Chapter VII

Potential Centres In Akkalkot
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7.0 Introduction:

The potential attractions in Akkalkot destination are summarized with a view of development of tourism industry at Akkalkot in the near future. Here an attempt has been also made to highlight the significance of potential attraction. The attractions and resources available at these places have summarized with meaningful comment for future development along with to make availability of the infrastructure facilities to be required by the tourist.

Tourism is a very complex industry. It embraces many economic activities, services, facilities, human relations and demand and supply pattern defining tourism in terms of territory activity, it means various services are provided to the tourist. No doubt, these services are essential for the tourism development, while tourism development in any area primarily depends on the facilities and services provided at destination to the tourists. Most important is the availability of a strong recreation resource base of tourism. In fact, it is the complex of attractions both natural and man made of a destination, which generate demand in the tourist industry. The potential for tourism development mostly depends on the variety and richness of tourist attractions and resources and more unique and varied resources are better prospects for tourism development.

The tourist potential of an area, site or region and its importance from the view point of tourism is determined by
various factors. Certain sites are more favorable for tourism development than others. Several factors which need to be assessed in the location of tourism destinations and influence the potentials of a geographical unit as a tourist destination or its importance for development, attraction, physical conditions, climate, accessibility amenities, constraints and incentives besides other factors such as political support, capital, availability of labour etc. are the important factors favourable for tourism development.

The term potential broadly means something existing but not yet fully exploited. Thus it symbolizes the sum total of qualitative and quantitative values on which the degree and the extent of exploitability depends. It is difficult to explain or assess the potential in numerical terms as it involves many factors in the context of tourist.

In India temples or Mathas are spiritual centers which provide psychological shelter to the people who believe in God. The god protects nature, human beings and all. Therefore, it is said that the god is everywhere and protects the earth. Whatever may be the reality, but the feeling of existence of the god supports internal energy of the human being. The temples therefore, in all the villages are the sources of such energy.

The study region has number of Mathas and Temples which are related to Swami Samarth. (Fig 7.1) A very few pilgrims visit these Mathas. It requires various basic facilities for the overall development of these Mathas due to lack of information.
AKKALKOT TOWN
POTENTIAL PILGRIMAGE ATTRACTIONS

Hannur Road Towards Tuljapur

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1. KM - Khandoba Mandir
2. MT - Mallikarjun Temple
3. SM - Samadhi Math
4. BM - Ballappa Math
5. VSSM - Vatruksha Swami Samarth Mandir
6. JBM - Joshi Buhva Math
7. HM - Hakkaya Maruti Mandir

Fig. - 7.1
7.1 Shree Swami Samarth Maharaj Samadhi Math:

It is located 500 meter away from MSRTCS bus stand towards south East direction. The distance from main temple is 1.5 km. This place was previously the residence of Cholappa, Swamiji’s ardent devotee. In this place Swamiji stayed when he came first to Akkalkot. Now this is the place where the body of Swamiji was interred as per the last wishes of Cholappa.

An idol of Swami Samarth is installed here along with Swamiji’s Padukas. An idol of Lord Ganesha in its Swayambhu (self manifest) form was found in the ground near the Math on 4th August 1964. This idol is installed close by.

The Math is in the care and custody of Cholappa’s descendants who conduct all the religious rites here. A sublime atmosphere pervades in this Math and his presence is felt and experienced by the devotees. Here various festivals related to Swamiji are celebrated throughout the year. At present 30 Per cent pilgrims out of the total are visiting this Math.

In this Math various types of puja, abishek is carried out daily. It is well connected by internal road but it is congested one. Due to location of settlements around the temple, other basic facilities are not available in and around the Math. Such as accommodation, toilet etc. In near future this Math will be developed if widening of road up to Math, provision of basic facilities, and publicity through various media. Then only this Math will be able to attract maximum number of pilgrims.
7.2. **Ballappa Math (Guru Mandir):**

It is located in the centre of the town towards the south of the MSRTC bus stand at the distance of 1.00 km. The distance from main temple is 700 metres.

Ballappa Maharaj was an ardent devotee of Swamiji. He constructed a Math and this Math is known by his name. In this Math he continued the work of Swamiji as per His order. In this Math the Atmalinga, Padukas, Chaati, Danda, Rudrakasha Mala which were given by Swamiji to Ballappa are kept.

A few devotees come here and find great benefits, spiritually as well as materially. One can derive peace and solace from the atmosphere here. This math is under the control of Shivpuri trust, founded by Shree Gajanan Maharaj a devotee of Swamiji. At present few pilgrims are attracted towards this math specially on Guru Pournima. Therefore it is also known as Guru Mandir.

In this Math few rooms are available for accommodation with other basic facilities. It is also connected by road. It is also located in settlement area, a narrow congested road, lack of basic facilities such as hotels, toilets etc.

Therefore, it is suggested that to construct wider roads which help easy transportation. Math authorities should provide other required facilities. If these facilities are made available either by math or municipal authority this place will attract more pilgrims in future.
7.3. Joshi Buwa Math:

This math is located in and around settlement area of Tilak Galli. The distance and direction from MSRTC bus is 1.7 km. towards south. The main temple is close to it at the distance of 300 metres.

Chintopant Tol was in the service of king Malojirao. He was a devotee of Swamiji. Chintopant was known better to Swamiji even before the arrival of Swamiji to Akkalkot. Tol was given responsibility of bringing Swamiji from Solapur to Akkalkot. He went to Solapur and requested Swamiji to come at Akkalkot. Swamiji had promised to come at Akkalkot along with him. They started their journey towards Akkalkot. Swamiji disappeared and in very sad mood Tol came to his home at Akkalkot, but he was surprised by the presence of Swamiji at his home and fell at his feet.

While residing at the Joshi Wada, Chintopant was an ardent worshipper of Lord Vishnu and would offer the Lord about 1000 Tulsi leaves every day. One day Swamiji appeared at Chintopant’s residence while he was starting his puja on seeing Swamiji he ran to greet him and requested him to stand for a while on a wooden seat while he offered about 1000 Tulsi leaves on his feet. After the puja, when Swamiji went away and the wooden seat was cleared the impression of Swamiji’s feet got engraved on the seat, as if they had been engraved by an artisan.

Today this place has been converted into a Math which is known as Joshi Buwa Math. This math enshrines sacred wooden seat. the devotees feel the live presence of Swamiji’s feet during their worship here. In this Math also various festivals are celebrated each year. it is also under control of private trust.
At present in this math campus a convent nursery and primary school is run by other private authority and open space is available to celebrate various functions. Independent water facility is available, accommodation facility is not available, roads are very narrow and congested, lack of wide publicity and sign board.

Therefore, it is suggested that roads must be widen by municipal authorities, wide publicity must be given by the math trust, display of sign board at proper places and other basic facilities should be provided in the form of guide, folders etc. Then only it can become one of the major pilgrim attracting centre in the town.

7.4. Raje Rayan Math:

It is located south west of MSRTC’s bus stand at the distance of 2 km. The importance of this math is that during Swamiji's presence it was constructed by a Raje Rayan, a prince of Hyderabad State. He was suffering from leprosy and had come down at Swamiji's feet to seek relief from his dreaded disease. By serving Swamiji he got relieved of his ailment. In sheer moment of joy he wished to present Swamiji with a part of his wealth. Swamiji however directed him to build a math at Akkalkot near the Ram temple. The math was then built on a vast expanse of land at the huge cost of Rs. 10,000/-then. The holy Padukas of Swamiji which was given to Raje Rayan are enshrined here are regularly worshipped by the devotees. This place being secluded offers a sense of tranquility necessary for ones spiritual uplift. Now this math has been renovated. An idol of Swamiji has also been installed here which is next to the original Padukas.
Festivals related to Swamiji are celebrated here such as Dattajayanti, Swami Punathi, Dashara festival etc. each year and these are the main attractions of the math.

7.5. Shivpuri: The Abode place of Shree Gajanan Maharaj

This place is situated 2.5 km. away from southwest of Akkalkot bus stand. Shree Gajanan Maharaj became a chief of the Ballappa math in the year 1938 before that Ballappa Majaraj selected Shree Gangadhar Maharaj and he blessed devotees from 1910 to 1938.

Shivpuri is the special place where from sky Seven Star (Saptsihree) are special views towards this area. It was explained by Shree Bhagwan Bhargavram. From 1984 he came to Shivapuri and started a different path of philosophy which is known as Agnihotra. Today thousands of devotees are gather on the occasion of Guru Pournima and pass the message and importance of Agnihotra. It is linked with German Phi-Foundation Association, a few devotees of foreign origin visit Akkalkot. Shree Srikantji Maharaj the son of Shree Gajanan Maharaj established an “Institute for studies in Vedic Sciences” and started propagating importance of Veda and Agnihotra.

Apart from this here Ayurvedic Rasashala, medicinal plants, and free Ayurvedic medical services are available to pilgrims. Therefore, it is suggested that to highlight the importance of this place to pilgrims through wide publicity by Shivpuri Trust.
7.6. **Hatti Talav : (Elephant Lake) :**

It is located 1 km away from main temple towards the South west direction. Name itself suggests that it was the place where Elephant get bath i.e. swimming purpose at the time of Sanstha period. The total size of the Hatti Talav is 900 Sq. metres. Municipal council of Akkalkot has decided to develop this Hatti Talav from tourism point of view where boating facility will be provided and greenery of the surrounding area may attract tourist.

Here also a very few accommodation facilities are available, an open space is also available, it is connected with good conditioned road. It is really a clam and quite place. Religious books are available to pilgrims for reading. This math is run by private trust. Due to lack of wide publicity in the form of any media, lack of signboards at proper place.

Therefore it is suggested that to attract more pilgrims towards this math it is necessary to overcome the above mentioned short comings such as publicity, sign boards etc.

7.7. **Khandoba Temple :**

This temple is located very close to MSRTC’s bus stand at a distance of 200 metres towards north direction. The importance of this temple is that when Swamiji arrived in Akkalkot he first visited this temple and stayed for some days that day was known as Prakat Din of Swamiji in Akkaklot. Only 5 per cent pilgrims visit this temple out of total pilgrims.

At present the temple is located on Akkalkot Solapur road but encroached by number of shoppers due to this it is not easily visible to pilgrims, lack of basic facilities, old structure of temple,
lack of publicity etc. It is necessary to remove all shops which encroached, make wide publicity due to which pilgrims will be attracted towards this temple and it is close to MSRTC bus stand.

7.8. Mallikarjun Temple:

This temple is located very close to MSRTC bus stand at the distance of 300 metres. This temple is known as Gramdaivat of the town. It is having an impression of Shree Shail Mallikarjun (Andhrapradesh). Mallikarjun Maharaj always used to visit Shree Siddarmeshwar Maharaj of Solapur, which is located 35 km. from Akkalkot. He always took rest at Akkalkot during his traveling from Shreeshailm (Andhra Pradesh) to Solapur (Maharashtra). Devotees of Mallikarjun were constructed this temple. Shree Swami Samarth Maharaj of Akkalkot always visited this temple. On Chaitra Shudha 11 the annual fair of Mallikarjun Maharaj is celebrated each year. The heavy Rath is fetched by devotee two times on this particular day.

The main problem of this temple is encroachment by tempo and jeep, lack of accommodation facilities, cleanliness, of the temple, information about the temple i.e. guide service. Therefore it is suggested that temple authority should take initiative to overcome these problems then pilgrims will be attracted towards this temple. Shree Swami Samarth Maharaj Samadhi Math is located 200 meter from this temple.
7.9 New Palace:

It is located at the top area of the town at a distance of 500 meter from MSRTC bus stand towards its north west direction. Once upon a time Akkalkot had a historical importance. The town has historical monuments such as huge palaces, forts and fort walls around the town but are in rather dilapidated condition. There are two palaces in the town, known as Old Palace and New Palace. At present New Palace is important from tourism point of view.

Fattehsinh III planned to construct the New Palace Similar to Buckingham Palace in London but he could not complete it as he died at the age of 28 years i.e on 4th April 1923. His widow Rani Tararaje fulfilled Fatesinh’s dream by building the New Palace.

Fatesinh III, born on 24th August 1894, became the Eighth Raje of Akkalkot in 1898. As he was a minor he was granted ruling powers only on 24th August 1916. He was under the care of an English governess, Miss Moxon. He was educated at the Rajkumar College, Rajkot from where he passed out with flying colours. He also joined the British Army and rose to the rank of a captain. He was the first Indian who joined British Army and fought in the first world war in France against the Germans. After retirement from the army he settled down in Akkalkot and started ruling. During this period he made this vast collection of arms and he himself arranged the armory Museum and it is named after him.

In due course of time the maintenance of armory was not done properly by the authority. In December 1999 both the Princes decided to shift the Armory Museum into the New Palace for better management. In the seven rooms of the Palace a decoration of arms is arranged in a systematic way. which gives us a glorious
picture of the State. From 30th March 2000 it was opened to the public. Few tourists visit this place.

It requires number of changes from tourist point of view such as landscaping of the Palace, development of garden, basic tourist facility, publicity, guide service, and snacks centre, information boards etc.

If all these things made available to the tourist, in near future it will attract maximum number of tourists towards it.

7.10 Conclusion:

Akkalkot has number of Mathas and Temples, such as Rajr Rayan Math, Ballappa Math, Khondaba Temple, Shivpuri, Mallikarjun Temple and New Palace, Hatti Talav which are in potential form. It is observed that only 5.2 per cent pilgrims visit these potential centres out of total pilgrims visited Akkalkot.

Therefore, it is suggested that through advertisement provision of basic facilities and information about these centers and guide service at the site only, then only they can become an important pilgrim destinations and attract large number of pilgrims which leads to overall development of the town.
References:

1. An interview has been conducted at President of respective Temple and Math

