



## A Need of Development of Heritage Tourism: A Case Study of Ankai Fort, Maharashtra

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### ABSTRACT

Forts are the major tourist attraction in Maharashtra state. Nashik District has more than 25 hill forts but there is lacking of systematic tourism development. Ankai fort is located in eastern Nashik district. This part of the district is drought prone as well as agriculturally and industrially lagging behind. Tourism development will be one of the regional development key in this part. This paper is aims to evaluate the potential of this site as a tourist place, to evaluate the efforts made by government and to suggest the measures for tourism development at Ankai fort. Two field visits and survey is the base of primary data. Secondary data was acquired from books, district gazetteer, census and websites. Ancient caves, remnants, water tanks, temples, fortification, religious value are the major plus point of this site. People are little aware about the potential and expected government intervention.

### KEYWORDS

Heritage Tourism, forts, caves, development strategy, poverty reduction strategies

### 1. Introduction:

Maharashtra state of India is characterized by hilly terrain mainly in its western part, where the Western Ghat lies. Its sub ranges run parallel in west-east direction. eg. Satmala Range, Harishchandra-Balaghat Range, Mahadev Range. Most of the hill forts are located in main western ghat range and its sub ranges. Basalt is the predominant rock found in hills reaching a thickness of about 3000 meters. Maharashtra plateau is the product of series of volcanic and followed by the erosion work of major rivers like Tapi (Tapti), Girna, Godavari, Bhima, Krishna and many other west flowing rivers. These geographical events shaped the topography of Maharashtra. Its variety of natural and manmade features astonished the tourist from all over the world. Hill forts of Maharashtra are the product of geographical set up and human efforts (fortification, construction, and carving). Now a day these forts are the major tourist attractions.

### 2.Objectives:

1. To highlight the potential of Ankai fort and surrounding for development of heritage tourism
2. To collect the information about the structure, places and caves in the premises of Ankai fort.
3. To evaluate current scenario of tourism, government efforts for tourism development and need of tourism development in this region.
4. To suggest the measures for development of Ankai fort as a tourist destination

### 3. Methodology:

Information about the Ankai fort is collected through secondary sources like Nashik district Gazetteer and few websites. The description of caves in this area is collected from the book 'The cave temples of India', (James Fergusson and James Burgess - 1880). Tourist experiences are gathered from the blogs of trackers and voyagers available on internet.

A small survey is conducted at Ankai village, located at the base of Ankai fort. The villagers are directly related and affected with the tourism activities. Information about their occupation, effect of tourist visited on their income, their awareness about government efforts, their sensitivity about the fort, characteristics of the tourist visited is gathered through questionnaire. No standard method of sampling is used. Convenient sampling of 50 households is selected for collecting primary data.

Two visits were organized in the month of September and November, 2016 for gathering the first hand information about the study area and interviews of people, Sarpanch (Village head),

head master, gram sevak (village level government officer) were taken in the second visit. This paper is mainly based on the discussion with local people, authority and observation.

### 4.Study Area:

Ankai village is located in Eastern Part of Nashik District in Maharashtra state at 20.18 N. latitude and 74.43 E. longitudes. Its total population is 2016 as per 2011 census.<sup>1</sup> Steppe Climate is experienced in this part. The climate here is classified as BSh by the Köppen-Geiger system. It has annual average temperature of 26.1 and average precipitation is about 581 mm.<sup>2</sup> More than 80% rainfall receive in 4 months of monsoon i.e. June to September. Summers are hot and May is the hottest month. The best period for visit Anaki fort is from September to February. Agriculture is the major economic activity, limited by lack of irrigation facilities. Water scarcity is the major problem in this part accompany with dry climate in most part of the year.

Ankai caves are declared as 'ancient monuments' by archaeological survey of India. It is include in Maharashtra state protected monuments.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. Result and discussion:

**5.1 Ankai Fort:** Maharashtra state has more than 300 forts and Nashik district have 25 among them. Most of them are hilly forts. In the Nashik district gazetteer detailed description of this fort is found.<sup>4</sup>

Other attractions of the Ankai fort are the remains of large palace, two water reservoirs with a small temple, well built guard house at Tankai. There are three caves of Brahmani type which are more ancient than the fort. These rock temples a very rough and unfinished. On the south face of the hill there is a Jaina caves.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from these ancient attractions there is a Agasti rushi Ashram, a wide cave. It is maintained by a saint (locally called as Baba) and his devotee. This place has a religious value and thousands of Hindu devotee visit here on the occasion of each Monday of Shraavan month, Rushi Panchami, Mahashivratri, Hanuman Jayanti, Ramnavami, Hartalika and other holy festivals of Hindu. There are few days were the population of visitors is exceeds to 100 thousands.

There are other attractions like Chotu baba Samadhi and, Pir baba which is a cause of hundreds of Muslim devotee to visit this place. This is a perfect example of communal harmony.

### 5.2 Potential of Ankai fort for tourism development:

**i. Remains of ancient structures:** This fort has remains of the fortification, at few places it is damaged and wall collapsed. Stones are loosened and fall at the bottom of the wall. Tankai's fortification is comparatively more damaged and steps are broken. Main gates and towers (Buru) of Ankai are relatively in good condition. Remains of main building located at extreme west are also one of the tourist attractions. Agasti Rushi Temple: This temple is in good condition. It is a cave. It is renovated in past few years so the marble flooring is found. The inside calm and peace is ideal for meditation and being refresh. There are idols of God Rama, Lakshmana and Seeta.

**ii. Remnants of old Dargah and Pir baba/ Chotu baba funerary monument (Samadhi):** These remnants were found inside the ruined structure of largest structure located at the west end. This is the holy place for the Hindu and Muslim community. Thousands of devotee's visit here mainly on Sundays and holidays, throughout the year.

**iii. Ancient Jain and Brahmani Caves:** Jain caves are located at the bottom of Tankai hill. There are 7-8 caves beautifully carved but looks like unfinished work. Entrance of the caves is attractive. Few caves were converted in to temple.

Brahmani type caves are located after the first main gate of Ankai fort. They are more rough, damaged and unfinished. But we can clearly see the figures, design carved on the cave walls and pillars. Premises of Brahmani caves is more dirty, garbage is accumulated here and there, wild plants grown outside of it and the inside smell might made tourist uncomfortable.

**iv. Water tank in carved basaltic rock:** It is the common feature found at almost every hill fort of Maharashtra. There are manmade water tanks made by carving the basaltic rock. Their location is decided by considering the slope.

**v. Aerial view from hill top :** At the half way of the ascent , where roads are separated towards Ankai and Tankai there is a spot where we can see the northern as well as southern country side. From the western end of the fort there one can see the aerial view of western side including the traffic of Manmad-A.nagar state highway, Manmad-Daund Railway, seasonal ponds (tanks), agriculture fields and scattered villages.

**vi. Good Rail and Road connectivity:** Manmad, Yeola, Malegaon are the nearby Cities to Ankai. Ankai Railway station (2km.) and Manmad Junction (8 km) are very near to the village. This place is very near to Manmad – Ahmednagar state high way.

**vii. Tourist guest house at Ankai Village:** One Guest house is constructed by state government in the Ankai village, called as 'Bhakt Niwas' (Residence for devotee). But it is not frequently use. Many tourist or devotees are visit here and not interested in staying.

**viii. Religious importance for Hindu and Muslim devotee:** A small temple is located at the centre of one carved water tank where mainly female devotee worships on auspicious days like Rushi Panchami, Mahashivratri etc. Pir baba, Agasti Rushi temple/Ashram are other religious places where thousands of devotee visits. Female pilgrims are also considerable in numbers.

**ix. Popular in trackers/ Tourist:** Many young enthusiastic trackers are interested in Ankai-Tankai track. As it is easy to visit, climb and of short duration it is the destination of beginners. Many trackers have their own blogs. They share their experiences of Ankai track on it.

Tourist from European countries frequently visited this place, though they are less in numbers. They are accompanying with the tourist from Indian states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. This place is popular among the people of neighboring districts of Maharashtra eg. Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, Jalgaon, Dhule, Bid, Parbhani, Pune, Nanded and

Solapur. Most of the tourist belongs to the towns, cities like Manmad, Yeola, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, Sangamner, Chandwad, Nashik, Kopargaon, Pune, Chalisgaon, Deola, Nanded, Shirdi, Mumbai, Nagarsul, Shrirampur, Rahuri, Malegaon, Malegaon, Satana, Akola and Vijapur etc.

About 200 to 500 thousand tourists were visited each year. Most crowded days are Rushi Panchami, Shrawan Somwar (Monday), Mahashivratri, Gudhi Padwa, Shriramnavami, Hanuman Jayanti, Sundays and public holidays. Shrawan or August is the most crowded month.

**x. Ideal site for solar and wind power generation:** At both the hill tops there is extensive flat ground which will be ideal for wind or power generation. This will help in electrification on the fort.

**5.3 Why Ankai fort not yet acquired the status of a good tourist destination?**

- i. Lack of drinkable water availability at the fort.
- ii. Security issue and poor police control at the time of festival. ( few devotees were return from half way because of mismanagement of crowd)
- iii. Incomplete reconstruction work mainly of steps.
- iv. Lack of evergreen vegetation, big trees and greenery
- v. Lack of attention, efforts by state, central government and archaeological survey of India
- vi. Passive local self government.
- vii. Lack of publicity and marketing.
- viii. Lack of professional attitude among the villagers.
- ix. Lacuna in Infrastructure development:

**6 Conclusion and recommendations:**

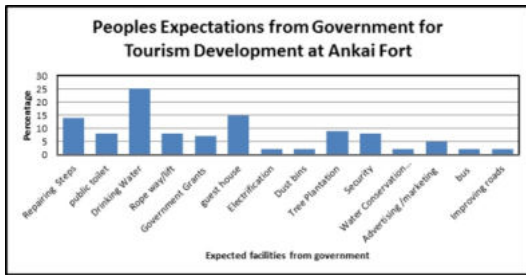
This fort and its premises are having lot of potentials for becoming as a tourist attraction in this region. This region is lagging behind in agriculture and industrial development. Dry farming is not supporting the population. In such condition tourism development can boost the local economy. Local people are aware about the importance of tourism but because of lack of infrastructure tourist were not interested to stay or spend considerable time in this location; consequently there is limitation on their spending. So local people are not getting much benefit of from tourism activity 70 % people said that there is no relation of their income with the number of tourist. 60 % people replied that even in the pick season their income is not increase. Attempt should be made to keep this place clean, attractive. Grants should be allocated to variety of projects like steps construction, renovation of caves, temples, fortification, monuments etc. There should be permanent system of Maintenance and security. 16 % people expecting the allocation of security. Local people think that the young cupules frequently visited here and they are sometime robbed, threatened by antisocial elements. Few visitors carving their names and variety of symbols on the monuments and damage the beauty and originality of it. 50 % local people asking for permanent drinking water facility and 16 % want the public toilet facility on the fort. The expectation of the local people from government is summarized in table 1.

**Table 1. Expectation of local people from government**

Sr. No.	Expectation of local people from government	No. of respondent (Out of 50)	percentage
1	Repairing of Steps	14	28
2	Providing public toilet facility	8	16
3	Drinking Water availability	25	50
4	Construction of Rope way/lift	8	16
5	Government Grants	7	14
6	Building new guest house at the fort	15	30
7	Electrification on the fort	2	4
8	Dust bins	2	4
9	Tree Plantation	9	18
10	Security	8	16
11	Water Conservation measures	2	4

12	Advertising and marketing of the place	5	10
13	Increase bus frequency	2	4
14	Improving road condition	2	4

Source: Survey conducted at Ankai Village on 30.11.2016



Gram Panchayat (Local Self Government of the village) send the resolution for variety of developmental work but it is said that there is obstacles from archaeological survey department. Developmental work is prohibited by AMASR ACT 1958 (modified in 2010).<sup>6</sup> It is the duty of member of local assembly (MLA), Collector office, Member of Parliament (MP) to convince the officers of archaeological survey department to permitting for the basic amenities at Ankai fort.

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), National Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), other private tourist operator have their website and own mechanism for publicity and marketing of tourist places but they are emphasize on the major tourist locations like Ajanta Caves, Raigad, Lonar, Get way of India etc. Small countryside tourist places are often either neglected or providing very less information. Actually their objective should be to exploring more and more new places of tourist potential like Ankai fort.

Planners also should provide funds and develop such sites as they are important to increase the income level of rural areas. Even international development agencies have been slow to include tourism among their poverty reduction strategies.<sup>7</sup> The relation between tourism development and poverty reduction and reducing out migration is discussed by many scholars like **Torres and Momsen, Shah and Gupta**<sup>8</sup> etc. Tourism development strategy might be useful the study area as it is agriculturally and industrially backward region.

Natural scenery increases the tourist interest in the place. This region is receives less than 600 mm annual rainfall water scarcity is the major problem. Basalt rock descent allows percolating the rain water so ground water level is also insignificant. The only way to conserve water and along with that soil and vegetation is the soil and water conservation works. Very few attempts have been made in this direction so in dry season this place is avoided by tourist. State Forest Department has to play a vital role to stop soil loss, accumulate the rain water and increase the vegetation cover. These works should be made on the fort as well as in the surrounding of the fort. Continuous contour trenches (CCT), Percolation tanks, Nala banding, grass plantation are recommended. In present days there are only a thorny bushes, cactus, and babul trees were found in this part which should be replaced by few tall trees, trees with fruits and berries (for providing food to monkeys squirrels and birds). This will be a continuous and long term strategy.

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