vishaya). In another inscription of the same, dated A.D. 768, the region is called Punaka.³

The Cultural Capital Of Maharashtra: Pune is also known as the cultural capital of Maharashtra. It has evolved over a long period of time and it has the unique distinction of having a rock cut cave temple of Shiva, known as Pataleshwar. This temple is located now right in the middle of the city. The later development was basically in the Kasba peth area, which was the earliest development along the river Mula.

The Pataleshwar Cave Temple: The Pataleshwar Cave Temple (also called Panchaleshvara or Bamburde) is a rock-cut cave temple, carved out in the 8th century in the Rashtrakuta period. It is located in what is now Pune, in the state of Maharashtra, India. It was originally situated outside the town, but the city limits have expanded so that it is now located on the downtown Jangli Maharaj Road.⁴ It has been declared as a protected monument by the government. The temple, made of basalt rock,⁵ is dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva. The sanctum - a cube-shaped room about 3-4 metres on each side - houses a linga - the symbol of Shiva and there are two smaller cells on each side. In front of the cave is a circular Nandimandapa, its umbrella shaped canopy supported by massive square pillars. This mandapa is one of the peculiar structures of Pataleshwar. The cave is located at a lower level than the present level of the road and the cave complex. There is an exquisitely carved circular Nandi shrine in the huge courtyard of the cave. The main cave is rectangular on plan and has a pillared porch. There are three sanctums in the cave temple and the central one houses the Shivalinga. There is a circumambulation path provided in the cave where one can see the unfinished part of the cave temple. It appears that after finishing the front and the sanctum the cave was left incomplete due to some reasons, one of which could be the faults in the rock. However the walls in the main cave have some outlines drawn suggesting the sculptures depicting stories from Indian mythology, especially involving Shiva. The huge complex of the cave has been converted into a garden and there are a few architectural members stored in it probably belonging to