

Cultural Tourism Prospects of Bhaleswor Mahadev of Chandragiri Area, Kathmandu

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Abstract

This paper makes an attempt to examine prospects of cultural tourism of Bhaleswor Mahadev in Chandragiri area of Kathmandu by applying cultural heritage studies perspectives. It is a cultural study of completely qualitative nature. Throughout the world, the tourism industry has been an economic generator including conserving the heritage sites. The study area is Chandragiri municipality - 4 and the major historical and religious sites in the foothill of Mahabharat hill range of Chandragiri. Bhaleswor Mahadev temple is situated on the top of the Chandragiri hill in the southwest of Kathmandu valley in 13 km. The shape of the hill looks like a Bhale (rooster) and Nilkantha Mahadev stayed in this hill for some time and at that time heard the sound of rooster so this Mahadev is called Bhaleswor Mahadev. Due to this temple, pilgrims and tourists are increasing day by day to go to Chandragiri hill through cable car. Bhaleswor Mahadev temple and Chandragiri cable car add more benefit in promotion of cultural tourism of Chandragiri area. One can easily go to worship Bhaleswor Mahadev through cable car within twelve minutes. One can observe spectacular view of the Himalayan range of Annapurna range, Langtang range, Everest and other mountains like Cho Oyu, Gaurisankhar etc from the top of the hill. Chandragiri cable car is the second commercial cable car of Nepal. Chandragiri area is very important from historical, cultural and archaeological point of view. The other major historical and religious sites of Chandragiri area in the foothill of Mahabharat hill range are Mahalaxmi Temple, Chandanvarateswor Mahadev, Matatirtha and Machchhe Narayan. These sites give more importance in the development of cultural tourism of Chandragiri area. Despite these studies, there is still hardly found scholarship of cultural tourism prospects of Bhaleswor Mahadev in Chandragiri area, Kathmandu. Therefore, this paper aims to address the gap of cultural tourism of Chandragiri area.

Keywords: Bhaleswor Mahadev, cultural tourism, Chandragiri area, historical site

Introduction

This study explores and analyzes cultural tourism prospects of Bhaleswor Mahadev in Chandragiri area of Kathmandu by applying cultural heritage studies perspectives. ‘Chandragiri’ literary means the hill with a forest of sandalwood (chandan). This hill under the Mahabharat hill range was called Chandragiri after Chandanagiri. (Himbat Khanda, 140 Slok 13) Chandragiri city was known as Shonitpur and was named by king Vanasur during the Dwapara era. Historical Shonitpur town was named Shitatidranga during the Lichchavi period. Tejprakash Shrestha wrote on his book that the same Suprabhanagari – Shonitpur -- Shitatidranga has now been named Chandragiri city. (Nepal Mahatmya, Adhyaya 9 Slok 17). Chandragiri area consists of various important historical and cultural sites such as Bhaleswor Mahadev, Mahalaxmi Temple, Chandanvarateswor Mahadev, Matatirtha and Machchhegaon. These historical and religious sites hold immense possibility to develop cultural tourism and enhance economical status of the area. In doing so, researcher have used the critical insight envisioned by Hyung Yun is “Theory of Heritage Tourism” and Lev Vygotsky is “Theory of Social Constructivism” as theoretical parameters to analyze the study area. The researcher has scarcely found any profound research on this topic. Due to that hardly few promotion of Bhaleswor Mahadev of Chandragiri area in cultural tourism prospects so that this research will fulfill the research gap.

During Dwapur Yuga, King Mahendradaman built this beautiful city for his sister Prabhavati. After Demon King got blessings from Pashupatinath, he built this a golden city so the name was changed to Sonitpur. Historical Shonitpur town was named Shitatidranga during the Lichchavi period which was the administrative territory of the Abhir Guptas. This area was very important as Gopal and Abhir Gupta entered the valley from this side. It managed to gain historical fame while maintaining its identity with the same name. Nowadays Chandragiri area is one of the most popular spot in Nepal due to its great mix of cultural, historical, natural beauty and excitement. There are many temples, shrines, monasteries with precious treasures of religion, culture and cultural importance within the settlements which are clustered separately with ancient historical and unique values. Newar, the hands of skilled craftspeople are abundant in the community.

Bhaleswor Mahadev is located in the southwest of Kathmandu valley 13 km far from Tripureswor. It is situated on the top of the Chandragiri hill in Chandragiri ward - 4. Its religious significance attracts both tourists and pilgrims. On the way, there are many restaurants, bars, amusement parks, adventure sports as well as can enjoy the peaceful atmosphere. On the nice weather day, one can observe the beautiful Himalayan range of Annapurna range, Langtang range, Everest and other mountains like Cho Oyu, Gaurisankhar

etc from the top of the hill. [Chandragiri Hills](#) is a well-known place to visit in Nepal. Its features draw people in.

The cable car history in Nepal started from 1998 November 24. The first commercial cable car is Manakamana Cable Car of Kurintar. The second cable car in Nepal is Chandragiri cable car started from 2016 AD. It starts at the base station in Thankot and takes passengers to the top of Chandragiri hill of 2551 meters high.

Other historical, religious and cultural sites on the foothill of Chandragiri hill are as follows:

Mahalaxmi temple is located in Thankot, Chandragiri - 4. This place is also important for those who want to study history as there are inscriptions of Licchavi period and medieval period. The major temples here are Mahalaxmi Temple and Adinarayan Temple. There is a lot of movement of people in this area due to the important temples, *Patipauwa*, *Dhungedhara*. Similarly it is found that Basantadev's Licchavi period inscription of Sambat 428. Mahalaxmi Temple is a two storied style Malla period temple. There are stone benches inside this temple. In addition to worshipping the formless rocks as Goddess Mahalaxmi, Sindoor Jatra is also performed in the month of November. There are *Mallakalin* inscriptions around this temple. Also, inside the temple premises, human statues of devotees are carved in *Namaskar* pose. Similarly, the glass carved behind the statue and the signs of Srivats are different from other places. A lot of domestic religious pilgrims visit in this temple.

Chandanvarateswor Mahadev temple is situated in Chandragiri M.C. - 6. This includes in 64 Jyotirlinga. Once in the ancient times, Lord Shiva came to visit this place with Goddess Parvati. Jyotirlinga originated when Shiva Parvati enjoyed playing sports in this beautiful land having Navadhara. Lord Shiva told the glory of fulfilling wishes of even Brahma, Bishnu and Indra to Parvati and he disappeared. Goddess Parvati stayed in this beautiful place for thousands of years and worshipped everyday by taking bath in Navadhara and applying *chandan* (sandalwood) to Shivalinga. Therefore, the name of this Shivalinga is Chandanvarateswor. (Himbat Khanda, p. 947) This area name is Mahadevsthan.

Matatirtha is located in Chandragiri - 8. It is 1 km from Gurujudhara on the south side of the Chandragiri municipality. It is believed that if one bathes in 10 streams and worships Mahadev, then 10 streams poured with the milk fed by the mother will be paid. It is said that the shadow of the deceased mother can be seen in this pond. (Khadka P.B. 2069 BS, p. 131) Matatirtha *Aunsi* is a day-long festival in Nepal. This day is celebrated to honor mothers and motherhood. On this day, people offer sweets, clothes and other gift items to their mothers. According to [Hindu](#) tradition, the festival is celebrated on the new moon that falls in the month of *Baisakh* as per the [lunar calendar](#). [Matatirtha Pond](#) is a [pilgrimage](#) site on the western outskirts of [Kathmandu](#) visited to remember deceased mothers. It is believed

that those who take a holy bath in Matatirtha and offer *tarpan* on that day help his/her mother reach salvation and bring prosperity to the family. (Rijal, R. 2080 B.S.)

Machchhegaon is situated in Chandragiri M.C. - 9. This is a magnificent place from religious and cultural tourism point of view. From religious point of view, Matsya Avatar is considered to be the first Avatar of Narayan. The Machchhegaon area is called Machchhe Narayan because it is the place where Matsya Avatar was assumed. In every leap year, one month more comes out. This longer time or month is called Adikmas or Purushottamas or Malamas. A grand Mela is held in this area for a month during this period. In Dwapara Yug, Lord Krishna stayed in this place and palace was built in Matatirtha. The Gwalas (cowherds) who came with Krishna came to this place. This is proof that residents of Gopali caste still can be found. Local people say that Machchhe Narayan is the first pilgrimage site in the world located in the lap of Chandragiri Hill range. (Poudel J, 2080 BS. p-38) This is one of the important and sacred places in Chandragiri Municipality.

Statement of the Problem

To the best of my knowledge, I hardly can find only few studies of Bhaleswor Mahadev and cultural tourism prospects of Chandragiri area.

Research Questions

Literature review has created the gap that's why research need to be carried out, which has made discussion on the statement of the problem. Without the research question it is difficult to conduct the research. Research question provide the way to researcher about the study. The following are the research questions about this research:

What is the history and origination of Bhaleswor Mahadev of Chandragiri area?

How does Bhaleswor Mahadev add cultural tourism prospects of Chandragiri area?

Objectives of the Study

This study is done to fulfill certain objective of the problem. Objective helps to create the direction for the study without the objective of the study it will be difficult for researcher to carry the research. Objective of this study are as follow:

To explore the history and origination of Bhaleswor Mahadev.

To analyze the cultural tourism prospects of Chandragiri area.

Methodology

This study explores and analyzes cultural tourism prospects of Bhaleswor Mahadev in Chandragiri hill of Kathmandu valley. The researcher is grown up in this area and gets the

opportunity to see the big changes. It is a cultural study of completely qualitative nature. It is considered that the research work focused on heritage exploration should be qualitative in nature. Most of the facts have been recorded by direct observation in this area was completed on 08 Dec, 2023. The facts related to the history, origination and importance of Bhaleswor Mahadev temple in the cultural tourism of this area were collected by asking open questions to the subject experts. Jatra, beliefs, worship tradition, culture tourism potentialities have been collected through of total 6 informants including culture expert were interviewed in the nature of asking open ended questions. Apart from these previously published books, journals and articles, which are considered as secondary sources. In this way, the study work has been completed by explaining the analysis of reliable facts and presenting them in descriptive style. The delimitation of this research only takes place in 4, 6, 8 & 9 ward of Chandragiri M.C. Research takes place in Bhaleswor Mahadev and coming down mostly in foothill of Mahabharat hill range of Chandragiri.

Findings and Discussions

There is a story of Bhaleswor Mahadev. Nemuni said Sati Devi died because of her father Daksha Prajapati's anger. Lord Mahadev carried her dead body on his back and started to wander across the world in rage. At that time, her Bhala (forehead) fell from her body at the peak of the hill and originated *Linga* over there. This is the place where there are two Rivers Lilawati and Roshi nearby. (Himbat Khanda, p. 780) That is why its name is Bhaleshwar Mahadev. This story is also mentioned in Swasthani story. This Mahadev includes in 64 Jyorti Linga. The forehead fell down place is in Gandharva Tirtha, Panauti Municipality. There is a temple of Kirat period. The stone inscriptions, inscriptions on the bell, the story of Bhaleswor Linga, the locations of rivers of Panauti give the evidence of forehead fell of Satidevi and originated Linga is in Panauti Municipality.

Bhaleswor Mahadev of Chandragiri does not include in 64 Jyorti Linga. The story of forehead fell down from dead Satidevi's body is not in Chandragiri hill. People from hillside called Bhaleswor, Newar called Gangochu and Tamang called Ghangachu for this place. All these names are related to Bhale (rooster). The top of Chandragiri hill looks like a shape of a rooster. The story is after *Samundra Manthan*, Mahadev took poison and became Nilkanda Mahadev and at that time Mahadev crossed the top of Chandragiri hill and stayed there for some time and at that time there was sound of a rooster crowing so then this hill is started to call Bhaleswor Mahadev. (Rijal R. Interview) So this place is connected to Mahadev.

At the time of Mahabharat, five Pandavas crossed this place and Yakshya (lord of jungle) asked questions to eldest brother Yudhistir. This place is related to Yakchhya so this place is also called Yakchhayswor Mahadev. (Shrestha, S. Interview) There is Yakshyaswor Mahadev temple and Ghat near Naghdhungha, Thankot. There is a tradition if this Chandragiri

area is very dry for a long time, local people go to worship Bhaleswor Mahadev for the sake of rain. (Khadka, S.B. Interview)

There is a Jatra occurred in Falgun Purnima. People from Indreswor area of Thaha Municipality come here to observe this Jatra. Different groups of Jakri, Lakhe participate in this Jatra.

The hill on which the temple is situated is related to the unification of Nepal campaign. On his way back to Gorkha from his in-laws in Makwanpur, Prithvi Narayan Shah had planned to make Kathmandu Valley the capital of a unified Nepal for the first time from Chandragiri hill.

Cultural Tourism Prospects of Chandragiri Area

Chandanvarateswor Mahadev is one of the historical Shiva Linga in Kathmandu included in 64 Jyorti Linga. It is believed that one's wishes will be fulfilled after worshipping this Mahadev. Vasa Bansabali and from other different sources, Gopals and Mahispals are the first and second dynasties of Kathmandu. Then after started Kirat dynasty. Matatirtha is considered as the capital of Kirat dyansty. The residence of Gwalas, the first Bagmati civilization, the abode of sages, Matatirtha is considered to be rare in the heavenly world. There is no place of pilgrimage or historical and cultural place in the world to worship and remember the mother. The Balambu's inscription B.S. 762 mentions that the ashram of Gautam Muni was also in Chandragiri. Machchhe Narayan is famous religious place in Chandragiri. A grand Mela is held in this area for a month during leap year. It is said that this is the first pilgrimage site in the world.

The six vital components of tourism system are Attraction, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, Activities and Affordability. These six vital components of tourism are fulfilled in Chandragiri hill. In attraction, there are cable car, view of amazing Himalayas, beautiful landscape etc. In accessibility, just 13 km from Kathmandu and 12 minutes cable car ride can arrive Bhaleswor Mahadev. In amenities, there are beautiful hotel, restaurants, seminar halls etc. In activities, there are pony ride, cycling, indoor and outdoor games, fun park for children, hiking program etc. In affordability, high level to economy level of accommodation, restaurants from base station to top of the hill.

Conclusions

In Ancient times Chandragiri is the major gateway to enter into the capital of Nepal. This area is also rich in flora and fauna. One can find different species of birds and butterflies over here. There are 23 public forests in this area. There are precious temples, shrines, monasteries, Dhungedhara etc in this area, this area is also rich in Jatra like Sindoor Jatra

observed in Balambu, Balagaon and Thankot as well as *Sat Gaule Jatra* (seven villages Jatra) observed in Satungal, Bhosigaon, Tapkhya, Lhokot, Bhanthok, Macchegaon and Kirtipur.

This land would have become more famous if the pilgrims/tourists will exchange their feelings with the nature and culture of this historical and religious place by doing effective management works. The six vital components of tourism system are Attraction, Accessibility, Accommodation, Amenities, Activities and Affordability. All these components are fulfilled in Bhaleswor Mahadev of Chandragiri hill. Therefore tourism can be of great importance to the people of Chandragiri both economically and culturally. Chandragiri area is very rich in nature and culture. Chandragiri can be one of the major attractions for both domestic and foreign tourists. Although most of the religious and cultural sites have not been exposed to the foreign tourists, travel agencies, tour operators, all these sites can be promoted along with Bhaleswor Mahadev and Chandragiri cable car.

These historical and religious sites hold immense possibility to develop cultural tourism and enhance economic status of the area. If the government and local stakeholders can manage properly, this area will be developed as cultural tourism hub of Nepal.

Recommendations

There are very old artifacts and archaeological sites in Chandragiri area. The artistry here has not been properly accounted for. Likewise, most of the archaeological and artifacts of this area where the earliest sources of Nepal's history are found are in a state of decay and destruction. It is necessary to find, archive, protect and promote them to promote the cultural tourism of Chandragiri area. It is necessary to open one museum in Chandragiri.

Appendix

M.C. – Municipality

B.S. - Bikram Sambat

Interview

S.No.	Sur / Given Name	Age	Address	Date	Occupation
1	Rijal, Rabindra	41	Chandragiri M.C.- 8	2080.08. 11	CM of Nepali History Association, President of HRSS
2	Pathak, Ramsharan	71	Chandragiri M.C.- 7	2080.08. 13	Professor, Social worker
3	Khadka, Surendra Bahadur	70	Chandragiri M.C.- 7	2080.08. 14	Retired Teacher, Social worker
4	Thapa, Shreehari	37	Chandragiri M.C.- 7	2080.08. 16	Businessman, Journalist, Social worker
5	Shrestha, Sagar	47	Chandragiri M.C.- 6	2080.08. 25	Social Worker, PhD Scholar
6	Shrestha, Santaprakash	60	Chandragiri M.C.- 3	2080.08. 29	Social Worker, Local Culture Expert

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