



## Developmental dimensions and pilgrimage tourism in northern Telangana—A study

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### Abstract

Tourism in India has emerged as one of the major segment of the economy. India, with its rich cultural heritage, ancient monuments, world famous temples, architecture masterpieces, wild animal's sanctuaries and scenic sports, country holds a great attraction for the overseas as well as domestic tourists. Since time immemorial, people had to walk long distance or use animals or carts for travel for pilgrimage. The pilgrimage (Tirth Yatra) was therefore, a journey undertaken for the betterment of spiritual pursuits. Travel or pilgrimage for mental peace and to gain knowledge about rich heritage or religious places in the country is an integral part of Indian culture and tradition. The state of Andhra Pradesh in India is the rich tourist state and magnificent historically, culturally and ecologically and it is the most desirable state which provides unique platform to sell traditional handicrafts in the Tourist markets. It is provide employment opportunities. In this paper has been covered tourism spots in North Telangana. Which are Kakatiya Kala Thoranam, Thousand Pillar Temple, Ramappa Temple, Bheemuni paadam waterfalls, Sri Raja Rajeshwara Temple, Kondagattu Hanuman Temple, Dharmapuri Laxminarasimha Swamy Temple, Elagandhula Fort, Ramagiri Fort, Bhadrachalam Temple, Papikondalu, Basara Temple, Gayatri waterfalls and Kuntala waterfalls.

**Keywords:** tourism, tourist, tourism spots, north Telangana

### Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the world's largest industries. It is expanding very rapidly and it is providing tremendous job opportunities to millions of people. In the modern society and firstly changing global economic scenario, environmental pollution poses a serious threat not only to the mankind but to the various ecosystems. Intensive and uncontrolled tourism activities have brought certain ecological and environmental pollution. Due to the constant pressure exerted by industrial and urban activities in the modern living, tourism is proving as one of the best tools to get away from the stress and strain of busy and modern city life and relax in a healthy and peaceful atmosphere. The apex body of the world and tourism has also recognized the importance of international travel as a means of fostering understanding among people, and giving them a knowledge of the rich heritage of the past civilizations, a better appreciation of the values of different cultures, thus, contributing to the strengthening of world peace. It adopted the theme 'Tourism-Passport to Peace'. Tourism is expanding very fast in various parts of our country including hill stations, deserts, mountains and coastal regions and has been perhaps the most rewarding industry in the world at present. In recent years, the country has woken up to this great reality and concerted efforts are being put in to develop and promote industry in a big way by introducing various schemes of ministry of tourism in various States. India, with its rich culture, heritage, ancient monuments, world famous temples, architecture, masterpieces, wild animals sanctuaries and scenic sports, remains a great attraction for the tourists.

The State of Telangana is a rich tourist state that attracts a large number of tourists. Several dynasties ruled over the state from Satavahanas to Asaf Jahis. The main dynasties were *Satavahanas*, *Ikshavakus*, *Pallavas*, *Chalukyas*, *Kakatiyas*, *Rachakonda* and *Devarakonda Velamas*, *Qutub Shahi* and *Asaf Jahi* in addition to many other minor dynasties. They have left behind their capitals with a number of secular and religious monuments like, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Warangal and Hyderabad. They constructed various beautiful architectures, sculptures, and paintings and they have made some of these places quite attractive and glorious-predominantly pilgrims centres. The religious centres with architecturally beautiful temples are *Vemulawada*, *Kaleshwaram*, *Dharmapuri*, *Bhadrachalam*, *Panugal*, *Kolanupaka*, *Basar* and *Jaina* monuments, *Buddhist* monuments and some of the well known *Jyothirlingas*. These temples were scientifically constructed with traditional knowledge and skills as per *Agama Shastras*. These all-important centres attract millions of domestic tourists and a moderate number of foreign tourists. Similarly other historical centres also has been constructed viz., *Naragjuna Konda*, *Nela Kondapalli*, *Bavikonda*, Jain centres like *Kolanupaka*, the Muslim monuments at Hyderabad, viz, tombs, *Ashurkhanas*, *Masjids*, *Charminars*, Churches of different denominations at Hyderabad, Medak and in almost all important towns, all theses monuments attracts local and domestic tourists and also tourists from overseas particularly from China, Japan, Singapore, Sri-Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Korea and Europe and America.

The eternal city, known for love, art, and history, flourishing together in perfect harmony making it one of the most enchanting places of the world, is Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana. It is the fifth largest cosmopolitan city in India. The city thrives with a variety of cultures intermingled into an astounding culture that gives it a distinct identity of its own. This is where tradition fuses with modern high rise buildings to add to the beauty of the city. Hyderabad, the magical name brings to the mind's eye visions of royal grandeur and leisurely "Nawabi" (Kingly) atmosphere. The city has a 400 years old history. Owing to its cosmopolitan character, geographically, Hyderabad is called the 'North of South India', and the 'South of North India'.

### Main objectives of the research paper

The present paper on *Developmental Dimensions and Pilgrimage Tourism in Northern Telangana*, special reference to Jagityal, Rajanna (Siricilla) and Jayashankar (Bhupalapally) districts is outlined with the following objectives:

1. To know the current position and future projections of tourism in Telangana of study region.
2. To access and analyze the development of pilgrimage tourism in North Telangana selected districts.
3. To highlight the importance and significance of places of pilgrimage in North Telangana selected districts.
4. Future strategy for the promotion of pilgrimage tourism in the study region.

### Methodology

The present study is based on primary and secondary sources. As the study investigates into the rise and growth of pilgrimage tourism in North Telangana selected districts, historical method is applied to collect Primary and Secondary sources from various repositories. The research approach takes the paper through empirical literature review which follows Government Publications/Records in State Central Library-Hyderabad, Census Reports, District Gazetteers, State Tourism Department Statistical Report, periodicals, Press Reports on Karimnagar district Temples, which are covered by Eenadu, Vartha, Andhra Bhoomi, Andhra Jyothi, Deccan Chronicle was consulted for this study.

### The concept of pilgrimage tourism

All religions have their Holy places and places of worship. Such places are called by different names like Devalaya (House of God) Temple, Church, Masjid and Gurudwara which mean a building for religious prayers and house for communal worship. Since time immemorial people had to walk long distance with the help of animals or carts for pilgrimage. The pilgrimage (Tirth Yatra) was therefore a journey undertaken for betterment of the spiritual knowledge and peace. Travel or pilgrimage to religious places in India is considered an integral part of her culture and tradition. In traditional societies like ours, the pilgrimage journeys performed to God's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community. Because sacred rituals and texts sanctified at certain places are associated with divine revelation. This is true in all religions. With this long and religiously embedded tradition, the flow of people started to places of religions importance in India. It has increased in the last couples of decades. The modern means of travel, like the road transport, railways and air travel, have increased tremendously consequently; the number of tourists and pilgrims visiting the various pilgrim centres also increased manifold in the country. The South Indian tourism is mostly considered as pilgrimage and heritage tourist destination. The centuries old glorious temples and colourful religious festivals attract millions of domestic tourists in the under study region.

The statistical figures reflect that the top 7 states with regard to inflow of domestic tourists in India during 2015, Telangana has the first position having attracted 155.8 million tourists followed by Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (Table 1). In the post independence taking into consideration the economic and social potentialities of tourism industry, both the state and Central Government have taken certain positive steps in order to develop the tourist industry, because the domestic tourism promotes local peace, harmony and friendship among us. The growth and size of domestic tourism would relatively depend on per capita income, size of population, economic growth rate, and cost of travel and existence of national attraction of the country. In the last few years the study region has achieved a remarkable goal by touching the highest figures i.e. around more than six times during 2000-2016 (Table 2). Similarly with regard to foreign tourist's arrival, the state has registered the maximum number of tourist during the same duration.

**Table 1:** Top ten States / Union Territories in domestic tourists (2015)

States / UTs	Domestic Tourists (in millions)
Telangana	155.8
Andhra Pradesh	144.8
Tamil Nadu	111.6
Karnataka	38.2
West Bengal	21.1

Source: States / UTs Tourism Department.

Telangana is a magnificent state with regard to physical, historical, cultural and ecological point of view and it is the most desirable state to be visited by large number of pilgrim tourists. The age old institutions to attract the maximum centres and temples have innumerable potentialities of foreign tourism and that is the reason why in Telangana State International Tourist flow has miraculously increased from 47,200 in 2000 to 7,95,173 in 2016 (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Inflow of Domestic and Foreign Tourist in Telangana State during 2000-2016

Year	Domestic Tourists (In millions)	Growth of Percentage	Foreign/ International Tourists	Growth of Percentage
2000	20.67	-	47200	-
2001	30.28	22.8	48700	3.2
2002	30.93	19.8	84100	72.6
2003	30.35	14.7	63600	24.3
2004	30.68	9.8	94400	48.4
2005	30.84	4.3	78976	16.3

2006	40.23	10.1	86310	9.3
2007	40.80	13.4	78713	8.8
2008	50.25	9.3	67147	14.7
2009	60.33	20.5	210310	213.2
2010	70.41	17	479318	127.9
2011	80.97	20.6	501019	4.5
2012	90.35	4.5	560024	11.7
2013	110.17	19.4	669617	19.5
2014	120.79	14.5	7,69,724	14.9
2015	130.26	0.37	7,89,180	2.46
2016	150.74	2.48	7,95,173	0.75

**Source:** TIOs/DTO's/ATO's/AAI of Dept. of Tourism, Govt. of Telangana State and Andhra Pradesh.

### Significance of the study

This paper deals with the tourist features of pilgrim centres and discuss in-depth pilgrimage tourism scenario in Northern Telangana districts of Telangana state. The paper also deals with the contemporary developments of Telangana state pilgrim centres. The paper also highlights the significance of pilgrimage tourist and its socio-economic impact on society and role played by the state Govt. especially by the Dept. of Tourism in order to promote and develop pilgrimage tourism in Telangana state.

### Brief profile of northern Telangana (selected districts)

These districts are located in the northern part of Telangana State and the entire region geographically lies to the south of the river Godavari. By virtue of its proximity to the river Godavari, the district has been the cradle of culture and civilization through centuries dating back to the early phases of the dawn of history. The whole study-region has great tourism potential. There are about a hundred historical sites which have isolating geographical locations., which need a thorough and expository study mainly based on the epigraphs and an on-the spot investigation of all the Buddhist, Jain, Hindu religious edifices in various aspects viz, historical, structural, sculptural, religious, social, economic and cultural. The recent archaeological operations at Dhulikatta, Peddabankur and Kotilingala have thrown ample light on the history of the Satavahanas dynasty in this district.

### Brief historical background of the study region

The history of study region starts from the Old Stone Age i.e. from 1,48,000 back. It is evident from the tools, culture and other materials found at different places in North Telangana. The exhaustions at Peddabonkur, Dhulikatta and Kotilingala are such evidences for history. The history of Northern Telangana is linked with Shatavahanas. "Kotilingala" was the main centre for Shatavahanas during their rule. Though there are many evidences of development from Stone Age, the actual development and growth of the district becomes noticed remarkably visible from Shatavahanas period only. The entire districts came into prominence during the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D onwards. Epigraphical records pertain to the Chalukyas of Vemulawada, who ruled over the area for a considerable period i.e. about 100 years. Simultaneously, the Rashtrakuta and Kakatiyas kings also ruled certain parts of in these districts. These districts also experienced the onslaughts of Delhi Sultans under Mohd Bin Tugluq in 1323 A.D. The entire districts was under the rule of Bahamanis and Mughals followed by Velamas, Qutubshahis and Asafjahis.

### Tourism scenario in northern Telangana (selected districts)

The existing traditional culture, art, and historical heritage reflect the flourishing of civilization and culture in the whole of the study region and its peripheral areas. It is the duty of each civilized human to protect the art, culture and heritage gifted to us by our ancestors for the posterity. There are many glorious relics, edifices, monuments, temples, holy places and visiting places, which reflect the culture and traditions of the study region. Jagityasl, Rajanna and Jayashankar districts are the leading and pioneer for these arts, cultures, and these districts was also influenced by Jain and Buddha cultures. The 12<sup>th</sup> century ancient Jain temple at 'Stambampally' is famous in the entire Telangana state. The rise and evolution of Buddhism during the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C in the entire Gangetic valley and the former's phenomenal success in 'Andhradesa' and its various parts is of great importance. In fact, the whole region followed Buddhism and the peace oriented religion commanded a large following during the Satavahana period in 'Andhradesa'. The Northern Telangana region was also a key centre of political activity for the Satavahana rulers. The region has also many Buddhist centres at *Dhulikatta*, *Pashigoan*, *Mirzampet* and *Kotilingala* which are very important for showcase of Buddha culture & civilization. Karimnagar along with the region in its vicinity is also famous for different types of hills particularly *Rakhi* and *Kandikal* hills. The water Sources for the region is mainly the Godavari River and its tributary *Maner* which pass through in this districts. Other small streams like *Mayathummeda*, *Erukulla*, *Vemulawada*, *Hussianmiya*, *Pedda vagu*, *Bandal vagu* and *Nakkala vagu* are also chief resources for agriculture and drinking water. From industrial point of view as well the study region is well developed. The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) the Singareni coal mines, Granite plates, Lime plates etc, are the main industries in the region. The region possesses red soil which is the base for rich forests. The different places like *Yellareddipet*, *Raikal*, *Sarangapur*, *Kothlapur*, *Masharrao*, *Mahadevapur* are popularly known for rich forests and variety of its flora and fauna. Presently this region is a developing district with various kinds of facilities. Loyer Manir Dam (LMD) is the one of the best tourist places in the area. Apart from there are the *Ujwala Park*, Boating and *Ginnkala Park* (Deer Park). Some of the remarkable and historic monuments are Gandhi Centenary Museum, Kaman, Clock tower, and Helipad Park.

### **Pilgrimage tourism treasure of northern Telangana and their significance**

The following are the famous and important pilgrimage tourist centres in the district that have been attracting millions of domestic and foreign tourists around the year. The study region is known as the cradle of culture and civilizations through the centuries. From tourism point of view it is a very potential region which has the distinction to possess around it historical sites and studded with numerous magnificent and glorious temples rich in variety and splendour. About eighty (80) inscriptions are noticed in and around these temples and monuments revealing the glorious past of this region. There are many pertinent places of pilgrimage tourism in the district. The important and popular temples of the study region have been discussed below one by one along with their specialties.

#### **1. Vemulawada**

Vemulawada, is situated about 8 kms. to the South of district headquarter Siricilla and 35 kms. to the West of Karimnagar. It was the Capital of the Chalukyas of Vemulawada, who ruled over the region from 750 A.D. to 973 A.D. They constructed extensive temples and sculptures at the same place suggest. Vemulawada was once known as *Lembulavatika* and during the course of time, it has converted into *Lemulawada*, *Emulawada* and *Vemulawada*. This ancient town has the sacred and famous temple of Sri Raja Rajeswara, an incarnation of Lord Shiva. The Bhimesvara temple, Nagaresvara temple, Baddi Pochamma temple, Kedareshvara temple, Raja Rajesvara temple, Adityagriha, Subhadhama Jainalaya, are the principal temples in Vemulawada and are the earliest best examples in Karimnagar district. There is Koneru Pond (Pool) known as *Dharmakundam*, the water of which is believed to some curative and medicinal properties and the people of the area consider a dip in the *kundam* is an act of merit (Punyam). Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the state, predominantly local congregate here for religious worship rituals. The Mahashivaratri festival and Kalyanostavam of the deity are celebrated during January-February and February-March respectively which attract thousands of pilgrims from all over the State and nearby places.

#### **2. Kaleshwaram**

Kaleshwaram is another important and historical town which lies in thick forest surroundings at a distance of 16 Km. from Mahadevpuram and 36 km. from district headquarter Bhupalapally at a picturesque spot where small river called the Pranahita. Therefore, the place is considered to be sacred not only on account of its being a confluence holy spot but also due to the existence of many ancient temples. Out of these temples, the one dedicated to Muktheswara Swamy is the most important. Special significance is attached to this shrine owing to the existence of two Shivaling as on one *Panivattarm* (pedestal). The Shivalinga temple is considered to be one of the three *Jyotirlingas* of Lord Shiva which constituted the three corners of Andhradesa (*Trilingadesa*), the other two being Srisailam in Kurnool district and Draksharamam in East Godavari district. There is a temple dedicated to Brahma as well here and at this place. Mahashivaratri festival is celebrated for two days during *Magha* (January-February) due to which a very large number of devotees including domestic tourists visit the place.

#### **3. Dharmapuri**

Dharmapuri is also an important temple for pilgrimage which is situated at a distance of about 48 Km. from district headquarter Jagtial town. It is rightly located on the western bank of the Godavari which forms a natural boundary between Jagtial and Adilabad districts. In fact, this tourist village is said to be one of the oldest villages in the entire Telangana state. Dharmapuri attained religious importance owing to the existence of the shrine dedicated to Narasimha Swamy, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Other temples of importance at the same place are those of Shiva with *Dhakshinamurthy* and *Vinayaka Saptha Matrukas* carved on a single slab stone followed by *Mahishasuramardini*. The sixty (60) pillared Mahalakshmi temple, Venugopalaswamy temple, Hanuman temple, Pochamma Temple and Akkapalle Rajanna temple are the others that heighten the sanctity of the place to the Hindus. Undoubtedly Dharmapuri is one of the places of tourist interest in the State and at this spot the *Kalyanotsavam* of Lakshminarasimha Swamy festival is celebrated during February-March which attracts nearly one million annually as from the state as well from the surrounding areas.

#### **4. Kondagattu**

Kondagattu in Mallial Mandal is about 35 Km. to the South of district headquarter Jagtial lying on the Public Work Department which leads to Karimnagar to Jagtial. The remains of fortifications, caves, caverns and the natural beauty of the surroundings filled with bushes and big trees look like a green garment on the hill which make it a beautiful picnic spot. As per the local tradition, a shepherd while grazing the cattle noticed the image of Anjaneya carved on a stone slab about 300 years ago and all the herdsmen of this place are said to have built a small temple for it. About 160 years ago Krishna Rao, the Deshmukh of Kodmial *Fargana* is stated to have built the present Anjaneya temple. The deity of Anjaneya is installed in the central *Garbhagriha*. The spires on the three *garbhagrihas* attract automatically the attention of the visitors from all over the region. There are *Mandapas* inside attached to the *Prakara* wall on all four sides for the pilgrims to perform their religious rituals and exercise. On Saturday and Tuesday thousands of pilgrims visit the temple regularly on the hill. The devotees who often take Hanuman Deeksha visit this place in large numbers not only from northern Telangana but also from the southern parts of Maharashtra and Chattisgarh.

In addition to the above discussed and highlighted important pilgrim centres, the temples of *Pulastyeswara* at Polasa, *Kesavanatha* and *Panchamukha Lingeswara* at Raikal, *Veerbhadr Swamy* at Kothakonda, *Mallanna* at Odela, *Rajeswara* at Pembetla, *Debba Rajanna*, *Mallanna* at Mallannapeta and several other temples definitely attract thousands of devotees every year and their number is constantly increasing due to good facilities in transportation. Thus, there are many curious items to be noticed and several picturesque spots, heritage centres, and eco-tourism spots in addition to the pilgrimage tourist places to be visited by the tourists in large number both domestic and overseas in North Telangana. The below given Table-3 highlights the inflow of tourist during 2010-2016 which depicts the real image and importance of the pilgrimage centres tourists arrivals data which showcase the real tourist image and importance of the district.

**Table 3:** Inflow of Tourist in North Telangana during 2010-2016

Year	No. of Domestic Tourists	Growth of Percentage	No. of International Tourists	Growth of Percentage
2010	60,02,510	-	25,662	-
2011	49,33,535	17.808	16,947	-33.96
2012	47,52,606	3.667	14,286	-15.70
2013	55,52,518	16.831	15,138	5.96
2014	48,72,182	12.252	8,062	-46.74
2015	81,01,728	86.81	7,302	-0.9
2016	1,41,23,363	74.32	9,045	19.27

**Source:** Director, Dept. of Tourism & Culture, Govt. of Telangana, Hyderabad.

### Recent tourism developmental activities in the study region

The Department of tourism Andhra Pradesh has taken important initiatives and steps in order to provide facilities by implementing various schemes and plans to rise and attract large number of tourists both domestic and foreign in the study region as well as in the entire State. The latest developmental activities of tourism have been discussed below:

1. The state Govt. has allotted around 3.20 acres of land for the construction of Rope Way project for the benefit of pilgrims and tourists at Kondagattu Pilgrim Centre.
2. The Dept. Tourism, Govt. of Telangna has decided to construct Budget Hotels at various pilgrim centres like Dharmapuri, Kaleswaram, Ramagundam, Kondagattu and Vemulawada and the local district authority has allocated about 21.20 acres of land for this purpose.
3. Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) has launched a one-day Package Tour (Daily) from Hyderabad to North Telangana on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2015. Under this scheme T.S. Tourism bus covers Vemulawada, Kondagattu, Saikath Koneru, Dharmapuri, Kaleshwaram and Kotilingala.
4. A Heli Tourism project concept was initiated by TSTDC very recently at Vemulawada pilgrim canter of the study region.
5. The Director, Dept. of Archaeology, Govt. of Telangana has sanctioned sufficient amount for the excavation works at Kotilingala historical site.

### Future strategies for promotion of tourism

Keeping in view the developing of the pilgrim centres in the district the following steps are suggested for better promotion of tourism in future.

1. Improvement of management at the pilgrim centres is necessary for their development.
2. The temple premises should be maintained properly.
3. Proper infrastructure developments like improving roads, construction of hotels, *dharmasalas* etc. with modern amenities are necessary for the growth of these pilgrim centres.
4. Sign boards have to be displayed asking pilgrims not to encourage begging.
5. Facilities like quality and taste of food, drinks, and toilets etc. should be available in all pilgrim centres.
6. Information brochures also are to be made available to the pilgrims about different pilgrim and other tourist centres in the district along with their specialties and also to CD form be circulated in at all National & International tourism bodies.
7. Maintaining proper spiritual atmosphere in these temple areas.
8. The Endowment Department has to take up wide range of publicity campaigns on district temples.
9. The Department of Tourism should take it up as a challenging task and should design tour packages and organize annual tourism festivals in these districts.
10. All the above-mentioned suggestions should be time bound.

### Conclusion

Northern Telangana has its own place on the map Telangana Cultural tourism in view of its glorious heritage in the form of magnificent cultural monuments and antiquities are overflowing with rich art and architecture. The music, folklore and dance during *Jataras* at temples provide a cultured and sophisticated entertainment to the tourists. Telangana State Tourism authorities have good strategies to cater the needs and expectations of National and International tourists and to give them a comfortable stay in Northern Telangana district. Since the responsibility of the development of tourism lies under the State Government, one of the major impediments in the proper developments of tourism which includes the maintenance of the monuments, protection of their architectural, historical and cultural value, is inadequacy of funds. The Central Govt. therefore, has to take up the responsibility of augmenting the developmental activities initiated by the State Government, with allocation of adequate funds at proper time, so that the pilgrimage tourism may be developed not only in the study region but throughout the country.

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