

Research Article**Contribution of Mulbagal Taluk to Tourism****Mohan Reddy G**

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Mulbagal Taluk in Kolar District, Karnataka, possesses rich religious, historical, cultural, and architectural resources with considerable tourism potential. The taluk is home to numerous ancient temples, sacred sites, hills, forts, dargahs, and heritage structures associated with mythology, local traditions, and the history of the Vijayanagara period. Important attractions such as the Anjaneya Temple, Narasimha Tirtha, Avani, Anjanadri Hill, Virupaksha Temple, Shankar Tirtha, Someshwara Temple, and Harapanayakanahalli Fort attract devotees, visitors, and researchers. The study examines the historical significance and tourism potential of these places and highlights their contribution to religious and heritage tourism. However, inadequate accommodation, transportation, sanitation, publicity, conservation, and other basic tourist facilities limit the development of the region. The study suggests improving infrastructure, preserving heritage sites, promoting local culture, strengthening publicity, and involving local communities in tourism development. Sustainable tourism development can also generate employment, strengthen the local economy, and preserve the cultural heritage of Mulbagal Taluk.

Keywords: Mulbagal Taluk, Tourism, Kolar District, Heritage Tourism, Religious Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Historical Monuments, Temples, Avani, Narasimha Tirtha.

Introduction

There are many paths in the search for knowledge. In recent times, many branches of knowledge have developed and are becoming subjects of study. Tourism is also developing as a branch of knowledge. There is a saying among us, "Read books and travel around the country." Accordingly, travelling helps us gain knowledge and experience. In addition, tourism has recently developed into an industry and has become a source of income.

Mulbagal

Kolar district is geographically situated on the borders of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. After the reorganisation, the district consisted of five taluks. Mulbagal is one of them and is regarded as the eastern gateway.

Mulbagal is about 30 km from Kolar and about 100 km from Bengaluru, the capital city. It is one of the ancient places in the district. In inscriptions, the place is referred to by names such as Mulavayi and Mulavayi Rajya.

Devotees coming from the ancient religious centres of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, particularly Tirupati and Kanchipuram, have traditionally entered Karnataka through this eastern gateway. Hence, it is believed that the place came to be known as Mulbagal ("eastern gateway").

According to tradition, Lord Hanuman stood on Arjuna's chariot flag during the Mahabharata war and helped bring victory. Since there is an image of Hanuman believed to have been installed by Arjuna, the place is also known as Arjuna Kshetra.

It is said that Anjanadevi performed penance on the hill near the temple, and therefore the hill came to be called Anjanadri.

Mulbagal developed as an important centre of trade and commerce and has several ancient temples. Because of this, it is also an important religious centre. The number of tourists visiting Mulbagal every day has consequently increased.

Anjaneya Temple

The historically famous Anjaneya Temple, believed to have been installed by Arjuna, is one of the most popular temples in the region.

The temple is situated within a large enclosure measuring approximately 300 feet in length and 200 feet in width. The temple faces east and consists of a sanctum, Navaranga and Mukhamantapa. The idol of Anjaneya is installed in the sanctum.

Within the temple complex are beautiful paintings depicting Anjaneya, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The pillars contain stone carvings, and there is also a tradition of decorating them with kedige flowers.

Venkataramanaswamy Temple

Within the enclosure of the Anjaneya Temple is the Venkataramanaswamy Temple. It contains paintings depicting stories connected with mythology and religious traditions.

The Navaranga has four beautifully carved pillars with relief sculptures. Sculptures can also be seen in the Sukhanasi. A shrine of Mahalakshmi is situated on the right side of the Navaranga.

Govindaraja Temple

Another temple inside the complex is the Govindaraja Temple, which resembles the temple of Srinivasa.

The deity Sheshashayana Swamy is installed here, with the consorts near his feet. The southern entrance is known as the Vaikuntha Dwara and is opened only on Vaikuntha Ekadashi.

There is a Garuda Mantapa in front of the temple.

Anjanadri Hill

Anjanadri Hill is situated to the west of the Anjaneya Temple. It is believed to be the hill where Anjanadevi performed penance.

The hill is also known as Sanjeevini Parvata. Various ancient structures and remains can still be seen on the hill.

According to local belief, Anjanadevi gave birth to Anjaneya here through the blessings of the divine.

Someshwara Temple

The Someshwara Temple is another popular temple in Mulbagal.

The temple faces east and has a large enclosure measuring approximately 300 × 500 feet. There is a sacred water source associated with the temple, known as Vrishabha Tirtha.

Various festivals and religious ceremonies are conducted here, especially during the Karthika month and on the full-moon day. A tall lamp pillar is also present.

Vitthala Narayana Temple: The temple situated to the west of the town faces east and has a spacious enclosure. There is a beautiful shrine of Vitthala here, and it is a deity as beautiful as the Vitthala of Pandharpur. On the stone erected in front, there is a Vijayanagara inscription dated 1547, belonging to the period of the rule of Sadashivaraya.

Adi Nancharamma Temple: This temple, situated at the foothills of Anjanadri Hill, is unique as it has been built beneath a huge rock. It is also a temple of the village deity and is a temple held in great respect by the people. The temple faces east and has three small shrines. There are shrines of Nancharamma and Ganapati, while one shrine is empty. Anjanadri is situated right beside it. Nature lovers are seen climbing the steps and enjoying an outing along with the Nancharamma Temple. The cool shade of the large banyan tree seems to beckon visitors.

Veerabhadra Swamy Temple

There are stone images of Anjaneya and other deities in the temple complex. A tall tower, approximately 20 feet high, with several kalashas is also present.

Another Veerabhadra Swamy Temple is situated in Palligarapalya. It has a large enclosure and faces south, while the sanctum faces east.

A special feature is the arrangement that allows the morning sunlight to enter the temple.

A beautiful stone sculpture of Veerabhadra is installed in the sanctum, and the pillars are decorated with relief carvings.

There is a beautiful 30-foot-high monolithic flagstaff on the eastern side.

Shankar Tirtha

Shankar Tirtha, located in Ganeshapalya, is an ancient religious centre.

According to tradition, around 1400, when the monastery at the time was disturbed by enemy attacks, its head, Sri Kaivalyananda Tirtha Swamiji, came to Mulbagal and established a monastery.

Later, when Mulbagal became deserted, he is said to have moved towards the banks of the Tunga River in Shivamogga, where Shivappa Nayaka built a monastery for him. That monastery subsequently came to be known as the Mulbagal Math.

Shankar Tirtha has several religious structures, including Vidyashankara Temple, Bhavani Temple, Brindavana, Shaneswara Temple and the large Pushkarini known as Shankar Tirtha.

Other Temples in Mulbagal

Gangamma Temple: Gangamma is regarded as the family deity and an important Shakti deity. The Karaga festival associated with the goddess is celebrated.

Shiva Lingeshwara Temple: The Shiva Lingeshwara Temple is situated on the K. Byrapalli Road in Mulbagal. It contains a crystal-like/stone Shiva Linga and is associated with the self-manifested form of Shiva Lingeshwara.

Panchamukhi Anjaneya Temple: The Panchamukhi Anjaneya Temple was established in the old gymnasium on Bazaar Street. The five-faced form of Anjaneya is worshipped here and attracts devotees.

Shirdi Sai Baba Temple: The Shirdi Sai Baba Temple is located in Someshwarapalya. Sai Baba is worshipped as a revered deity, and the temple has become increasingly popular in recent years.

Narasimha Tirtha

Narasimha Tirtha, situated on the outskirts of Mulbagal near the national highway, is a famous religious centre.

Lord Narasimha is depicted here in a yogic posture.

One of the prominent figures associated with the place is Sri Padaraja, one of the pioneers of the Dasa literary tradition. It is believed that he lived here and attained spiritual fulfilment through penance.

There are Brindavanas of Sri Padaraja and many of his disciples.

A large and perennial Pushkarini called Narasimha Tirtha is situated here. There is an attractive temple structure in the middle of the tank. The surrounding hills and natural environment provide a peaceful atmosphere and attract visitors.

Virupaksha Temple

The Virupaksha Temple is situated a few kilometres from the town, near the present-day Veerabhadranagara area.

The temple is believed to have been constructed during the Vijayanagara period, and inscriptions associate it with the rule of Devaraya.

The temple is built in the Dravidian style and has a large enclosure measuring approximately 600 × 200 feet. Restoration work is being carried out.

It has several entrance gateways and is one of the largest temples in the taluk. The temple has a tall Rajagopura in the Vijayanagara style. The Kalyana Mantapa and other structures are particularly noteworthy.

There is a shrine of Parvati Ammavaru, while separate shrines dedicated to Durga are situated in the outer enclosure.

Several hero stones and Mahasati stones can also be seen here.

Avani

Avani, about 12 km from Mulbagal, is one of the important historical sites of the taluk.

It has been known by names such as Avanti Kshetra and Avani Sthana, and is also described as "Dakshina Kashi" (Kashi of the South).

The place is believed to date back to the period of the Gangas and is associated with the Kalamukha ascetics. Stone images associated with these ascetics can still be found below and on the hill.

A pillar known as the Manastambha, bearing an inscription, stands on the southern side of the temple complex.

The local traditions of Avani are strongly connected with the Ramayana. Because of the hills, natural springs and pleasant surroundings, local legends say that several events associated with the Ramayana took place here.

It is believed that Valmiki's ashrama existed here and that Sita took shelter in the ashrama and gave birth to Lava and Kusha.

Avani has more than ten temples, including Rameshwara, Lakshmaneshwara, Bharateshwara, Shatrughneshwara, Vali-Sugriva, Parvati, Kashi Lingeshwara, Kamakshi and Anjaneya.

The place demonstrates harmony between Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

Lakshmaneshwara Temple

Lakshmaneshwara is one of the largest temples here.

The walls are decorated with sculptures of Shiva, Bhairava and various deities. The relief sculptures in the Navaranga are particularly attractive.

There are also Shesha Tirtha, Sita-Parvati Temple and Ekanta Rameshwara Temple.

The nearby hill is associated with Koundinya, and the area is also referred to as Koundinya Kshetra.

Vinayaka Temple and Channakeshava Temple

The Vinayaka Temple has a large monolithic image of Ganesha and is considered a unique and ancient Ganesha image.

Nearby are temples such as Channakeshava, Kashi Vishweshwara, Nageshwara and Kemadamba.

The Channakeshava Temple is situated behind the Vinayaka Temple. The temple is in a somewhat dilapidated condition, and some of its idols have been moved to the Someshwara Temple for protection.

Uthanur

Uthanur is a village situated about 18 km from Mulbagal. It was historically an agrahara and has several temples and historical remains.

Important temples include Bhujeshwari, Nadimaleshwara, Kumbheshwara, Veereshwara and Durga. Several ancient inscriptions and historical remains have been found here.

Koladevi

Koladevi is situated about 15 km from Mulbagal. The local deity is believed to fulfil the wishes of devotees and has become a place of pilgrimage and tourism.

Kadaripur

Kadaripur is situated about 3 km from Mulbagal and is known for its historic Narasimha Swamy Temple.

The place is associated with religious traditions and is regarded as a sacred site. The temple has a large enclosure and a 70-foot-high structure/flagstaff.

Kappalamadugu

Kappalamadugu is situated about 4 km from Mulbagal on the Madras Road highway.

The Channakeshava Temple is particularly important. Channakeshava is installed here along with Bhudevi.

The place is said to have received its name because there was once a water pond nearby that attracted frogs. Hence, the Telugu name Kappalamadugu came into use.

Kadenahalli

Kadenahalli is about 20 km from Mulbagal and is a village with several special features.

The village goddess Chowdeshwari is situated outside the village. Festivals such as the Bandi Habba are celebrated here.

The Sapta Matrikas are represented in the Chowdeshwari temple: Chowdeshwari, Indrani, Varahi, Vaishnavi, Kaumari, Parameshwari and Brahmika.

These ancient goddess images are of considerable historical interest. There are also images of Kalabhairava, Vani and Ganesha.

Gudipalli

Gudipalli, about 18 km from Mulbagal, is a village known for its many temples.

Important temples here include Someshwara, Kashi Vishweshwara, Janardhana, Sri Ramachandra, Chowdeshwari, Anjaneya, Ganesha, Gangamma and Venugopala.

During restoration work, Panchaloha idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Anjaneya were discovered.

Another special feature of the village is the Gavepuravara Bungalow. It is approximately 25 feet high, 70 feet long and 60 feet wide, with entrances on the eastern and western sides.

Ghattugudi

Ghattugudi, about 25 km from Mulbagal, is situated near the border and has developed into a sacred centre.

There is a Venkataramana Temple here. Because it is situated at a higher elevation and is surrounded by trees, bushes and natural vegetation, the place became known as Ghattu.

A fair is held here on Sri Rama Navami, along with a cattle fair. Traders from neighbouring states come here to purchase cattle.

Baba Haider Auliya Dargah

The Baba Haider Auliya Dargah is a well-known centre of religious devotion and is situated on the road towards KGF.

It is associated with Hazrat Baba Haider Auliya Hussaini Saharwardi, who is revered by devotees. An annual Urs is held here, attracting people from different parts of the country.

Many Hindus also visit the dargah, particularly people who believe that they are suffering from the influence of ghosts, spirits or certain illnesses.

Harapanayakanahalli Fort

Among the historically famous forts of Mulbagal taluk, Harapanayakanahalli Fort is particularly important.

According to local history, Bise Gowda came into contact with the Mysore Wodeyars and, with their support, became a local chieftain.

In 1799, he is said to have participated in the siege and capture of Chandragiri Fort in Chittoor district, returning victorious with considerable wealth.

A strong fort built by Bise Gowda still exists in the middle of the village. Weapons that were used during wartime are still preserved in the house and are worshipped during Navaratri.

Conclusion

Thus, Mulbagal taluk has a large number of religious, historical and cultural attractions.

Important religious centres include Avani, Narasimha Tirtha, Shankar Tirtha, Anjaneya Temple and Kurudumale.

Historical forts and fort remains include Harapanayakanahalli, Gudipalli, Kootandahalli, Balasandra, Mulbagal Fort and Virupakshi/Nithilakote.

There are also centres of cultural activity such as Avani and Ghattugudi.

However, these important places in Mulbagal taluk lack adequate food, accommodation and other tourist facilities. Therefore, the government should pay attention to these places and provide proper facilities for tourists. This would attract more visitors and help promote tourism, thereby contributing to the economic, social, cultural and historical development of the region.

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