

Perspective on Historical and Eco-Tourism Development of Harishchandragad, Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra.

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1. 1 Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industry and a source to major foreign exchange and employment generation for many countries. It is one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena.

The world 'tour' is derived from the Latin word 'tornus' meaning 'a tool for making a circle'. Travel is as old as mankind on the earth. The man at the beginning of his existence roamed about the surface of the earth in the search of food, shelter, securities, and better habitat. However, in course of time, such movements were transformed into wanderlust.

Tourism may be defined as the movement of the people from their normal place of residence to another place (with the intention to return) for a minimum period of twenty-four hours to a maximum of six months for the sole purpose of leisure and pleasure. According to WTO (1993) tourism encompasses the activities of persons traveling and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes."

About five thousand year ago, changes in climate, dwindling food and shelter conditions hostile invaders made the people leave their homes to seek refuge elsewhere like the Aryans left their homes

in central Asia due to climate changes. Perhaps, this leads to the development of commerce, trade, and industry.

During Hindu and Chinese civilization, a movement of religion, education and culture began. Christian missionaries, Buddhist monks and other traveled far and wide carrying religious messages and returned with fantastic images and opinions about alien people.

1.2 Ecotourism

Eco-tourism offers new ways of creating tourism value that goes beyond leveraging the historical importance, built heritage, natural beauty of the destination or providing superior comfort in travel mode and stay. In the past few months, there has been a clear trend of tourists opting for locations of natural beauty with dispersed accommodation (home stays/ resorts) at destinations drivable from cities. The first pillar of eco-tourism, i.e. Value creation, can build on this base to engage tourists in - nature discovery walks/treks; local farming activities; adventure sports; local cuisines; crafts, folklore and arts; volunteering for community development; mental and spiritual rejuvenation... and the list goes on. All of these can potentially enhance duration of stay and tourism spends, while lowering environmental footprint and achieve more with lower tourist volumes.

Eco-tourism planning needs to target a

diverse set of destinations across a state or region. Tourist activities need not be limited to seashores, lake banks, Pinecone Mountains, or forests with endangered wildlife. Eco-tourism can be created across our village landscapes, fertile agriculture lands, terraced farms, semi-arid forests, rolling hill ranges (aka Aravalli's) and even urban forests. Irrespective of the location, integrating nature appreciation in the tourist experience is important. The third pillar we need to build on is the 'community'. 'Atithi devo bhava' – the spirit of observing godliness in our guests is ingrained into the Indian ethos and can be experienced across the country. While the hospitality is cherished and enjoyed, eco-tourism enables us to respect the sensitivity of the host communities. Evolved practices can take this further, where tourists intermingle with host communities, learn, understand, and appreciate their way of living, exchange ideas, thoughts and experiences and not just transact in monetary terms. Kumbalangi in Kerala and khuri in Rajasthan are good examples of rural tourism offerings well integrated with the village communities. Building community organizations, enabling the host communities' sustainable practices, upskilling and creating sustainable livelihoods, building entrepreneurial capabilities and nurturing arts, crafts and intangible heritage are steps in the right direction.

The world is gradually emerging from the pandemic with the motivation to 'build back better' – to not just get back to where we were but evolve a better society and economy. For India's tourism industry, eco-tourism practiced in the right earnest can be our mantra to achieve the same.

1.3 Historical tourism Background

Historical tourism refers to a kind of

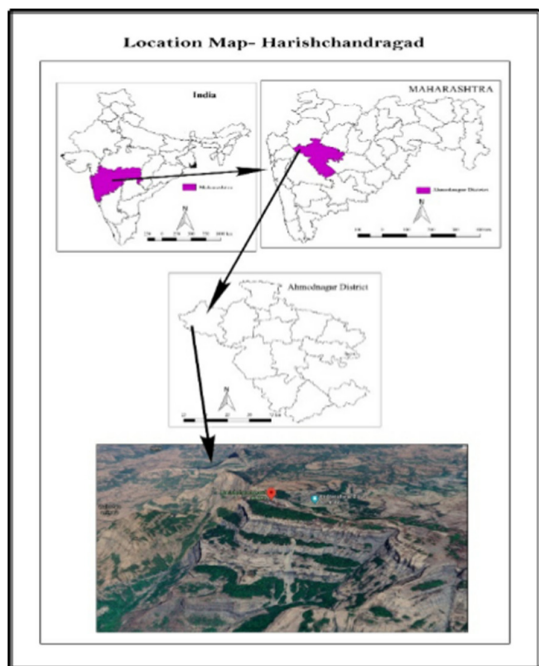
tourism, where the tour or tour group focuses on the history, history of some place, people, thing, or events. They go, see, study, discuss and experience places where historical things occurred. The places will be a portrayal of history of that country or the region and tells about the past happenings. Tourists usually visit those places of historical importance to know about the culture, tradition, past happenings etc. And get to know about the evolution and development in culture.

This is an attempt to understand, the living environments and life – styles of ordinary people of the past, and present and interpret these in an interesting manner to the tourists. Places of important historical events, such as battlefields or sites where discovers and explorers landed, are also being promoted as tourist attractions.

1.4 Objectives

- Awareness regarding historical importance of the place.
- To provide the basic tourist facilities.
- To encourage the eco-tourism of the place.

1.5 Study Area



Harishchandragad is a hill fort in Maharashtra situated at an elevation of about 4670 feet in the district of Ahmednagar. Its coordinates are 19°23'18"N 73°46'33"E it is popular for the Trekking trail and is also famous for Bhandardara tourist spots. Harishchandragad fort complex has number of historical caves, temples and number of ponds which makes it an ideal tourist place.

Within the fort, there are several temples dedicated to Vishnu and Ganesh. The monument dates to the 6th century and finds a home at an altitude of 1424 meters (4665ft) and often, given its altitude finds itself marked on several trekking trails in and around the area. Konkankada or the Konkani cliff is a semi-circular rock wall and resembles a cobra's hood, occasionally sporting a rainbow.

The fort originally dates to the 6th century during the rule of Kalchuri Dynasty. The citadel was built during this era and various caves probably have been carved out in the

11th century AD. Sage Changdev used to meditate here in 14th century ad. Later the fort was under the control of Mughals and Marathas captured it in 1747 AD. Remnants of microlithic human inhabitants have been discovered here. The various puranas like Matsyapurana, Agnipurana and Skandapurana have many references about Harishchandragad.

Harishchandragad trek has multiple routes. It can be approached from 3 different villages. They are from Khireswar, Pachnai and Walhivale/Belpada village.

1.6 Research Methodology and Collection of Data

This present research paper is based on primary data collection through field visit and detail information regarding the site is based on secondary data. The primary data is collected through questionnaire with the help of Google forms and some data is collected from the locals residing there. The given table is made with the data collected by questionnaire From 53 visitors

Table 1: Visitors Information

Sr No.	INDICATORS	SUBGROUP	(%)
1	Gender variation	Male	67.9
		female	32.1
2	Age group	16-23	66
		23-45	30
		Above 45	4
3	Location of visitors	Amravati division	1.9
		Aurangabad division	5.7
		Pune division	20.8
		Konkan division	41.5
		Nashik division	7.5

		<i>Other states</i>	22.6
4	<i>Medium of awareness</i>	<i>Social media</i>	62.3
		<i>Friends or relatives</i>	32.7
		<i>Newspaper articles</i> or	5
5	<i>Season preferred by tourist</i>	<i>Rainy season</i>	31.3
		<i>Winter season</i>	55.6
		<i>Summer season</i>	13.1
6	<i>Satisfaction regarding ladder and railing</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	2
		<i>dissatisfied</i>	98
7	<i>Satisfaction level regarding Harishchandr agad</i>	<i>Pleasant</i>	99
		<i>unpleasant</i>	1

1.7 Interpretation of Table

This table depicts gender variation of the tourist visiting Harishchandra. The frequency of male visitors are 67% which are more than females which is 32.1%. Then too observations show that number of female visitors are increasing too may be because of tourism awareness regarding this place. the tourist who visit here are mostly in the age group of 23 to 45 year Which is 66 % and second age group is of 16 to 22 year which is 30.2%. And people above 45 yr. visit less. the location of the visitors which is divided into 6 administrative division and last column of other state .Visitors are more from Konkan division which is 41.5% and tourist from other states are 22.6% and pine division are around 20.8% The frequency of first-time visitors are more which is 66% and 34% are those visitors who often visit Harishchandragad. Many tourists visit here through awareness from friends and relatives which is 32.7% and people aware from social media are 62 .3%. Awareness from newspaper, magazines is 5%. In terms of transportation network, it is not developed well, and frequency of public transportation is less. More visitors

prefer private transportation. The season which is mostly preferred by tourist is winter season which is around 55.6% second mostly visited season is rainy season which in terms of percentage is 31.3%, Summers are 13 % least visited. There is more dissatisfaction level for ladder and railings which is around 98%. Depending on the route's tourist prefer. More care and attention are needed towards the prevention of these historical monuments. Above 99.9 % of tourist rated this place pleasant, which shows the significance of this place.

1.8. Sightseeing on Harishchandragad

❖ Kokankada

Kada means cliff in Marathi. It is a standing tall natural wall that has a concave structure. Because of this structure, you can experience many natural phenomena such as vertical cloud bursts, circular rainbows also called a brokenspecter.

Harishchandra gad trek has many temples, Pushkarini and caves on the top. They all represent different cultures starting from the 6th century. Harishchandreshwar temple . is a glorious example of the fine art of carving sculptures out of stones that prevailed in ancient India. This temple has been carved out of a single huge rock.

❖ Kedareshwar cave

Kedareshwar cave is located towards the right side of the Harishchandra temple. It has a big shiv Linga situated between the four pillars each representing different yugas of which three of them are broken and surrounded by water.

❖ Saptatirtha pushkarini

Saptatirtha pushkarini is a pond located to the east of the Harishchandreshwar temple. There used to be idols of lord Vishnu inside the temple windows-like structure that are on the bank of the lake. Now, they have been moved to the caves due to their deterioration.

❖ Taramati peak

Taramati peak is the the name given after the wife of Harishchandra king and is the 4th highest peak in Maharashtra. It is located at top of Harishchandragad plateau. From there you can see the Naneghat region and other forts near Murbad.

1.9 Problems

- *No washroom facilities.*
- *No safety measures in routes.*
- *Railings are ladders are not proper.*
- *Dustbins are not provided on routes.*
- *Proper sign boards or symbols are not available.*
- *The information about the place on boards are in bad condition.*
- *No proper fencing is provided where it is required.*

2.0 Solutions

- *Composting toilets facilities should be provided. Which would not affect the natural environment.*
- *Railings and ladders and proper fencing should be provided where it is required.*
- *Dustbins should be provided on routes for avoiding any pollution relating to plastic on this place.*
- *Proper sign boards should be placed where it is required to avoid confusion among tourist.*
- *Proper check should be made on the visitors who carries alcohol and create pollution and should be fined accordingly.*
- *The frequency of public transports should be increased.*

- *The roads towards Harishchandragad should be maintained properly to boost tourism.*
- *More trees should be planted to avoid soil erosion and degradation of this place.*

2.1 Recommendation for Locals

- ✓ *Locals should check the bags of visitors near entry gate to avoid any nuisance.*
- ✓ *Locals who sell snacks and other stuff should carry potable dustbins to avoid pollution.*
- ✓ *Rather than selling plastic water bottles, locals should focus on having water purifiers which would minimize plastic pollution and water will be available at low cost which will be affordable by all.*
- ✓ *Caves and temples should be cleaned time to time.*

2.2 Conclusion

- ✓ *Tourism is said to be a fastest growing sector in which ecotourism has gained more importance nowadays which adds in the preservation of the existing and in the economic development of the country. There will be more growth in tourism if certain safety measures and development is done on the tourist spots without damaging the actual nature. More focus should be made on ecotourism perspective and on creating the awareness regarding the historical importance of the place. Until the region is well connected with transportation*

network and basic facilities; Growth and development of the place is not possible. Preventive measures must be taken to maintain the natural biodiversity of the region. Focus should be made on afforestation and conserving and promoting the natural biodiversity. Locals should take more initiatives and suggest measures for the development of this place, as they are well aware about the terrain of this region and even this development will be more beneficial for them in terms of employment generation and even to preserve the economic and cultural significance of this place. Sustainable tourism is the future of the tourism and appropriate care and measures should be made accordingly.

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Sightseeing on Harishchandragad

