Chapter VIII

Conclusion
And
Suggestion
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Tourism is considered as one of the world’s largest industries which induces many economic activities. It is also considered as foreign exchange earning industry without any smoke or pollution and without loss of internal resource.

The present work justifies that the pilgrimage tourism has fulfils the essential characteristics of tourism geography and has emerged out from Human Geography. Pilgrimage is a particular form of domestic as well as international tourism. The aim of pilgrimage is purely religious but is also linked with visiting of different places in addition to worship sacred shrines, which shows interdependence of tourism and pilgrimage.

Geography of Tourism is an important branch of Human Geography, so it is natural that tourism is directly related to geography because it is a function of geography. It is totally based on appreciation and enjoyment of nature, climate, landscape and infrastructural facilities. Therefore, Geography plays an important role in studying the tourist demands at various places of tourist interest.

Akkalkot, once upon a time had a historic importance but now it has become merely a religious place. The importance of the town as a pilgrimage centre might be the cause for the change in structure, function and land use of the town. It is observed that during the span of 20 years from (1981 – 2001), there is shift from primary and secondary sectors to tertiary sector. 4.82 per cent increase is observed in this sector during this period which shows positive effect of pilgrimage tourism. Alike other religious places in India, in Akkalkot the most of the business activities are concentrated around the temple of Swami Samarth. The
shops are specialized for devotional goods and articles, due to its pilgrimage character. The industrial activities in the town are very meager.

In 1901, Akkalkot recorded population of only 8,348 persons which increased to 38,218 persons (2001) showing 4.5 times increase. The importance of the town as a pilgrimage centre might be the cause for the increase in population along with natural increase. The spatio-temporal analysis of land use pattern from 1973 and 2003 reveals that the residential area decreased by 1.18 per cent, due to shifting of land from residential to commercial use. The remarkable growth is observed in commercial sector. 4.67 per cent increase is recorded in commercial sector due to pilgrimage. New housing colonies are developed along the Akkalkot road railway station and Akkalkot Bhagehalli road. The special Tirth Kshetra Vikas Arakhada is prepared to develop the town. It includes underground drainage system and sewage disposal of the town and beautification of the town. The water supply plan is also introduced assuming the population of Akkalkot for 2020 A.D.

At present the town has only two gardens but in the development plan the provision is made for garden and playground. The Akkalkot Devasthan Committee has decided to develop accommodation facilities near the temple area. Municipal corporation of Akkalkot has decided to develop Hatti Talav, widening of roads, beautification of town, shopping complex with the help of Centre and State government.

The history of the town reveals that during the period of Maloji II Shri Swami Samarth came to Akkalkot. They were devotees of Swamiji therefore they built a temple while constructing New Palace along with this the basic infrastructural facilities were developed such as electricity, drinking water, schools etc. The major work done by them is shifting of
Armory Museum from Old Palace to New Palace, which is one of the major attractions of the tourist.

Vatvruksh temple is also having a glorious history. Earlier it had only the area of 10 x 10 feet but today it has developed like a Banyan tree because of Vatvrakash Devasthan committee. Due to live presence of Swamiji Akkalkot destination is one of the major attractions for pilgrims.

The study reveals that the development of basic infrastructural facilities in the study region has given positive effect to pilgrimage tourism such as accommodation, internal transportation etc.

The origin, growth and development of tourism in India is closely associated with the history of human civilization. The travel in ancient and medieval period was mainly for trade, commerce and religious purpose. After various efforts made by the Central government there is positive increase in international tourist. It is found that still we are not able to achieve the maximum benefit from international tourism. In the year 1951, there were about 16,829 tourist who had visited India it increased 33,67,000 tourists in the year 2004. The new tourism policy was declared by the Government of India to attract maximum tourists.

At this stage, it may be suggested to give more emphasis on private investment to develop tourist destination in remote areas. It is necessary to simplify the entry and exit formalities for tourists.

Maharashtra the Great Land as the name implies a distinct position in Western India. Through Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) the government is trying to achieve goals of tourism development in the State. The State is having tremendous potential for the development of its varied natural and cultural tourism resources. State tourism policy of 1993 and 1999 were able to achieve
some target of tourism development by giving tourism is a status of industry.

Major part of domestic tourism is constituted by pilgrimage tourism in India. Akkalkot is one of the major pilgrimage destinations. The growth trend of pilgrims shows that it will develop very rapidly within the short span of period. It is due to various efforts made by Municipal corporation. Shri Vatvarksh Swami Samarth Devasthan Committee and Shree Swami Samarth Annachhatra Mandal of Akkalkot. It is found that the efforts are not able to cope up with the demand of the pilgrims. Therefore government of Maharashtra and Central government should provide maximum development funds for the destination.

The functional characteristics of the pilgrims reveal the views of the pilgrims and their behavioural attitude regarding the pilgrimage. It is observed that the maximum number of pilgrims come from Maharashtra (80.64 per cent) within the state Pune division has recorded the highest percentage (46.00 per cent) of pilgrims who visit Akkalkot. The study region lies in this division. It is found that 75.30 per cent pilgrims visiting Akkalkot in vacations because 35.48 per cent pilgrims belongs to service sector. It also observed that 54.51 per cent of pilgrims have completed their higher education. Through the survey it is noticed that only Hindu Pilgrims are visiting Akkalkot. The main purpose of their visit is pilgrimage and to worship Shree Swami Samarth. It is observed that out of the total pilgrims maximum (47.66 per cent) pilgrims belongs to the age group of 36 to 60 years followed by age group of 21 to 35 years.(45.48 per cent)

Transportation and accommodation are basic elements of tourism. The mode of transportation reflects the pattern of transportation i.e. number of tourists traveled either by Maharashtra State Transport Corporation bus, rented vehicles or own vehicles. 47.74 per cent pilgrims
visited Akkalkot by MSRTC buses followed by rented vehicles (21.93 per cent). The role of Railway is very negligible. It is observed that during field work most of the pilgrims using private vehicles to save time and money. To boost up the local economy the mode of travel used by pilgrims in the town is very important. In the study region it is observed that 50.96 per cent pilgrims visited main temple on foot (walk), it is due to close proximity of the temple from bus stand. 23.54 per cent pilgrims traveled by Auto rickshaws in the town.

Accommodation is one of the important pilgrim facilities of vital importance needed at the destination. It is observed that maximum number of pilgrims prefer to stay at rooms available at temple site. (27.4 per cent) followed by Bhakt Nivas (24.20 per cent) the most remarkable thing is that 33.54 per cent of pilgrims were day trippers due to lack of other attractions and accommodation facilities they were not staying at Akkalkot.

It is observed that the income level of pilgrims and their urge for pilgrimage both are positively correlated. Major share of pilgrims belong to middle income group.

Length of stay and the development of destination is positively correlated. It increases the income level of residents. It is experienced that the average stay of pilgrims at Akkalkot was not more than three days due to lack of other tourists attractions in the town. Therefore it is recommended that some potential tourist attractions in the town should be develop with joint venture by the state government and Municipal Corporation.

Devotional goods and articles, devotional eatables, religious books are very important religious items, which satisfy the needs of pilgrims. It is observed during the field work that purchasing capacity of pilgrims is in proportion to the income level of the pilgrims.
The study of occupational structure gives us the guidelines about the level of the nature of gathering. It is observed that 35.48 per cent pilgrims belongs to service sector followed by others. Therefore, it is suggested that the respective authority should provide the level of services to the pilgrims as per their level of occupation.

The pilgrims are satisfied with existing facilities available at Akkalkot viz. accommodation, transportation, darshan facility, opinion about the town, food and drinking water facilities, behaviour of the citizens, shopping facilities and about the personal safety.

The level of satisfaction depends on the relationship between pilgrims, residents and facilities provided to pilgrims at the destinations. The level of satisfaction of the pilgrims is known by noting their views about the facilities provided to them is assessed. The factor wise satisfaction index is calculated. Darshan facility ranks first, food and drinking water facility received second rank, accommodation third, transportation fourth, personal safety fifth, behaviour of the locals and shopping facilities both were at 6.5th rank and 8th rank that is last one is about the town. It reveals that the pilgrims were satisfied with the darshan facility at main temple food and drinking water at Annachhatra Mandal. It indicates that the tourists are satisfied in general. It is necessary to increase the level of satisfaction. The three respective authority should take combined effort to render best services to the pilgrims.

Geographers always take keen interest in the study of locational aspects. Around the study area having a radius of 150 km. there are five existing tourists centres and from these centers some of the pilgrims visit Vijapur, Gangapur (Karnataka State), Pandharpur, Tuljapur (Maharashtra), forms a Geographical Tourist Travel circuit zone. The study reveals that eight travel circuits are found. It is also observed that
maximum number of pilgrims (24.51 Per cent) complete the part of travel circuit zone starting from Pandharpur Solapur, Tuljapur, Akkalkot and Gangapur. Only 6.12 per cent of pilgrims completed entire travel circuit. It means that it requires a joint effort by the State government of Maharashtra and Karnataka to promote this travel circuit zone by providing enormous facilities. Then it will help in strengthening the development of Akkalkot town.

The assessment of impacts means the assessments of development of the destination. Akkalkot is in developing stage, hence the impacts are comparatively less. Even though town is facing many problems due to constant rush of pilgrims throughout the year particularly in vacations. It creates physical, economic and socio cultural impacts on host population. The physical impacts like over crowding and congestion, noise and air pollution, strain on public utility services, road conditions etc. create burden on destination. The socio cultural impacts like crime, awareness regarding preservation of religious and cultural heritage, strain on the quality of police protection etc. has created negative attitude towards pilgrims in the minds of the residents. The positive impact are employment generation to locals, increasing opportunity for shopping business, demand for labours etc. are observed.

Likert Scale technique is used for the measurement of these selected indicators. Physical impacts are assessed by selecting twelve indicators. It shows that the opinions of the residents, entrepreneur and administration are near about the same. They feel that there is higher impact of overcrowding and congestion, noise and air pollution, quality of sewage and garbage disposal, road conditions, need for separate parking place. During study it was found that the mean attitude index, means of residents (+ 1.387) entrepreneurs (+1.019) and administration (+1.363) indicate that overall there is moderate physical effect on
pilgrimage on Akkalkot. Therefore, it is recommended that for solving the problem of crowd on the roads, widening of roads and one way traffic system should be developed. It is also suggested that the congestion around the temple site should be removed immediately. Regarding the facilities of sewage and garbage disposal, road condition and place for parking are already included in the development plan of the Municipality.

With the help of fourteen indicators the economic impact of Akkalkot is assessed. It reveals that there is higher effect of pilgrimage on destination. The positive effect of pilgrimage is increase in the income of residents, rise in income of three local bodies that is Vatvurksha Devasthan Committee, Shree Swami Samarth Annachtra Mandal and Municipal corporation of Akkalkot, rental houses as source of income, opportunity for shopping, increase in standard of living etc. The mean attitude index of residents is (+0.917), the entrepreneurs (+0.614) and administrator (+0.421) indicates that there is a minimum overall economic impact of pilgrimage on Akkalkot.

Socio cultural impacts refer to the change in the quality of life of the residents of destination. By using eighteen indicators the socio cultural impact is assessed. It is observed that the constant flow of pilgrims at Akkalkot throughout the year has given a positive effect like the importance of Akkalkot in socio cultural development of the State, preservation of religious and cultural heritage change in occupational structure etc. There are some negative impacts such as quality and strain on public protection, increase in crime rate etc. The mean Attitude index of residents (+0.830), entrepreneurs is (+0.329) and administrators (+0.472) indicate that there are little socio cultural impacts of pilgrimage on Akkalkot.

For strengthening the socio cultural base of the destination it is suggested to establish an institution like A Study of Datta Samprayda
where all age group population should take part in study of Datta Samprayada. It is also suggested that provision of Religious Library is necessary to provide the required literature to common people and scholars. This would help to create the image of Akkalkot as an important place of cultural study.

An information was collected through questionnaire regarding the implementation of pilgrimage policy. All these three community groups i.e. residents (53.33 per cent), entrepreneur (27.33 per cent) and administrators (17.33 per cent) agree on one point that they wish to continue the pilgrimage with some improvements. Such as over crowding, road conditions etc. They also expressed that the existing pattern of flow pilgrims should be divided to avoid the above problems.

It is obvious fact that physical, economic and socio cultural attributes have influenced the environment of Akkalkot keeping in view of the positive impacts, the planners have to play an important role in minimizing the adverse impacts on Akkalkot in the years to come.

Akkalkot has number of Mathas and Temple, 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 then only they can become an important pilgrim destinations and attract large number of pilgrims which leads to overall development of the town.

The Vatvruksha Swami Samarth Temple is located in a very congested area and encroached by residential and commercial activity. At present the safety of the pilgrims in the temple is in poor state due to lack of open space in side the temple and small exit gate. Therefore it is
suggested that the Devasthan Committee and government should take necessary action immediately to avoid accidents which took place at “Mandhar Devi” in Wai Tahsil of Satara district of Maharashtra on 25th January 2005.

**Safety Precautionary Measures in the Main Temple:**

The Vatvruksh Swami Samarth temple is located in very congested area and encroached by shops. The total space available to the temple is very limited. Within that space there are number of rooms constructed for the purpose of office, accommodation and Mandap hall for multiple use. (Fig. 4.1)

Around the temple residential and commercial area is occupied by the population. If we observe the inner location of temple there are three gates which are used for the entry and exit of pilgrims. At present the flow of pilgrims is large and if something happens at that time it is not possible to exit from the temple. Therefore to take safety precautionary measure, it is suggested that the following changes should be done on top priority in and around the temple site. (Fig. 8.1)

It is suggested that demolish all the existing accommodation rooms, mandap and construct a wide sealing from the border area of the temple, make provision of two large size exit gates, due to availability of wide open space pilgrims can take darshan in a systematic manner (Row type).

TO enter in the temple pilgrims require a wide open space which is not available at present. Therefore it is necessary to shift the entire present commercial shops at least 300 meters away from their existing place. Open area will be used for the parking purpose.
AKKALKOT TOWN
SUGGESTED LAY-OUT FOR
SHREE SWAMI SAMARTH TEMPLE FOR SAFETY PROPOSAL

Map - Not to Scale

Fig. - 8.1
It is also suggested that provision of close circuit Television inside and outside the temple should be made available for the pilgrims on specific days during which large number of pilgrims visit the temple.

The main problem for implementing this scheme is that present trust is not under the control of government, the problems are rising in demolishing and shifting of the existing places. Therefore, it is an urgent requirement of the pilgrims that government should take initiative in this work then only hundred per cent change in the present scenario is possible and they can avoid accident which took at Mandhar Devi fair in Wai Tahsil of Satara district of Maharashtra on 25th January 2005. It is also suggested that some basic measures as per guide lines given by State government of Maharashtra on 10th March 2005 should be taken into consideration by Devasthan Committee. The guidelines are as follow-

1) Status of road within the town-Narrow or Wider in position
2) Separate route for To and Fro to pilgrims
3) Availability of emergence route
4) Control cabin and close circuit T.V. facility
5) Safer electric supply arrangement
6) Breaking point of Coconut
7) Fire brigade, Ambulance and Medical facility
8) Drinking water, S. T. BUS arrangement
9) Control on Pilgrims flow.
Suggestions:

1. The new tourism policy would take into account the role of Indian tourism as an engine for economic development, employment generation, social integration and promotion of its cultural image abroad. It takes into account the various barriers and constraints that it faces and find a solution to overcome them so as to be able to develop and promote tourism to greater heights.

2. It is necessary to collect relative data. Comprehensive data compilation and publication on periodic basis could provide a sound base to domestic tourism planning in Maharashtra.

3. Preparation of tourism plans through a systematic identification of tourism resources and their development at preferred destinations, centered around specific nodes and circuits based upon geographical location.

4. Tourism infrastructure involving the development and improvement of the transportation and accommodation facilities needs urgent attention from policy makers.

5. Cost effective package tours integrating the various tourist attraction in the state should be popularized by the MTDC.

6. In the study region tourism should be promoted as a viable economic enterprise, demanding deft handling and professional expertise. The acute shortage of trained man power in a dynamic service sector as tourism needs urgent attention from the state government. Human Resource Development (HRD) through the organization of training programmes and refresher programmes specially designed
towards skill up gradation of the service providers for ensuring greater guest satisfaction need to be emphasized.

7. At present, tourism advertisements are almost conspicuous by their absence. The tourist attractions of Akkalkot need to be promoted at national level by an effective use of the mass media such as E-tourism holds good prospects in the percentage of IT.

8. Community participation in tourism should be encouraged from the inception of planning and development.

9. It is necessary to provide either public or private sector transportation facility to the pilgrimage to visit other potential centre in the town with proper trained man power (guide).

10. All types of banks should start providing “Tourism Loan’s” to the tourist.

11. Government of Maharashtra should again start Leave Travel concession to their employees.

12. Active participation of local NGOS should be consider in beautification of town.

13. Sign boards must be display at various entry points in the town.