

Managing Heritage Attractions of Village Kotheir – A Theoretical Approach

SHAIB MOHD

Research Scholar

Department of History

University of Kashmir, India

Abstract:

Failure to facilitate conservation efforts and the absence of specified site management plans as well as pre-determined carrying capacity limits exacerbate the deterioration of this heritage site. History and structural reminisce of this site under study depicts the area's exposure to outer world though what it seems now a geographically remote area. Site has been referred in the ancient sources like Nilmatapurana and Rajatarangini which in a way substantiates the historical importance of the area. No policy had been adopted for the sake of conserving cultural heritage of the area. And also no effort has been taken to enhance the role of cultural heritage for the development of the area. In order to hand over this outstanding heritage to the future generations, it is critical to break the current bottlenecks. To create a virtuous cycle for desirable heritage conservation, several issues should be considered. First, new financial resources should be secured. The most realistic resource under the circumstances would be tourism revenues which can grow significantly under due care and considerations. Village based tourism can sustain the manifold purposes, so it's an endeavor to limelight the historical heritage of the area for tourism purposes.

Key words: Heritage, Tourism, Kotheir, conservation, Arpath, Papsudan tirtha, Kapatesvara.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The valley Ārpath or Harsapatha which opens to the east of Anantnag forms the Pargana Kuthar(Stein, p.467). This name is probably connected with that of the ancient tirtha of Kapatesvara, situated on the southern side of the valley close to the village of Kotheir (Hasan,p.110). The village of Kotheir is situated 8 kilometres above Achabal, a little off the Achabal-Kashtwar road (Iqbal, Excelsior). The letter of the name is undoubtedly a derivative of Kapateshvara, as the analogy of Jyether< Jyesthesvara, Triphar< Tripuresvara, etc., clearly shows (Stein, 467). The place has for many centuries in the past enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity. King Bhoja of Malva who was a contemporary of King Ananta (A.D. 1028-1063) (Kak, p.139) of Kashmir had a round tank constructed at Kapatesvara (Stein, 467). R.C Kak writes that it was built with heaps of gold that king Bhoja sent. King Bhoja vowed that he would always wash his face in the water from the Papsudana tirtha (Agarwal, p.161). King Ananta (Padmaraja) made the fulfilment of his difficult vow possible by regularly despatching from this tirtha large numbers of glass jars filled with that water (Stein). The *Nag* (spring) has 3 *kanals* and 5 *marlas* of land registered in the revenue records (Revenue record). The Hindus believe that this sacred spring shoots from the foot of Bishanji.(Mabool, pp.145-46) Hence, in the book of Shastri they have named it Vishnu-pad(Ibid). Its water is always blue in colour and ice blocks float around it during winter.

The author of Zainah-tarangini writes that Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin passed his leisurely time on Kotheir Mountain in the summer season for amusement and recreation and for hunting and fresh air (Ibid). Many times he took a boat on the Kotheirnag along with a saint of his time who was his spiritual guide. He passed his time in reading and writing books on *Tasawuf* and in the discussions on various points relating to it, and kept busy in going around the spring. The tank is circular

made up of stones built by Bhoja is still partially extant. The flights of steps flanked by side-walls which are surmounted by the cornices usual in Kashmiri temples, facing north and south respectively, lead down to the water level. By the side of the spring are two small temples which seem to be contemporaneous to the stone wall of the spring. The larger temple measures 8' 4" internally and faces south-west. Its roof seems to have been destroyed by fire. The entrance is 3' 8" by 6', and it is noteworthy that the recesses on the exterior of the other three sides, which in most other temples are of about the same dimensions as the open doorway, are in this instance much smaller. (Koul, p.83) The smaller temple measures 6' 4" internally. It faces west. Its lower part is buried underground. There is a long stretch of wall 246' long and about 12' wide, on the north side of the area, which originally formed part of the enclosure wall round the temples and the tank. (Ibid, p.83). The fragment that is above ground on the east side shows that this surrounding wall is in reality a cellular peristyle. The top stones of the cells are visible.



Google Map View of The Site



Images of Papsudan Nag



Scattered Structures at the Site

OBJECTIVES

- To document the history of the site under study
- To identify cultural heritage resources available at Kotheir.
- To view local communities' perception towards cultural heritage tourism development.

METHODOLOGY:

The required information's are collected from both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data and information's are collected through primary sources, field survey and participant observation. Secondary data are collected from various relevant books, journals etc.

DISCUSSING THE SITE

Abul Fazal, in the *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that there exists in the village of Kotheir a deep spring surrounded by a stone temple. When its water decreases an image of Mahadeva in sandal wood appears (Stein). In this tank Shiva is believed to have shown himself in the disguise of pieces of sandalwood floating on the water (Mabool, p.137).

The local tradition narrates that the tank and its stone enclosure was constructed by a Raja from the Deccan named Matsukund. This King was disfigured by horns which had grown on his head and had in vain sought relief by visits to numerous sacred sites. When near Kapatesvara (Kothair) he noticed that a wounded dog was healed by entering the water of the sacred spring. The king followed his example and got rid of his horns. Thereupon he testified his gratitude by the construction of the tank (Local Sadr Sultan Mir also revealed the same). To same king is ascribed the erection of a temple in the usual Kashmiri style. A curious local legend reports that a

treasure lies buried somewhere in or near the spring, and that there was a stone slab embedded in the wall of the spring on which were inscribed directions for its discovery and expenditure on the repairs and upkeep of the spring and its dependent shrines. The same legend associates the name of a king Mutskund with the foundation of the temples. In support of this the people quote the adage:

“Mutsakund razas manshihandi kan Timkati tsalanas? Kuthar van” (Rafiqa, Yasmeen reveals during interview)
(King Mutskund has buffalo's ears: where will they be removed? In the wood of Kothair)

R.C Kak writes: “He (Matuskund) is said to have been favoured by nature with a pair of buffalo's ears, of which he was anxious to rid himself, but he could not achieve his purpose by any means at his disposal. At length, being advised to try a bath in the waters of this spring, he had his heart's desire. In gratitude he expended his treasures upon the foundation and upkeep of the temples and the spring (Kak, p.140).

The total land under the ruins or monuments at Kothair is 7 *kanals*, including the barren land of 12 *kanals* around it (Revenue Record). And under survey number 427/1, fallow land (barren land) 2 *kanals*, and under survey no. 427/2 barren land 3 *marlas*, and under survey no. 428 it has 12 *kanals* of land registered (R.R). In total it has occupied 36 *kanals* and 8 *marlas* of land. The revenue record has not mentioned the name of the Nag as *Papsudan* but is mentioned by the name *Shankarshannag*.

A few years back near about Rs 45 Lakh were sanctioned for its renovation (Rural and Urban office, Achabal). But the centre temple in front of the Nag fell ironically into the water during reconstruction of Nag in 2011-12. The temple which possessed Shiva Lingam and some idols fell deep into the spring. These idols were revered by Hindu community prior to insurgency. Thus, sheer negligence of the concerned contractor had ruptured the historically rich assets of the past (Farooq,

interview). Local traditions associated with this spring reveal that in the ancient times, the Hindu *Yatris* used to come here to wash of their sins from its healing waters (Iqbal). On Baisakhi fair is held at this shrine, it is called *Achan Trie Yatra* (Ravinder).

PROSPECTS

To secure revenue for conservation from the significantly growing tourism industry, it is necessary first to ensure a symbiotic integration between heritage tourism and conservation. If such integration prevails in Kashmir, it would pave the way for a sustainable tourism benefit to flow towards conservation of these Kothair monuments and spring. During the study it was found that local residents were deeply committed to the conservation of the site in their daily life activities. However, without better awareness about the scientific ways to conserve cultural heritage sites, their commitment in some cases has negative impact on heritage values. In the case of residents support for tourism development, those residents who were less educated, resided away from the site, and had no tourism-related exposures tended to be less interested in tourism development. Local administrators also performed weakly in both sectors, and provide little or no support to residents who would like to engage in the tourism industry, particularly in commercial activities. The negative impacts of tourism on the socio-economic spheres of Kothair were also found to be negligible because of no tourism activities except the occasional visits of some devotees towards the sacred *Papsudannag*. At the same time, to understand their level of attachment with the heritage, villagers were asked whether these scattered structures and heritage spring have any value for them or not. Our findings indicate that majority of respondents believed that the place have religious, cultural and historical values for them and

hoping for economic benefits in coming future as well. Furthermore, such values may incubate their sense of ownership over the site. People replied that they have a sense of ownership over the site. Hence, this shows to some extent the local residents tend to have a profound sentimental attachment to the heritage. Our survey findings regarding Kothair residents level of attachment with their heritage seems to be inconsistent with previous studies on heritage by Timothy (1999, pp. 5-17) and Myles's (1989, pp.118-27), which argued residents of developing countries seems have few sentimental attachments to historic and other heritages. In general the majority of the respondents want to see the tourists visiting their village and want to get engage in tourism-related businesses. Maximum number of the respondents argued that Tourism Department has never taken adequate measures to inform the local community about the basic essence of heritage conservation. In addition, according to the respondents, public discussions were hardly held to discuss what residents should do in order to sustainably preserve the rich spring and scattered temples. The local government can play a vital role in enhancing local residents' awareness and participation in both the conservation and tourism development arenas. Villages with historical attractions can be best managed by the authorities' pain-sticking efforts through regular visits and making direct involvement of the people a possible affair. Frequent discussions between the local government and community can be a way to narrow the broad gap between them. The integration of heritage tourism and conservation can be materialized through the collaboration of various stakeholders as well as by considering tourists' perceptions of the site and its surroundings (Mc Kercher and du Cros,).

CONCLUSION

After going through the primary sources and folklore regarding the site of Kothair it is pertinent to mention that this site was

having religious importance during ancient times. Sources testify that the site attracted kings to spend their leisure time in Kothair Mountains. So here we can say during medieval times its sublime and picturesque beauty attracted people. We can't say that it has totally lost its religious sanctity as people still come from outside valley to celebrate *Achein Trei Yatra* at this *Nag* annually.

Authorities should take some steps to revive this site for pilgrim tourism. The site which was once considered sacred and was hailed by the great kings of its time is now totally neglected by the authorities. The site is yet to figure on the tourist map of the state. Although located at a minor distance from the busy spot of Achabal, the tourists miss to see this grand heritage site of the south Kashmir. Since State Archaeology Department has taken few steps and has renovated the arcade around this mysterious spring but no steps have yet been taken to conserve the archaeological remains of the site. Recently site has been updated as a site of importance when it got precedence on the heritage calendar of Department of Archives and Archaeology. It needs further extension through media advertisement, so that it can attract the attention for heritage tourism and can sustain the economy of the state in general and of local area in particular.

To sustainably harmonize heritage tourism and conservation, we suggest that the government should start pre-conservation studies of the heritage as a first step in line with preparing a site management plan and carrying capacity limits. To do so, both financial and human resources have to be secured for conservation. The government should consider several conservation financing approaches by linking the tourism industry with the conservation sector. Tourists are also expected to share a part of these costs through many ways. At the same time, local resident's commitment to conserve the site must be also maintained through enhancing their level of awareness, and protecting them from undesirable tourism

influences. A mutually beneficial relationship free from undesirable conflict among stakeholders must also exist if one aims to harmonize the two sectors through stakeholder collaboration. Importantly, special attention must be also given to alleviate the unfavorable tourism service facilities of the town so as to boost tourist's satisfaction and comfort at the destination.

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INTERVIEWS

1. Mohd Sultan Mir, retired PHE employee.
2. Sajja, W/o Late Mohd Shaban Wani, Age 85. 17 April 2015
3. Rafiqah w/o- Ali Mohd Lone, age 65,
4. Yasmeena, W/o Mohd Amin Lone, age 45,
5. *Jamabendi*. (transferred to Archaeology Department) Patwari record Under Khasra no/ survey no. 427.
6. Information gathered from Rural and Urban Development Office, Achabal. But the Project was completed under the authority of R&B.
7. Interview with Farooq Ahmad Lone, S/o Ali Mohd Lone, age -35, Patwari from Kothair, 10 March 2015
8. Ahmad, Iqbal. Papsudan Nag, Daily excelsior