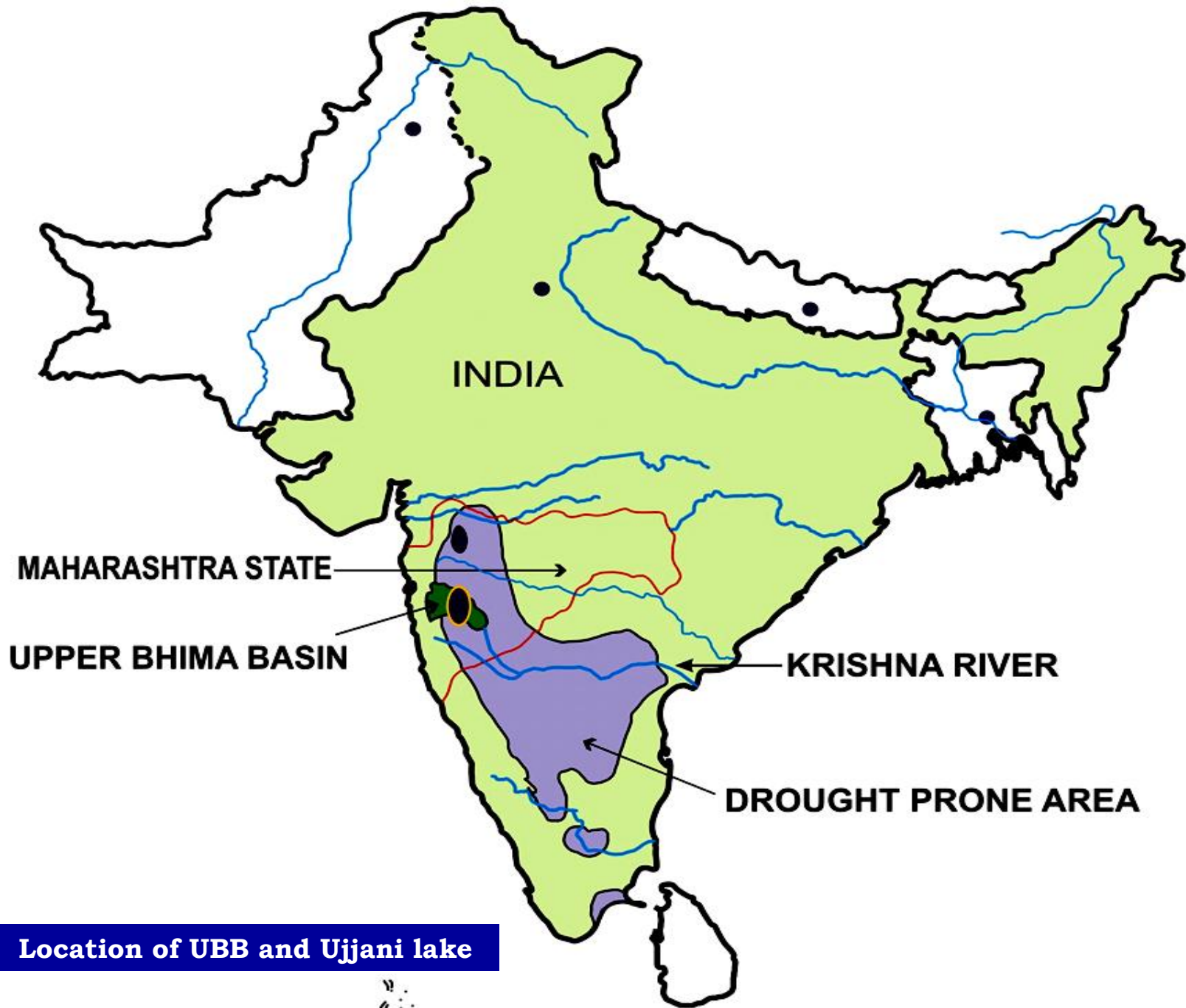
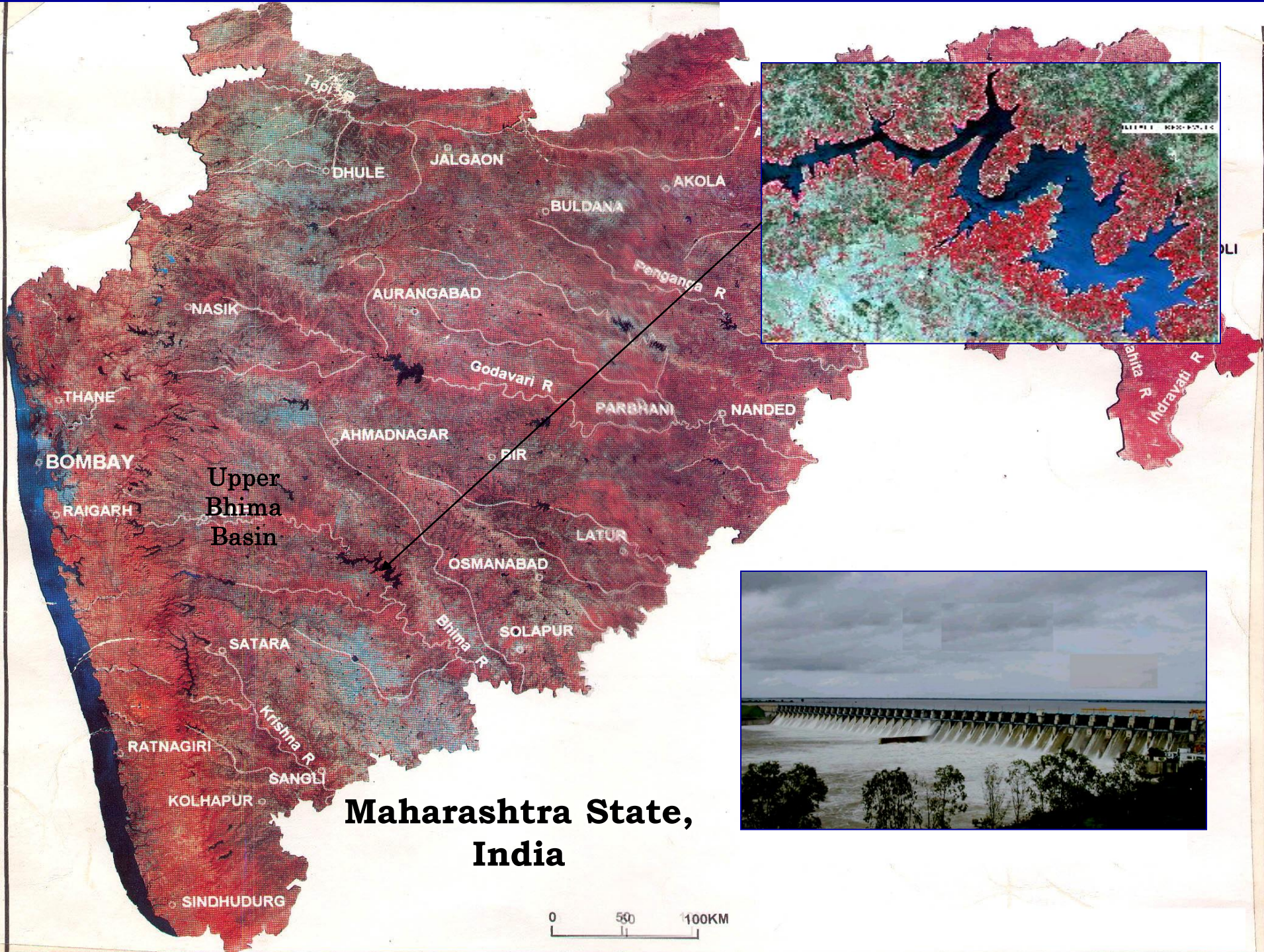


Jal Dindi – Pilgrimage on water

*An example of how tradition and culture can be integrated
in to a movement for conservation of water resources*

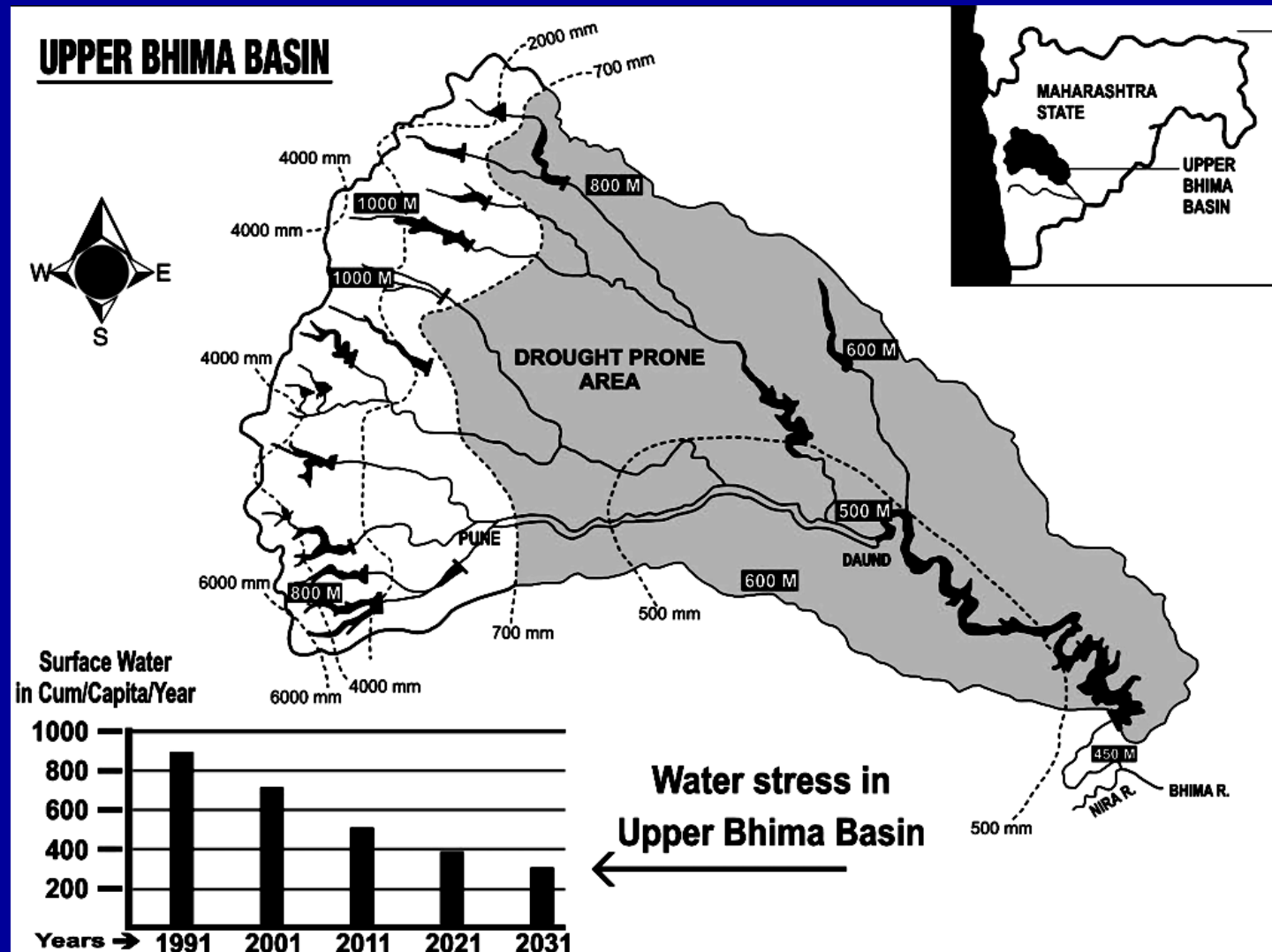




Maharashtra State, India

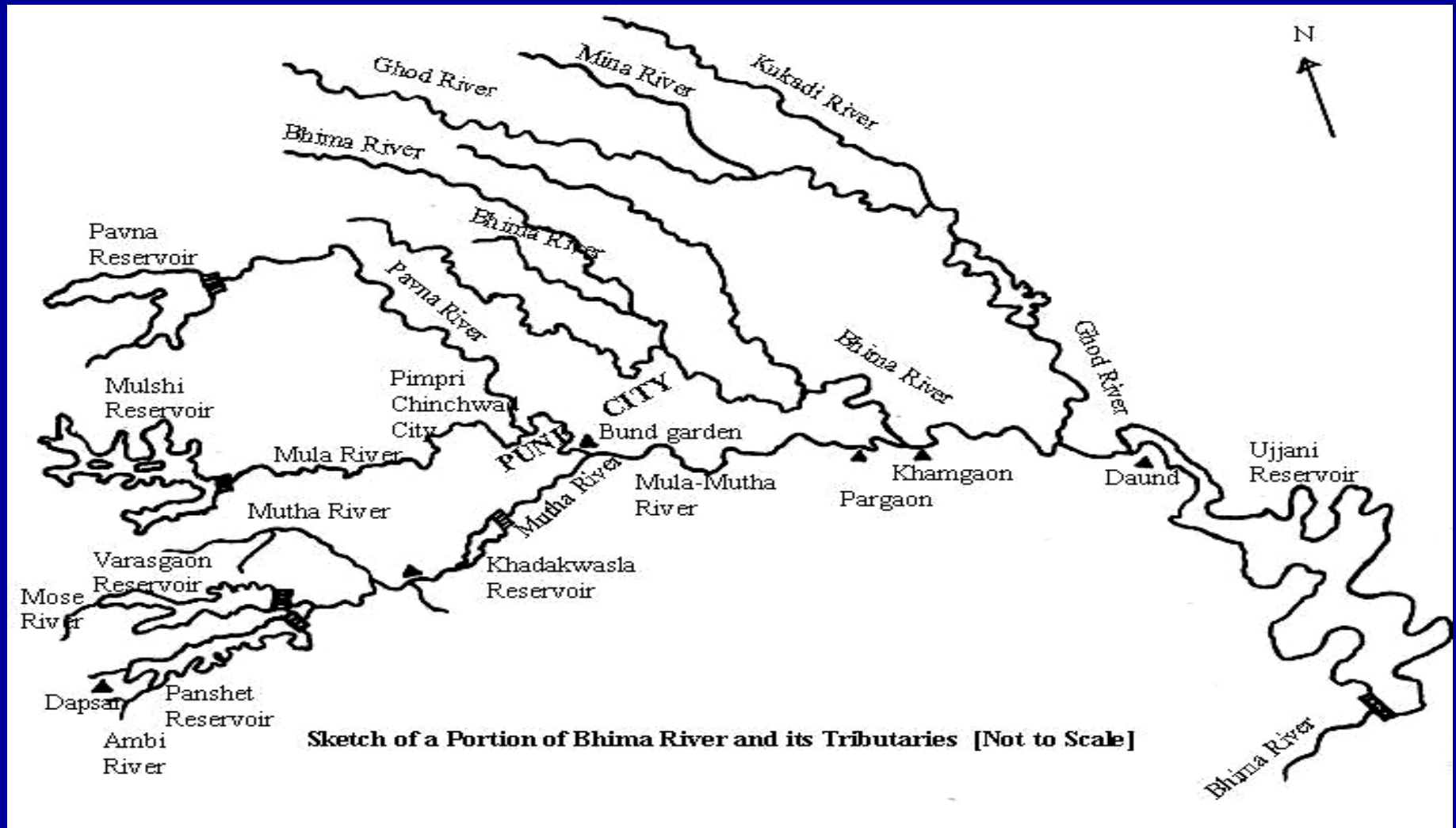
0 50 100KM

Details of Upper Bhima Basin and water resources : Reservoirs and rivers



Extreme spatial and temporal variation in precipitation pattern is characteristic feature of UBB where annual rain fall varies from 6000 to 500 mm from West to east direction.

River Bhima and its tributaries in UBB



Bhima is the major river on which Ujjani lake is impounded. Down stream it joins Krishna, the mighty river of Southern India



Degradation of river Bhima and its tributaries along the route of Jal Dindi

The Upper Bhima Basin [UBB] is cradle of a great civilization that gave birth to *Bhakti* movement roots of which go back to thousands of years. *Bhakti* - single minded and total devotion produced a number of traditions, one of which is to undertake annual pilgrimage on foot.

On the lines of the foresaid tradition, a group of citizens aggrieved by the highly degraded state of rivers in the region, had started a great movement of *Jal dindi* (pilgrimage on water). The annual event taking place since 2002 in the month of October has transformed lives of thousands of rural people.

The Jal Dindi covers a distance of 450 km up to Ujjani reservoir in about 12 days, enroute touching 70 villages along course of the river.

Red dotted line shows the route of Jal Dindi



I - Jal Dindi : Integration of tradition and culture in to environmental protection

Highlights of the symbolic action programmes during Jal Dindi

- 1. Kalash puja (Worship of a sacred pot) :**
- 2. Jal - Maitri Yatra (Friends of river/water) :**
- 3. Establishment of Jal Mitra Mandals (River Eco-Clubs) :**
- 4. Jala Dindi Sanskar Shibir (Camp) :**
 - Health check-up, advise and distribution of medicines**
 - Water quality studies/assessment and guidance for avoiding water related health issues**

The way ahead : The Jal Dindi has emerged as an unprecedented environmental movement touching the lives of thousands of impoverished rural people who are victims of water pollution from up-stream urban centers.

1. Kalash pujan (Worship of a sacred pot) :



In Indian culture *Kalash* – the sacred pot – has a special significance as it represents material prosperity and social well being and its worship is undertaken before beginning any socio-economic, religious or culture endeavor. The jal dindi begins from Alandi after performance of Kalash puja and the Jal Dindi is flagged off.

2. Jal - Maitri Yatra (Friendship with water)



It is a great event and thousands and thousands of pilgrims and people lining on the bank of the river witness it with indelible impression on their minds about their responsibility towards water resources.

3. Establishment of Jal Mitra Mandals (River Eco-Clubs) :



The mandals are established in the villages along the course of the river. The members of these clubs undertake actions for maintaining the river clean and free from pollution. Sanitation and tree plantation are other important activities.

4. Jala Dindi Sanskar Shibir (Camps) :



Moral values are crucial for order and peace in any society and this programme essentially addresses these issues. Youth in the age group of 6-14 yrs are trained in the role of values for leading materially prosperous, socially responsible and spiritually fulfilled life.



Environmental sanitation and water borne, carried and related diseases are twin challenges in rural India. During Jal Dindi services of doctors from Pune are enlisted to conduct health and environmental camps :

1. Child and mother health check-up
2. Cancer detection and reference
3. Eye and dental check up
4. Health through Indian system of medicine

River Bhima and its tributaries in their magical beauty along route of Jal Dindi



Environmental status of rivers indicates health of a nation

Epilogue

Jal Dindi has emerged as an unprecedented environmental movement touching the lives of thousands of impoverished rural people who are victims of water pollution from up-stream urban centers like historic Pune, one of the fastest growing cities in Maharashtra and its twin, the Pimpri-Chchwad often described as Detroit of India.

Perhaps in the environmental history of India, it is for the first time Jal Dindi has brought together thousands of environmental activists, professionals and institutions for a common cause of protection of rivers and lakes.

The movement has potential to be global as basic issues of river pollution are crying for solution in all countries of the world. The mass movement is highly replicable and many such events are already happening all over the country. In deed in this lie the secret of its success.

THANKS



Yeshwantsagar, Ujjani lake, Upper Bhima Basin (UBB), Maharashtra, India

Lakes and wetlands are most important components of Global water cycle. They impound precious fresh water. In view of their large scale and wanton destruction and degradation, it is time their role is properly evaluated in the water economy and effective actions initiated for their protection and conservation.