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## Potential and Planning for Tribal Tourism in India: A Case Study on Gond Tribes of Madhya Pradesh State, India

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### Structured Abstract:

**Purpose:** Tribes are an integral part of the rich culture of any country so the Gonds are one of the largest tribal groups in the world are still in part of Madhya Pradesh state of India. Cultural tourism as a sustainable link and opportunity for the visitors to learn about and experience different cultures, so the basic purpose of this case study to help the visitor understands the present Indian culture in relation to the cultural history of Gonds tribe and how they can be the showcase with tourism potential.

**Methodology:** This paper is descriptive in nature and based upon extensive secondary resources, focusing on the opportunities and planning of Tribal Tourism in line with the overall role and contribution of tourism in the state.

**Findings:** The development of tribal tourism should be done keeping in mind sustainable planning and development. There is a need to capitalize on the available Gond tribal resources to produce the maximum optimum result. Gond Tribal tourism can surely act as a sector for the development of Gond tribes by providing a source of employment and connect with urban life.

**Research Limitations:** It is prepared only to give insight on possibilities to develop tribal tourism which needs further research. there is no such extensive work done on the same area or published material related to tourism development so far.

**Practical Implications:** Need to be done detailed feasibility studies on the topic.

**Social Implications:** It also requires the consent of those Gonds tribes who will be going to impact their socio-economic and cultural impact through tourism.

**Keywords:** Culture, Tribal Tourism, Potential, Tourism Planning, Sustainability

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**Article Classification:** Case Study

### **Introduction**

‘Tribal tourism’ as defined by Terry Ward, journalist and travel writer, is “a new form of travel in which tourists visit tribal villages in order to be exposed to a culture completely different from their own.” Tribal tourism is a way to experience the tribe’s life, art, culture, and heritage on remote and rural areas, benefiting the local tribal community and providing interaction between the tourists and the tribes an unusual experience. Indian tribal culture is rich in many aspects. As Indian tribes are found throughout the subcontinent, tourists will be able to peep into diverse Indian culture through these tribes. Statistically, more than 500 different communities of tribes are part of the Indian population which consists in number about 80 million. The tribal communities of India have always been a major attraction among the travel freaks, professional photographers and cultural aspirers.

Tribal- tourism both at conceptual and empirical levels is significant in a number of respects. In the present scenario, tourism is a grooming sector in developing nations. However, its impact on indigenous people has become a controversial issue. Over the hundreds of years, changes have been observed both in the content and context of tribes of India. With globalization, the processes of these changes not only widened and multiplied but also gained in importance. Tribal tourism explores the multitude of interactions that exist among the tribes and socio-economy of the local people.

In India, states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Nagaland, Himachal, and Chhattisgarh see maximum tribal tourism. It has been involved in creating diverse earning opportunities for the tribes living in the hinterlands. It is also creating awareness about the indigenous people in India, who are facing the problem of oppression, lack of opportunities and social exclusion. As per the reports of the census of India, 2011, Tribe’s population represents about eight percent of the country’s total population.

Madhya Pradesh situated on the famous Central Plateau and bounded in the north by the great Northern Plains; by the great Thar Desert and the Sahyadaries in the west; and the great tribal belt consisting of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and the Orissa in the South and the East. Madhya Pradesh (MP) is inhabited by a large number of tribal communities, who are unique in terms of their culture and also adjusting at different stages of modernization. Their occupations today range from hunting and gathering to white-collar Indian tribal groups that hold an inheritance of traditions, which are deeply rooted in their culture and lifestyle.

## **Gonds Tribes in Madhya Pradesh**

Journey to the tribal places in Madhya Pradesh give a view of the long-standing culture and traditions of the country, which continues to persevere in its primitive surroundings. Tribal tourism in Madhya Pradesh can be an opportunity to well explore, understand and experience India in its true sense. Traveling in vast areas covered with virgin forests that are yet not explored and walking on those unexplored trails and discovering some of the tribal regions as well as the best wildlife areas is no less than a heaven for visitors.

With a population of around four million, the Gonds are one of the largest tribal groups in the world. They live mainly in Madhya Pradesh and its surrounding states. With 14.7% percent of the total population of ST's live in Madhya Pradesh, this is the highest in population in whole India ST's population (Census survey of India, 2011). Gond tribes' population is in majority even in India and Madhya Pradesh occupies the largest populations of Gonds. Gond tribe is considered to be culturally very rich and is more organized and effective when we compare it with other tribes. The word "Gond" has come from a Telugu word "Kode" which means mountain. Due to the reason that Gond tribe prefers to live in mountain areas that's why this name is given to them. The name by which the Gonds call themselves is Koi or Koitur which means unclear. Generally, Gond tribe is found on both banks of River Narmada in MP but it is also found in few other districts like Baitul, Hoshangabad, Chhindwara, Balaghat, Shahdol, Mandla, Sagar, Damoh, etc.. Gond tribe has many sub-castes and they are: Pardhan, Agariya, Ojha, Nagarchi, Solhal, Koila Bhooti.

### **Literature Review:**

The population of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the country, as per Census 2011 is 10.45 crore. STs constitute 8.6 percent of the country's total population and 11.3 percent of the total rural population. Numerically, most highly populated tribes are Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra; and Santhals of Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal with more than 4 million populations for each group. Kerala has a tribal population of 484,839 divided across 36 different communities. Though Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population, the concentration of them is only 21.1 percentages to the total population (Census of India, 2011). India has seen a revolution in tourism, and tribal tours have become extremely popular among tourists from all over India and abroad (Ritika Potnis, 2016). Lilang, Tbulan, and Hrung (2013) in their study in Taiwan Chu-Chu Liao, concludes that Indigenous (tribal) tourism is resource-based, and their culture works as a major tourist attraction. The beautiful natural landscapes should be developed along with tourism in such areas. The exotic landscapes and their people may work as a catalyst to attract tourists Culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of places, regions, and countries. It has been found that today's culture is expanding an important part of the tourism product and having a significant role as it creates uniqueness in a crowded global marketplace. Presently tourism is also one of the sectors can provide an important means of enhancing culture and creating income which can support and strengthen cultural

heritage, cultural production, and creativity (OECD, 2009). Authentic and pleasing natural scenarios, as well as cultural artifacts for tourists, are abundantly available in rural communities than in the urban areas for the purpose of tourism (Ikporukpo, 1993). Tribal tourism may renew local architectural qualities and facilitate the revival of traditional arts, crafts, and culture. It is a major source of employment and income in many rural areas (David, 1995). Nirmal Kumar Bose (2002) through his book 'Tribal Life in India', has discussed the various aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of the Scheduled Tribes. It also enlightens the readers on the varied means of their livelihood and also their social organization, religion, art, and music. The book based on the proceeding of a nation seminar entitled 'Emerging Roles of Anthropological Knowledge in Promoting Tribal Welfare and Development,' written by N. Sharma (2002), contains twenty-five papers from various disciplines. All the papers based on applied in nature and contents directly or indirectly are useful for the betterment or uplift of any aspect of tribal life. Book entitled 'Policies and Strategies for Tribal Development Focus on the Central Tribal Belt' written by Meenaxi Hooja (2004), analyses the changes in approaches, strategies, and schemes of tribal development in India over various Five Year Plan periods. Special attention has been paid to the problems and achievements of Tribal development programmes and administrative arrangements in India's Central Tribal belt comprising the state of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. Tankesh Joshi and Muktesh Joshi (2010), in their study "A new aspect for Economic sustainability among tribes of Chattisgarh" concluded that the potential of using aboriginal tourism as a strategy for rural tribal development in Chhattisgarh using Baster as a case as a study. The research paper published by Nilakantha Panigrahi (2005), Development of Eco-tourism in Tribal Regions of Orissa: Potential and Recommendations from Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, Bond University (Australia), have emphasized that eco-tourism is one of the ways to develop the tribal community and tribal tourism. Eco-tourism is a concept center on the nature of tourism and with regard to local communities emphasizes conservation, sustainability, and biological diversities.

The initiative of The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) through an MoU with the UNDP for the Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP) in 2003, has taken steps to view tourism in the broader context of development with a focus on sustainability of rural tribes. Ecotourism Policy of Madhya Pradesh (Draft), as well as the Madhya Pradesh Forest Policy (2004), has conceptualized the role and engagement of indigenous communities in the promotion of tourism. With the passing of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, the role of the community as protector and an important stakeholder of the forests have been established. Developing tribal tourism in tribal areas it is very important that the adverse effects are minimized and the benefits coming from it are maximized. With this prevention of environment, natural landscapes, wildlife, flora, and fauna should also be taken into consideration.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The review of the literature mentioned above reveals that there are both positive aspects and negative aspects of tribal identity, culture, and economy. Though various imitative of government and other groups started, still the life conditions and livelihood of those tribes have not much changed. the tribal's Madhya Pradesh, who were once dependent on the forests for their livelihood and lived like nomads are also quietly settling down, reaping the benefits of modernization and tourism is one the way to connect them with the world and their own survival and sustainability. The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the Gond Tribal Tourism potentials in Madhya Pradesh State.
- ii. Appraise the constraints to Gond Tribal Tourism development and participation in the state.
- iii. Create an informed interest in the development of tribal tourism potentials of the state
- iv. Make suggestions and recommendations which may assist policy-planning makers in tribal tourism development.

### **Tribal Tourism potential in Madhya Pradesh with reference to Gond:**

Madhya Pradesh is known as the incredible heart of India. The state shares its boundaries on the north by Uttar Pradesh, the east by Chhattisgarh, the south by Maharashtra and the west by Gujarat and Rajasthan. It is one of the fastest-growing states in the country, particularly in the tourism industry as it has bagged the Hall of Fame National Award, given to a state for being judged the best one for tourism three years consecutively, at the National Tourism Awards, 2018. During the year 2017, 15.05 crore tourists, including 3.63 lakh foreign tourists had visited Madhya Pradesh.

Among the various states for cultural tourism in India, Madhya Pradesh is the most popular. The reason for this is that Madhya Pradesh is famous for its rich cultural heritage. The state is renowned for many magnificent palaces and forts which showcase the rich cultural heritage of the state. References of Gonds have mentioned almost all the historical texts of India. Some of the most magnificent tribal art in India comes from the deep forests of the region of Amarkantak in the eastern territory of Madhya Pradesh, which the mainlands of Gond tribes. It has been found that the Gonds, have their origin from Dravidian culture, and one of the earliest inhabitants of the subcontinent, even evidence, has found their roots back to a pre-Aryan era. Gond culture and their rich traditions have so much importance and significance as their lifestyle very much close with nature, animals, birds and the forest, their home. According to the historian, these tribes settled in the Gondawa region way back in the ninth to thirteenth century AD. They had also established their kingdom as a Gond dynasty and ruled over the region Garha-Mandla, Deogarh, Chanda, and Kherla in central India. Some of Gonds tribes considered great warriors and freedom fighters since the British period.

**Customs and Festivals:** Gonds are following culture as father culture. Gond people are very strict regarding their social customs and do not like any change in it. Marriage within

the same Gotriya is not acceptable in gond tribe but they use to marry among near relatives. There are several methods of marriage in gond tribe and they are:

- Dudh Lautana
- Chad marriage
- Pathoni Marriage
- Lamsena Marriage

Ladies of gond tribe are very much fond of ornaments and tattoo marks on their bodies. The people of gond tribe use the minimum cloth to hide their bodies. Male uses a small piece of cloth in order to cover their waist and legs on the other hand females use series to cover their waist up to knee, head, and breasts.

**Fair and festivals:** Fair and festivals are influenced by Hindu traditions. Gond tribe celebrates many festivals but the most important among them are: Vidri Pooja, Bak Panthi, Har dhili, Nawakhani, Jawara Madhai, Cherta Keslapur Jathra is the important festival of the Gonds. Apart from these they also celebrate a Hindu festival called Dusshera.

**Dances:** Gusadi dance is the most famous dance performed by the Gonds. It is performed by wearing headgears decorated with the peacock feathers. They wear cotton cloth around their waist. They smear ash all over their body and beards made of animal hair are also an important part of the dance costumes. The main dance forms of the gond tribe are Karma, Saila, Bhadoni, Keherwa, Sajni, Sua Hardili, Deepawali.

**Paintings and Art Work:** The artistic expression and aesthetics of Gond's folk painting are remarkable. These paintings are an integral part of their traditional festivals and auspicious occasions. The Gond folk painters have a flair for ritualistic and auspicious wall paintings and floor decorations. Ceremonial decorations in flour are also made on almost all auspicious occasions like Nevala Ashtami, Sheetla Saptami, Radha Ashtami, Sanjhi, Maha Laxmi, Mamulia, Karwa Chauth, Gahoi Ashtami, Bhai Dooj, Deepawali, Ekadashi, Makar Sankranti,. Traditionally they decorate their houses mud walls with traditional designs. With the research, it has been found that some of the painting works of Gonds are quite similar and remarkable with aboriginal art from Australia as both styles use dots to create the painting. Gonds are also very popular in woodwork, metalwork, and Terracotta.

**Occupations:** The people of the Gond tribe earn their livelihood by agriculture or by hunting, they also use to collect roots and various other products of the plant in order to sale them in the market. The main items in their food are Mango, Amla, Jamun, Mahua, Fishes, Rice and tree roots.

### **Steps for Planning and Development of Tribal tourism for Gonds of Madhya Pradesh:**

Despite Gond art and culture gaining mainstream acclaim in the 1980s, the themes in their art have remained the same till now not much explore in terms of the socio-cultural and economic point of view. Today, Gond's culture and heritage need to highlights and express with the help of tourism which is the motive of tourism to develop sustainable rural tourism.

It has been observed that despite having rich cultural heritage legacy and abundance of cultural attractions of Gond tribes, the destination Madhya Pradesh is still unable to improve the quality and standard of Tribal cultural tourism in the state. The encouragement and control of Tribal tourism in Madhya Pradesh need to foster closer cooperation and best practice between all the stakeholders involved in cultural tourism. There is a need to encourage the deepening of the Madhya Pradesh identity and cultural exchanges through Tribal tourism. The success of Gond tribal tourism in Madhya Pradesh depends upon the successful involvement of a wide range of actors concerned with tourism development and planning. These actors include the Government sector like Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Government Tourism Department, Agency, Cultural department and Private sector like Hotels, Travel Agent, Tour Operator, Transport Operator, Service Provider; NGOs like Tourism Groups Preservation Groups, Environment Groups, Community Groups. Based on the report of the NATHPO Tribal Tourism Toolkit Project: "Cultural and Heritage Tourism in Indian Country" 2005 Washington, DC, there is a need to plan comprehensive planning. To promote and develop the Gond Tribal Tourism the state can adopt the following steps in planning as:

1. Form an Action Committee: there is a need to constitute an Action committee with State government with the help of other concern departments both public and private to provide a detailed report about the strategies and recommendations for chalk out the proper plan to link Tribal tourism with the mainstream of tourism planning.
2. Plan and Complete a Tribal Community Inventory: There should be requires a proper inventory of Gonds resources in terms of culture, heritage and economy.
3. Conduct the survey to find the gaps between the tourism requirement and the Gond's life-style to meet the challenges in developing tribal tourism in the state,
4. Analyze Potential Current Market: after finding the gaps for linking tribal tourism with the mainstream of tourism, the government should need to assess the existing or new markets for this special interest form of tourism.
5. Establish Priorities and Goals: Specific policy can be drafted with clear goals and objectives to promote tribal tourism in the state.
6. Develop Strategies/Projects and Identify Resources: projects can be initiated through government and private sector partnerships. Ideal places or locations can be identified to start such Gond tribal tourism project in the state.
7. Analyze Project Impacts: A proper feasibility study needs to be conducted so all the pros and cons can be tested without diverting the main focus of the development of tribal communities.

8. Test Strategies in the Community: create the sensitivity and awareness about the project among the Gond tribes and develop the strategies with participation of those community tribes in such projects. a model project can be initiated and test the possibilities.

9. Formal Endorsement and Implement the Plan: after taken all consideration and approval with all concerned authorities, the plan can be implemented and monitoring and rigorous follow-up can be started.

To promote Gond tribal tourism as a tourism product, a proper marketing strategy needs to be formulated so that hosts and tourists both are informed about it. This information can be given through visitor centers, tribal departments, cultural departments, tribal research institutes (TRIs), tribal tourism books and guides. This technology can also be used like promotional audio and videos and brochures etc. Apart from this, there should also need to conduct special training workshops for tour operators/ travel agents/guides/ taxi operators/ Hoteliers and others directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry to generate awareness about Gond tribal tourism potential, its destination, sites, and requirement. With the involvement and guidance of researchers in this field and tourism professionals can further upgrade and enrich the educational value and cultural importance of these tribes. Scheme of government's under the Ministry of Tribal Affair and Ministry of Culture likes 'Conservation Cum Development (CCD)', 'Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA, 2006)', 'Scheme of Assistance to State Scheduled Tribes and Finance Development Corporations (STFDCs)', 'Financial Aid for Persons distinguished in Letter, Arts and such other walks of life', 'Scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion and Dissemination of Tribal / Folk Art and Culture' can be analyzed and link with development of this form of tourism. Finally, the Ministry of Tourism at the centre and state level can play a prominent and proactive role in planning tribal tourism and project it as an integrated part of the Indian tourism industry.

### **Conclusion:**

The ancient state of Madhya Pradesh has everything you name it and the state has it. But the challenge is to convert the potential into realization. Since the state has so much diversity the brand positioning has to be well thought and planned. The development of tribal tourism should be done keeping in mind sustainable planning and development. There is a need to capitalize on the available Gond tribal resources to produce the maximum optimum result. Gond Tribal tourism can surely act as a sector for the development of Gond tribes by providing a source of employment and connect with urban life.

In the planning for Gond Tribal tourism, the first thing requires to identify these tribal locations need to be made assessable. After this other amenities such as transportation, accommodation, connectivity, food and beverages and safety need to be developed. The formulating a proper policy and planning for Gond Tribal Tourism, the state government



should keep in view the following two points (i) the quantitative and qualitative targets in respect of number of tourists likely to visit the state for this niche market segment of tourism and the estimated earnings from them and consequently the investment required for tribal tourism development should be defined clearly in the draft plan, and (ii) the volume, nature, and sources of capital that has to be spend on development programmes and coordination and cooperation between the government and private players which can play a vital role and act as catalyst to give proper way for development of Gond Tribal tourism in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

**Acknowledgments:** This paper was partially supported by World Cultural Tourism Association. I thank our colleagues from the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management, who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research, although they may not agree with all of the interpretations of this paper.

I thank Dr. S Chinnam Reddy, Director of NITHM, Hyderabad (TS), India for assistance with guidance and selecting this title, and [Dr. R N Shrivastva, Hod History Department, Govt. MKB College, Jabalpur (MP), India, for comments that greatly improved the manuscript.

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