



Tourism Potential in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra: A Geographical Analysis

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Abstract:

Tourism is an ever-growing service industry with immense potential for development and expansion. It is an ancient phenomenon that has existed in human societies since early times. In the modern era, tourism has evolved into a significant social and economic phenomenon, contributing substantially to regional and national development. Kolhapur is one of the leading tourist districts in the state of Maharashtra. Located in the south-western part of the state, the district is known for its healthy climate, scenic landscapes, historical heritage, and cultural richness, which attract tourists from all parts of the country. The present paper attempts to classify the major tourist destinations in Kolhapur district, assess their current status, and analyze the scope for tourism development. It also highlights the need for systematic classification and the recognition of tourism as a major industry with significant growth potential. It is observed that there are numerous tourist attractions in and around Kolhapur district, ranging from historical monuments and religious sites to natural landscapes and wildlife resources. The district is enriched with remarkable biodiversity and forms part of the ecologically significant Western Ghats region, recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. This natural wealth further enhances its tourism potential.

Keywords: *Tourism, Tourist Destinations, Physiographical Setup, Classification, Tourism Industry, Growth Potential.*

Introduction:

Tourism is an ancient phenomenon which has been existing in social communities since long back. Present day it has become a social and economical phenomenon. It is considered to be one of the fastest growing activities of the world. It is a big business and has the capacity to transfer large exchange, including foreign exchange to a tourism site. Tourist places are defined accordingly into five categories. Attraction, access, accommodation, amenities and activities, religious- historical places, wild life centers, spectacular places, lake and river sites are the important aspect of tourist places. Tourism involves the activity of human being traveling to and staying in a place outside their usual

environment for the purpose of pleasure through education, experience, enrichment and recreation activity, etc. the present paper, an attempt has been made to find out development of tourist activity in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra (Iridin) since ancient past.

Objectives:

- 1) To study the tourism resources in Kolhapur District
- 2) To classify the existing tourist centers and suggest potential tourist centers in Kolhapur district
- 3) To suggest planning for tourism development in the study area.

Data Base:

The present study is based on the Primary and Secondary source of data. Data used for this study is mainly in the form of Kolhapur Gazetteer Data and Field survey data of Kolhapur district.

1. Primary Data:

The proposed study is mostly based on the primary data. The primary data, as the source, will be generated through intensive field work and through the method of observation and interviews of local people.

2. Secondary Data:

The secondary data source will include related published reviews, Kolhapur Onneteer, com of India, mystical architects and some unpublished records. The data will be collected from different offices like Revenue, from the tehsil headquarters.

Tourists Attractions of Kolhapur District:**A. Religions Places and Tourism:**

1) Ambabai Temple: In all the objects of interest in Kolhapur the Ambabai or Mahalaxmi temple is the most important. It was the centre of the old town and the city derives its appellation of Dakain Kasi mainly from this temple. The construction of the temple is said to have been started in the 9th Century A. D in the Rastrakota Period. [H. D. Sankalia and M. G. Dixit; Excavations at Brahmapuri (Kolhapur) 1945.] Some people believe that the oldest part of the present shrine may have been the work of the early Chalukyas (550 A.D. to 660 A.D.) which the Silaharu rulers of Kolhapur (9th Century A.D. and onwards) added to and overstated considerably.

2) Jotiba: This temple is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. This is also called Kedarnath and Wadi Ratnagiri, Mythology Says, Jotiba helped Mahalaxmi in her fight with her demons. He founded his kingdom on this mountain. He belongs to the Nath cult He was born in the hands of Vimaimbuja, the wife of the sage Pougand, on

Chaitra Shukla 6. killed demon (evil spirit) Ratnasur who troubled civilians. With this incidence name of village was Wadi Ratnagiri. Instead of taking such long name public accepted this place as the name of God Jotiba" and this name become famous. This God is avatar of Lord (Bhairav). Jotiba

3) Trambale (Temblai): On the east of Kolhapur city about three miles from the old city there is a small hill and on this hill is built the temple of Temblai or Tryambuli. According to the Karvir or Kolhapur Furan, Temblai the younger sister of Mahalaxmi in consequence of a quarrel with Mahalaxmi left Kolhapur 1900 years ago and retired to a hill about three miles to the east of the city and remained there with her back turned towards her elder sister.

4) Kashi Vishveshwar Temple: It stands previous to the compilation of "KarveerMahatmya". It is in the premises of "GhatiDarvaja" to the north of Mahalaxmi Temple. The Pinda" (round-oblong stone) is called Kashi Vishveshwar. The "Karveer-Mahatmya" Says that it was visited by sage Agasti, Lopamudra, King Pralhada and King Indrasen formerly, before the Mandir there were two holy tanks Kashi and Mani Kamika, of which Mani Kamika is completely drained, and upon it the corporation has started a garden (Mahalaxmi Udyana) since 1962, While the present condition of Kund is very pitiable. It is said that in the outer small Mandap there is an ancient cave meant for meditation.

5) Bahubali: In 1935 Celibacy Resort was established and named after the sage Bahubali who mediated here about 300 years before. His tomb is here, with 4 further under the guidance of Gurudeo 108 Samant Bhadra Maharaj many resort and schools were built 75 years before. Nearly 850cms high, white-colored idol of Bhagawan Bahubali in the Khadgasana posture. The tirth is the land of penance of many ascetics. Nearly 350 years ago, great and learned

Digambar Acharya Samantabhadraji Maharaj Saheb practiced here severe penance. On this hill, there are ancient but new idol was recently installed here under the auspices of His Holiness.

6) Katyani Devi: Kolhapur has a peculiar cultural influence owing to various ancient temples. Formerly, other deities were established around central Mahalaxmi for her protection Siddha Batukeshwar in the east, Tryamboli in the west, jyotirling in the north and Katyayani to the south. This Deity is mentioned in the „KarveerMahatmya". In ancient times the Demon Kolhasur had kept Demon Raktabeej for the protection of this area.

7)Khidrapur: Khidrapur (Shirol T.; 16° 40' N; 74° 35' E; p. 1,409), lies on the Krsna about twelve miles south-east of Shirol and eight miles to the south of Jaisingpur railway station on the Miraj Kolhapur meter gauge line. The chief interest of the village is the temple of Kopesvar which lies in the centre of the village and is 103½ x 65' x 52' high to the top of the dome. The walls are made of black stone richly carved and the dome is covered with stucco. To the main building are attached two richly sculptured mandaps or vestibules. In the vestibule are two concentric squares the outer with twenty and the inner with twelve pillars all richly carved. In front of the temple is a round roofless structure called the Svarga Mandap (Heavenly Hall), on the plan of what would be a twenty-rayed star, only that the spaces for four of the rays are occupied by four entrances. On the outside on a low screen wall stand thirty-six short pillars, while inside is a circle of twelve columns. Further from the temple is a nagarkhana (drum-chamber).

8)Kaneri math: (Shiva's holy place): It is one of the spot aloof from publicity but working. It is only a mile from Kolhapur. It is said that in the 140 century Shiva -Pindi was, installed by a Lingayat priest on a high hill surrounded by natural beauty, Original Mandir was Hemadpanti.

About 500 years ago, a Lingayat Priest kadsiddheshwar developed it. A well 125" deep is seen. Shivaji and Sambhaji Maharaja visited and donated. A tomb of Muslim priest Mirasaheb, who was a great devotee of lord Shiva, was built on this hill as in niraj. It is equally worshipped

9) Ramtirth, Ajara: A scenic picnic spot in Ajara taluka, with ancient temples, a river, and old coffee plantation and an orchard, lend a quaint charm to this place. According to legend, the place is so named because Rama stayed here during his vanvaas or exile in the forest. It is well known for its breathtaking natural beauty.

10) Binkhambi Ganapati: Binkhambi Ganapati Temple: This temple is at the corner of Mahadvar Rond. The temple consists of two parts, the inner temple and the mandap in front. Both these have no pillars to support the ceiling and hence the temple is called Binkhambi (or without pillars). The mandap is a square room about 25' x 25'. The usual tower with Kalas is on the inner temple. The image of Ganapati is of stone with Shendur applied to it. The temple was formerly known as Josirao's Ganapati, possibly because the Josirao family was managing the temple.

11) Bramheahwar Temple: This temple is near Varuntirth. It is like the Ambabai temple in construction but the spire or tower is missing. The temple is also half buried under the ground and presents a desolate appearance. It has a small original mandap in front and a big recent mandap of corrugated sheets. Inside the shrine there is a linga below the level of the ground and in the mandap there is a Nandi

12) Khol Khandoba: The Khol Khandoba is a temple near the Burud Galli. From the outside one sees a big dome like that of a mosque. One has to go down about 20 to 25 feet. into the temple to reach the deity. The deity in the temple is the Linga. The temple is said to be ancient and the habitation round about is said to be even older than the habitation round the Mahalaxmi temple.

The temple is not, however, in its original shape. It appears to have been partially demolished by an earthquake and have been rebuilt at a later date. The structure is rough and is without any embellishments.

13) Phirangai Mandir: The temple of Phirangai or Pratyangiras a favourite goddess of the lower classes, is near Varuntirth. This goddess receives offerings of flour, salt, turmeric, and oil and she is supposed to have the power of curing children suffering from itch. Formerly buffaloes were offered but now goats have taken the place of buffaloes.

14) Radhakrishna Mandir: This is an old temple near the Padmain or old race course. The temple is small and simple in style with a spire in the usual way. The idols are of white marble. There is an image of Krsna playing on the flute and an image of Radha standing beside him. There is a small cow in between and a small figure on the left hand possibly of another cowherd. These figures face north on the left hand side and facing west is the figure of another woman, possibly a Gopi.

15) Sheshashayee temple: This temple is in the Subhas Cauk. The temple itself is of recent construction but the image of Visnu sitting on the coils of Sesa is an ancient one. It was found in the moat round the city wall south of Ravivar Vesa, and has been removed from there and installed at the present place during the reign of Sahu Maharaj. The image is carved in black stone and shows Visnu reclining on the coils of the serpent who has spread its many headed hood on him and a 'Das' and a 'Dasi' are pressing Visnu's feet.

16) Vithoba Mandir: The temple of Vithoba, which was probably built about the same time as Ambabai temple, lies south-east near the Subhas, Cauk. A large space encloses five temples with a rest-house large enough for several hundred travellers. The chief temple of Vithoba to the

right is built of stone and is similar in style to the great temple of Ambabai.

17) Jain Mandir: In Laxmipuri, near the Padma Talkies there is a temple of Munisuvrat, the 20th Tirthahkar of the Jains. Although the mandir was built in 1947, it is a fine example of an attempt to build in the old Indian style of architecture. The mandir is modelled on the lines of the old Jain mandirs and reminds one of the Jain mandirs at Abu. There are beautiful carvings both inside and outside the temple.

18) Jain Swami Math: This math is in Sukravat Peth a short distance from the Sukravat Dharmasala. The math is very old. The main gate or Nagarkhana, is very beautiful and is similar to the nagarkhana of the old Palace. It is, however, surmounted by a number of four-pillared towers. The main arched gateway is very beautiful. This nagarkhana or gate was built 80 years ago by Mathadhipati Laxmisen Maharaj at a cost of Rs. 61,000. It is built of black stone and is 65 ft. in height.

19) Shankaracharya Math: Sahkaracarya Math. This math is in Sukravat Peth on the way to the Pancaganga Ghat. It is an old two storeyed structure without any embellishments or architectural points. It is, however, very old. The building is occupied by Sankaracarya of Sankesvar. Although formerly it was a part of the Sankesvar Math, the link was broken about 50 years ago and now the Kolhapur math is known as Karvir Pitha

20) Babujamal Darga: The Babujamal Darga is behind Saraswati Cinema theatre within a short distance of the Ambabal temple. This darga appears to have been built when the Muslims first conquered Kolhapur.

There is a big gate leading into the draga grounds. The top of the gate has, however, been removed. This gate was built in 1909 according to a tablet fixed there. The darga has a fairly extensive area with a garden and subsidiary building. The main

darga stands in the middle of the ground. It is a typical Muslim structure with a big dome and four small domes at the four corners. The darga seems to have been built with stones of Hindu temples because the image of Ganapati appears on the lintel of the door. It is white washed.

B. Historical Places and Tourism Development

1) Panahala: Panhala (Panhala Mahal; 16° 45' N; 74° 05' E; p. 2,573), is the head-quarters of the Panhala Mahal and is the best health resort in the Kolhapur district. It has two parts, Panhala fort or Kilia Panhala, also called Huzur Bazar (headquarters market) on the hill-top, and the suburbs of Ravivar, Mangalvar, Guruvar and Ibrahampur at the foot of the hill fort. The hilltop is pleasantly broken and adorned with cliffs, pools, and shady springs. Except during the rains the climate is delightful, the days cool, and the nights fresh. The fort is famous for its freedom from cholera chiefly because of its plentiful supply of pure iron-charged water. The best spring is the Nagajhari (Cobra Spring), but it dries up in the hot weather.

2) Vishalgad: Vishalgad Fort (Sahuvadi T.; 16° 50' N; 73° 45'E; p. 79), crowns the Gajapur hill about fortyfive miles north-west of Kolhapur. It is 3,200 feet long and 1,040 feet broad. The walls, gateways and towers are almost entirely ruined. Besides the old mansion of the Kolhapur Pratinidhi the chief building is a mosque with a tomb to Hajrat Malik Rehanzir seventeen feet Jong by fifteen broad and eight high. This mosque is visited both by Hindus and Musalmans. Every year on the 13th of the Musalman month Zilhaj a fair or urus is held attended by 300 to 400 people. To meet the cost of this fair the mosque has a yearly cash allowance of Rs. 90. The fort is watered by the Bhopal and Ardhaandra (half-moon) reservoirs, and by a cistern.

3) Gagan-Bavada: This beautiful building is situated near the Civil Hospital on the Bhausingji Road. It stands in the extensive and beautiful

Town Hall garden. The building is in Gothic style with two spires and a steep roof. It consists of a large central hall and gallery with two rooms on either side joined to the main hall by a spacious verandah in the front. Besides these statues, there are the following statues or busts in the city:

C. Lakes-Rivers and Tourism Development:

Kolhapur is situated on the bank of Panchaganga River. In and around the Kolhapur city it has various lakes.

1) Rankala Lake: In all the places of interest in Kolhapur, Rankala is perhaps the most popular. It is a place where people throng in the evening for a stroll. It is sometimes referred to as the mackbay or Marine Drive of Kolhapur. Rankala is a lake at the south western end of the city. It has a radius of 2% miles to 3 miles and depth of 35 ft. The road on the city side is in good condition and is the most frequented. It is really a bund which was built to increase the capacity of the lake. The water of the lake is now used mainly for irrigation and about 350 acres are irrigated.

2) Vadi Narsinha: It is commonly called Narsoba's Vadi, a vadi or suburb of Sirol (16° 40' N; 74° 35' E); a spot richly wooded with babhul and tamarind, lies three miles south of Sirol at the meeting of the Krsna and Pancaganga. It is named after Narsinha Sarasvati, who for twelve years is said to have lived at the sacred meeting of the rivers. Most of the people are Brahman pujaris or ministrants of the deity Narsinha. Vadi Narsinha is a holy place and is visited by large numbers of pilgrims. It has two large temples, one dedicated to Dattatreya and the other to Narayan Svami.

3) Kotitirth: To the east of the city near the Sahu Mill (Sahu Chatrapati Spinning and Weaving Mill) there is a big tank or lake with a temple of Mahadeva. This is called the Kotitirth. This is a picturesque spot in Kolhapur. On the city side there is an earthen bund. There are some babul trees on this side. The temple of Mahadeva is

slightly inside the lake with a small strip of land joining it to the bund.

4) Panchganga Ghat: To the north-west of the city, there is an extensive ghat on the Pancaganga river. There are numerous temples here including some in the river itself. On the bank is an enclosure where members of the royal family are cremated. There are many temples here dedicated to the deceased members of the royal Gagan-Bavada (Bavada Peta; p. 1,338), one of the fifteen forts built by Bhoja Raja of Panhala (1178-1209), lies thirty-six miles south-west of Kolhapur on a peak of the Sahyadris more than 2,500 feet above the sea. The fort rises sharply from the Konkan and is very difficult to approach. The hill and the country around were formerly thick with forest, which has now largely disappeared.

4) Shalini Palace: Salini Palace-The Salini Palace stands on the northern bank of the Rankala lake. It is a modern construction in Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. It is a rectangular double-storeyed structure with four square towers surmounted by domes at the corners. On the front side above the main entrance another square tower rises above the corner towers and it is surmounted by a polygon tower with slender pillars and a dome at the top with an inverted lotus leaf. The Palace faces the Rankali tank and has beautiful grounds. There is a small ghat on the lake where one can sit and enjoy solitude or from where one can go boating. The Palace is richly decorated inside and is lavishly furnished.

5) New Palace: The New Palace is on the Bhausingji Road (Bavada road) near the Residency. It took seven years to complete, from 1877 to 1884, and cost about seven lakhs of rupees. The building faces south and has an octagonal tower in the centre, commonly known as the clock tower, about 25 ft. broad (outside dimension) and 135 ft. high.

4) Old Palace: The Old Palace stands near the Mahalaxmi temple to the south-east of the temple.

It was built more than 200 years ago. Some portions of this Palace were set on fire and destroyed in the insurrection of 1813 by Sadalla Khan and they had to be rebuilt from time to time. The front portion is very recent. The Palace is a two-storeyed building having a terrace all over except the central portion where a hall has been erected. The Palace contains six chowks (quadrangles).

7) Bhavani Mandap: The oldest and also biggest structure in Kolhapur is Bhavani Mandap, which was known as Glory of the city. This building was constructed during the period 1785-1800 AD and the Kolhapur ruler Shivaji Maharaj II. Originally the mandap had 14 squares and the invasion of muslim King Sadakhan in 1813 ruined 7 squares.

8) Town Hall: family, Sambhaji, Sivaji III, Aba Saheb and Babasaheb. Of these, the biggest and best is the temple of Sivaji III. It was built in 1815 and contains some beautiful carvings. It is, however, an ill-assorted combination of large Musalman Hall and a lofty Hindu spire covered with stucco formed into mouldings and with a few ornaments. [Old District Gazetteer.] These tombs are ling shrines. In some temples padukas are found.

5) Radhanagari Dam: This dam is built by Kolhapur ruler Chh, Shahu Maharaj and is constructed across Bhogawati River. This dam is used for hydro-electricity power generation and also for irrigation purposes. The dam has self opening get and is 100 years old. The dam site is located amidst surroundings with thick forest covers having a habitat for many flora and fauna and many visitors reach here to see the spectacular bird species.

6) Gokak Falls: The real beauty of Kolhapur is seen in rainy season. The Gokak fall is well known as Niagara Fall of India, is a must visit for adventure and nature lovers. Enjoy the thrilling ride on a swinging rope bridge there.

7) Barkhi Waterfalls: The Barkhi waterfall is a seasonal attraction in the monsoons. Located about 45km drive from Kolhapur city, it is huge breathtaking waterfall. You can also enjoy backwater reservoir nearby the waterfall. On your way to Gaganbawada, you can visit Palsamba, a serene place with fresh air akin to a natural oxygen bar, which you thirst for in towns.

8) Amboli Waterfalls: Visit numerous view points for a pleasant view of the lush hills and fertile plain. Seaview Point offers a rare view of the land all the way to the golden Konkan coast. You can spend hours angling for a fish at Hiranya Keshi or picnic at Nagatta Falls, Mahadev Gad and Narayan Gad. Another pleasant and different expedition is a visit to the Bauxite Mines, 10 km away. For a few days of isolation, Amboli is an ideal resort.

D. Wildlife, Treks and Other Places:

1) Dajipur Sanctuary: The forest area of Dajipur is situated on the border of Kolhapur and Sindhudurg Districts. Surrounded by rugged mountains and dense forest, this secluded little place is completely cut off from human habitat. Home to Bison, wild deer, gava(bison), and many more spectacular wild animals and birds. An excursion in the vicinity to the Gagangiri maharaj's Math makes for a pleasant outing. There is a scenic resort near the backwaters of Radhanagari dam which is highly recommended for wildlife lovers.

2) Amba: Amba is situated on the tip of the Western Ghats and is a wonderful new holiday spot. With plenty of stunning scenery and forested area around, Amba is as yet not cluttered with tourists. There is a beautiful two-hour long trek that starts from the forest leading up to the hill, to reveal a stunning view of the Konkan and Deccan Plateau. Within an hour's drive from Amba, you can reach Pawankhing and Vishalgad, both hallowed places in the history of the Marathas. After returning to Amba, you can drive

towards Ratnagiri to visit Marleshwar, Ganpatipule, Pawas and many idyllic beaches in the Konkan.

3) The Pandav Darah Caves: The Pandav Darah Caves (Panhala Peta) apparently of Buddhist origin, are cut in a semicircular scarp about twenty-five feet high overlooking about a thousand feet of thickly wooded hill-sides above the plains six miles west of Panhala and eighteen miles north-west of Kolhapur. The group of caves includes a large cistern running into the hill-side, eight dwelling cells, and two large caves, a chapel and a school.

4) Shivaji University: A gateway of higher education of International level to regional masses and surrounded by rich nature

5) Rajaram College: The Rajaram College (Arts Section) building is near the nagarkhana, of the Old Palace. This building is in the Rajasthan style of construction with small curved domes supported by slender pillars and galleries with curved roofs. The building is a two-storeyed structure in black-stone with two beautiful polygon towers in the Indo-Saracenic style, with slender pillars supporting a dome with an inverted lotus-leaf. There is a partial third storey which seems to have been built at a later period and does not completely harmonise with the main building.

6) Municipal office Building: The Municipal Office building stands on the Bhausingji road near the Sivaji Chowk. It is a rectangular two-storeyed stone building with a small third storey in the middle of each side. There are shops on the ground-floor on the outside.

7) Sathmari: Sathmari or the arena for elephant fights is on Subhas Road in the south-eastern part of the old city. It is a plot of about two acres with small stone castles built at different points where the persons provoking the elephants to fight could take shelter. The whole plot is fenced round with a wall on the top of which there is place for the spectators. Elephant fights were popular during

the rule of Sahu Chatrapati. Now the place is used as a playground and is only a remainder of the old sport.

8) Wrestling Arena: Kolhapur is known for wrestling. To encourage wrestling a special wrestling arena has been built by the former Kolhapur State Government. The arena is between Subhasa Cauk and Kesavarao Bhosale Natyagrha (old Palace Theatre). It is a circular open place with a pavilion at one end and circular sloping ground all round. The ring is in the middle. The arena can accommodate 20,000 persons at a time. The arena is now owned by Government and has been leased out to the Kolhapur Sports Association which arranges wrestling bouts periodically.

9) Chhatrapati Pramila Raje Hospital: The C. P. R. Hospital or the Civil Hospital (formerly known as Albert Edward Hospital) is situated on the Bhausingji Road near the old Queen's or Rani Circle. The main building of the hospital is an example of English architecture of Gothic style of the nineteenth century. It was constructed between 1881 and 1884 at a cost of Rs. 3 lakhs. It is a two storeyed structure with a small portion behind the porch at the entrance going up to three or four storeys. This portion has a steep tiled roof ending up with wrought iron railing at the top.

10) Karvir Nagar vachan Mandir: It is opposite the Rajaram Colleg (Arts Section). It has a small but attractive building with a small dome and some carved slender pillars, forming a porch. The architecture is somewhat similar to the architecture of the Rajaram College building, though not of that exquisite quality. The library was founded in 1850 and was then known as the Kolhapur Native Library. It was originally housed

in a building which was later on taken over by the Government.

11) Kolhapur as a military centre: Kolhapur has been a military centre since old days. The Chatrapati had his own army before the British came. The British maintained their infantry and it was quartered at Infantry Lines near Line Bazar, but when the British units withdrew and the Maharaja was allowed to have his own army, the Raiaram Rifles were formed. They were quartered in barracks specially built on a hillock near the Terhblai Hill. This continued to be the head quarters of the Raiaram Rifles until the merger of the Kolhapur State when this infantry was disbanded. Now a Territorial Army Artillery unit is stationed at Kolhapur and it uses the barracks built for the Rajaram Rifles.

Conclusion:

We can experience magical agglomeration of History, Nature, Spirituality, and Culture all at one place. Facilities of comfortable accommodation, good network of air and road transportation, well convergent guides, etc. will help speedy development of tourism in this district. Accessibility, amenities, accommodation, climate, attractive sites are the main aspects studied in this research work

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