The Ganga Project

Collection Contents
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INTACH is undertaking a project on the Cultural Mapping of the River Ganga from Gaumukh to Gangasagar for the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. The ICH Division has been working on the intangible cultural heritage aspect of this project in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; a study of the 2019 Kumbh Mela at Prayag was also undertaken as a part of this mandate. Each documentation report contains research—primary and secondary—of the history, mythology, sacred complexes, fairs and festivals, arts and crafts, oral traditions, languages, foodways, and notable personalities of the culturally significant locations along the course of the river Ganga. The following are some of the completed reports submitted to the NMCG.

Allahabad (Prayagraj), Uttar Pradesh (38 records)
The report on Prayagraj covers the foremost topics related to intangible heritage, with the research comprising a mythological and historical overview, the city in antiquity, a look at Shringverpur, Pratishthanpur and Jhunsi, and the later impact of colonialism. The recognition of Prayagraj as Tirtharaj or the ‘king of pilgrimage’, its deep connection with the philosophy of Sanatan Dharma, the history of the Kumbh Mela and it

The famous Ganga Jamuni tehzeeb, and the impact of the literature and language of the city on the rest of the country has been documented; as also various communities residing near the river. The numerous sacred complexes and ghats, the fairs and festivals, crafts like moonj basketry, performing traditions like the Pattharchatti Ramlila, and foodways unique to the region have also been recorded, along with interesting traditions like that of gehrebazi, a form of horse racing, and the well-known Sufi Daire of Allahabad.

Divya Kumbh
Traditional art of Allahabad
Sculpting God, Allahabad
Bhardwaj Ashram, Prayagraj
University of Allahabad
Kalpavaasi
Rituals with coconut
Vedi, a sacrificial altar, Allahabad
Flute Sellers
Ram Pyaari
Nishad Boatsmen
Street Art in Allahabad
Swachata ki sawari
Veni Daan
Akhada Area
Tools for Scupling Idols
Foreigners at Kumbh
Ganga Aarti
The Sacred Cow
Naga
Snacks at Kumbh
Adi Shankaracharya
Moonj Baskets
Polluted Ganga
Sunset at the Ganga
Boat with pilgrims
Giant ferris wheel
A Maulvi with the holy text
Prayagwal pandas dictating rituals
Procession of shahi akhada
Lending Hand
Besan treats during Kumbh festival, Allahabad
Street Food Vendor
Khusro Bagh - Tomb of an almost Emperor
A devotee blowing the Shankha
Shiva linga
A meal before the Shahi Snaan
A man after holy snaan

**Begusarai, Bihar (14 records)**
The Begusarai report details the **history of the region**, the various sagas related to the epical and **mythological stories of the Ganga** and the different empires that played a crucial role in contributing to the imagery of the Ganga, both as an imperial symbol and as a sacred element. The **language and literary traditions** of Begusarai, **festivals** like the Ardh-Kumbh, Kartik Purnima Snan, and **Simariya or Kalpvas Mela** have an interwoven narrative with the Ganga.

Along with the prevalent **Saktah traditions of Ugratara Temple** at Mahishi, the many contributions of local folk music, theatre, and art-craft traditions of this region have been highlighted in the report, especially **Mithila painting and Sujni embroidery** work. Mithila painting, depicting various milestones in people's lives, was traditionally done on freshly plastered mud walls of the hut but is today also done on cloth, handmade paper, and canvas. **Patna Kalam** art has also been documented with details of its techniques and forms.

- A wall representation of Mithila painting of Sita and Ram at Darbhanga
- Sujni making tradition, Samastipur
- Basket Makers of Samastipur
- Clay models of Sama and Chakeya, Samastipur
- Depiction of Gangavataram
- Devotees chanting the songs and tales of the festival
- Devotees listening to the narration (Katha)
- Mithila artists at work with nibs and colours
- Shradhalus (devotees) cooking their meal
- Swami Chidamand narrating the tales of Kalpavas to devotees
- The entrance and view of the Kartik Kalpavas Mela, Simariya
- The Ghats of Simariya during Ardha Kumbh
- Cremation ground at Simariya
- A view of Simariya Ghat

**Bhagalpur, Bihar (15 records)**
- Manjoosha painting
- A colourful Manjoosha painting
- The ruin state of Karnagarh
- The interiors of famous bengali author Sh. Sharat Chandra's house
- A view of Ajgaivinath Temple
- Devotees gathered for the Holy dip
- Women performing the rituals during Chhath celebrations
- A gathering of devotees for the holy dip
- Vikramshila University
- A view of Kuppaghat
- Kanwariyas on their way to Babadham
- Kali puja celebrations
- Holy dip in the river Ganga
- Celebrations during Durga puja
- A view of Bateshwar Shtan Kahalgaon

**Farukkhabad, Uttar Pradesh (11 records)**
The project looks at the intangible heritage of the district, which includes the history of the ancient Kampilya/Panchal kingdom along the Ganga. In 1714, Nawab Mohammad Khan Bangash unified 52 villages of Bisen Kshatriyas (Bumtelas) and named them as Farrukhabad. In ancient times, Kampil reached its highest glory as the capital of the Panchala Kingdom. The presence of numerous Shivalayas has given it an exalted religious status of Aparakashi. The report covers the country's freedom movement and the involvement of local freedom fighters of Farukkhabad in the struggle. The report also documents other luminaries of Farukkhabad which include famous poets like Mr. Mahadevi Verma and Dr. Shiv Om Ambar, and music composer mr. Anwar Farrukhabadi. The history of wooden boat-making in the district is believed to be about 250 years old.

- Yakhni Manda of Kaimganj
- A view of Vishrant Ghat
- Urmila Devi ji practicing Ayurveda
- Tree of life, traditional motif used by the Sadh community
- The ritual of Pahravan on the river Ganga
- Beautifully embellished structures of Shah ji Vishrant
Idol depicting Ganga and Bhairav
Aksharalok, a local publication of farukkhabad
A bust to honour Smt. Mahadevi Verma
A boat under construction
A bird's eye view of the amazing ghats and vishrants of Farukkhabad

**Garh Mukteshwar, Uttar Pradesh** (42 records)
Garh Mukteshwar is an ancient place mentioned in the *Bhagwat Purana* and *Mahabharata*. The name of the town is derived from the temple of Mukteshwar Mahadeva, dedicated to the goddess Ganga who is worshipped here in four temples. Many Hindus come here (instead of Haridwar, Varanasi or Gaya) for *asthi visarjan* (immersion of ashes in the Ganga after cremation) of their deceased family members.

It was one of the main centres of trade on the Ganga water route. The place is also famous for its *Mudda* industry (which uses the locally grown grass), with exports to many countries. This collection of images provides a glimpse into the sacred complexes, shrines, rituals, ghats, and other cultural traditions associated with the place.

- Ganga Abhishek
- Donations made in the name of the Ganga
- Ghats of Garh Mukteshwar
- Sunset on the ghats of Garh Mukteshwar
- Commercialization through Ganga
- View of the Ghats of Garh Mukteshwar
- Preparing Sarkanda mats
- Dried Sarkanda grass
- Sacred Scriptures
- Mundan ritual being performed, Garh Mukteshwar, Uttar Pradesh
- Newly married woman performing ritual
- Devotees performing rituals during Ganga Dussehra
- Devotees performing Ganga Snan
- Students of Gurukul
- Doorway at Sita-Ram Temple
- Statue of Goddess Ganga
- Essential items for a ritual
- Interview with Kapil Sharma
- Hindu Genealogical Registers
- Interview with Pt. Shiv Kumar Shankar
- Devotees performing Deep Daan ritual, Garh Mukteshwar, Uttar Pradesh
- Interview with Acharya Vineet Pandey
- Temple with a statue of Vishnu’s Vishva Roop
- Students at a Gurukul
- Temple priests, Brij Ghat
- A local Mudda seller
- A shop selling Mudda
- Meera ki Reti
- Traditional Sarkanda mats
- Doorway to Ganga Temple
- Ritual preparations
- Ghats and the ferry rides
- An appeal to make Ganga Ghat green
- Diya for Ganga Aarti
- Ram Parivar
- An idol of Lord Brahma
- Preparation of traditional food items
- An idol of Goddess Ganga
- Making of a Mudda
- A ‘figurine’ of quartzite stone
- Manuscript of a Hindu Genealogy Register
- Interview with Pt. Santosh Kaushik

**Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh** (26 records)
Blessed with a fine cultural history, the area around Mirzapur, or Vindhyachal, is a lesser known gem adjoining Varanasi and Prayagraj. The Mirzapur study delineates the history, etymology and the gradual establishment of Mirzapur as an important trading centre of India via the river route, long before rail and road transport became the norm. The report also looks at
its sacred complexes including the famous Vindhyavasini temple, and the rich living tradition of artisanship, with crafts like carpet weaving, brassware, shellac work, and Chunar pottery carving a unique niche for the region.

Although there are many popular opinions about its genesis, it is believed that Kajri singing emerged primarily from Mirzapur. Birha and Laavani are also important folk song traditions here. Lorikayan is a popular folklore of the region and is sung with great emotion, usually in Bhojpuri. The Bharat Milap Panchami is also an important festival here.
The entrance gate of Chandika Sthana
Female devotees in their traditional attire
Munger copper plate of Devapala

**Patna, Bihar** (23 records)
The river Ganga is not just a geographical entity here but inhabits many legends of its own and their deep connections with the region's history and culture are palpable. The illustrated report outlines this history of Patna District and its arcane links with the river Ganga, as witnessed in the settlement over the centuries, and of several great empires along its banks. It establishes that even when Patliputra was in ruins, Magadha was the peaceful home of Buddhism, full of great shrines and splendid monasteries, chief among them being Nalanda.

Patna represents a cultural space of much linguistic diversity. In contemporary times, a few languages like *Bhojpuri*, *Magahi*, *Maithili*, and *Angika* have been established as the vernacular majors of the region. The report looks at this linguistic plurality and complexity. It also documents boatmen communities like the *Mallah* and the *Navik*. Ritualistic fairs such as *Chhath Puja*, the famous Sonepur Cattle Fair and other important festivals which take place throughout the year are covered. The various *Shaktipeeths* have also been listed.

- Aami Mandir
- Agam Kuan
- Ashoka Rock Edict
- Devotees going on a boat ride on the bank of river Ganga
- Devotees performing the rituals for the deity
- Entrance and the main sanctum of Choti Patan Devi
- Entrance gate of Ami Sidha Shakti Peeth
- Entrance gate of Harihar Nath Temple
- Inner Sanctum of Harihar Nath Temple
- Carvings on Mahabodhi temple walls
- A view of NIT Ghat
- Litti Chokha
- Malpua
- Parwal ki Mithai and Ghugni
- Ruins of Nalanda
- Shitala Devi Temple
- Sonepur Cattle Fair
- Sonepur Cattle Fair involves various buying and selling of animals
- The depiction of Ganga
- Main deity in form of Shakti panda
- The Navik community
- The Yagna Kund
- Thekua

**Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh** (45 records)
Varanasi reflects a unique identity that has resulted from the combined living memory of the communities settled here, and the multi-dimensional cultural influences accommodated by the city over the years. One of the most ancient cities of the world, it is a repository of heritage, with a series of invasions and inhabitations informing its secular and spiritual nature, each carrying with it a plethora of both intangible and tangible properties, social contracts and related norms of knowledge, traditions and customs.

The steadfast river Ganga, the famous *galis*, the magnificent *ghats*, the countless temples, the *kunds* and places of religious interest, the historic Banaras Hindu University, the *sadhus and varied cults*, the profound theories of life and death, the commerce, the craftsmanship and culinary flavours, and the vitality of the Banaras *gharana* and its exponents in the field of music and dance, make the intangible cultural heritage of Varanasi truly exceptional. These intangible inheritances have been listed and documented in this report. The report also highlights the connection of the river Ganga with the city and its people. From the daily *Ganga aarti* to the last rites and rituals, the river plays a very crucial part in the lives of its residents and the millions of tourists and pilgrims that arrive here for its *darshan*.

- Ganga Aarti
- Ganga performed early morning at the Assi Ghat
- Rituals at the Ghats
- Marriage Performed by the Ghat
- Ganga Snaan (Bathing in the Ganga)
- A priestess narrating the story of Tulsi Vivah, Varanasi
- Ladies gathered to perform Chath Puja at the ghats
- Priests performing the Ganga Aarti on the occasion of Dev Deepawali festival, Varanasi
- Aakashdeep Festival being Celebrated on the Banks of Holy Ganga in Varanasi
Hand-made altar for Chhath Puja in Varanasi
Preparation of Sesame oil diyas for Aakashdeep celebrations in Varanasi
Jiutiya thread being sold for Jivitya puja in Varanasi
Characters from Krishnalila at the Tulsi Ghat
A young boy dressed as Sita for Ramlila celebrations at the Asi crossing, Varanasi
Flavoured Lassi
View of the ghats from a boat
Swimming lessons in the river
A girl selling diya and flower offerings
Ganga Snaan on Kartik Purnima
Ghats of Varanasi
Hanuman Ghat, Varanasi
Bamboo Umbrellas form an integral part of the ghat scene
Students at a Ved-Vidyalaya
Malviya Bridge, Rajghat, Varanasi
Construction of a boat at the ghat
Musicians consult the text and recite verses from it for the Ramlila at Manikarnika Ghat
Pind Daan rituals at the ghats
Flute players at the ghat
Water is offered during tarpana
Crescent formation of the flow of the river
Boats of different shapes and sizes are plied on the river
The boats and the boatmen are crucial elements of the city
Morning rituals and yoga sessions at the ghats
Varanasi Chaat is the most famous street food of the city
Morning scene at the ghats
Subah e Banaras at Asi Ghat, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
Ganga Aarti at the Dashashwamedh Ghat
Tulsi Vivah ceremony in Varanasi
Kanhaiyalal Mishra playing the Sarangi, a Traditional Musical Instrument, Varanasi
Chandrakant Mishra, A Shehnai Artist from Varanasi
Padma Vibhushan Pt. Chhannulal Mishra, renowned Hindustani classical singer from Varanasi
Bow used in Ramlila
An Akhada in Varanasi
Pehelwans wrestling in the Tulsi Akhada, Varanasi
Pt. Puran Maharaj, a renowned Tabla player with his students