

Chhattisgarh State: A Potential of Tribal Tourism

Tapesh Chandra Gupta*

Department of Commerce, Govt. J.Y. Chhattisgarh College, Raipur, India

***Corresponding author:** Tapesh Chandra Gupta, Department of Commerce, Govt. J.Y. Chhattisgarh College, Raipur, India. Tel: +917712427126; Email: tapesh_48gupta@yahoo.in

Citation: Gupta TC (2018) Chhattisgarh State: A Potential of Tribal Tourism. Tourism Hospit Ope Acc: THOA-123. DOI: 10.29011/THOA-123. 100023

Received Date: 25 September, 2018; **Accepted Date:** 09 October, 2018; **Published Date:** 17 October, 2018

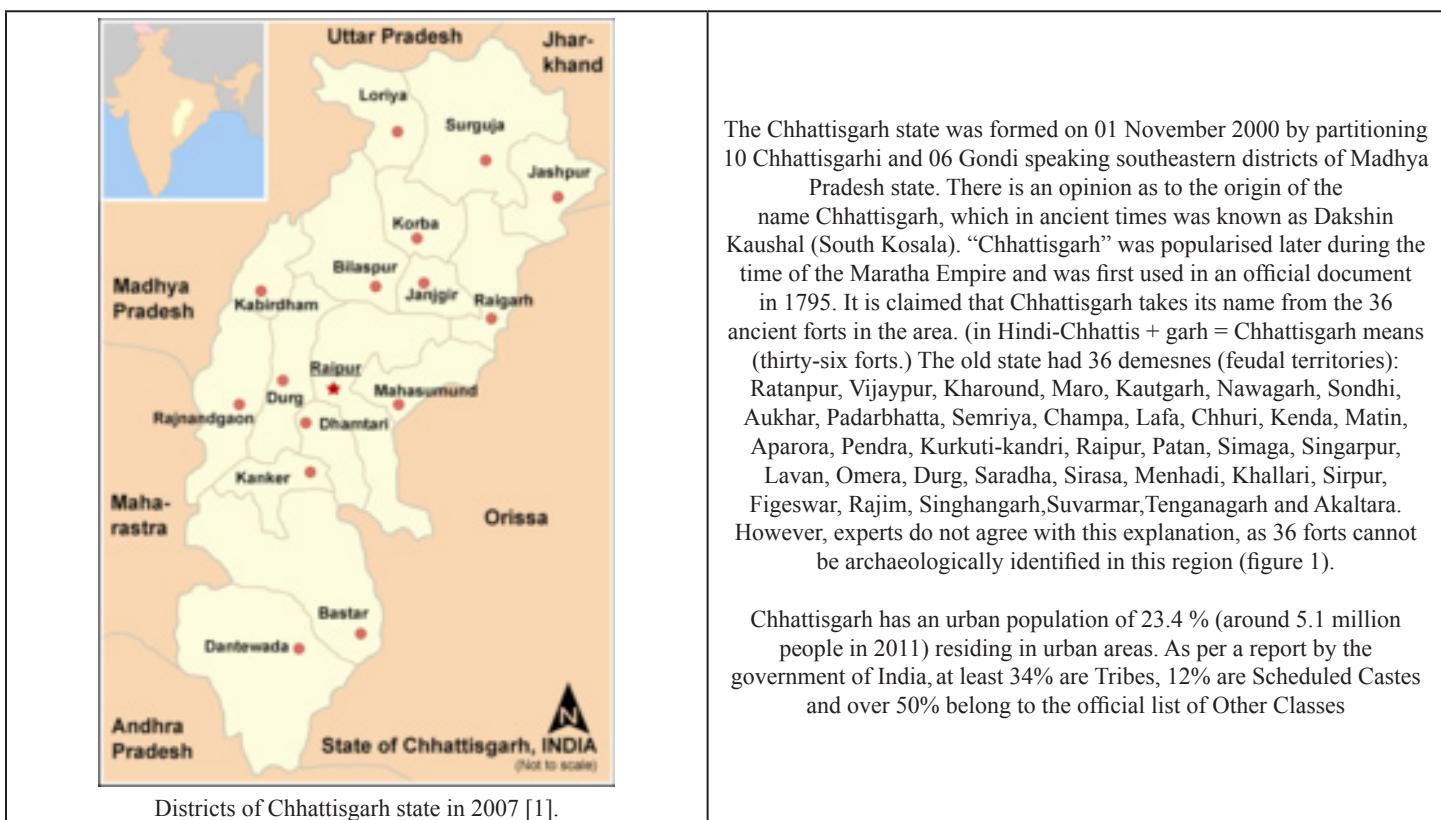


Figure 1: Districts of Chhattisgarh state in 2007.

The northern and southern parts of the state are hilly, while the central part is a fertile plain. The highest point in the state is the Gaurlta Deciduous forests of the Eastern Highlands Forests cover roughly 44% of the state. The state animal is the van bhainsa, or wild asian buffalo. The state bird is the paari myna, or hill myna. The state tree is the Sal (Sarai) found in Bastar division.

Chhattisgarh state has coverage of mostly four to six-lane roads which provides connectivity to major cities, eleven national highways passing through the state which are together 3055 km in length. Almost the entire railway network spread over the state

The Chhattisgarh state was formed on 01 November 2000 by partitioning 10 Chhattisgarhi and 06 Gondi speaking southeastern districts of Madhya Pradesh state. There is an opinion as to the origin of the name Chhattisgarh, which in ancient times was known as Dakshin Kaushal (South Kosala). "Chhattisgarh" was popularised later during the time of the Maratha Empire and was first used in an official document in 1795. It is claimed that Chhattisgarh takes its name from the 36 ancient forts in the area. (in Hindi-Chhattis + garh = Chhattisgarh means (thirty-six forts.) The old state had 36 demesnes (feudal territories): Ratanpur, Vijaypur, Kharound, Maro, Kautgarh, Nawagarh, Sondhi, Aukhar, Padarbhatta, Semriya, Champa, Lafa, Chhuri, Kenda, Matin, Aparora, Pendra, Kurkuti-kandri, Raipur, Patan, Simaga, Singarpur, Lavan, Omera, Durg, Saradha, Sirasa, Menhadi, Khallari, Sirpur, Figeswar, Rajim, Singhangular, Suvarmar, Tenganagarh and Akaltara. However, experts do not agree with this explanation, as 36 forts cannot be archaeologically identified in this region (figure 1).

Chhattisgarh has an urban population of 23.4 % (around 5.1 million people in 2011) residing in urban areas. As per a report by the government of India, at least 34% are Tribes, 12% are Scheduled Castes and over 50% belong to the official list of Other Classes

comes under the geographical jurisdiction of the South East Central Railway Zone of Indian Railways centred on Bilaspur, which is the Zonal headquarters of this zone. The main railway junctions are Bilaspur Junction, Durg and Raipur, which is also a starting point of many long distance trains. These three junctions are well-connected to the major cities of India. The air infrastructure in Chhattisgarh is small compared to other states. Swami Vivekanand Airport in Raipur is its sole airport with scheduled commercial air services. A massive reduction in sales tax on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) from 25 to 4% in Chhattisgarh in 2003 has contributed to a

sharp rise in passenger flow. The passenger flow has increased by 58% between 2011 and November 2012.

Nascent historical tribe state of Chhattisgarh has a large untapped potential for tourism. State's Forests are home to notable species of animals that cohabit with forest communities since centuries. Large number of waterfalls & caves in the forest landscapes sustains with greenery, amazing variety of Nature's creatures, world life animals. Deep forest area of state Bastar has the oldest and densest tribal habitation, almost untouched tribe culture for thousands of years. The state is also full of traditional culture & natural medicine. A resource-rich state, it is a source of electricity and steel for the country, accounting for 15% of the total steel produced. Chhattisgarh, situated in the heart of India, is endowed with a rich cultural heritage and attractive natural diversity. The state is full of ancient monuments, rare wildlife, exquisitely carved temples, Buddhist sites, palaces, waterfalls, caves, rock paintings and hill plateaus. (Figure 2,3). Chhattisgarh's nominal Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is estimated at ₹3.26 lakh crore (US\$45 billion) in 2018-19, the 17th largest state economy in India. The economy of Chhattisgarh recorded a growth rate of 6.7% in 2017-18. Chhattisgarh's success factors in achieving high growth rate are growth in agriculture and industrial production [2].



Figure 2: View of Bhoram Dev, Kabirdham & Rajeev lochan Temple from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014.



Figure 3: View of Chitrakot waterfall: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014.

The paper stresses for effective marketing and development of Tourism that needs constant gearing up of infrastructure to international standards and coordination with the tourism service suppliers keeping in view the nature, culture and human capital which are the key factors in making tourism and tourist destinations desirable for sustainable development of the communities and the environmental surroundings. India is tourist paradise and has all unique features of modernity and traditional hospitality. Each state has its own cultural glory and historical monuments to visit [3]. The cultural heritage is having direct impact in the promotion of tourism. Tourism is considered the world's largest industry with nearly 600 million people traveling and touring. It is single largest activity that brings largest earning to the state treasury (Figure 4-6).



Figure 4: View of Motel at Chitrakot waterfall: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014.



Figure 5: View of Ruler area: from Kapa, Mungeli (My village my agro-crop field)- Dr. Tapesh Chandra Gupta.



Figure 6: View of Indra Devi Art & Music University Campus: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014- A special lecture delivered on “Personality development” by Dr. T.C. Gupta at Tribe area [4].

Covered with nature’s canopy of Sal, teak and bamboo trees and carpeted with lush green vegetation, the nascent state of Chhattisgarh has a large untapped potential for tourism. More than 44 percent of the state’s 135,191 square kilometer area is a dense forest home for notable species of animals such as tiger, gaur, nil gay, wild buffalo, chital, wild boar and leopards that cohabit with forest communities since centuries. Bastar forests are the world’s densest to Amazon and one of the three UN identified biodiversity hot spots in India. Chhattisgarh is the newly born state situated in the heart of India which is developing very fast. Like other industries, tourism is also a fast growing industry in Chhattisgarh. Tourist places are spread from Chitrakot, Abujhmad (Bastar) to Mainpat (Sarguja). Similarly, Bhoramdeo (Kawardha) to Rajim (Raipur). Chhattisgarh is gift of god. It has played a significant role in the world of tourism since ancient era. (Figure 7,8).



Figure 7: Goddess: maa Danteshwari, Dantewara,Maa Bamleshwari, Dongargaon and Maa Mahaamaayaa, Ratanpur: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur.



Figure 8: View of waterfalls: Ghatarani, Swetdharaa, Chitrakot and Amritdhara: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014.

Chhattisgarh is surrounded by the ancient hills of Maikal, Sihawa and Ramgiri with plains in middle part of the state. It is the centre of attraction for the tourist since ancient era to the modern time. It has become the centre of philosophy religion and culture. It is an ancient land and it is said that Lord Rama has spent part of exile here and was known as Dakshin Kosala. It has a rich cultural heritage and attractive natural diversity and is full of ancient monuments, rare wild life, temples, Buddhist sites, palaces, waterfalls, hills, plateaus, caves and rock paintings. The land of Chhattisgarh has a rich and varied archaeological and cultural heritage. On one side, there are dense, left forests and rapidly flowing rivers and waterfalls. On the other side, there are numerous sites with historical relevance that can be developed into national and international tourist resorts. However, all places have not got the needed connectivity and basic amenities, which need to be developed in a big way to bring Chhattisgarh as a sought after destination in the tourist map of India.

The state has taken a conscious decision to do away with past legacies to adapt to tourism Development [5]. The tourism policy is focused on creating a unique image for the state and to position it as an attractive destination for both domestic as well as foreign tourists. The state will play a role of catalyst and facilitator to promote tourism and invite private players. It will ensure inter-government and intra-government coordination, rationalized taxation policies, regulating sustainable growth and

providing tourist's safety. In order to define its role, the Chhattisgarh Government has come out with a Tourism Policy. According to the state's draft tourism policy, an important component for the development of tourism is the availability of basic infrastructure like motor able roads, clean drinking water, uninterrupted power supply, proper waste disposal systems, proper transport facilities etc. (Figure 8).

The message given by our Honorable Chief Minister Dr. Raman Singh about Chhattisgarh is "Tourism in Chhattisgarh has many dimensions. Places of tourist interest date back to pre-historic times and range from rock shelter paintings to archaeological sites of different dynasties and rulers." The Chhattisgarh tourism board has been established with the mandate of steering the growth of tourism industry in the state. Its core responsibility is to develop a frame work for institutional growth, investment opportunities and viable private, public and community partnerships. The Chhattisgarh Government has already taken many initiatives; give an impetus to growth of the tourism industry in the state. This included:

- Development of basic infra structure on the highway and for tourist.
- Integrated Development of Tourist circuits.
- Development of Rural Tourism in Tribal villages.
- Development of Mainpat as Hill stations.
- Development of Shirpuras Major Buddhist center.

The rest houses in the state will be developed as comprehensive tourist centers. Tourist information centers are also being set up, within the state and in major Indian cities of other states, to provide information to tourist. Traditional fairs festivals are going to be celebrated in a big way and everyone is welcome to join in Tourism Development [6]. The new website of the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board is a treasure house of information for everyone interested in discovering tribal area, Chhattisgarh tourism is going to lead the whole country with proud and pride. Now it's going to be the next that change in heritage of Chhattisgarh tourism.

To harness the true potential of tourism [7], government is adopting integrated approach for development of tourism areas. The new government has taken steps for development of basic infrastructure at all tourist spots and on the highways. Development of Integrated Tourist Circuit - **Rajim-Kawardha- Raipur - Baranawapara-Sirpur- Gangrel dam-Kodagoan-Bastar- Nagarnar** with the help of financial assistance from Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. Rural tourism is being promoted in tribal villages of Nagarnar & Chitrakote with the

assistance of Govt. of India and UNDP. (Figure 9,10).



Figure 9: View of Sarguja Museum: from Chhattisgarh Culture Department, Raipur A Report-2012.



Figure 10: View of Rudri dam Dhamtari and Artist at International Trade Fair-New Delhi by Dr. Tapesh Chandra Gupta.

The Rest Houses of other departments are being transferred to tourism department to put them to viable commercial use. Tourism centers have been opened in prominent cities of nation. To boost pilgrimage tourism, the state government has decided to connect the three shakti - peeths at Danteshwari Mai in Dantewada Ma Bamleshwari in Dongarhgarh and Mahamaya temple in Ratanpur and equip them with the best infrastructure facilities and thereby promote the temple circuit. Chhattisgarh Tourism Board has its head office in Udyog Bhavan, G.E. Road, Raipur 492006, India. The state of Chhattisgarh has its own well organized and administered Tourism Board an Impressive website www.chhattisgarh tourism. Net [8], complete images and description of the sites has almost all the information a tourist needs about the state and the product.

Suggestions for Developing Tourism

Information Access and Dissemination:

In addition, the state in a very short period of time has developed an effective network of the travel information centers across the country. There is need to expand it further and establishing a few of them in other countries would of immense help. Well informed professional tourism managers with full of creative zeal, managing these centers can act as ambassadors of the state. The prospective tourist should be able to find the address and the contact numbers in the website and the Chhattisgarh state is up to the mark in this respect. Efforts need to be made towards impressing upon the already established tour operators working in other parts of the country.

Constant and patient and patient approach by inviting them to be the partner in the tourism promotion and presenting the well-designed readymade tourist circuits within the state will surely convince the investors and operators and they would not be able to ignore the state any more.

Tourism Expos and Marts:

Organizing heritage exhibitions in Expos and Marts attract the tourist of all ages. It will display life size photographs, paintings, sculptures, famous Bastar handicrafts and video shows which will trace back the history of the state arising interest of the tourist.

Tourism Weeks, Seminars and Awards:

Wide spread awareness regarding the Chhattisgarh tourism product can be created by celebrating Chhattisgarh Tourism week.

It will present the potential of the state tourism and the impact it can make in various sectors of the economy and the society. Seminars and Conferences provide an opportunity to get together and discuss long and short term plans to boost tourism. Tourism Awards should be instituted and be given away to the outstanding performers- be the travel agents, tour operators, educational or the health institutions.

Continuous Updating and Modernization:

Tourism as a product requires constant updating and modernization. We must strive to make the destination for tourist to visit again and again and hence look beyond the destinations available within the states. Domestic tourism should not be overlooked and be promoted very seriously for proper and continuous utilization of the tourism infrastructure. Immigration officials in the airports and the tourist guides create the first impression; they should be made to update their behavioral standards and knowledge. The tourist is encouraged to learn the foreign languages so that the tourist be at ease with him. He should be able to work as a goodwill ambassador. (Figure 11).



Figure 11: View of Bhoram Dev Temple Campus: from Chhattisgarh Culture Department, Raipur A Report-2014.

Tax Free Purchasing:

The state Govt. has plan to promote tourism through tax relief policy and announce Tax free sachsen on purchasing and development of tourism (Hotel, Motel, Water/ Snow park, etc.) should be encouraged so that more tourists can be attracted.

Hotel Management:

Chhattisgarh state tourism board has developed and run the hotels, restaurants and guest houses with required facilities and managed. (Figure 12).

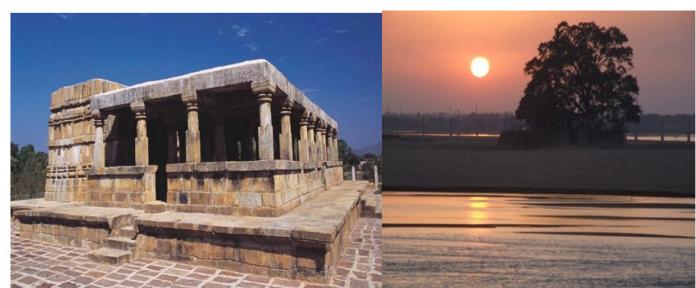


Figure 12: View of Sarguja Tribe District: from Chhattisgarh Tourism Department, Raipur A Report-2014 at Tribe are.

Conclusion

It is not the question of the state of Chhattisgarh alone but India as a whole has never able to attract foreign tourists on the scale witnessed by tiny countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore etc. In year 2007-08, India witnessed 3.54 million foreign arrivals registering 10.4% growth over the year 2006-2007. But Singapore

a country almost half of Delhi, could receive three times more- 10.28 millions in the same year. Despite the slow growth if compared to other countries, Indian tourism remains the biggest foreign exchange earner. In terms of Government spending on tourism, India ranks 153rd out of 160 countries. The problem faced by India in attracting tourist is not just on account of some temporary disturbances, not only there are no high quality and affordable hotels, what a tourist pays as hotel tax often varies from one state to another. Thus the tax regime governing tourism industry also need to be overhauled and made more tourist friendly. After all, don't we say that that the tourists are our honored guests? *Atithi Devo Bhava*. (Figure 13).

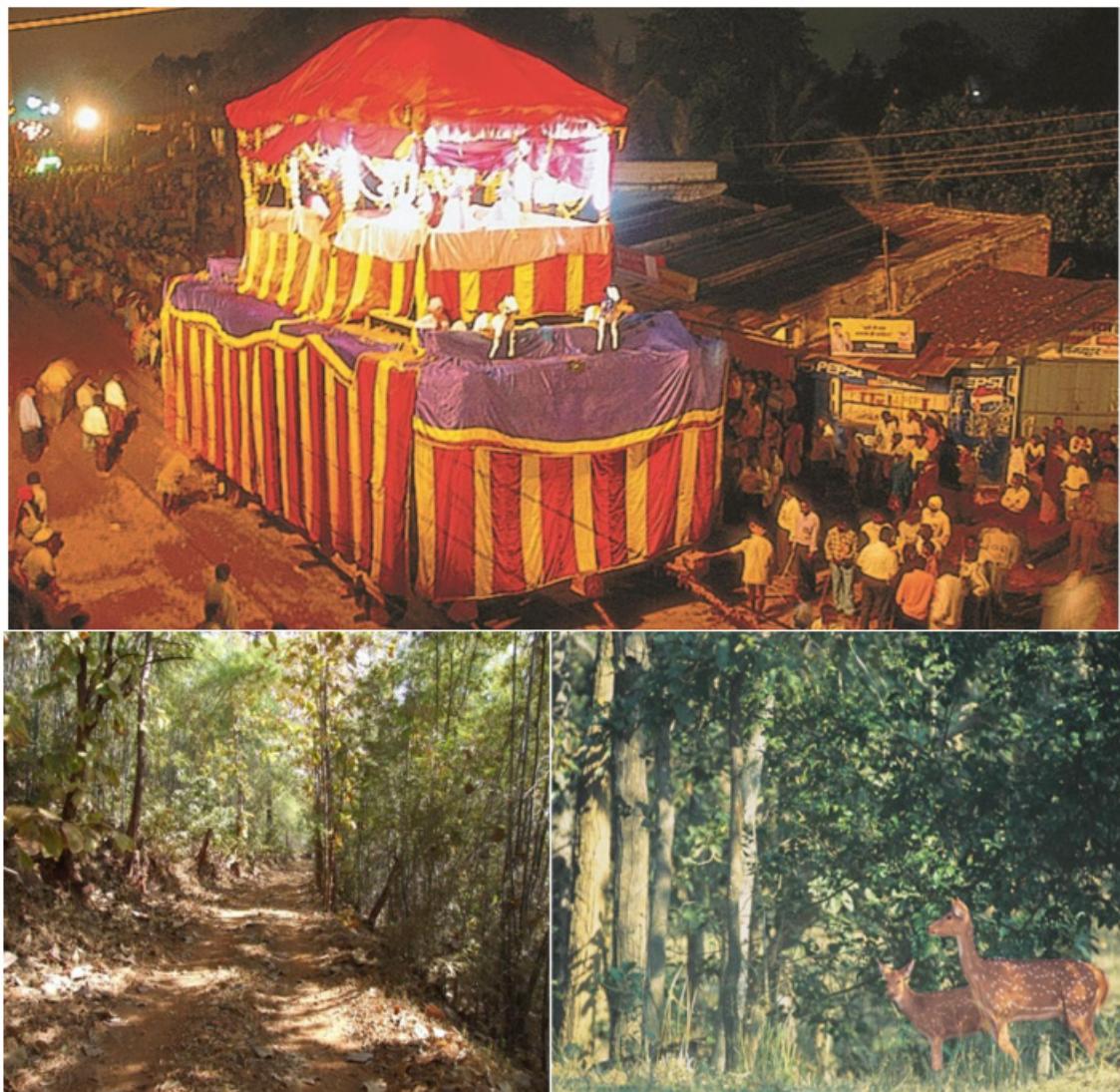


Figure 13: View of World famous Bastar Dussahra festival: from Chhattisgarh Tourism & Culture Department, Raipur Annual Report-2013.

Another issue is our tourism policy which must act as a catalyst that brings out the best of the tourism market through the conservation of environment, both natural and culture, along with the goal of reaching the benefits of the local community. Policy initiatives towards promoting the environmentally sustainable form of tourism that is co tourism will prove to be more beneficial for the state's development objectives.

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