

UNEXPLORED BALOCHISTAN: (SOME TOURIST ATTRACTIVE SITES AND EVENTS)

Tourism

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ABSTRACT

In terms of archeological, historical, cultural and religious sites Balochistan has a great importance and potential in the field of tourism. The Province has a lot of beautiful and attractive places and sites for domestic as well as international tourists. Almighty Allah has blessed Balochistan with many natural, historical and religious sites. When ever some one visit the Pakistan desire to visit Balochistan, there are snows capped beautiful mountains, rich natural parks, red and white sand deserts attracts the tourists, 700 kilometer long crystal clean amusing beach, there are, ruins of ancient civilizations like, Mehrgarh, Naal, Kech, Zhob, and Quetta civilizations attract the tourists to come and visit this heritage. The cultural norms of the area are based on 9000 years old Mehrgarh civilization. The main aim of this paper is to provide first hand information to attract the domestic as well as foreign tourists to come and visit these sites and events and gain knowledge about the beautiful and historic land of Balochistan.

INTRODUCTION

Balochistan has great importance in terms of tourism. The province has a lot of beautiful and lovely tourist places, cultural and religious sites, ancient archaeological sites, Mellas and festivals etc. There are numerous sites and events but among them the following are some important for domestic as well as foreign tourists.

A) SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS SITES:

i-PEER CHATTHA NOORANI

Shrine of Peer Chattha Noorani is situated at Gandawa. An everlasting water channel flows from the front side of the shrine of Peer Chattha Noorani. The shrine is surrounded by the date trees. The water channel (Siyāhāp), flows towards the oasis of the dat trees. White and black

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fishes can also be seen in the channel water. The surrounding fields of Gājān and Gandāwah, and the vast land of the connected areas is watered by the channel. It is worth mentioning that, fish in the water channel come to the frontward upto one km and turn back soon to the shrine of Peer Chattha Noorani. The shrine officials have banned fishing here. The sceneries of outskirts of the shrine are captivating and attractive for the tourists. People come from all over Sindh and plains of Balohistan to visit the shrine. (Pana:2007)

ii- SHRINE OF HINGLAJ MATA OR BIBI NANI

The shrine of Hinglaj is one of the prominent Hindu shrines in the hilly area of district Lasbela some 250 kms far from Karachi is locally known as shrine of Bibi Nani. Shrine is named by the famous Hinglaj Devi and Hingol River, In Sanskrit Hinglaj means the Shrine of the Desert. Hindus not only come to visit this religious place from the countryside, but also from India particularly from Rajestan and throughout the world to perform their religious rites. The temple of Hinglaj Mata has a great importance in Hinduism.

Due to difficult route some two decades before it was not easy to reach Hinglaj but after construction of coastal high-way now it is very easy to reach there. The Makran Coastal Highway linking Quetta and Gwadar passes near this shrine. Then coastal high ways follows the same path which Alexander the Great took when he ended his campaign and returning back. The highway has made the pilgrimage and visiting the shrine very convenient. There is a natural park known as Hingol National Park at 6,200 square kilometers area is also known as the largest Natural Park in the country. (Waheed:2010:03)

iii-SHAH BILAWAL NOORANI

The shrine of the famous saint Shah Bilawal Noorani is situated in the Tehsil Saron district Khuzdar. To reach this shrine, there is also a track from district Lasbela to Shah Noorani. Pilgrims from different parts of the country come to visit the shrine, a number of pilgrims from Sehwan Sharif also come here by foot. As in the Shiite community, the on-footed pilgrims are known as "ZAWAR", who bear a distance from Sehwan Sharif to the tomb of Bilawal Shah Noorani. While travelling to the Shah Noorani shrine there are many beautiful and wonderful types of scenery attract the tourists to enjoy a lot. In Urdu, Sindhi, Balochi and Brahui mystical songs have been composed to narrate the said saint.

B) FESTIVAL AND MELAS.

I-THE SIBI FESTIVAL

Sibi's traditional festival is the largest and most ancient festival in Balochistan. The Sebi area became historically important when the Lashari family of Baloch made Gandawa and the Rinds family made Sebi their permanent headquarters and constructed huge forts for themselves. Mir Chakar Khan constructed a fort including a big bazaar in Sebi. When the British took possession of Balochistan they continued this gathering with the name of Sebi Darbar to take political benefit from the Balochi tradition and they also established a high-powered council, the Shahi Jirga. The Sardar, the elite, and the elders loyal to the British were awarded prizes and certificates of loyalty. The Sibi Jirga Hall in Sibi is another historical building is sign of the same Darbar. After the creation of Pakistan, this traditional and historic gathering was not only continued but is now arranged as the *Jashn-i-Sebi* mostly in the month of February every year and people from different parts of Balochistan and Sindg to take part in this historical and cultural festival .
(Shahwani: 2009:03)

The main traditional festival in Sibi is the largest and most ancient festival in Balochistan. Sibi is not only the second largest city of Balochistan, but also the oldest historically important city near the well-known Bolan Pass of the subcontinent. According to tradition, in 1878 in the British period, the name of this city was "Sandeman Abad" after Robert Sandeman, but the people did not like this name and Sevi remained Sevi. Many people could not exactly pronounce this so they pronounce Sevi as Sibi. In Balochi poetry, the name of this area is Sevi.

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This comfortable life of the Baloch later became the victim of mutual competition. At the same festival, during a competition, the Rinds declared Rehan Rind the winner beating the well-known horse-rider Ramen Lashari in a horse race. The youth of the Lashari tribe became angry and slaughtered the kids of the camels of Gohar Janati. As a result of this incident, a conflict between the Baloch people started and then continued for a long time. In the winters, nomads from cold areas come to Sibi. A market that sells purebred cattle is also held during the Sibi Festival and young people also take part in

tent pegging, horse racing, sword play, wrestling, camel races, dancing, and other similar activities. The owners of purebred livestock and the best tent-pegging player are awarded swords, arrows, purebred horses, and other prizes.

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C) NATURAL PARKS AND GARDENS.

There are various natural parks and gardens in Balochistan among these the following are worth mentioning.

i-ZIARAT VELLY

The Ziārat Valley is one of the most tourist attractive areas in Balochistan it is situated 133 kms from Quetta city and its altitude is 2449 m from the sea level. Juniper forest here is considered one of the biggest and oldest forests of the world. Ziarat is one of those places which have an old forest like this. According to some researchers, this forest is about 5000 years old.

Tourism Department has constructed an eight-bedded hotel for the tourists at Ziārat valley to comfort the tourists. Ziārat Residency is the important tourist place of Valley. At the distance of 10 kms from Ziārat, the tomb of *Baba Kharwari* is situated, where, a large number of people come to visit his shrine. (Waheed:2010:3)

ii-HARBOI

Harboi is the second largest center of juniper forests situated 45 km from Kalāt City. The word "Harboi" is the derivation of "Her-bu" namely (every fragrances); whereas, the word Harboi denotes that the valley is full of fragrance of different herbs, shrubs, trees and medicinal plants. When the multi-flavored plants come into bloom in the spring season, an unfinished smell spread in the valley of Harboi. Besides, there is a rest house, a mosque and some houses on the top of the Harboi Hills.

The rest house built at the top had been used by the Khans of Kalāt for their summer meetings. There is a thousands year old juniper forest. On the other hand, flavored fragrances of medicinal plants and fluttering of partridges over the sky make the scenes more beautiful, and enhance the attractiveness of the Harboi.

Harboi is situated three hours distance from Khuzdar, 5 hrs from Quetta and 7hrs from Karachi. The construction of Gandawah to Zehri road, and Khuzdar to Shahdadkot road made Harboi an attractive tourist place for the people of the country. (Pana:2007)

iii-CHILTAN MOUNTAIN AND HAZAR GANJI NATIONAL PARK

a-CHILTAN MOUNTAIN

Chiltan Mountain is one of the famous mountain ranges in Balochistan. The literal meaning of Chiltan in the Balochi and Persian languages is "forty bodies". A myth about Chiltan Mountain says that a man of the past lived with his forty sons at the peak of the mountain. There is a shrine to a saint named Chiltan Baba at the top of the mountain. Nowadays, the mountain is famous due to Hazar Ganji National Park, located on the eastern side of the mountain range near Quetta City. The park has been preserved by the provincial Forest Ministry for many years. It is situated some 18 kilometers from the provincial capital of Quetta. This is one of the most beautiful national parks in the country. In the Balochi and Brahui languages, the words Hazar Ganji mean "thousand treasures." The local nomads believe that there are a thousand varieties of fauna and flora found in this mountain range. The range is some seven thousand feet above sea level. The peaks of the mountains are covered with snow like white turbans throughout the year. (Talar: Oct, 2009:08)

The main fauna of the Chiltan Mountain is the Chiltan wild goat, or the "Chiltan Markhor". Establishment of the park was basically aimed at providing protection to the rare species of Chiltan Markhor which is the national animal of Pakistan. Markhor kept in this park are straight-horned. Markhors and leopards live on the mountain while other animals occasionally migrate from one area to other areas. Besides the Markhor, various other animals like wolves, wild cats, porcupines, jackals, foxes, and the Asiatic leopard are also found on Chiltan Mountain. There are various kinds of reptiles and birds also found in the Chiltan mountain range, particularly in the national park. Hazar Ganji National Park is accessible by road from Quetta and attracts many visitors who can spend their free time

in the park. Facilities, including a museum, picnic spots, and rest houses, are also available in the park enabling the visitors to stay awhile and enjoy their time.

Chiltan Mountain is also famous for its beautiful birds. In the different seasons, particularly in the spring and autumn, different kinds of migrant birds visit the park. Hundreds of species of plants are also seen in the park. The most prominent tree in the mountain range is the pistachio. The other shrubs found on the mountain provide food and shelter to the animals and birds and other life found on the mountain and in the park. The park is strictly protected with barbed wire and livestock grazing and wood cutting are prohibited.

There are many kinds of medicinal herbs found in the park. In the months of March to May every year, a colorful meadow can be witnessed here. In these months, most of plants of the park are blooming. Visitors, including tourists, students, and scientists, visit the park in this season. (Talar: Oct,2009: 09)

b-HAZARGUNJI NATURAL PARK CHILTAN

Hazargunji Natural Park Chiltan is one of the most beautiful national parks in the country. Hazar Ganji National Park is situated some 18 kilometers in the southwest from the provincial capital of Quetta. The words *Hazar Ganji* mean "thousand treasures in Balochi and Brahui. The local nomads believe that there are a thousand varieties of fauna and flora found in this mountain range. The range is some seven thousand feet above sea level. The peaks of the mountains are covered with snow like white turbans throughout the year. Chiltan is one of the famous mountain ranges in Balochistan. The literal meaning of Chiltan in the Balochi and Persian languages is "forty bodies". A myth about Chiltan Mountain says that a man of the past lived with his forty sons at the peak of the mountain. There is a shrine to a saint named *Chiltan Baba* at the top of the mountain. Nowadays, the mountain is famous due to Hazar Ganji National Park, located on the eastern side of the mountain range near Quetta City. The park has been preserved by the provincial Forest Ministry for many years. The main fauna of the Chiltan Mountain is the Chiltan wild goat, the Chiltan Markhor.

iv- HINGOL NATIONAL PARK

Hingol National Park is situated 190 kms from Karachi and consisted of 1650 sq/km of land. The boundaries of the Hingol National Park touches the districts of Lasbela, Gwadar and Awaran. The beautiful hills of the Hingol area attract the tourists. The park has different kinds of animals such as, thirty five mammals, sixty five marine and creeping animals and one hundred and eighty five varieties of birds are considered to be the beauty of Hingol National Park. These different varieties of animals enhance the attention of the tourists towards the importance of the Park. The cool, beautiful and dense shadows of *Daron koh* of district Awaran are also part of Hingol National Park. Besides, Hingol River plays an important role in the fish breeding in the region. This Park became famous when it was introduced to the Public of the country. (Ulus:2007:45)

c- LAKES AND WATER FALLS.

Balochistan is a mountainous region, the rivers here are seasonal, there are various important water falls and lakes in the province among them following have much tourist attraction.

i-HANNA URUK VALLEY

Hanna lake is a beautiful tourist site situated at a distance of 21 kms from Quetta City. The historical background of the lake is that In 1894, a small action dam was constructed on main Urak road for converting of water into Hanna Lake coming from the Zarghoon Mountains range. There is also a water channel which was constructed the same time by the British to convert the snow and rain water near spin kaarez coming from Murdar mountain to this lake. The lake is located a little short of the place where the Urak Valley begins and 14 km from Quetta. The beautiful Hanna Lake was built in the British period in 1894. There are few restaurants having picnic tables shaded by pine trees.

Tourists from different parts of the country as well as from foreign countries come to visit the lake. Lake is very attractive for holiday makers, and is crowded with picnic parties and campers in holidays.

ii-PEER GHAIB BOLAN

Peer Ghaib is another tourist place in the historical Bolan Pass, which is situated at a distance of about 70 kms from Quetta city, near the Sibi road. A beautiful scene of a waterfall shows an interesting scenery, which comes up from the hill side and falls in between the date-palm trees to

make a water pond. A large numbers of local as well as foreign tourists visit the site. Due to lack of roads and basic facilities, the masses come from different parts of the province and country comes to visit the weekends and confront a lot difficulty. Khajoori is another place of tourism on the vicinity of Peer Ghaib, where hundreds of people come to visit this area.

e- TOURISM AT COASTAL AREA

A long strip of 770 km coastal belt of the province of Balochistan has a great importance for the coastal tourism. God has bestowed a lot of attractive and heart-captivating scenes to the Province of Balochistan, especially to the coastal areas. The coastal areas everywhere in the world are of a great importance, and the governments are taking interest to promote this department with modern needs and facilitate the tourists according to their capacity, but the governmental authorities here are not paying tendency to this aspect. There is approximately ten places tourism at the coast of Balochistan, which could be made the tourist places of international importance. Currently, the coastal highway is under construction and the railway track is being planed to be spread it from Gwadar to Tajikistan. Gwadar deep sea-port has been constructed and it has been functioning well, but there is a need of tourist places in the coastal belt. (Pana:2007)

MIRI FORT AND ROYAL PALACE KALAT

Thousands year old Miri Fort Kalat was the ruling place of the ancient rulers including, Seva Hidus, Mughals, and other invaders. The fort was also capital of the region in the Ahmedzai era. Till the period of Mehmood Khan-II this fort covered by a strong wall was the residence of the rulers and other elite class. In the great earthquake of 1935, the fort turned into ruins; there are signs of a great mosque as well as the Hindus spiritual place and ancient temple of Kali Devi inside the fort. Royal palace Kalat is another famous tourist attractive site in Balochistan. Palace was constructed by the then ruler of Kalat Khan Ahmed Yar Khan after the earthquake of 1935 when the old fort turned into ruins. This double-storied palace is constructed in the shape of a ship. There is a beautiful small masque annexed with the palace called Shahi Masque or Royal Mosque. The Royal palace Kalat is a tourist attractive site in Balochistan. (Waheed: 2005:2)

Charles Masson a traveller of 19th century write about history of the fort that "Kalat, the capital of Balochistan, and the residence of the khan, is but a small town, seated on the eastern acclivity of a spur from the hill called Shah Mirdan. It is in form oblong, and surrounded by a crenated wall of mud, chiefly of moderate height, and strengthened by towers. The western side of the wall traces the summit of the ridge, and is carried under the miri, or palace of the khan. The last is an edifice of some antiquity, being referred to the period when Kalat was governed by Hindu princes The town has three gates, one facing the east, and the two others the north and south respectively. It may contain about eight hundred houses, a large proportion inhabited by Hindus. The bazaar is equal to the size of the town, and is fairly supplied." (Masson:1886:96)

CONCLUSION

The Province of Balochistan has a great importance in the field of tourism. The province has a lot of beautiful and lovely tourist places, including, cultural and religious sites, ancient archaeological sites like Mehrgarh, Miri Turbat, Pariyano Ghundi Zohb, Naal and Kuli culture, various natural parks, ancient forest deposits etc but the basic infrastructure, repairing of roads and highways, clean drinking water, reasonable restaurants, residential hotels and motels are needed to be established to provide basic facilities to the visitors. More than sixty years have been passed, but no attention was paid to the tourism development, field. Lack of resources and lack of interest from both federal and provincial Governments, the key aspect of tourism remained unprogressed. The province can be made a more attractive place for the tourists if progressive steps will be taken by the provincial and federal governments.

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