

Gandikota – An Overview of Tourism Importance

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Abstract: India can always boast of its rich cultural heritage. Travel and Tourism in India is an integral part of Indian tradition and culture. In ancient times, travel was primarily for pilgrimage – as the holy places dotting the country attracted people from different parts of the world. These bear testimony to the exquisite inheritance of this land, and are examples of unparalleled craftsmanship of the people of the bygone ages. Andhra Pradesh is one of the 29 states of India whose recorded history begins in the Vedic period. It is mentioned in Sanskrit epics such as Aitereya Brahmana (800BCE). The Assaka Mahajanapada (700-300 BCE) was an ancient kingdom located between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers in southeastern India. Kadapa, a centrally located district in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh is situated at a short distance from two major cities – Chennai and Bangalore. It is a district rich with semi perennial rivulets, streams, beautiful villages, shimmering waterfalls and deep mysterious caves. The district also finds a mention in the accounts of Hieuntansng as a wild jungle region, rich in mineral and forest wealth. Gandikota is a small village on the right bank of Pennar, 15 km from Jammalamadugu in Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh in India. Here lies the famous fort of Gandikota, which acquired its name obviously due to the 'gorge' (in Telugu it is called 'Gandi'), formed between the Erramalai range of hills, also known as Gandikota hills and the river Pennar that flows at its foot, reducing its width to a mere 300 ft. Situated amidst beautiful landscape and wild forests, it is endowed with vast natural resources. This paper deals with Andhra Pradesh tourism has vast potential for generating employment and earning large sums of foreign exchange besides giving a flip to the country's overall economic and social development.

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India can always boast of its rich cultural heritage. Travel and Tourism in India is an integral part of Indian tradition and culture. In ancient times, travel was primarily for pilgrimage – as the holy places dotting the country attracted people from different parts of the world. People also traveled to participate

in large scale feasts, fairs and festivals in different parts of the country. In such a background, cultural tradition was developed where 'Athithi Devo Bhava' (the guest is god) and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family) became bywords of Indian social behavior. Since times immemorial, the rulers in different parts of India built luxurious palaces, enchanting gardens, marvelous temples, grand forts, tombs, and memorials. These bear testimony to the exquisite inheritance of this land, and are examples of unparalleled craftsmanship of the people of the bygone ages. The beauty of India's cultural heritage and the richness of nature's endowments make India tourists "paradise.

Andhra Pradesh is one of the 29 states of India whose recorded history begins in the Vedic period. It is mentioned in Sanskrit epics such as Aitereya Brahmana (800BCE). The Assaka Mahajanapada (700-300 BCE) was an ancient kingdom located between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers in southeastern India. Accounts that people in the region are found in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. In the sixth century BCE, Assaka was one of India's sixteen kingdoms. It was succeeded by the Satavahana dynasty (230 BCE-220 CE), who built the city of Amaravati. The kingdom reached its zenith under Satakarni. At the end of the period, the Telugu region was divided into fiefdoms ruled by lords. In the late second century CE, the Andhra Ikshvakus ruled the eastern region along the Krishna River.

During the fourth century, the Pallava Dynasty extended their rule from southern Andhra Pradesh to Tamilkam and established their capital at Kanchipuram. Between 1163 and 1323 the Kakatiya dynasty emerged, bringing the Telugu region under unified rule. In 1323 the sultan of Delhi, Ghiyath-al-Din Tughluq, sent a large army commanded by Ulugh Khan to conquer the Telugu region and lay siege to Warangal. The fall of the Kakatiya dynasty led to an era with competing influences from the Turkic kingdoms of Delhi, the Chalukya Chola dynasty (1070-1279) in the south and the Persio-Tjik sultanate of central India. The struggle for Andhra ended with the victory of the Musunuri Nayaks over the Turkic Delhi Sultanate. The Telugu achieved independence under Krishnadevaraya of the Vijayanagara Empire (1336-1646). India's glorious traditions and rich cultural heritage are closely related with the development of tourism. Its magnificent monuments attract a large number of tourists from all over the world. The natural surroundings, the architectural masterpieces, the music, dance, paintings, customs and languages all these go to make India as tourist paradise.

Kadapa, a centrally located district in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh is situated at a short distance from two major cities – Chennai and Bangalore. It is a district honoured by history, blessed by nature and haven of tourism with relics of Jain and Buddhist settlements at Danavulapadu near Jammalamadugu and adapur near Nandalur. The innumerable sites and artifacts prove the existence of prehistoric civilization in this district. It is a district rich with semi perennial rivulets, streams, beautiful villages, shimmering waterfalls and deep mysterious caves. The district also finds a mention in the accounts of Hieuntansng as a wild jungle region, rich in mineral and forest wealth. The name of Kadapa itself is highly evocative where the past and present blend gracefully. Ptolemy, a great historian of second century AD., called it 'Karupe' a corruption of 'Gadapa' meaning the threshold to sacred temple of Lord Venkateshwara of Seven hills. The first Telugu inscription of 6th century A.D. was found at Kalamalla in the district. This rare inscription supports the view held by many scholars, that the roots of Telugu language lie in this historic district.

Tourism is a powerful economic development tool, which creates jobs, provides new business opportunities and strengthens local economies. It helps to protect our nation's natural and cultural treasures and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike if cultural heritage tourism development using a proper planning. In the former year, the primary role of tourism industry was acting as marketing ready products to tourists. Nowadays, tourism, preservation, heritage and culture

are much more likely to overlap, where some state tourism offices now help develop heritage resources, and a number of preservation organizations are marketing their sites to tourist. The promotion of cultural heritage tourism in Andhra Pradesh faces numerous underlying issues that both related to the complexity of the society living in Andhra Pradesh. The tourism industry is driven mainly by private agencies with the prime motivation of generating profit. There are several issues that need to be reviewed to develop a successful cultural heritage tourism industry especially in understanding different perspectives between tourism operators, cultural heritage managers and the communities themselves. Tourism operators run a tourism business and serve customers but have constraints in accessing to the site they want to visit and their products. Tourism operators depend on a market that can have strong seasonal variation such as holiday periods and yearly events. Tourism operators need a great deal of certainty in access, timing and facilities to deliver reliable and efficient service to domestic and international clients. The majestic view of Gandikota Fort with the deep gorge, cut by the river Pinakini near Jammalamadugu, impressed the French traveller Tavernier and he opined that “resembles Humpi” in its massive monuments. Gandikota or Gorge Fort, is believed, was founded in 1123 AD by a certain chief Kakaraja, a subordinate of Abhavamalla Someshwara I, the Western Chalukyan king of Kalyana. The town played a significant role during the Kakatiya, Vijayanagara and Qutub Shahi periods.

India is a land of great variety and contrast. Its unique cultural mystique, exotic heritage, aesthetic environment and outstanding natural resources have attracted international tourists. Tourism has emerged as one of India's important industries. Today tourism is a major source of foreign exchange earnings and employment. India is a huge market for tourism for outbound and inbound tourists. In other words, cultural heritage can be seen in many forms including buildings, areas, dance, food, dress, events, values, lifestyles and handicrafts. Given the values of cultural property, many problems are created when such materials were damaged, destroyed, or removed from their context. These losses include the damage or loss of buildings of historical importance, archaeological sites, monuments, and objects; the loss of traditional knowledge and “scientific” information; the loss of access to objects of cultural or national importance; and the alienation of people from their culture or the loss of national pride.

Gandikota is a small village on the right bank of Pennar, 15 km from Jammalamadugu in Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh in India. Here lies the famous fort of Gandikota, which acquired its name obviously due to the ‘gorge’ (in Telugu it is called ‘Gandi’), formed between the Erramalai range of hills, also known as Gandikota hills and the river Pennar that flows at its foot, reducing its width to a mere 300 ft. Situated amidst beautiful landscape and wild forests, it is endowed with vast natural resources. Surrounded by a deep valley and impassable hills, with massive boulders of red granite and the river Pennar that flows about 300ft. below on the west and northern sides, its location affords strong natural defence to the occupants of the Fort. The exploits of Pemmasani Nayakas, rulers of Gandikota and commanders in Vijayanagar army to protect the honour of Telugu land are well known. Surrounded by a deep valley and impassable hills, with massive boulders of red granite. Roughly it occupies an area of about 5 miles in circumference and is circular plan. The area within is full of the debris of ages and many ancient structures in varying stages of decay. The fort has a Masjid, a large granary and a temple. The Jamia Masjid has two adjacent minarets. The large granary, with a vaulted roof, is now used as the traveller's bungalow. Within the fort are two ancient temples, dedicated to Madhava and Raghunatha. The other structures within the fort, include another large granary, a magazine, a graceful ‘pigeon tower’ with fretted windows and an extensive palace built by bricks with some plastered decorations and some wells. There is an old cannon still lying in the fort. There is also the ‘Rayalacheruvu’ with its perennial springs irrigating some lime and plantain gardens. It is said that this ‘Cheruvu’ was connected to a fountain in Jamia Masjid by pipes, traces of which can still be seen.

There were another gardens and springs during the Muslim and Pre-Muslim days. There is an undated inscription on a boulder, near the ‘Nagajhari’ outside the fort, recording the gift of two gardens at the place to the temple. There was also a garden called ‘Parebagh’ with a waterfall at the foot of the hills, on the bank of the Penneru. There is a Persian inscription on a boulder at the place. Refurbishment of Archaeological Survey of India monuments has been taken up to boost heritage tourism involving local authorities, trusts etc., in the restoration, preservation of tourist attractions and maintenance of the surroundings and providing world class tourist facilities, amenities and landscaping of area around important monuments in a phased manner.

National Importance

It has national importance. Tourists are visiting from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and neighbouring other States of Andhra Pradesh.

Present Status of Tourist Attractions

The following are the main tourist places/attractions available around the proposed destination.

- Agastheshwara Kona – 35 km
- Mylavaram Dam – 24 km
- Eskoti Yellamma Temple – Near the Temple
- Gurivinja Kona – 4 km
- Kanyatheertham – 25 km
- Lakshumma Kona – 5 km
- Padam Vonka – 1 km
- Nayanalappa Temple – Nossam- 30 km
- Danavulapadu – 20 km
- Baloon Caves – Kolimigundla – 55 km
- Gurappa Swamy Temple Near Mylavaram – 30 km

All the destinations/Temples proposed for this heritage circuit in Kadapa district.

Visitors Flow at the Destination

The visitors’ flow to the destination is increasing every year. As per the local people and officials of destinations, the visitors flow during the previous four years is as below.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Approximate No.of.Visitors</i>
2020-2021	2,00,000
2021-2022	2,30,000
2022-2023	2,70,000
2023-2024	3,20,000

Estimated Future Visitors Flow

The visitors’ flow to the destination has been increasing year by year and the estimated future flow of visitors/tourists is as follows.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated Visitors</i>
2024-2025	3,75,000
2025-2026	4,20,000
2026-2027	5,00,000

Justification for Tourist Flow

The logic behind the estimation of future visitors' flow is that there is huge potential to attract the visitors. The rationale is as follows.

- In the summer holidays, the students flow to the destination is very high
- The destination available for the people for historical, natural environment and entertainment
- Water body available throughout the year for boating
- Historical temples are also available in the Fort
- Finest spot to spend pleasant weekends by the officials, business people, students
- Increasing number of intra state-tourists from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and neighbouring States of AP
- A number of educational institutions in the district
- The peak days are generally Sundays, holidays and festival days
- The crowd in May, June and July is high due to holidays to the students
- The average growth of visitors flow is increasing on an average of 10% - 20%. Apart from this, if the Tourism Department provides infrastructure and promotional facilities to the tourists, that can add another 10% - 15%.

Tourism development is thus a composite subject and does not necessarily mean the development of only the tourism facilities like hotels, restaurants, recreational activities will be meaningful only if the area has the minimum basic amenities and infrastructure like road, water, electricity, sewerage, telecom facilities etc. This aspect was given importance in the Tourism 'Synergy' programme. Subsequently the State Governments were requested to prepare Master Plans for development of Tourism based on the same concept. Andhra Pradesh tourism has vast potential for generating employment and earning large sums of foreign exchange besides giving a flip to the country's overall economic and social development. Much has been achieved by way of increasing air seat capacity, increasing trains and railway connectivity to important tourist destinations, four-laning of roads connecting important tourist centers and increasing availability of accommodation by adding heritage hotels to the hotel industry and encouraging paying guest accommodation. But much more remains to be done. Since tourism is a multi-dimensional activity, and basically a service industry, it would be necessary that all wings of the Central and State governments, private sector and voluntary organizations become active partners in the endeavour to attain sustainable growth in tourism if Andhra Pradesh is to become a world player in the tourist industry.

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