

GEOLOGICAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA - A CASE ANALYSIS OF BELUM CAVES

Dr. Pujari Krishnaiah*

Abstract:

In view of the fact that beginning of the history, man has migration spirit, which is satisfied through travel, so he has abundant fascination for travel. The urge to know the unknown, to discover new and strange places, to seek change of environment and to achieve new experiences, inspired mankind for new vestas and move from one place to another. Most of the travels in the past were almost unplanned and limited; having not much significance, but as civilization developed and moved further, conscious travels began to invade the world. In fact, the history of civilization is a rather chronological account of tribes and classes leaving the land of their fore-fathers and going in search of new horizon. So the people are strongly believe that the Caves are abodes of gods and goddesses, therefore sacred in the Indian culture mileu. Hence they become pillgrimage centres. They are found in the hill tracks and forests and form part of eco systems. They were dwellings of human populations all over the world in the prehistoric times.

Key Words: Geological tourism, invention, employment generation, economic growth and belum caves.

* Assistant Professor, Dept. Of Geography & Environmental Studies, College of Social Sciences and Languages, Mekelle University, Ethiopia.

Introduction:

Now a days, tourism is one of the fastest growing industry in the world. It is the third biggest industry after the fuel, and steel industries in the world. It is also smokeless industry, employment generation industry and income generation industry. It has a multiple branches i.e piligrimage tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and geological tourism etc. Each section of tourism having different types of activities. This paper deals with Geological tourism and its development in Andhra Pradesh, India with reference to Belum Caves. Belum Caves is the fastest growing geological tourism and it attracts more tourists. It is located in the western part of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh. It is 80 kms. from Anantapur, 30 kms. from Tadipatri, 420 kms from Chennai, 280 kms from Bangalore, 275 kms from Tirupati, and 220 kms from Hyderabad.

Geographic distribution:

Caves are found throughout the world, but only a portion of them have been explored and recognized by speleologists. The distribution of recognized cave systems is widely slanted towards countries, where caving has been admired for many years such as Italy, Australia, U.K, United States and etc. As a result, look at caves which are found generally in Europe, Asia, North America, East Asia region and etc. However sparse in South America, Africa, and Antarctica. This is a great simplification, as huge expanses of North America and Asia contain not recognized caves, while areas such as the Brazil and Madagascar deciduous forests contain many documented caves. As the world's expenses of soluble bedrock are examined by cavers, allocation of known caves is expected to modify. In Andhra Pradesh, State mainly two famous caves are there i.e. Borra Caves at Vishakapatnam district, and Belum caves in Kurnool district. Caves is generating more income and creating more employment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC).

History of the Study Area:

Belum Caves is the second largest caves in the Indian sub continent and it is also longest caves on the plain areas. It gives the geological patterns like sinkholes, spit holes, stalactite and stalacmite formations. It is impressing more tourists and some tourists are treated these

stalacmite formations like Shivalingams' which resembles of Shiva's statues. They are performing poojas to stalacmite formations. Its having long passages, spacious cavity, bright water arcades and drain off. The caves reach its deepest point 120 feet from surface to the lowest point of the cave that is called as Pataalaganga. Belum Caves originate its name from "Bilum" in Sanskrit. It's a cave, but in Telugu Bilum means hole. In the beginning, people had seen and termed it as a hole, slowly it was termed as Belum Guha. It means Cave in Telugu language called as a Belum Guhalu. Belum Caves has an extent of 3229 meters, it is making the second largest natural caves in Indian Subcontinent.

In initially, the caves were discovered by the British Surveyor Mr. Robert Bruce Foote during 1884. After that, one of the Speleologist named H. Daniel Gebauer during 1982 and 1983. He visited this place along with his team members and conducted in depth exploration of the caves. They prepared some designs for structure of the caves. For this mission, so many local peoples are assisted for success of the task. Even though, Belum Caves were known to the locals, first work of Caves were stated in expedition report of Robert Bruce Foote, in 1884. Subsequently, Belum Caves stayed unnoticed for almost a century till a German team headed by Herbert Daniel. Gebauer conducted meticulous exploration of the caves in 1982 and 1983. In this expedition they were found the following items i.e. 4500 BC Remnants of vessels of that age were found in the caves. That is associated to the Jains and Buddhists religious. Afterwards in 1988, Government of Andhra Pradesh confirmed that it was protected location under the control of Archaeological Survey of India. In the year 2000, Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation has takeover for improvement and development of the caves. APTDC allowed the tourists to visit in the year February 2002 with the development.

At present, 3.5 km of the cave has been successfully discovered. However, 1.5 km only is open to tourists and still there is a research is going on in the Belum caves with collaboration of French and Indian government. They are finding the innovative ways in different channels.

Geologically and historically, Belum caves are important. There are some indications that Jains and Buddhists monks occupied this caves centuries ago. Many Buddhists rests Archaeological survey of India (ASI) also found bits and pieces of vessels and etc. of pre-Buddhist era and dated the remnants of vessels found in the caves to 4500 BC.

Historical well at Belum Village:

In the heart of the Belum village is natural. But artificially expanded well with perpendicular walls. The well is the one and only drinking water source for the entire village. The well lengthens into a cave and rises and decline in the water level is in accordance with the monsoon in severe dry weather conditions. When the water level moves away, people are forced to enter the cave to bring water. The passage expand up to about 65 mts. Its happened in 1963, 1946 and in 1981. In 1946 B.Malla Reddy village head man of Belum, made a sketch of the cave below the well, for the first time. The variation of the water level at the well point. It has been related to the Belum caves for the small stream. The caves are believed to be heading towards the Belum Well. A tributary of the chitravathy river seems to have diverted the flow of the penneru by headward erosion. It caused sedimentary filling of the Belum caves. Higher flows in the penneru river may have created the water level about Belum and the sinking of the level varied with the erosion in the riverbed.

Development of the Belum Caves by APTDC:

Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation has taken over Belum caves during 1999 from Archaeological department. They developed decoration of the caves and maintained by APTDC. It was completed all its developments during February 2002. Its opened for visitors for their enjoyment of natural beauty of the caves. In its development, the major highlighted things are:

Now, caves are controlled by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC). It has developed the pathways in and around 2 km length of the caves which provided soft illumination. It has created fresh-air-shafts in the caves. Inside the cave, APTDC has installed bridges, staircase, etc. for easy movement inside the cave at many places. It has also created a canteen, rest rooms and etc near the entry point. Besides, they have constructed dormitory facilities for the visitors who are wish to stay in the nights at the site area. There is a giant Buddha Statue near a hillock next to the Belum Caves. The area of cave known as "Meditation hall" was used by Buddhist Monks. The rest of Buddhist period were found here. These relics are housed in archaeological museum in Anantapur.

Main Sections of Belum Caves:

Inside of the caves the structures are in different shapes according to their shapes.

Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation named its in different names i.e.

- Simhadwaram — Simhadwaram means lion's gate. It is a natural arch of stalactites formed in the shape of a lion's head;
- Kotilingalu Chamber - This section contains stalactite formations which are a kin to shiva lingams. This section has thousands of such stalactite giving it a surrealistic look. It has one huge pillar formed due to stalactite and stalagmite joining together.
- Patalaganga - It is a small perennial stream which disappears into the depths of the earth. This stream flows from the southeast to northwest. It disappears and is believed to be heading towards a well at the Belum village, located 2 km away from the caves.
- Saptaswarala Guha or Musical Chamber - Saptaswarala Guha means chamber of seven notes. The stalactite formations in this chamber reproduce musical sounds when these are struck with a wooden stick or knuckles. This section was opened to the public in 2006.
- Dhyana Mandir or Meditation Hall - This section is near to the entrance. An interesting formation at Meditation hall looks like a bed with pillow to recline. The local legend has it that in ancient times many sages use to live here. This section was used by Buddhist Monks. Many relics of Buddhist period were found here which are now housed in museum at Ananthapur.
- Thousand Hoods - This section has amazing stalactite formations shaped like thousands hoods of cobra . The stalactite formations on the ceiling looks as if thousands of cobras have opened their hoods.
- Banyan Tree Hall - This section has a huge pillar with stalactites hanging from the ceiling. This gives a look of Banyan Tree with its aerial roots when seen from below. The locals call it "Voodalamari" since it looks like a Banyan Tree with its aerial roots hanging from the branches.
- Mandapam - This is a huge area inside the cave with magnificent stalactite structures on the sides giving it a look of a hall with pillars.

Awards for Belum Caves:

Indian Government has awarded to belum caves for the development of the caves by giving awards to the APTDC as follows:

- In, 2003, APTDC won the prestigious "National Tourism Awards" instituted by Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India for its initiatives in developing and promoting the Belum Caves.
- Belumcaves was also adjudged the best destination award 2002 at the Tourism and Travel Fair held in Bangalore in 2002.

Tourist Inflow to the Belum Caves:

During 2002- 2003, it attracts 2.43 lakhs of tourists to this center, because it was opened to the tourists by APTDC and it was recorded more number of tourists during the period. Most of the tourists are domestic for belum caves. The tourist's inflows are low comparatively in following years and it follows for the year 2003-2004. The tourist inflow was 1.66 lakh for the year 2004-2005, the inflow was 1.52 lakhs for the year 2005-2006, the inflow was 1.13 lakhs for the year 2006-2007, the inflow was 1.54 lakhs for the year 2007-2008, the tourist inflow was 1.50 lakhs for the year 2008-2009, the inflow of tourists was 1.54 lakhs for the year 2009-2010 , the tourist inflow was 1.58 lakhs for the year 2010-2011 respectively.

Tourist Inflow in Belum Caves:

Year	Tourists inflow(in lakhs)
2002-2003	2.43
2003-2004	1.67
2004-2005	1.52
2005-2006	1.13
2006-2007	1.36
2007-2008	1.54
2008-2009	1.50

2009-2010	1.54
2010-2011	1.58

Source: Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation Records.

Most of the domestic tourists are visiting these place relatively international tourists. More reasons for the visit in belum caves and located in the remote area. There is no rail and air transport connectivity to this place and road connection also very poor and having single road facility, buses are not frequency available. Lack of publicity is one of the major drawbacks for the inflow of the tourists to this shine tourist site. One way, it is also rural tourist place as well as geological tourist place.

Income generation of the centre

Year	Income (Rs. in lakhs)
2002-2003	45.45
2003-2004	44.86
2004-2005	37.01
2005-2006	27.02
2006-2007	31.71
2007-2008	36.42
2008-2009	43.93
2009-2010	44.54
2010-2011	45.12

Source: Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation records.

Belum caves has produced the income through selling of its entry tickets, incomes are as follows: They collected 45.45 lakhs for the year 2002-2003, its income was 44.86 lakhs for the year 2003-2004, 37.01 lakhs for the year 2004-2005, 27.02 lakhs for the year 2005-2006, 31.71 lakhs for the year 2006-2007, 36.42 lakhs for the year 2007-2008, 43.93 lakhs for the year 2008-2009, 44.54 lakhs for the year 2009-2010 and 45.12 lakhs for the year 2010-2011. Because of the

tourist's inflow variations, tickets cost variations in the collections for the years take place. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporations Proposals for further development of Belum Caves:

The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation is having very good proposals for its further developments of the caves i. e.

- To construct a Budha museum in the premises of Belum caves
- To develop the landscape in the premises
- To develop the rock museum
- To develop the accommodation facilities
- To construct the rest houses for tourists within the premises of belum caves,
- To develop children's park
- To develop the boating unit near the site
- To introduced some direct packages from Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai.

Conclusion:

Tourism has become one of the most important phenomenons of man's spatial behaviour in modern days. Increasing enjoyment of travel tends to get changes in human life all over the place in the world. Tourists bring their money and ideas with them, which further cause numerous changes in every sphere of life. Economic alteration through tourism has normally been accepted by all and consequently tourism has been recognised as smokeless industry. It increased employment opportunity and income potential in almost every sector of economy at national, regional, and local level. The impact of tourism in international development and trade has also been fully accepted by the society. Now a days the geological tourism also enhancing national level in generating the income in a high level manner. It also contributing in high level, not only income generating and also employment generation.

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