



Upper Panchaganga Basin a Treasure of Ecotourism: a Geographical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

India ranks top most in the list of most preferable destinations of tourism. India is bestowed with charismatic aspects of tourism like deep routed history, diversified cultural revelation, and of course unparalleled natural beauty in respect of flora and fauna. Tourism is, therefore, rapidly developing in all aspects. Physical setting of the country is distinguished and promoting nature or ecotourism. Considerable part of the country occupied by lofty mountain ranges, hills, plateaus, plains with thick forests and surface water bodies. The Maharashtra state is one of the richest states in this regards. Recently the state has been recognized by UNESCO including parts of Western Ghats in the list of places of world heritage. On the eve of this it is appropriate to take review of ecotourism by various ways. In the present paper the distinguished and untapped destinations having potential of ecotourism particularly in Panchaganga basin one of the important tributaries of Krishna river. The rigorous fieldwork has been adopted to explore the destinations. Sophisticated hand held 'GPS' instrument has also effectively used for determination of geographical co-ordinates and scaling altitude. All destinations in the valley are unparallel in respect of distinguished features and their characteristics. Water falls, view points, rivers, brooks sacred natural grooves, high hills, deep wooded valley, agriculture farms and even picturesque villages.

Keywords : Ecotourism, sanctuary, forest, waterfalls, western ghats, GPS

Introduction

Ecotourism defines enjoying leisure and pleasure of tourism with several natural factors without tampering their natural status. It again describe meticulously the individual activity with separate distinguished aspects of nature e.g. mountain tourism, river rafting, jungle safari, trekking etc. it sense different meaning to different things with different crowd or individual. Legitimately Ecotourism is defined as, "Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas." (Thompson 1996).

In the present paper attempt has been made to explore new destinations in Panchaganga basin from the ecotourism point of view. The study can be supported to the development of eco-tourism in the area.

Study Area, Objective and Methodology

Upper Panchaganga river basin claims extreme western part of Maharashtra State lies between 16013' to 17011' north latitude and 73041' and 74042' east longitude (Fig.1). It includes partial geographical area of Shahuvadi, Panhala, Gaganbavada and Radhanagari tahsils. Bhogavati, Tulsi, Dhamani, Kumbi and Kasari are the tributaries of Panchaganga basin. The region promotes ecotourism with mild temperate climate consisting with enjoyable high rainfall and warm temperature. Ecologically the considerable part of region enjoys, reserved, protected and classed with conserved forests. Versatile ecology found in Radhanagari sanctuary, Gaganbavada forests, passes like- Phonda ghat, Karul ghat, Anuskura ghat etc. There are many hill stations on Sahyadri scarp. In addition, charactersised ecology found in river valley, dams, hill slopes, valleys, escarpment sanctuary, forests with wild animals etc.

The prime objective to study in this paper is to explore and identify new destinations significant to ecotourism and to as-

sess the geographical basis for eco-tourism development and its importance. The primary data retrieved by rigorous field work is principal basis of the study. However, exclusive interviews of tourists are also taken.

Discussion

From the point of view the Panchaganga basin is well laden with versatile natural features. Among them in this attempt has been made to identify some exclusive destinations that are being enjoyed seldom by tourists. The analysis of interviewed tourists say that majority of young tourist prefer visit to natural destinations with waterfall and other water bodies, caves, hill tops etc. The middle aged tourists are tend to visit wildlife sanctuary, plateaus and hills, whereas old age tourists are prefer to visit river confluences, valley view points and other easily accessible destinations. The table given below shows most visited and potential destinations in the study area.

Table: 1 Potential ecotourism destinations

Sr. No.	Identified Destination	Geographical Co-ordinates	Elevation In meters	Discription
1	Prayag	N 16° 44' 07.3" E 074° 10' 45.7"	533	Confluence of three rivers, temple
2	Masai Temple	N 16° 48' 54.8" E 074° 02' 57.8"	962	Laterite Caves
3	Pandav Dara (Caves)	N 16° 49' 27.8" E 074° 02' 50"	946	Ancient Rock Cut Caves
4	Salasi Village	N 16° 51' 07.1" E 074° 01' 49.4"	605	Hanuman Temple, 30 Memory Stones
5	Kasari Valley View Point	N 16° 53' 37" E 073° 48' 03.4"	768	View to Vishal Gad & Kasari Valley project
6	Vishal Gad Foot Hill	N 16° 54' 16" E 073° 44' 50.3"	687	Water divide Panchaganga & Warna river, About 2000 Tourists visit per day

7	K.T.Weir on Kasari River	N 16° 53' 37" E 073° 48' 03.4"	544	on Bajarbhogaon to Porle road
8	Patpanhala	N 16° 45' 19.8" E 073° 57' 41.3"	552	Scenic village with sugarcane, banana & sunflower blooming in the fields around.
9	Gaulwada	N 16° 46' 11.22" E 073° 54' 45.4"	567	Sacred grove with Bharadi Devi Idol
10	Anandkunj	N 16° 47' 01.9" E 073° 54' 08.1"	648	Uro-therapy centre
11	Burky	N 16° 46' 45.3" E 073° 50' 38.6"	577	Wooded Village with jack fruit trees everywhere
12	Burkey Waterfall	N 16° 45' 51.1" E 073° 50' 21.2"	628	Inaccessible & dangerous in monsoon recommended for adventure tourism
13	Bridge on Kasari River	N 16° 47' 31.7" E 073° 51' 10.4"	566	Meandering river course
14	Bhui-Bawada Ghat	N 16° 32' 56.0" E 073° 49' 57.6"	560	Pass with open tunnel canal type
15	Sangashi Phata	N 16° 33' 18.2" E 073° 51' 57.6"	569	Dam, Morjai temple
16	Kale Phata	N 16° 42' 38.8" E 074° 03' 16.3"	544	Weekly market with farm fresh vegetables and fruits
17	Chakreshwar-wadi	N 16° 27' 52.8" E 074° 04' 42.8"	747	Temple, valley view point, paddy farms
18	Tapsa	N 16° 28' 19.6" E 074° 04' 30.2"	687	Small rock cut cave, Water point, temple thick forest, sacred groove.
19	Chakreshwar-wadi hill	N 16° 28' 08.9" E 074° 05' 13.5"	843	Hill top view
20	Tulasi river source	-	-	Deep and thick forest, sacred groove
21	Radhanagari Dam	N 16° 24' 36.88" E 073° 56' 56.70"	668	Spectacular scene of backwater extent
22	Rautwadi	N 16° 25' 39.55" E 073° 57' 14.37"	724	Waterfall, Scenic view of Radhanagari dam
23	Dajipur new dam	N 16° 23' 20" E 073° 51' 49.2"	582	Water tank, wet land, deep river course, forest
24	Waghache Pani	N 16° 26' 01.3" E 073° 52' 12.7"	901	Wild animal watch tower, water point, deep & thick forest
25	Bison Point	N 16° 29' 45.5" E 073° 54' 36.54"	688	Extensive plateau with endemic flower plants.
26	Palsambe	-	-	Deep river gorge, rock cut temple, sacred groove

Source: Based on field work

Conclusion

Most of the destinations are having water bodies in the form of waterfalls, ponds, lakes and dams. Thick forests with endemic plants, shrubs, vines and dwarfs are barring approach. Some destinations in forests are of temples where sacred grooves have deliberately maintained for centuries. Plateaus and hill tops are occupied with some distinguished flowering plants which can be grate attraction of tourists in the said area.

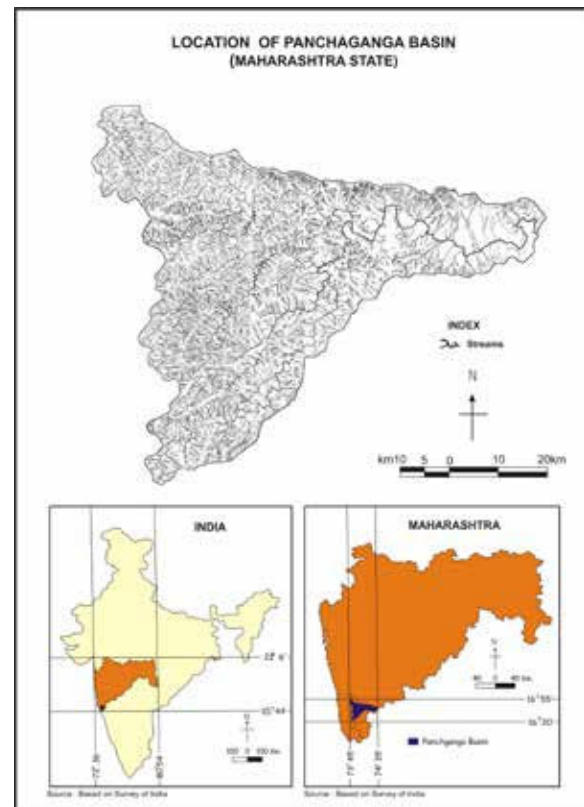


Fig. 1

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