

# Potential of Cave Tourism in Maharashtra: A Special Reference to Lenyadri Cave

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study is to present the dimensions of the caves to produce revenue. This revenue will assist the management while conserving the cave. This paper was analyzed the tourist inflow of the Lenyadri caves in Maharashtra followed by revenue produced through tourism. The study is based on qualitative method whereas secondary data used to find out the potential of them. Inherent of the caves will help to promote the state with new “Cave Tourism” product. A descriptive statistical analysis was used to examine the tourist inflow and revenue collection at caves. This study is limited to ticketed monuments which are registered under the Archaeology Survey of India. This finding can't be generalized to other caves in Maharashtra or India. The finding of the study will aid to understand the potential of caves as an independent “Cave Tourism” product to a global market.

**Keywords:** Cave Tourism, Potential, Maharashtra, Lenyadri

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A cave is “a large hole in the side of a hill, cliff, or mountain, or one that underground” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Caving is an individual activity to explore the caves (Farlex). Caving traditionally was a recreational activity to explore the wild cave systems. Now, cave tourism is allied with wild cave systems as well as to explore man-made caves which are carved at mountain cliff or hill (Bali, 2018). The caves are located in natural settings and carving, sculptures inside them are tangible. Thus, caves can be promoted under ecological tourism product (Rathnayake, 2016). Tourist visits the caves especially for nature, trekking, pilgrimage and to explore the history. Thus, their motive and socio-demographic traits play an important role to finalize travel (Kim, Kim, Park, & Guo, 2008). Cave as an individual entity will support the tourism industry to promote “Cave Tourism” to the global market. Development of Cave Tourism will ultimately help the government and policymakers to conserve the environment (Okonkwo, Afoma, & Martha, 2017).

Maharashtra State offers more than 800 - 900 caves which spread across the entire state (Joshi, 2008), (Bagwe, 2019). These caves were carved for the residential and meditational purposes by Buddhist, Jain monks (Dalavi, 2014). The financial aids are given by various merchants, traders. This evidence witnessed through numerous inscriptions and epigraphy (Pandit & Narayan, 2013), (Gaikwad, 2015), (Hebalkar, 1985).

Various studies are conducted on the historical, archaeological, epigraphical background. However, Lenyadri cave promoted under pilgrimage tourism. This paper tends to study the potential of the Lenyadri cave to endorse the site as an independent “Cave Tourism” product amid the global market. In this paper, the author analyzed tourist inflow and the economy generated through tourism in the study area.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study the tourist inflow of Lenyadri caves in Maharashtra.
- To examine the revenue generated through tourism in the study area.
- To understand the prospects of Lenyadri caves to develop as an independent Cave Tourism destination.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** This study was undertaken as descriptive research to explore the current scenario at the cave site area. The data collection is done on a basis of secondary data received from Archaeology Survey of India (ASI) – Mumbai Circle.
- **Area of the study:** Lenyadri (Pune District of Maharashtra)
- **Analysis:** The data collected and analysed with the help of a descriptive statistical analysis like graphical presentation.

## 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA

### *Lenyadri Cave*

Lenyadri is located in Junnar (Tehsil) of Pune District, Maharashtra. Junnar is settled in the Sahyadri mountain ranges surrounded by nature, pilgrimage, and historical sites. Junnar tehsil itself is having more than 350 groups of caves along with numerous spots like forts, water cistern, temples, ghat, waterfalls, pass, etc. (Department, 2018). Lenyadri cave is a hill cliff and these caves are located 04 km north of Junnar across the river Kukdi. This mountain hill is also known as Sulaiman Pahar and Ganesh Pahar (Archaeology Survey of India, -). This cave is also recognized as Ganesh Lena, as one can find Ganesh Shrine carved

in one of the caves (Archaeology Survey of India, -), (Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation, 2015). Lenyadri is a rich in history, natural beauty which facilitates trekkers and pilgrimage tourist to visit the Lenyadri (-, Junnar, 2017). This cave is approximately carved within 1st Century to 03rd century CE. This caves dimension is found similar to Ajanta, Karla, Bhaja, etc. (Archaeology Survey of India, -).

As per the information published by “Shri. Lenyadri Ganpati Devasthan Trust, Pune”, Lenyadri declared as ‘B’ class pilgrimage area under the “Rural Pilgrimage Development Scheme”. Through this, the area received the funds for development work from the Government of Maharashtra, Rural Development Department (Lenyadri Ganpati Devasthan Trust, 2018). This scheme helps to uplift the destination under the Rural Tourism Scheme.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Potential of Caves in the study area

Lenyadri cave is a ticketed monument registered under Mumbai Sub circle of Archaeology Survey of India (ASI) (Archaeology Survey of India, 2009).

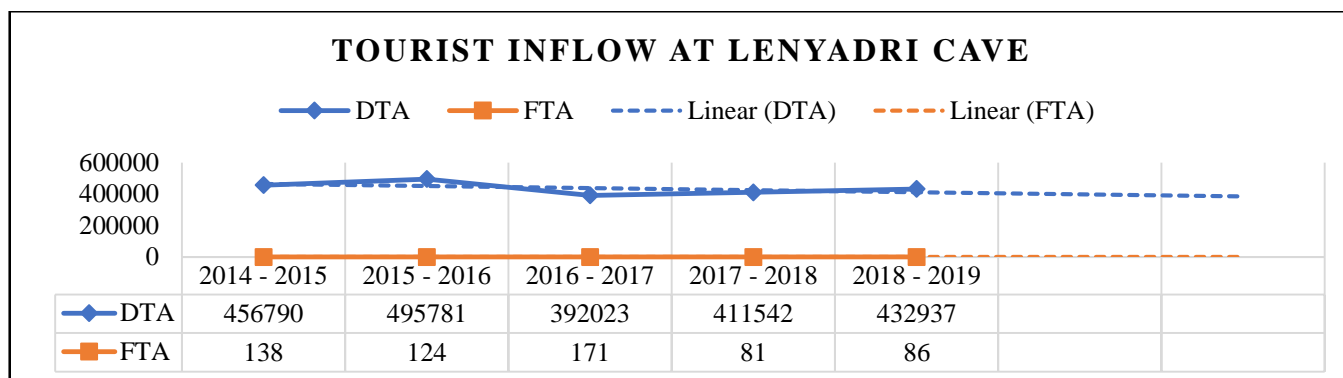


Figure 1: Tourist inflow for last 05 year at Lenyadri Cave

(Source: Archaeology Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle dated on 05.03.2019)

The graphical representation provides information about tourist inflow at Lenyadri caves during the past five years. Graph cited that in the year 2015- 2016 there is a positive shift in tourist inflow in Domestic tourists visiting Lenyadri, Pune. Because Maharashtra Tourism Developmental Corporation (MTDC) promoted Maharashtra to the global market under the scheme of “Visit Maharashtra Year 2017” (DNA Representative, 2015). The domestic tourist inflow has decreased by 103758 but there is an increasing trend observed in foreign tourist arrivals. Author forecasted the linear trend for upcoming years and found out that there is will be a decreasing trend for domestic tourists but foreign tourist inflow will be constant for the next two years.

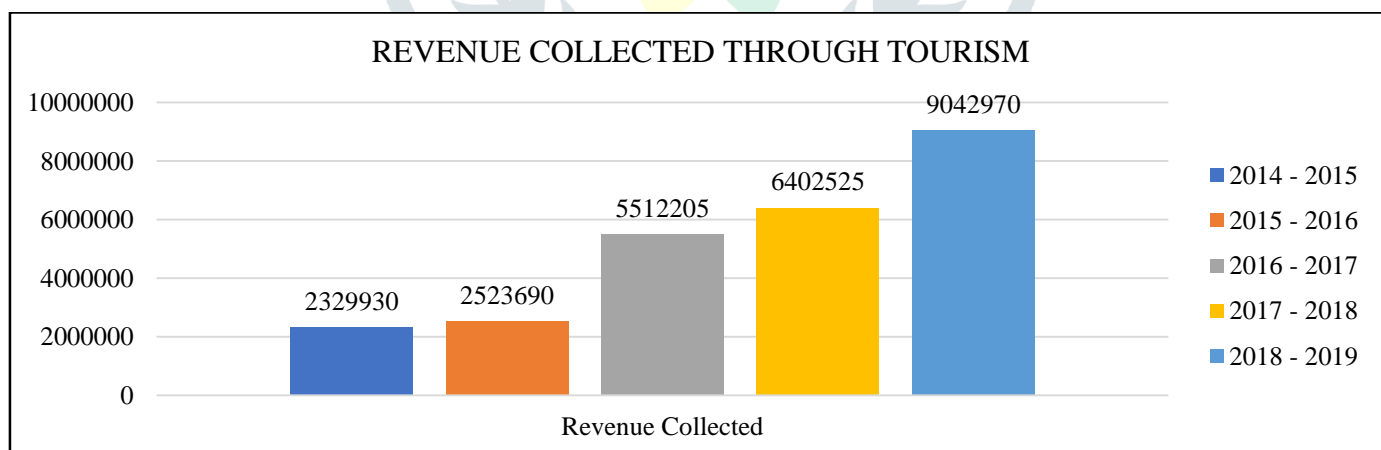


Figure 2: Revenue Generated for last 05 year at Lenyadri Cave

(Source: Archaeology Survey of India, Aurangabad Circle dated on 15.04.2019)

Revenue generated through tourism is showcasing positive increasing trend throughout the last 5 years. There was a decrease in domestic tourist inflow but at the same time, a positive shift in foreign tourists helps to uplift the Foreign Exchange Earning (FEEs). And this ultimately helped the government to uplift the revenue generation through tourism.

### *Prospects of Lenyadri caves to develop an independent Cave Tourism destination*

Lenyadri is located in State Highway 111 and is easily accessible by all the five A's of the tourism product. Nearby the cave site area, one can found all the facilities and services which are essential while visiting any destination.

Due to one of Ashtavinayak Shrine, this cave is famous among the domestic tourists. Trekkers, nature, pilgrimage, heritage are the various categories of tourists visits these group of caves (MM Representative, 2009). According to Survey done by Archaeology Survey of India (Mumbai Circle) confirmed that Lenyadri is 03rd largest destination visited by tourists (MT, 2014). For trekking and relaxation, a group of senior citizens visited the Junnar districts which include Naneghat, Malshej Ghat, Shivneri and Lenyadri (Ambre, 2016).

Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeology Survey of India launched "Adopt a Heritage" scheme in 27th September 2017. These central government organizations have identified numerous heritages sites and launched this scheme for development, maintenance, and operation of Tourism Amenities in Monuments (Ministry of Tourism, 2018). According to a guideline published by the Ministry of Tourism, Monuments are divided into major 03 categories and higher value given to the orange color. They have identified Lenyadri is an important heritage monument with a higher weightage (Ministry of Tourism, Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan, 2017).

According to latest marketing guideline issued by Ministry of Tourism, New Delhi on 07th March 2018 cited that government requires the estimated tourist inflow (DTAs and FTAs) on the basis of Same day and overnight tourist arrivals. For the same, illustrative list of tourist destinations in Maharashtra is declared. In that illustrative list of destination, they have covered Lenyadri as one of the prime destinations (Ministry of Tourism, Require Statistical Data Base on published methodology, 2018).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The research studies reconnoiter the tourist inflow and revenue generated through tourism at Lenyadri cave in Pune, Maharashtra. The study concluded that there is a constant positive trend in tourist inflow along with revenue generation through tourism. The government has taken an initiative to promote the Lenyadri cave to a global market and organizing adopt a heritage scheme for the development and conservation of the cave site. Government initiatives for understanding estimated tourist inflow and tourist's participation to explore the site helps to analyzed to the current scenario of the Lenyadri cave and this will aid to develop Lenyadri as an independent "Cave Tourism" product among the tourists.

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