

Investigating Interlinked Relationship Between Tourism And Culture In Melghat Region

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Abstract - The Melghat region, with its abundant natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, presents a unique opportunity to explore the interconnection between tourism and culture. By delving into the ways in which the local culture influences tourism and how tourism impacts the cultural practices and traditions of the region, we can gain valuable insights into the potential for economic growth and development. One aspect to consider is how the region's cultural events, traditional crafts, and performing arts contribute to the tourism potential. Understanding how these cultural elements attract visitors and contribute to the local economy can provide a solid foundation for sustainable tourism development. Additionally, assessing how tourism affects the preservation of cultural heritage in the region and the impact on traditional practices is crucial for understanding the long-term implications of tourism growth. By studying the interplay between culture and tourism in the Melghat region, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these factors can contribute to the economic growth and overall development of the area. Furthermore, identifying any potential challenges or conflicts between tourism and cultural preservation will help in developing strategies to mitigate negative impacts and ensure a harmonious relationship between the tourism and culture.

Key Words: Tourism , Culture , Tradition , Economy , Government Schemes ...

1. INTRODUCTION

Melghat, situated in Maharashtra's Amaravati district, is a designated tiger reserve wildlife sanctuary nestled within the southern offshoot of the Satpura Hill Range known as Gavilgarh Hill. Positioned 225 km west of Nagpur, it was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1967 and attained tiger reserve status in 1974. It holds historical significance as one of the first nine tiger reserves designated under Project Tiger, a conservation initiative launched in 1972 to safeguard Bengal tigers.

Renowned for its unique flora, diverse fauna, and rich biodiversity, Melghat Tiger Reserve holds a prominent position in Maharashtra's conservation history. Characterized by its varied topography of high hills and deep valleys, it provides a secure and enduring habitat for various species. The reserve falls within the Bio-geographic zone 6E-Deccan Peninsula-Central Highlands.

The buffer zone surrounding Melghat Tiger Reserve comprises the Multiple Use Area, designated as Reserve Forest, and is home to 39 villages. While part of the reserve since 1974, the area historically lacked adequate protection and habitat restoration efforts, particularly aligned with the objectives of the tiger project. The region is inhabited by tribes like the Korkus, Nihals, and Gaolis, whose cultural heritage intertwines with the surrounding forests' flora and fauna.

Tourism in Melghat is centered around four key villages: Semadoh, Chikhaldara, Harisal, and Shahnur, with additional accommodation available at Kolkas, located 14 km beyond Semadoh. Notably, the Gavilgarh Fort near Chikhaldara Hill Station holds significant historical importance and lies on the buffer zone's periphery. [1]

1.1 Historical Background

Discovered by Captain Robinson of the Hyderabad Regiment in 1823, Chikhaldara captivated English settlers with its verdant landscapes reminiscent of England. Managed by the Municipal Council since 1948, Chikhaldara is the sole hill resort in Vidarbha, perched at an altitude of 1118 meters. It boasts abundant wildlife, including tigers, panthers, sloth bears, and wild boars, with the nearby Melghat Tiger Project housing 82 tigers.

Legend has it that Chikhaldara, derived from 'chikal' (mud) and 'dhara' (stream/falls), was the site of Bheema's defeat of the villainous Keechaka in the Mahabharata, giving rise to its colloquial name. Though its scenic vistas can be savored from Hurricane Point, Prospect Point, and Devi Point, other attractions like Gavilgad and Narnala Fort, Pandit Nehru Botanical Gardens, Tribal Museum, and Semadoh Lake offer memorable excursions. Despite not being earmarked as a hill station in the 1984 development plan, Chikhaldara attracts between 80,000 to 1.5 lakh tourists annually.

2. Objective

To study the importance of culture tourism and its contribution in economic growth of the Melghat region.

To study and analysis how local culture can drive the tourism development in Melghat region.

To study the different government initiatives to boost the cultural tourism of Melghat region.

To study the positive and negative impact of cultural tourism in Melghat region.

3. Scope

Cultural Heritage and Tourism: The paper would explore the cultural heritage of the Melghat region, including the traditions, customs, and practices of the Korku tribe, and how these cultural elements attract tourists to the region. It would investigate how tourism activities impact local culture and traditions, both positively and negatively.

Economic Impact of Tourism: The research paper would analyze the economic impact of tourism on the Melghat region, focusing on aspects such as foreign exchange earnings, investment opportunities, employment generation, and economies of scale for local businesses. It would examine how tourism contributes to the economic growth and development of the region.

Integration of Cultural and Tourism Industries: The scope would include studying the integration of cultural and tourism industries in the Melghat region and how this integration optimizes the tourism value chain. It would explore how combining cultural resources with tourism elements enhances the overall tourism experience and contributes to the economic prosperity of the region.

Socio-Economic Study: The research paper would involve a socio-economic study of tribes and non-tribes in the Melghat region, analyzing their dependence on the Melghat Tiger Reserve and the adjoining areas. It would investigate the social organization, structure, and livelihood practices of the local communities and how they are influenced by tourism and cultural interactions.

Conservation and Community Context: The scope would also cover insights from conservation efforts, conflicts, and the community context in the Melghat region. It would examine community perceptions towards tourism, conservation initiatives, and the role of local communities in sustainable tourism development.

4. Limitation

The Study of cultural and tourism is limited to the Melghat region of the Vidharbha , Maharashtra.

Study is limited to the literature analysis of the research topic.

5. Methodology

Study and analysis of history of the Melghat region.

Study and analysis of tourism sector of Melghat region.

Study and analysis of various cultural practices in Melghat region.

Study and analysis of different ways leading to economic growth of the Melghat region.

Study and analysis of various government schemes.

5.1 Tourism Data

Chikhaldara is the only and a popular hill station in Vidarbha, it attracts number of tourists throughout the year. The tourist inflow data for past five years was collected from the tourist tax record of Chikhaldara Municipal Council (Annexure 2). Tourist inflow per month in year 2016-17 to 2020-21 is shown below:

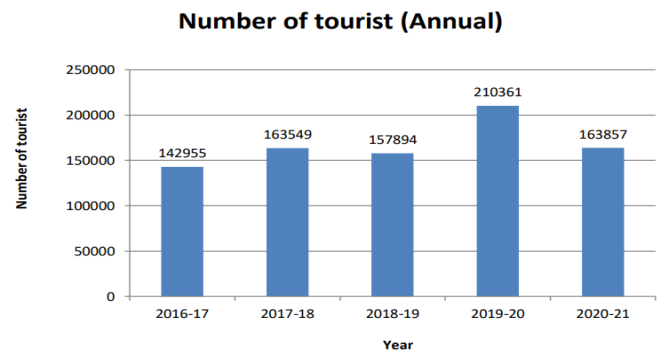


Chart -1: Annual tourist inflow for 5 years [2]

Chart -1 shows the annual tourist inflow in Chikhaldara for last five years i.e. from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Chikhaldara was visited by more than 2.10 lakh tourists in the year 2019-20 whereas 2016-17 saw the least tourist visits in Chikhaldara i.e. around 1.43 lakh. The average tourist visits in Chikhaldara is around 1.67 lakh.

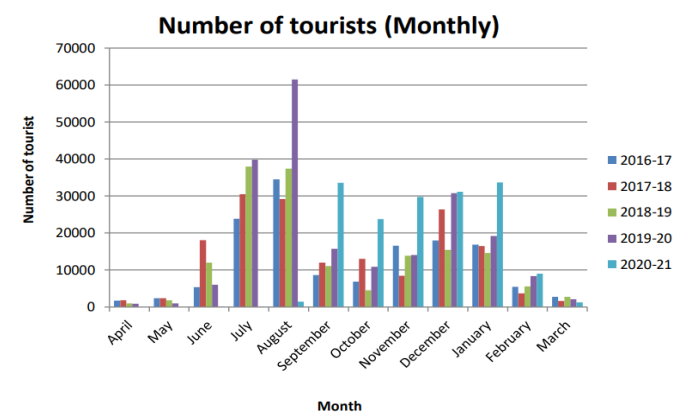


Chart -2: Monthly tourist pattern for 5 years [2]

From chart -2 it is clearly visible that Chikhaldara attracts majority tourist during monsoon season i.e. in the months of June, July and August followed by winter months from November to January. Chikhaldara witnesses negligible tourist activity during summers.

The tourist activity in Chikhaldara is unevenly distributed. The average number of daily tourist visits in Chikhaldara ranges from around 40 tourists during summers to more than 1000 during monsoons.

This pattern arises due to the limited activities and destinations available for visits during the dry season. However, with the onset of the monsoon, the region transforms as waterfalls rejuvenate, the landscape turns lush green, and misty weather blankets the area, drawing in a significant influx of tourists

5.2 Tourist Locations

Tourist points located in chikhaldara are listed as follows :

- Malviya point (sunrise)
- Bhimkund (Kitchakdari)
- Vairat Devi
- Sunset Point
- Bir Dam
- Panchbol Point
- Kalapani Dam
- Mahadev Mandir
- Semadhoh Tiger Project
- Hariken Point
- Mozari Point
- Prospects Point
- Devi Point
- Goraghat
- Shakkar Lake
- Government Garden
- Museums
- Waterfalls
- Bakadari
- Pancha Dharag waterfall
- Gawilgad Fort

5.3 Coffee Plantation

Coffee colony in Maharashtra, not numerous would believe it, but there are in little given Chikhaldara in Vidarbha, it's popular destination for nature suckers. The hill station boasts various catcalls and creatures, denes and lacks etc.

Table -1: Property Of Coffee Garden

Property of coffee garden	
Owner	Area in acres
Roman Catholic Church	60
Government	7.5
Holy Cross Convent	2.5

In Chikhaldara some coffee auditoriums are private and some are belongs to government timber department. substantially in Mariyampur auditoriums are belongs to Roman Catholic Church(Mission). To take care of civilization on the inauguration of Bishop Elies Ghonsalvis Bishop of Amravati Diocese and honourable Governor of Maharashtra Shree C. Vidya Rao have stationed 100 field workers to supervise and guided the locals so as to cover and supervised and guide the civilization of the area on regular base. Table-1 Property Of Coffee Garden Property of coffee theatre proprietor Area in acres Roman Catholic Church 60 Government 7.5 Holy Cross Convent 2.5 Labors substantially original communities are working in coffee estate, numerous people get employment so that they get diurnal succour to survive. Seasonally labours are handed workshop, to get stipend on daily base at the rate of Rs. 200 per day. This increases their purchasing capacity and increase the standard of living of ethnical. The sell of coffee greasepaint is through original shopkeepers especially occupants. No ingrained request is available the excursionists buy coffee at the rate of Rs. 500 per kg. The coffee produced bloomed during the month of stormy season it's on the flowering stage and by the month of September seeds are ready after the civilization season seeds are burnt, dried and predicated the power is ready for sell. Yearly they're dealing 80 kg. Coffee roughly going is Rs. 40,000/-.

5.4. Tourism Festival

The week long Chikhaldara Tourism Festival, in which colourful conditioning that attract excursionists from across Maharashtra is held. The jubilee was introduced 8 times back by former minister Dr. Sunil Deshmukh still, the organizers stopped holding the jubilee in after times. The jubilee was revived many times back keeping in mind

the eventuality it has to induce profit. Food jubilee, adventure sports like parasailing, rappelling and touring, and a picture exhibition on Melghat’s biodiversity are the special point of jubilee. The jubilee provides tribals an occasion to showcase their bamboo art and form of folk culture. It also helps employment generation as particulars made by tribals are vended.

5.5. Demographic Data

Chikhaldara, located in the Amravati district, is a Municipal Council city divided into 17 wards, with elections held every 5 years. According to the Population Census 2011, it houses a total of 948 families and has a population of 5,158 individuals, comprising 2,789 males and 2,369 females, resulting in an Average Sex Ratio of 849.

Among the populace, 10% are children aged 0-6 years, totaling 503, with 263 male and 240 female children, leading to a Child Sex Ratio of 913, surpassing the Average Sex Ratio.

Chikhaldara boasts a commendable literacy rate of 91.9%, higher than the 87.4% literacy rate of Amravati district. The male literacy rate stands at 95.37%, while the female literacy rate is 87.74%, reflecting the community's commitment to education and empowerment.

in Marginal activities, providing livelihood for less than 6 months.

Of the 1,329 workers involved in Main Work, 8 are cultivators (owners or co-owners), and 38 are Agricultural laborers, underscoring the agricultural significance within the community's economic landscape.[3]

	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	910	733	177
Cultivators	8	8	0
Agriculture Labourer	38	31	7
Household Industries	10	6	4
Other Workers	854	688	166
Marginal Workers	419	297	122
Non Working	3,829	1,759	2,070

Chart -4: Chikhaldara occupation data

5.6. Culture

Within the Melghat region, a significant tribal populace is dispersed across the administrative tahsils of Chikhaldara and Dharani. The Korku tribe stands out prominently, constituting approximately 90 percent of the demographic, alongside other tribal communities like Dhanwar, Pardhi, Gond, and Rajgonds.

Distinctive traditions and belief systems

The Korku tribe boasts a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, sharing many customs with neighboring tribes while maintaining unique traditions of their own. Divided into four groups and spread across 36 clans, each clan venerates a unique totem, reflecting their spiritual connections to animals, objects, and nature. Inter-tribal disparities, particularly regarding marital practices, were more pronounced historically but have diminished over time.

Religiously, the Korkus align closely with Hinduism, though with nuanced differences. Their mythology elucidates natural phenomena and societal occurrences, with reverence for mainstream Hindu deities alongside natural forces like the sun, moon, rivers, and forests. Lord Shiva holds primary

	Total	Male	Female
Children	503	263	240
Literacy	91.9%	86.4%	78.9%
Scheduled Caste	882	426	456
Scheduled Tribe	1,844	1,041	803
Illiterate	881	380	501

Chart -3: Chikhaldara demographic data

The Chikhaldara Municipal Council oversees the provision of essential amenities such as water and sewerage to 948 households. Additionally, it holds the authority to construct roads within its jurisdiction and levy taxes on properties within its purview.

In terms of demographics, Schedule Caste (SC) individuals constitute 17.1% of the population, while Schedule Tribe (ST) members make up 35.8% of the total populace in Chikhaldara.

Within the Chikhaldara Municipal Council, 1,329 individuals are engaged in various work activities. Among them, 68.5% are classified as being in Main Work, involving employment or earning for more than 6 months, while 31.5% are engaged

reverence, supplemented by figures such as Ravana, Meghnath, and Kilar Muthwa. Worship of deceased ancestors is prevalent, often marked by the construction of small huts and pillars. Supernatural beliefs permeate daily life, influencing actions based on omens. Tattooing is considered a sacred practice, while magico-religious and ethnomedicinal traditions remain prominent, albeit facing degradation.

Festivals and artistic expressions

Korku festivals, including diwali, dussehra, and holi, are celebrated with fervor, accompanied by specific observances like gudipadwa and pola. Festivities involve feasting, music, dance, and elaborate decorations. Dance, a major art form, is performed enthusiastically during festivals and special occasions, showcasing diverse styles and attire. More than 14 types of dances are prevalent, accompanied by traditional music played on instruments like sindhi, bhugadu, kingari, mrudanga, and dhol.

Culinary traditions and language dynamics

Culinary practices among the Korku people echo those of neighboring tribal communities and wider Indian traditions, with reliance on forest produce, grains, vegetables, and non-vegetarian fare. Liquor consumption is common, with Mahua being a popular local brew. Tobacco usage is widespread.

Language forms a vital aspect of Korku identity, with the Korku language facing endangerment according to UNESCO. Efforts to preserve it face challenges due to socioeconomic factors and language prioritization in education. Despite these challenges, Korku language shares dialectic and phonetic similarities with the Santhali language, underscoring its unique linguistic heritage. [4]

5.7. Government Schemes

In recent times, the Indian Government has acknowledged the pivotal role of tourism in job creation and foreign exchange earnings. In line with this recognition, it has implemented several initiatives to bolster both domestic and international tourism, thereby significantly enhancing the tourism sector. Here are some of these initiatives:

Swadesh Darshan Scheme: Launched in 2014–15 by the Ministry of Tourism, the Swadesh Darshan scheme is a flagship program designed to promote theme-based tourism and tap into India's vast tourist potential. By March 2022, the Ministry had committed Rs. 5,500 crore in investments and approved over 76 projects spanning 31 states/union territories. Furthermore, the scheme has catalyzed the enhancement of tourism infrastructure across more than 500 tourist destinations. In April 2022, the ministry approved 10 new projects under the heritage circuit theme.

The National Integrated Database of the Hospitality Industry stands as a flagship initiative in harmony with the

Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision, harnessing technology to empower businesses within the hospitality sector. The program aims to comprehensively understand the geographical spread, size, structure, and capacity of the hospitality industry. As of August 27, 2022, a total of 45,152 accommodations were registered under this portal.

E-tourist Visa: Introduced in October 2014, the E-tourist Visa initiative simplifies the process of obtaining a tourist visa for foreign nationals, thereby promoting tourism in India. In 2019 alone, the government granted 2.36 million e-tourist visas.

Advertising Campaigns: Through campaigns like 'Incredible India,' the Indian Government has effectively promoted tourism and showcased the country's rich cultural heritage to a global audience. Recent initiatives include the launch of the Italy edition of Incredible India Reconnect 2022, a virtual roadshow aimed at enticing international tourists to visit India. Additionally, in May 2022, the Ministry of Tourism showcased India's diverse tourism offerings at the Arabian Travel Market.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The interlinked relationship between tourism and culture in the Melghat region is a significant factor contributing to the economic growth and development of the area. The Melghat region is rich in cultural heritage, with archaeological sites like the Gavilgarh fort and Narnala fort, as well as the presence of the Korku tribe, which has diverse traditions and practices.

This cultural richness attracts tourists, who come to experience the unique history and way of life in the region. Tourism activities in the Melghat region, such as jungle safaris and visits to archaeological sites, create an array of benefits that spill over through multiple routes to promote economic growth. Tourism increases foreign exchange earnings, encourages investment, drives local firms towards greater efficiency due to increased competition, alleviates unemployment, and leads to positive economies of scale, decreasing production costs for local businesses.

The integration of cultural and tourism industries in the Melghat region can optimize the tourism value chain by promoting the transfer of tourism value to high-consumer groups, combining aesthetic cultural resources with tourism elements, and redistributing resources and values through the integration of supply chains. This integration can help evolve primary tourism-related industries to a higher value-added stage in the value chain, contributing to the overall value and development of the tourism sector in the Melghat region.

Moreover, the Melghat Tiger Reserve, a prime habitat of the tiger, is a significant attraction for tourists, with its tropical

dry deciduous forest dominated by teak and its role as a catchment area for five major rivers. The Reserve's conservation history and rich biodiversity further enhance its appeal as a tourist destination, contributing to the economic growth and development of the Melghat region.

In conclusion, the interlinked relationship between tourism and culture in the Melghat region plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and development. The region's cultural heritage, archaeological sites, and natural attractions, such as the Melghat Tiger Reserve, create a vibrant tourism industry that generates benefits for the local economy, drives investment, and creates jobs. The integration of cultural and tourism industries can further optimize the tourism value chain, contributing to the sustainable development of the Melghat region.

6.1 Problems Identified

Owners are not giving attention on coffee garden as such as agriculture farm.

Low earning wages is another problem of local people.

No, proper guidance to tribal people to make their cultural practices major source of income.

Migration of tribal people due to lack of job opportunities.

6.2 Suggestions

Coffee gardens have responsibly utilized 70 acres of land in the scenic hilly regions, showcasing their significant contribution to the area's landscape and economy.

Shopping facility has to provide it means still there is scope to improve services.

There exists a promising opportunity for local residents to embark on agro-tourism ventures, enticing urban dwellers to immerse themselves in the authentic rural lifestyle. This initiative not only fosters a deeper connection with nature but also facilitates the direct sale of locally produced coffee to visiting tourists, enhancing economic sustainability within the community.

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