

# Tourism: An Attempt for Socio-Economic Growth on Account of Morena, M.P

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**Abstract**— The Indian Subcontinent has a vivid typology of religious and cultural heritage, one of which is a temple. The ancient temples of which stood against the force of various calamities as well as religious dominance. One of whose examples lies in the Valleys of Chambal River in Morena, MP. The difficult geography of the region, mainly ravines sustained its monumental heritage from the invaders and could prevent its further destruction. This group of temples represents the legacy of Pratihara and Kachhapagta period even today. The architecture of these temples reflects the technological skills of Indian craftsmen and master builders. In the early 20th century, the area was highly infested by dacoits, who prevented the monuments from harmful effects of urbanization but simultaneously lowered the socio-economic status of the settlements evolving nearby. This research paper aims to highlight the challenges of conservation of ancient religious structures in the area to serve as a tool for the regeneration of small towns surrounding it. The religious tourism thus developed will enhance the social and economic conditions of the population, with the help of local government and residing population to serve as a major stakeholder. The rising concern for these heritage monuments will also exhibit the importance of Hindu temples in the Chambal Valley at the global level.

**Keywords**—Heritage, Hindu Temples, Regeneration, Tourism Route

## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 20th century, the ravines of Chambal have been inhabited by the dacoits. Despite various potentials, the region suffered excessive backwardness in terms of socio-economic development. Morena, a town in Madhya Pradesh, is 39 kms from Gwalior. The town is strategically located as NH-3 passes through it which links the Agra-Mumbai corridor.

The main occupation of local people is agriculture but due to excessive gully erosion of Chambal river and its ravines, the region faces crises in terms of agricultural production. But the geography of the region sustained its monumental heritage from the invaders and development which could further prevent its destruction. The region is rich in sustaining monuments of the past especially those of the Pratihara and Kachhapagta period. Thus, there is a need to think about the tourism potential to strengthen socio-cultural harmony.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of Morena could be tracked from the prehistoric period by the presence of painted rock shelters along the Asan river. This region was ruled by various rulers and has suffered various invasions. But the major contribution in architecture was made by the Pratihara and

Kachhapagta who ruled from the 8th century to the 13th century A.D.

The Pratiharas were mainly the north-western frontier of India, which steadily spread in the central region. They were the saviours of the Hindu civilization protecting the northwest region. They were the great patron of temple architecture. Temples like Nareshwar and Bateshwar show the early form of the temple during their rule which later evolved in Shiv temple, Dang. Other examples of temples built under their rule include Nareshwar group of temples; Shiv temple, Dang; Bateshwar Mahadev Temple, etc.

The tradition of building great temples in Morena was preserved when the region came to be ruled by the Kachhapaghtas, who were political successors of Pratiharas, who ruled from Gwalior. The Kachhapaghtas tried to develop the existing temple architecture and mainly focused on well-developed plans like Temples at Ainti; Shiva Temple, Padhawali; Chausath Yogini Temple, Mitavli; Kakanmath Shiva Temple, Sihonia. Their reign in Gwalior-Chambal region extended for more than two centuries, starting from 975 A.D. to late end 12th century. Temples built under them include Donamath temples, Bateshwar; Satanasmadhi, Bateshwar; Temples at Mitaoli; Jain temples Dubkund; Shiva Temple, Chaubaya; Sun Temple, Ainti; Shiva Temple, Ainti; and many more.

## III. DEVELOPING A TOURIST ROUTE

India has a diverse typology of cultural and religious heritage one of which is temples. Due to several reasons, the Chambal valley could sustain much of its temple wealth. In the current time of crisis and a low economic generation, a tourism route could serve in facilitating the development of basic infrastructural facilities and also to generate income for the local community and the government. It may also balance the regional development programs for economic and socio-cultural harmony.

Similar to most of the heritage towns of India, the region is not only significant for its historical monuments and its vicinity, but also for its rich and diverse mixture of tangible and intangible heritage resources including the built legacy, natural legacy, craftsmanship, and residents with their rituals and traditions.

To extract its potentials and spread its significance globally there is a need to develop tourist routes on specific ideas to attract tourists from all over the globe. The initiation can be done by flourishing a religious route of Hindu temples which would attract tourists and researchers towards the region.

This paper tries to create one such route linking four major destinations which are close to one another. The objective of having such a route is to increase the footfall which would be helpful in increasing the economy for the region. The major beneficiaries, in this case, could be the local residents. The identified route could be approached through NH-3.

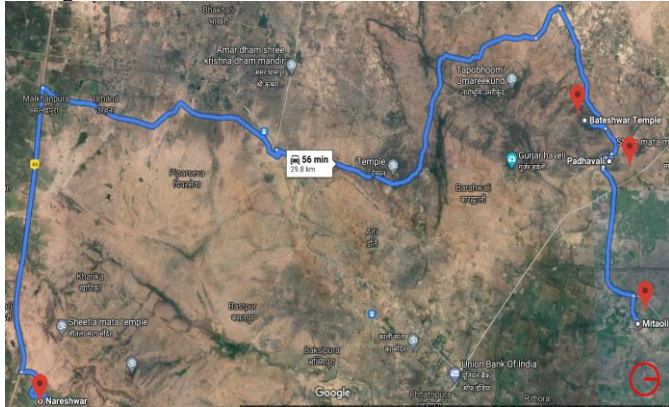


Fig. 1 Showing Tourist Route (29.8 kms long)

#### A. MITAOLI

Located on a small hill with circular planning. It comprises a circular cloister around an open courtyard over a high plinth with a temple of Lord Vishnu outside it. This temple is under the possession of the Archaeological Survey of India.

258 families reside in this village. A major part of the total population is dependent on agriculture who earns for more than six months and only 3.88% of the total population were involved in a marginal activity which provides a livelihood for less than 6 months (according to census 2011).

The religious monuments present in this village may serve as a boon to the area, where religious tourism will create opportunities for the villagers, and they may serve as the major stakeholders in both providing and achieving benefits from the tourists. A road is also present which leads to the village but the other external infrastructural services need to be strengthened to attract the tourists.



Fig. 2 Showing Mitaoli Temple Above A Hill

#### B. PADHAVALI

Village Padhavali can be reached from the village Mitaoli by a linking road. Here in the village two temples of Lord Shiva are present. One of the temples is situated in the late medieval fortress of a village which was made under the rule

of Pratiharas. Through time only Maha Mandapa, Ardh Mandapa, and Mukh Mandapa have survived with highly ornate pillars carrying architraves and ceilings with beautifully decorated figural friezes and ornaments. The Garbha Griha is probably demolished during the later construction of the fortress.

The other temple of Lord Shiva is a later construction at around 13th century A.D. indicating the fall of Kachhapagta art tradition. This site is also under the Archaeological Survey of India.

A large population with 536 families reside in the village. A major part of the total population is dependent on agriculture who earns for more than six months and only 3.88% of the total population were involved in a marginal activity that provides a livelihood for less than 6 months (according to census 2011).

There is a road which leads to Padhavali but the other external infrastructural services like water supply, electricity needs to be improved. Activities like landscaping, development of parks, fencing, compound wall, engaging tourists in rituals and practices of villagers, etc. may also prove to be effective in attracting tourists and developing the site.



Fig. 3 Showing Temple At Padhavali

#### C. BATESHWAR GROUP OF TEMPLES

2 km southwest from Padhavali is the Bateshwar valley forest area. A large number of early medieval temple remains are scattered with many temples in a tumbledown condition. These temples majorly belong to the era of Pratihara except for the few namely, Donamatha temple and Satanasmadhi temple, which were built under the rule of Kachhapagta. In the midst of these temple is a stepped tank which still provides water in the area.

One of its major sites is the Bateshwar Mahadev temple which is under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. The approach road leading runs through the midst of the Bateshwar forest valley.

As compared to other sites this temple precinct has partially developed a landscaping and a park area. Many of the temple ruins are reconstructed and the conservation work is still under process. Apart from this, there is also a need to develop a tourist center which may also enrich the site and serve the tourists.



Fig. 4 Showing Bateswar Group Of Temples

#### D. NARESHWAR TEMPLE

Nareshwar also referred to as Nalesvara is situated 18 km north-east of Gwalior. The area has a large number of temples dating from the 8th century to the 12th century which represents the legacy of the Pratihara rulers.

The number of these temples is large but their size is small. These temples represent an important stage of temple architecture during the early medieval period in the central region of India which serve in the development of temples in the succeeding periods. These temples stand on three levels of terraces with a tank located in the front of the main temple. This site is currently under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Apart from the temple, the area has no habitation nearby. The basic amenities for the tourists are missing in the precinct. Temple can be approached only through a highway, which further leads to a dusty unpaved lane and fields for about 2 kms.

Despite being just 5 kms from the main road, the temple precinct is difficult to be reached. Due to severe dacoit infestation development remains untouched in this area. Thus, the necessities need to be incorporated with infrastructural provisions, especially the approach road to invite the tourists in the region. Also, there is a need to envisage conservation work to restore the ruins of the monuments.



Fig. 5 Showing Ruins Of Nareshwar Temple

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Heritage and its value must be identified by the community at the earliest so that it becomes a major beneficiary for them. Tourist routes can be proposed to cater the socio-economic growth in the region.

The primary product of this route may benefit the population. The improvement of infrastructural facilities may be done by improving the basic amenities, connectivity, landscaping, and documenting the existing structures.

The tourism route must be planned in a manner that does not hinder the pristine nature of the region. Also, there is a need for the enactment of laws combined with incentives, public awareness as well as people's involvement for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Many more temples and other unidentified structures present in the region can be listed, protected, and incorporated as part of tourism routes further.

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