

Gujarat's Vadnagar included in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage sites

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About Vadnagar:

- Vadnagar, a city known by names like Vridhanagar, Anandapur, Anantapur and Nagar, is said to have been inhabited uninterruptedly for **over 2,700 years**.
- The town represents a continuously evolving historic urban landscape/area which played a major role in the hinterland trade network of Western India.
- The continuity of the historic town proves its resilience and outstanding universal value unlike the sites like **Harappa and Kalibangan, (Rajasthan)** which were abandoned eventually.

Significance:

- **The town's fortifications, arched gateways (toranas), temples, wells, residential structures (kothis)** and excavated sites like **Buddhist monasteries and dedicated stupas** showcase the architectural influence of various cultural periods.
- The **extensive water management system** here has also played a role in the town's continuity.
- The study of the historical geography of ancient India reveals Vadnagar was situated at a strategic location of two major ancient trade routes:
 - **one joining central India with the Sindh and further northwest regions, while another connected the port towns on Gujarat's coast to northern India.**
- **Excavated cowry shells** traced to the Maldives further imply involvement in **overseas trade**.
- **A gold coin**, believed to be from **the Mamluk dynasty of Egypt** that dated back to the 15th century, was also found.
- **The first excavations in Vadnagar happened in 1953-54** and were later taken up by the Gujarat state archaeology and museum directorate in 2006.

Vadnagar: A centre of Buddhism:

- Chinese traveller **Xuanzang or Hieun Tsang** is said to have visited Vadnagar around 641 AD, referring to it as '**Anandpur**' in his writings, which also record how more than 1,000 monks of the **Sammitiya School or Little Vehicle** lived in **10 monasteries at Vadnagar**.

What is World Heritage Site and how is a place declared as one?

- **A World Heritage Site** is a location with an "outstanding universal value".
- This signifies "**cultural and/or natural significance** which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity".
- **According to the World Heritage Convention's** operational guidelines, a tentative list is an "inventory" of properties a country believes deserve to be a **World Heritage Site**.
- After UNESCO includes a place in the Tentative List, that country has to prepare a nomination document that will be considered by the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee**.
- This will be followed by a UNESCO evaluation and an inspection by their representative.

Q1) How many UNESCO World Heritage Sites are there in India ?

As on 2022, India has 40 world heritage sites that include 32 Cultural properties, 7 Natural properties, and 1 mixed site.

Source: The history of Gujarat's Vadnagar, included in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage sites