Development of Heritage Tourism in Kolhapur Region with an Emphasis on Its Forts

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Abstract: -   Tourism encompasses a wide range of activities and experiences, such as sightseeing, cultural exploration, adventure, relaxation, and more. The significance of tourism goes beyond leisure and recreation; it is a major economic driver worldwide. Maharashtra has a distinct history of forts. There are no other places in the world with as many forts in a single state. The forts of Maharashtra are a significant legacy of the Marathi Emperor Ch. Shivaji Maharaj, each with its unique history and glory. Since there are large number of forts in Maharashtra, out of which some forts are in Kolhapur region standing as silent sentinels to history. There is a very high Tourism Potential which could develop through the preservation and conservation of the same. Forts, as a heritage tourism product, play an important role in attracting a large number of tourists because of their historical significance, distinctive architecture, and unique locations. This study examines the significance of heritage tourism development in the Kolhapur region with specific reference to the fort. It explores the current state of tourism in the region, identifies challenges to tourism development, and proposes strategies to enhance the growth of heritage tourism. Overall, the paper provides valuable insights and recommendations for promoting heritage tourism in the Kolhapur region and contributing to the development of the tourism industry in Maharashtra.

Keywords — Tourism, forts, monuments, heritage tourism, preservation, socio-economic development

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a multifaceted concept that involves the movement of people from one place to another for various purposes, such as leisure, business, or cultural exploration. It provides individuals with the opportunity to experience and engage with diverse aspects of a destination, including its culture, language, cuisine, and activities. Tourism essentially is a means to experience a culture, location, language, cuisine, and activities different than one's own. (Naganath D. Banasode, 2013) The Oxford English Dictionary defines tourism as "the commercial organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest". United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as "comprising of activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes."

India attracts travelers from all over the world with its wide variety of natural and cultural attractions, which include wildlife, historical landmarks, forts, forests, and scenic splendor. In India, tourism has grown to be a major sector of the economy, generating revenue, jobs, and social progress. To avoid adverse impacts on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage, it is crucial to manage tourism responsibly.

Maharashtra's tourism sector has a lot of room to grow because there is a wide range of tourist locations with different themes and a basic infrastructure. The rich historical and cultural legacy of the state has not yet been thoroughly explored by the tourism sector or government organizations. Maharashtra's robust fundamental infrastructure offers a great starting point for private investments in the growth of the tourist industry, which may provide a large number of direct and indirect job opportunities for the state's citizens..

Heritage tourism, as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is traveling to locations and taking part in events that faithfully depict historical events and people. Our heritage is made up of the customs, artifacts, buildings, and culture that have been passed down to us and from which we get our modern customs and behaviors. This industry has grown significantly in India as a result of the government's recent initiatives to improve the country's reputation as a heritage tourism destination. (Bhumika Ranawat D. A., 2019)

Teaching the new generation about our magnificent past is the finest approach to inspire love for our heritage. They would feel proud of themselves for this and be inspired to continue the practice and pass it on to the following generation. A portion of our NEP 2020 Policy is this. A few examples of legacy tourism include breathtaking forts, history tours that showcase the city's architectural wonders, festivals, pilgrimages that include visits to one or more

temples, and the stunning rock-cut tunnels strewn around the area.

II. STUDY AREA

A. *Kolhapur Region*

Known for its abundance of tourist spots and physical features, Kolhapur District is one of the biggest districts in southern Maharashtra. Situated between 15° North latitude and 17° North latitude and 73° East longitude and 74° East longitude, the district is part of the Deccan plateau. Its position makes it a top choice for tourists who want to experience Maharashtra's natural splendor and rich cultural legacy. With three separate sections and a total area of 8,047 sq km, Kolhapur District extends 60 km from east to west. From Malkapur in the north to Samangad in the south, the Sahyadri mountain range—also referred to as the Western Ghats—stretches. In the east of the district is flat terrain, while the district's center is dominated by the hilly Panhala-Alta range. Every area welcomes visitors to explore and take in the breathtaking natural splendor. One of the Peethas from 3 ½ Peeth lives in Kolhapur, popularly called "DakshinKashi," a site of religious significance. Shankaracharya's Cloister, Mahalaxmi Temple, Jotiba Hill, Katyani Devi Temple, Bahubali sacred place, and Kaneri Cloister are just a few of the well-known religious sites in the area that are well-known for their religious significance and individuality. Amba Pass, Vishalgad, Panhala, Bhudargad, and other natural beauty spots including Bhawani Mandap, New Palace, Shalini Palace, Rankala Lake, historical sites, forts, temples, Pandava caves, water features, and breathtaking waterfalls are just a few of the Kolhapur region's many natural beauties. These sites are popular tourist attractions in Kolhapur that draw tourists from all around the world. Numerous Buddhist caves and their relics, related to caves at Agashiv, Karad, and Panhalkaji near Dapoli, can be found in Kolhapur. These include Pohale, Bhuye, Masai, Panhala, Palasamba, and Gaganbavada. These caves have the potential to draw visitors from all over the world and open up new travel opportunities if they are properly cleaned, repaired, and revitalized. Keeping in mind all of these factors, an effort has been made to research the possibility.

Location map of Kolhapur region is given below :

Fig.1 Study area

B. *Objectives:*

1. To draw attention to the Kolhapur region's and the adjacent forts' potential to grow heritage tourism.

2. To assess the state of tourism today and the need for growth in this area.

3. To pinpoint issues about the growth of heritage tourism and offer suggestions and solutions.

C. R*esearch Methodology: -*

The primary data are taken into consideration in this study. The information regarding different locations included in this study was gathered through on-the-spot inspections and investigations. The crucial foundation of this research project is comprised of primary and secondary data. Through visits to the locations and surveys using photos, interviews, and questionnaires from travelers, pilgrims, stakeholders, etc., primary data was gathered. The secondary data was gathered from a number of sources, including handbooks, magazines, and booklets, daily newspapers, magazines, reports, internet, and other official documents. Among these were reports from the tourism department, Kolhapur District Gazetteer, and the forest department.

D. *Results and Discussion: -*

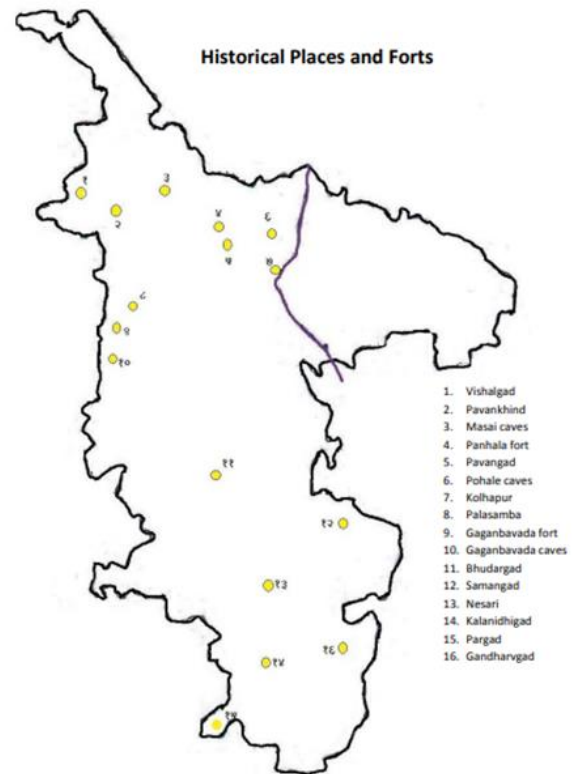Historical forts and places as tourist location in Kolhapur region: -

1. Vishalgad
2. Pavankhind
3. Masai caves
4. Panhala fort
5. Pavangad
6. Pohale caves
7. Kolhapur
8. Palasamba
9. Gaganbavada fort
10. Gaganbavada caves
11. Bhudargad
12. Samangad
13. Nesari
14. Kalanidhigad
15. Pargad
16. Gandharvgad

Fig.2 Forts and places as tourist locations in Kolhapur region

Why forts have not yet acquired the status of a good tourist destination?

Forts certainly have potential as tourist destinations, and many forts around the world already attract significant numbers of visitors. However, there are several reasons why forts may not be as popular as other tourist attractions in some regions:

  i. Some of the forts don't have access to potable water.

  ii. Police control issues and security concerns

  iii. Unfinished reconstruction efforts.

  iv. The Indian Archaeological Survey and the state and federal governments' lack of focus and effort

  v. Local self-government that is passive.

  vi. Insufficient marketing and exposure.

  vii. The villagers show a lack of professionalism.

  viii. Infrastructure development's lacuna

Heritage tourist destinations in Kolhapur region are given below :

Table 1 Taluka wise heritage tourist destinations in Kolhapur Region

Sr. no.	Taluka	Fort	Historical Places	Pilgrimage/ Religious tourism
1	Shahuwadi	Vishalgad	Pawankhind	Vishalgad Darga , Yelwanjugai, Udgiri, Dhopeshwar
2	Panhala	Pawangad, Panhala	Pawankhind marg, Shiva Kashid Samadhi, Rede ghati	Jyotiba, Masai, Yamai, Paijarwadi, Sidhoba (Sadale)
3	Gaganbawada	Gaganbawada	Bawada sangashi	Gagangiri, Sangashi
4	Radhanagari	Shivgad		Durgamanwad Gaibi, Gudaleshwar
5	Bhudargad	Bhudargad Rangana fort	Mouni Math,	Balu Mama Temple Adamapur. Mouni Maharaj Math
6	Gadhinglaj	Samangad	Nesari	Kalbhairav, Hiralge Jain mandir, Mahalaxmi Mandir
7	Ajara			Jain Mandir, Chaloba
8	Chandgad	Pargad Chandgad/Gand harvaga, Kalanidhigad Mahipalgad		Khalnath Shiv mandir Mahipalgad, Vaidyanath
9	Kagal			Nrusinha temple, Sangaon, Birdev Mandir Pattankodoli
10	Hatkanangle			Kunthegiri, Bahubali,
11	Shirol			Nrusinhawadi, Khidrapur,
12	Karveer			Prayag sangam, Kanerimath, Katyayni temple

Information of forts and caves in Kolhapur Region is given below :

Vishalgarh –

This is located 5 km from the Gajapur village and to the southwest of Kolhapur. The fort has a number of constructed elements, including Takamak Kada, the nearly shattered Munda door, the Ardhachandra well, the Darga of Hazarat Malik, the residence site of Pratinidhi, and Amruteshwar temple. There are also several temples on the fort, including Temples of Narsoba, Waghajai, Rameshwar and Ram and memorials of Bajiprabhu and Phulaji.

Panhala fort

Panhala holds immense historical importance. It is 19 kilometers away from Kolhapur and 845 meters above sea level. The fort's numerous buildings, including the Teen darwajas, grain godowns, Balekilla, and temples, shed light on the area's rich architectural and cultural history. As a result of the area's development into a hill station, tourists may take in the area's breathtaking natural surroundings and extensive historical legacy.

Jyotiba

In the southwest of Kolhapur, Maharashtra, Jyotiba is a well-liked pilgrimage place. It is around 14 km away from Kolhapur and is perched on a hill. Here you may find the temple of Yamai, a water kund, and the shrines of Kedarling, Ramling, and Kedareshwar. Visitors from Maharashtra are drawn to the Hemadpanthi-style temples in Jyotiba, particularly during the Hindu month of Chaitra. After seeing Jyotiba, tourists frequently travel to Panhala and the Mahalaxmi temple in Kolhapur.

Pandavdara (Masai Pathar)

About nine kilometers to the west of Panhala is the Pandavdara plateau. The area is made up of hills and valleys, and rivers like the Kasari and Warna are among the many streams that flow through it.

Masai leni (Masai Caves)

The Pandavdara (Masai Pathar) plateau holds great significance both historically and culturally, especially with regard to Buddhism. The plateau's caves are thought to have been built during the Buddha's time and contain a

number of buildings, such as a stupa, Pathashala, and Chaityagruha. Wells and a water tank suggest that humans had lived in these caverns at some point in the past. Surrounded by hills and rivers, the plateau's setting enhances its allure as a tourist destination and preserves its natural beauty.

Pohale

The Buddha era Buddhist caves in Pandavdara are worth a visit because they contain a Chaityagruha (prayer hall), a Pathshala (school), and other buildings. The region is renowned for its picturesque features, which include neighboring waterfalls, hills, and valleys, in addition to the sounds of peacocks.

Pavangad

The rich legacy of the Maratha kingdom is reflected in the Pavangad Fort, a significant historical site in the area. The Marathas' building prowess is demonstrated by the fortifications and temples on the premises. Another indication of the secular character of Maratha administration is the existence of a Darga (mosque) on the fort.

Gaganbawada

References to the Buddha era can be found in Gaganbawada Fort. There is an ancient Darga, and caves with water tanks at the base of the fort, and currently it appears that the fort has only one complete turret and stone wall. A picturesque view of the Konkan region may be seen from the fort's location.

Palsamba

There are historic Buddhist rock-cut caves at Palsamba that date back to the second century BC. Palsamba is well-known for its stunning waterfalls and verdant woodlands in addition to its historic Buddhist temples.

Shivagad

Situated in the Dajipur Wildlife Sanctuary, Shivgad Fort is encircled by stunning natural scenery and a wide variety of fauna.

Chakreshwarwadi

This area has been inhabited since the Stone Age. The horizon may be seen from its elevated position, making it an ideal location for stargazing.

Bhudargad

The distance between Bhudargad Fort and Kolhapur is 58 kilometers to the north. This fort was restored by Chh. Shivaji Maharaj in 1667. The fort's water tanks and the temples dedicated to Bhairav, Jakubai, and Kedarling are also notable attractions.

Rangana

This fort is located 70 kilometres to the north of Kolhapur. The fort's architectural elements include water tanks, temples, turrets, doorways, stone walls, and remnants of earlier structures. This location also has a stone inscription. This fort is situated between the Amboli, Manohargad, Mahadevgad, and Konkan rivers and is encircled by thick trees.

Samangad

This fort is located one kilometer southeast of Gadhinglaj. Raja Bhoj constructed this fort in the twelfth century, and Chh. Shivaji Maharaj took control of it in 1674. The fort is located 2972 feet above mean sea level. In addition to dungeons, a Bhavani temple, Hanuman temple, Bhimsagari Devasthan, Chorkhind, Sat Kaman well, and Shivmandir caverns, the fort features ten towers. The fort has undergone considerable restoration work, but it is still unfinished.

Gandharvagad

Situated at an elevation of 522 meters above sea level in the Sahyadri mountain range, the fort of Gandharvagad is situated 7 kilometers away from Chandgad. The security wall of stone is nearly collapsed. Nagsawant of Sawantwadi constructed the fort in 1724, but the King of Kolhapur eventually gained the fort's support and returned it to the Sawants. On the fort are temples dedicated to Chaloba, Shankar, Ganapati, and Maruti. **Kalanidhigad**

Kalanidhigad is said to have been built by the Maratha ruler Shivaji. This fort is fortified and surrounded with rampart.There is a stone wall, temples at this fort.

Pargad

Pargad is situated in the Sahayadri mountain range, roughly 45 kilometers to the west of Chandgad. It is located 610 meters above sea level. The fort is inhabited by locals. There is a 360-step tight stairway that leads to the summit. The roughly 16-hectare fort needs to be restored. Bhavani has an ancient temple in the fort. In addition, the location is made more beautiful by Ganesh Lake, Phatal Lake, Gunjal Lake, Panji Point, and Sunset Point on the fort.

Mahipalgad

This fort is near to Belgaon. A stone wall, turret, temple in hemadpanti style and a big well are main features of fort. The entire region is encroached by local population.

III. SUGGESTIONS & DISCUSSIONS

The findings are given below:

Tourism Experience:

Popular tourist spots in the Kolhapur area, like Jyotiba Temple and Panhala Fort, are frequently packed with

tourists, especially on weekends and holidays. To avoid the crowds, some tourists do, however, also like visiting these locations throughout the week. Other lesser-known locations, like Samangad Fort, Pavangad Fort, and Gaganbawada Fort, could be less frequented and less crowded.

Accommodation Facilities:

Since some tourist places are always crowded as they are very popular. So especially in the peak season, it is difficult to get accommodation during the peak season. But some tourist places are having less accommodation facilities.

Transport problems:

Public transportation can grow congested during peak seasons in many tourist areas, which makes it difficult to get to and from the attractions. This frequently leads to visitors arranging their own travel arrangements, which can cause traffic jams in well-known tourist locations, particularly on weekends and holidays. Additionally, several tourist locations are in isolated places without transportation service, which annoys visitors.

Environmental Impact:

If tourism development is not properly regulated, it can have an adverse effect on the environment. Long-term effects on the ecosystem may result from the overcrowding of hotels and restaurants, which can degrade trees and cause animals to lose their home.

An uncontrolled tourist inflow may cause pollution levels in the water and air to rise. The local environment, which includes the native plants and animals, may suffer as a result of this. Furthermore, there may be issues with waste management and disposal due to the rise of solid waste from tourists. Because of this, tourism-related activities must be controlled wisely, with safeguards in place to minimize adverse impacts on the environment and nearby populations.

Tourism development in Kolhapur region must be carefully planned and managed, taking into consideration the environmental carrying capacity of the area. Tourism may help preserve natural and cultural heritage, advance environmental awareness and education, and sustainably boost the local economy by reducing waste, preserving resources, and supporting conservation initiatives. It is essential to strike a balance between the advantages of tourism and the necessity to preserve the environment for upcoming generations.

IV. CONCLUSION: -

The study focuses on the development of tourist attractions in the Kolhapur region and identifies potential areas for further tourism development. The lack of infrastructural facilities in the predominantly rural area is highlighted as a challenge for tourism development. The study reveals that the largest number of tourists come from Kolhapur and visit the region for its historical and religious places. Tourism development in Kolhapur region can bring economic benefits and create employment opportunities for locals. However, sustainability is the key to avoid harming the environment and cultural heritage. Involvement of local communities in planning and implementation can ensure their needs are considered. Regulations and monitoring can prevent issues like pollution and overcrowding. Proper management can ensure benefits for both tourists and local communities in the long run.

Measures to improve heritage fort tourism in the Kolhapur region are given below:

Development of infrastructure at the forts:

To promote tourism in the Forts region, private partnerships might undoubtedly be a good idea. Hotels, restaurants, and tourist information offices are just a few examples of the infrastructure and amenities linked to tourism that can be developed with the help of private investors.

Good fort transit and roadside conveniences:

In addition to fostering economic development and improving the overall visitor experience, the construction of well-maintained roads and wayside amenities can help draw in more tourists. However, it is vital to guarantee that any development is executed in close collaboration with local populations, considering their requirements, apprehensions, and viewpoints and that it is synchronized with the wider objectives of sustainable development and preservation of ecological and cultural assets.

Offering tourists with information booklets and signage that is both clear and educational can improve their experience and help them understand the significance and history of the places they are visiting. By giving clear instructions and alerts for any possible hazards, it can help increase accessibility and safety.

Development Control Regulation at forts:

'Development Control Regulations' could be designed to ensure that any improvement to the site's natural environment, historical value, or tourist experience is thoughtfully considered in all development.

Strengthening of Bed and Breakfast scheme:

Supporting neighborhood communities and advancing sustainable tourism is made possible by this program. Through it, visitors can get a taste of the host community's cuisine, customs, and way of life. Along with encouraging business, this can also assist the locals make money. In distant locations without hotel accommodations, it is very helpful.

Public-Private-Partnership:

In order to ensure sustainable and responsible development, conservation, and preservation of the identified forts, it may be helpful to identify particular forts for public-private partnerships and to prepare conservation strategies.

Cultural Tourism:

Promoting Maharashtra's rich cultural heritage should involve identifying and showcasing its unique features, such as folk arts, along with organizing folk dance and music events at fort locations to draw tourists while contributing to the growth of sustainable tourism.

Crafts:

Local artists can make money by having their items displayed at tourist attractions. Local customs and culture can also be supported and preserved in this way.

Information Kiosks:

It is an excellent concept to set up interactive kiosks with links to online booking systems and tourism information in major forts, railway stations, bus stations, and airports. This might facilitate traveler accessibility and convenience and support local tourism.

Creating Awareness:

For the Kolhapur region's tourist business to grow sustainably over a long period of time, it is imperative that people understand the value of tourism and that responsible, sustainable tourism practices be promoted. Outreach initiatives, workshops, seminars, and instructional campaigns are just a few of the ways this can be accomplished.

Better Advertising and Promotional Events:

Social media plays an important role in each organization. Marketing and promotion of travel can make extensive use of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

To promote the overall growth of the studied area, such a study may draw specialists from the fields of planning, economics, art, architecture, and administration. for the population's socioeconomic standing to significantly improve in the study area.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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