

CHITRAKOOT-“HILL OF MANY WONDERS”

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ABSTRACT: - Chitrakoot is a town and a nagar panchayat in Satna district in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. It is a town of religious, cultural, historical and archaeological importance, situated in the Baghelkhand region. “The hill of many wonders” nestles peacefully in the northern spurs of the Vindhyas, a place of tranquil forest glades and quiet rivers and streams where calm and repose are all pervading. This loveliest of Nature’s gifts is also hallowed ground, blessed by the gods and sacrificed by the faith of pilgrims. The tourism potential of the Chitrakoot (Vindhyas) has not been fully explored. The rich natural beauty, diversity, exotic cultural and ethnic mosaic, flora and fauna and the serenity of the virgin, unexplored areas with a blend of religious tint provides possibilities of a totally different experience for the tourists in Chitrakoot.

KEYWORDS: Chitrakoot, Vindhyas, Tourism, Baghelkhand Region.

INTRODUCTION

Chitrakoot is a town and a nagar panchayat in Satna district in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. It is a town of religious, cultural, historical and archaeological importance, situated in the Baghelkhand region. The town lies in the historical Chitrakoot region, which is divided between the present-day Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. It is known for a number of temples and sites mentioned in Hindu scriptures.



Figure 2 Chitrakoot Ghat

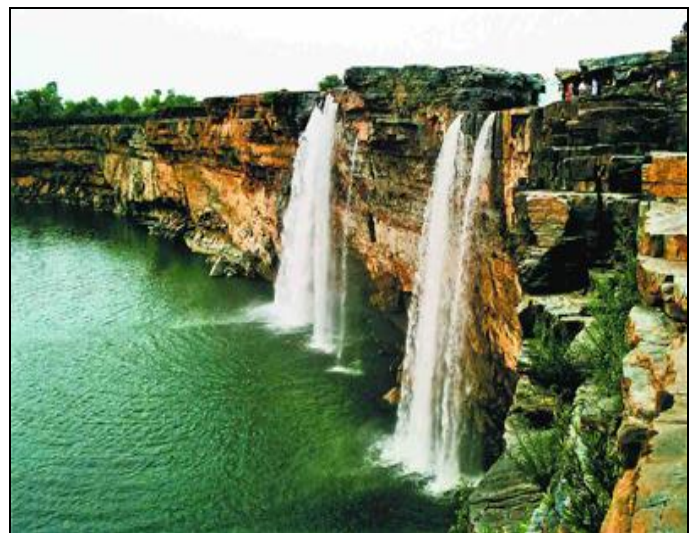


Figure 3 Thundering Waterfalls

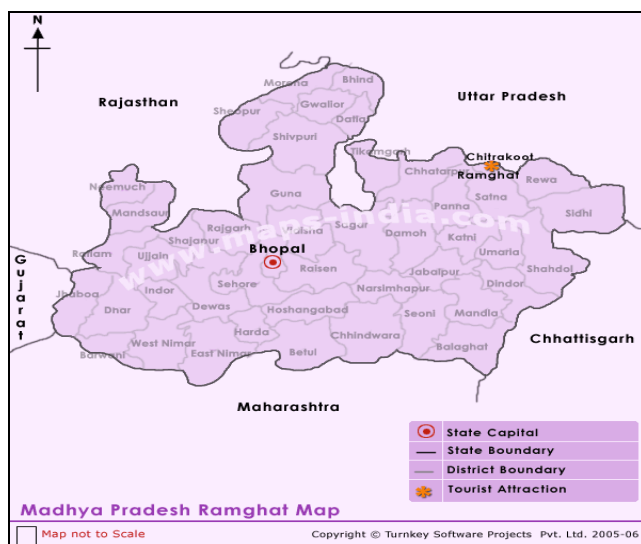


Figure 1 Chitrakoot Map

“The hill of many wonders” nestles peacefully in the northern spurs of the Vindhyas, a place of tranquil forest glades and quiet rivers and streams where calm and repose are all pervading. This loveliest of Nature’s gifts is also hallowed ground, blessed by the gods and sacrificed by the faith of pilgrims.¹



Figure 4 Ram Sita idols in Temple

For spiritual legacy of Chitrakoot, stretches back to legendary ages, it was in these dense forests Rama and Sita spent eleven of their fourteen years of exile; and here where the principal trinity of the Hindu pantheon Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh took their incarnations. Sufferers and seekers, poets and visionaries, princes and noblemen have through the ages, sought and found solace in Chitrakoot, drawn inspiration from its sublime natural beauty, gained spiritual strength from its serene temples.

The capacity of tourists to spare their leisure time and money for holidaying combined with their business enterprise can lead to steady growth of tourism industry. A part of the foreign exchange earned from international tourists in addition to our domestic sightseers contributes during their travel and stay can be spent to improve tourism infrastructure. Generates more employment, foreign exchange brings people closer together and has a great impact upon area development within the country.²



Figure 5 Lakshman Pahad

The prospering tourism sustains the revival of traditional skills, local arts, craft work, activities of the performing folk artists. As a result of greater marketability of the visible and invisible or intangible products, the reconstruction of regional as well as national economy has taken place in a big way. Tourist activities build up a travel and tourism industry and give rise to a number of new professions for the people.

Taking up the problems of mass or unplanned tourism and shall look into the possible regional as well as national policies for adopting measures to tackle them. It starts providing market for a number of other industries like Agriculture, manufacturing, building and road construction works get boost from increasing demand of tourism.

More of hotels and motels opened in an area mean multiplication of a number of interconnected service industries, one following another. Even a visit to old monuments, building a machine (engines) of historic importance is included in what is now called the "heritage industry". It enlarges the scope for the work of advertising bureaus and visual media as well as for the governments' tourist departments to lure tourists in even increasing numbers.

The multiplier effect of tourism being very high and the ripple effects are widespread. The benefits are shared by an incredibly large number of service providers, like lodgings, food and beverages, handicraft, local transportation, guides, shopping, entertainment, photography which adds to overall tourism benefits.³

RamGhat-The Ghats that line the bank of the river Mandakini reveal a constantly moving and changing kaleidoscope of religious activity. With the very first ray of dawn that gleam upon the river, Ramghat stirs into life as the devout of all ages take the ritual, purifying dip in the waters and invoke the blessings of the gods. At all times Ramghat witnesses a deep and abiding faith which finds expression in the rituals which honors the sanctity of Chitrakoot. The rippling blue green waters of the Mandakini can be traversed by boats, readily available for hire.¹



Figure 6 Ramghat

Kamadgiri- Kamadgiri the original Chitrakoot is a place of prime religious significance. A forested hill, it is skirted all along its base by a chain of temples and is venerated today, as the holy embodiment of Rama. The Bharat Milap temple is located here, marking the spot where Bharat is said to have met Rama to persuade him to return to the throne of Ayodhya. Many are the faithful who perform the ritual parikrama of the sacred hill, asking for boon or blessing.¹



Figure 7 Kamadgiri Parikrama

JanakiKund- Upstream from Ramghat is a serenely beautiful stretch of the Mandakini, a symphony of nature in tones of earth- brown and leaf green, the intense blue of the river waters finding a paler echo in the canopy of the sky. In this ideal pastoral setting it is said Sita would bath in the crystal clear waters during the years of her exile with Ram. Certainly this quiet spot seems to have been specially blessed for an aura of total harmony and quietitude hallows it setting is apart from the bustle of the everyday world. There are two approaches to Jankikund 2 km up from Ramghat by boat or by road along a foliage line drive.¹

Sati Anusuya- Sati Anusuya is located further upstream set amidst thick forest that resounds to the melody of bird song all day. It was here that Atrimuni and his wife anusuya and their three sons (who were the three incarnations of Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh), are said to have meditated. Sati Anusuya lies 16 kms from the town and can be reached by road- an undulating, curving drive through densely wooded areas.¹



Figure 8 Sati Anusuya Temple

Sphatik Shila- A few kms from Jankikund is again a densely forested area on the banks of the river Mandakini. One can climb up to the bolder that bears the impression of Rama's foot print and where Sita was pecked at, by jayant in the form of the crow. There are large fish in the river here, easily visible in the pellucid water and a few temples.²



Figure 9 Sphatikshila

Gupt Godavari- 18 kms from the town by road is a natural wonder located at some distance upside of a hill. The wonder here is a pair of caves, one high and wide with an entrance through which one can barely pass and the other long and narrows with a stream of water running along its base. It is believed that Rama and his brother Lakshman held court in the latter cave, which has two natural thrones like rocks.²



Figure 10 Gupt Godavari

Hanuman Dhara- Located on a rock phase several hundred feet up a steep hill side is a spring, said to have been created by Rama to assuage Hanuman when latter returned after setting Lanka a fire. A couple of temples commemorate this spot which offers a panoramic view of Chitrakoot. There is an open, paved area here in the shade of a massive Peepal tree, a lovely halting place after a long climb up.²

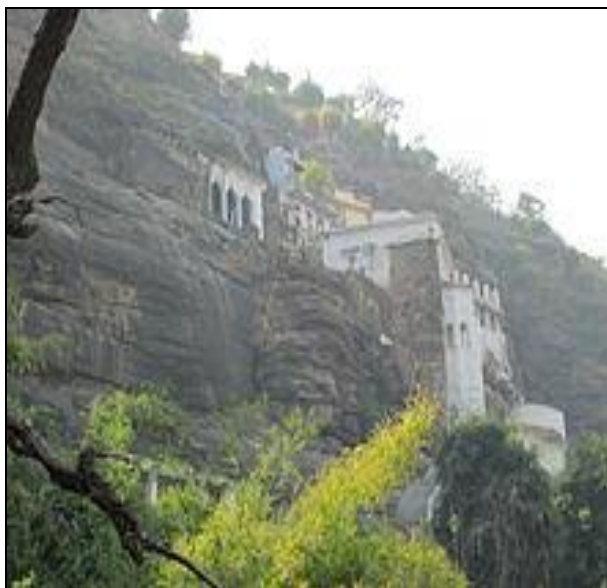


Figure 11 Hanuman Dhara

Bharat Koop- Bharat Koop is where Bharat stored holy water collected from all the places of pilgrimage in India. It is a small isolated spot, a few kms from town.²



Figure 12 Bharat Koop



Figure 13 Sun Temple Chitrakoot

CONCLUSION

Tourism being a global industry of great economic importance, driven by our human desire to experience new environments, but uncontrolled development and business operations can lead to some major negative consequences like pollution, loss of biodiversity, economic inequality, and unsuitable cultural change. Recognizing and attempting to reconcile these often competing social, economic, and environmental imperatives that accompany tourism should be centrally focused. The tourism potential of the Chitrakoot (Vindhyas) has not been fully explored.⁴

Global tourism has been booming and future projections show that this trend will continue. The new generations of travelers who are 'money rich and time poor' are

increasingly looking for unique experiences. More and more people are looking at tourism as less of a journey and more of an experience. The rich natural beauty, diversity, exotic cultural and ethnic mosaic, flora and fauna and the serenity of the virgin, unexplored areas with a blend of religious tint provides possibilities of a totally different experience for the tourists in Chitrakoot.⁵

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