



## TOURISM POTENTIAL IN AKOLE TAHSIL OF AHMEDNAGAR DISTRICT (MAHARASHTRA)

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### Abstract:

Tourism is renowned as the largest industry in the world. It contributes about 10 per cent Gross Domestic Product out of total in the world. Tourism is a service sector, which has a great potential for increasing economy, employment, infrastructural facilities and eliminate the regional disparity. Tourism has comprehensive nature therefore, it known as the fourth dimension of contemporary economics. In many developing countries like India tourism become a major source of regional development, which is backward due to the lack of natural resources. Especially, rural and tribal area of the country has great potential of tourism because of pleasant environment, diversity in physical features, distinctive culture and different socio-economic status.

Akole Tahsil of Ahmednagar district is well known tribal area of Maharashtra. It is east towards part of the Western Ghat. Abundant natural scenery, diverse physical features, pleasing climate, specific tribal culture, reservoir and biodiversity are the main tourism characteristics of Akole Tahsil. However, government infidelity is responsible for under development of tourism potential in this region. State and central government did not take special efforts to promote tourism activity, which can change socio-economic setup of the region. Aims of the present research paper have been collect information and high light the different tourist sites in Akole Tahsil.

**Key Words:** Tourism industry, Regional disparity, Employability, Potentiality.

### Introduction:

Maharashtra is a one of the leading states in India for industrialization, agricultural development and tourism development. It has many tourist hotspots and a huge potential of tourist attractions. Akole Tahsil is one of the tourism hotspot within Maharashtra. It lies within the western Maharashtra at regional basis, as per physiographical concern it covered by Western Ghat which is called as *Sahyadri* mountain range. The Tahsil has very undulating topography, but it is blessed by nature. It has great potential of tourism development but unfortunately, it is still waiting for positive response of government infrastructural developments.

About 50 per cent population is tribal, which is socio-economically backward in Akole tahsil. Due to undulating topography, lack of irrigation facilities agricultural has limited scope for improving economy of the region. Therefore, the region is economically backward compare to other part of Ahmednagar district. Tourism development is a paramount activity for eradicate the regional disparity in this study area. There are ample scope of nature tourism and cultural tourism because of various attractive landscapes and unique culture of *Mahadev Koli* tribal Community. The natural vegetation, different landscape, water bodies, wildlife of plant and animals, religious sites, cultural and historical base are offer extensive platform to tourism development. Which support to generate employment to local community and increase rate of economical development in the tahsil.

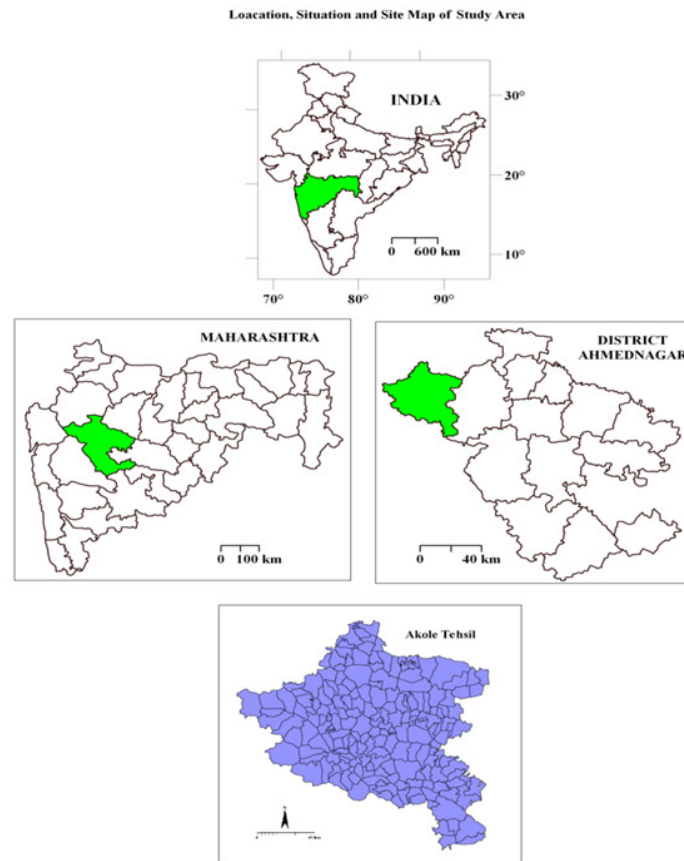
Tourism industry has known as the fourth dimension of contemporary economics. Keeping this in mind an attempt has been made to study the potentialities of tourism development in Akole tahsil and high light the tourism hot spot in the region.

### Study Region:

Akole tahsil is well known tribal tahsil in Ahmednagar district, which is located extreme western margin of Ahmednagar. It is extending between the 19°15'12" N to 19°45'06" North latitudes and 73°37'00" E to 74°07'21" East longitudes. The western part of the tahsil is surrounded by Thane district, southern part covered by Pune district and Northern part delimited by Nasik district. The tahsil acquire 1505.08 km<sup>2</sup> geographical area, in which 65.59 per cent area under agriculture, 27.7 per cent area under forest and 6.71 per cent area utilized for other purpose.

Geologically the tahsil has very complex geomorphologic diversity has found. This region was formed by volcanic eruption, it was associated with inter trapped beds such as limestone, red bole beds, sandstone, porous, clay, shales thin mantle of black cotton soil present almost every were on the basalts. The western part of tahsil is covered with hilly region were the average height is 1300 m., Kalsubai (1646 m.) is the highest peck of Maharashtra is located in this area. The eastern part has riverine plain topography were gentle slope is observed towards east.

### Location Map of Study Area



The Harishchandragad range is a water divider between Godavari and Krishna river basins. Pravara and Mula river are the main tributary of Godavari, which are east flowing rivers in the tahsil. Bhandardara and Nilwande reservoir are built on Prvara river. The climate of the study area is wet warm in rainy season and dry in summer season. The average temperature is 38°C in hot season and 17°C in winter season, annual rainfall varies from 606 mm to 5366 mm in study area. The western part of study area is observed wet deciduous forest and mixed evergreen forest.

#### Objective:

1. To study the tourism potential in the study area.
2. To high lights the tourist sites in the study area.
3. Enlist the suggestions for future tourism development in the study area.

#### Data Collection and Methodology:

The present research paper is based on the primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through people participatory

rural appraisal method, investigation. Information about some places was achieved on the spot observations. The Secondary data were achieved through various reference books, research papers, and newspaper article .Tourism atlas, maps, reports on district tourism plan for Ahmednagar district were used as a secondary source of information. The collected information is studied with the help of appropriate statistical techniques. The data is summarized, processed and represented with the graphical form for getting proper inference.

#### Tourism Potentiality of Akole Tahsil:

Akole tahsil is popular among adventure tourist for its hilly topography. Kalsubai, the highest peak in Maharashtra is amongst the favorite choice of the trekkers. The hilly topography situated in the Akole tahsil comprising of other such adventurous and wildlife sanctuary like Bhandardara, Harishchandragad, Samrad, Randhafall, Kokankada. Tourism in Akole tahsil has been blessed with variety of choices. The adventure, wildlife, historic monuments, natural scenery, pilgrim centers and heritage tourism in Akole tahsil gives demonstration of huge

potential. Considering the colossal geographical spread tahsil has been attracting the tourists from the surrounding districts. All these sites are significant as local destinations and have been attracting local tourist during weekends and during specific days of religious importance. The main group of tourists comes from the Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Nashik and generally focused upon a particular group of places in the surrounding areas. The large amount of the tours is visited on the weekends or public holidays.

Akole tahsil bounds incredibly tourist attractions ranging from topography, forest and wildlife, ancient forts, temples and pilgrimage centers, along with a rich tradition of festivals, arts and culture. In view of the existence of a diversity of tourism resources, ranging from Natural sites to temples to pilgrim centers, it can be said that tourism in Akole tahsil has enormous potential. The tourist sites can be divided as per the qualitative differences and its recognition among the people.

#### **A) Nature /Adventure Tourist Sites:**

The western hilly region of tahsil is known for its natural beauty. As a part of Western Ghat (*Sahyadri* Mountain) there are various natural features like peaks, hills, water bodies, waterfalls, rivers and wildlife are located in the tahsil.

##### **1. Kalsubai Peak:**

Kalsubai is the highest (1646 m) peak of Maharashtra, which is located in *Sahyadri* hilly range at Akole tahsil. It is challenge to trekkers as it is most rugged, hilly area and difficult to get accessibility. It had known as a watchtower to foresee any danger from the enemies during Maratha rule. It has a religious important because of at the top of the mountain a local deity '*Kalsubai*' temple is located. During the *Navaratri* period, the people from local and nearby region approach the place in large number, for all nine days. The backwater of Bhandardara dam, Harihargad, Brahmagiri, Anjaneri, Ghargad, Bahula, Tringalwadi, Kavnai, Kulang, Ratangad, Pabhargad, Ghanchakkar and Harishchandragad can seen from the peak.

##### **2. Bhandardara Wildlife Sanctuary:**

The wildlife sanctuary is spread on 316 Sq. Km. area from Kalsubai to Harishchandragad, this area has been declared as wildlife sanctuary by the state government of Maharashtra. It is rich in fauna because of variety of natural vegetation. There some pieces of mixed evergreen forest in which, various wild animals

and birds are found. Tourists can find wide variety of mammals, reptiles and birds. The mammals found here are Leopard, Jungle cat, Palm civet, Mongoose, Hyena, Wolf, Jackal, Fox, Wild Boar, Barking Deer, Sambar, Hare, and Bats etc. The most attractive animals are Indian Giant Squirrel and Porcupine. The reptiles found in this sanctuary are Monitor Lizard, Fan-Throated Lizard, Turtles and many species of snakes. Among the birds are the common hills and grass land birds. One can also spot water birds such as White Necked Storks, Black Ibis, Herons, Egrets, Cormorants, Water hens are found.

##### **3. Umbrella Fall:**

Umbrella Falls is actually a water outlet for the Bhandardara dam (Wilson Dam) and is a charming spot below the Bhandardara dam. As this waterfall is created due to the water released from the dam, is visible periodically and for some specific time. The shape of this waterfall to some extent is like an Umbrella and so is called as the Umbrella fall. This waterfall is mostly seen in the Monsoon season and at the time when the water from the dam is released. The fall is a natural scenic attraction that offers some enchanting views. The dam is at a height of 150m. At this fall at the base of the dam there is a tranquil garden with streams and trees which makes for a peaceful environment.

##### **4. Randha Waterfall:**

Randha fall has been increased the demand of the Bhandardara to manifold. This waterfall is a 45 m high, situated at 10 km from Bhandardara (Wilson Dam) down the river Pravara. This is the third largest fall in the India. Most of the people visiting Bhandardara particularly come to visit the Randha fall. The best season to visit this place is Monsoon. In other period also the fall can be seen, but in the Monsoon period the one can enjoy the fascinating look of the nature at this place

##### **5. Sandhan Valley:**

Sandhan Valley is one of the astonishing places of the Bhandardara which offers a varied experience to the trekkers. This valley is also known as valley of Shadow. This valley is a marvelous wonder of nature and splendid of Sahyadri (Western Ghats). Sandhan Valley is positioned on the western side of the stunning Bhandardara region near village Samrad. This valley is 150 m deep and is filled with the water at most of the places throughout the year. The water level in the valley changes according to the season, in Monsoon the valley is so much filled that it is unable to access through the

valley. Sandhan Valley is surrounded with mighty Alang, Madan & Kulang, Ratangad, Ajoba & Kalsubai mountain ranges. There is a Brilliant & deep narrow rock floored ravine between the two high walls of mountain range. At the end of valley you get wonderful view of high cliffs & deep valleys.

### **B) Religious Tourist Sites:**

Akole tahsil has many religious sites and pilgrimage places for different sects. There are Amruteshwar, Harishchandragad, Agasti and Tahkari .

#### **1. Amruteshwar:**

Amruteshwar temple is situated at foothills of Ratangad, it is a famous Hemandpanthi architectural style temple built back to 100 AD. This magnificent Hemandpanthi style of architecture gives the temple a historical look. The main attractions of the temple comprise of its intricate carvings. The Amruteshwar Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva.

#### **2. Harishchandragad :**

Harishchandragad is the one of the religious and historical tourism site within the Sahyadri mountain. It is an ancient fort, which reference is including in Matsyapurana, Agnipurana and Skandapurana. There are various caves with idols of Lord Vishnu. The carvings on the temples of Nageshwar, in the Harishchandreshwar temple and in the cave of Kedareshwar indicate that the fort belongs to the *medieval period*, since it is related to Shaiva, Shakta or Naath. Later the fort was under the control of Moguls. The Marathas captured it in 1747. From Kokan Kada picturesque views of surrounding, back water of Bhandardara dam and others peaks are viewed. The area is famous for trekking also.

#### **3. Agasti Rishi Ashram and Jagdamba Temple:**

North side of Akole city Agasti Rishi Ashram is situated on left bank of the Pravara river. According to Ramayana, Lord Ram, Laxshman and Sita visited to Sage Agastya on this location. It is believed that, Ravan killed by a miraculous arrow which was offered to Lord Ram by Sage Agastya.

The Jagdamba temple at Thakari village is also well known pilgrim center in Akole tahsil. The sculpture of the deity *Apsaras* is similar to style to the Khajuraho temple. The Jagdamba temple is situated on the bank of Adhala river which is a tributary of Pravara. Chaitra Pournima and Navratri festival are the main attraction towards the Jagdamba temple.

### **Conclusion:**

Akole tahsil of Ahmednagar district have full of potential of tourism on the basis of pleasant environment, natural beauty, wildlife, pilgrim's centers and historical tourism sites. But still the area is lacking behind to attract tourists at the national and international level. There are some causes where we want to pay attention. Lack of promotion and publicity about the tourism sites is the major obscurity. Low levels of awareness among stakeholders regarding the potential. Infrastructural facilities like public convenience facilities, medical facility, accommodation facilities, absence of integrated efforts to promote the many facets, electricity, seating resting, street light, parking, guard railing, toilet block, drinking water, street lighting direction signages etc. are require for tourism development.

There is need to encourage from the government to native people, to educate the local people about hospitability, to start the training organization about tourism especially for tribal student, increasing awareness and interest in ecotourism due to media. If above said situation change by efforts from government definitely Akole tahsil is become a one of the hot spot of tourism at the national and international level.

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