



HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF CHITRAKOOT

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Chitrakoot is a town and a nagar panchayat in Satna district in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India. It is a town of religious, cultural, historical and archaeological importance, situated in the Baghelkhand region. It borders the Chitrakoot district in Uttar Pradesh, whose headquarter Chitrakoot Dham (Karwi) is located nearby. The town lies in the historical Chitrakoot region, which is divided between the present-day Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. It is known for a number of temples and sites mentioned in Hindu scriptures. Many people gather here on each Amavasya. Somwati Awavasyas, Deepawali, Sharad-Poornima, Makar Sankranti and Ramanavami are special occasions for such gatherings and celebrations. It attracts crowds throughout the year including above occasions and for Free Eye Hospital Camps. Noted 'Ayurvedic' and 'Yoga' centres like 'Arogyadham' are located in Chitrakoot. Chitrakoot means the 'Hill of many wonders'. Chitrakoot falls in the northern Vindhya range of mountains spread over the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Chitrakuta region is included in the District Chitrakuta of Uttar Pradesh and the District Satna of Madhya Pradesh. Chitrakoot district in Uttar Pradesh was created on 4 September 1998. Chitrakoot Parvat Mala includes Kamad Giri, Hanumaan Dhara, Janki Kund, Lakshman pahari and Devangana famous Religious mountains. Chitrakoot's spiritual

legacy stretches back to legendary ages : It was in these deep forests that Ram, Sita and his brother Lakshman spent a few months of their fourteen years of exile; the great sage Atri, Sati Anusuya, Dattatreya, Maharshi Markandeya Valmiki Ramayan, Gita Press, Gorakhpur and various other sages, seers, devotees and thinkers meditated; and here the principal trinity of the Hindi pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, took their incarnations. It is said that all the Gods and Goddesses came to Chitrakoot when Rama performed the Shraddha ceremony of his father to partake of the suddhi (i.e. a feast given to all the relatives and friends on the thirteenth day of the death in the family). The first known mention of the place is in the Valmiki Ramayan, which is believed to be the first ever Mahakavya composed by the first ever poet. As Valmiki is said to be contemporaneous with (or even earlier than) Ram and is believed to have composed the Ramayan before the birth of Ram, the antiquity of its fame can well be gauged.

Valmiki speaks of Chitrakoot as an eminently holy place inhabited by the great sages, abounding in monkeys, bears and various other kinds of fauna and flora. Both the sages Bharadwaj and Valmiki speak of Chitrakoot in glowing terms and advise Ram to make it his abode during the period of his exile. Lord Ram himself admits this bewitching impact of this place. In the 'Ramopakhyan' and descriptions of teerths at various places

in the Mahabharat, Chitrakoot finds a favoured place. In 'Adhyatma Ramayan' and 'Brihat Ramayan' testify to the throbbing spiritually and natural beauty of Chitrakuta. Various Sanskrit and Hindi poets also have paid similar tributes to Chitrakuta. Mahakavi Kalidas has described this place beautifully in his epic 'Raghuvansh'. He was so much impressed with its charms that he made Chitrakuta (which he calls Ramgiri because of its time-honoured associations with lord Ram) the place of exile of his yaksha in Meghdoot. Tulsidas, the saint-poet of Hindi has spoken very reverently of this place in all his major works-Ramcharit Manas, Kavitali, Dohawali and Vinaya Patrika. The last-mentioned work contains many verses which show a deep personal bond between Tulsidas and Chitrakoot. He spent quite some part of his life here worshipping Ram and craving his darshan. It was here that he had, what he must have considered the crowning moment of his achievements i.e. the darshan of his beloved deity Lord Ram at the intercession of Hanumanji. His eminent friend, the noted Hindi poet Rahim (i.e. Abdur Rahim Khankhana, the soldier-statesman-saint-scholar-poet who was among the Nav-Ratnas of Akbar) also spent some time here, when he had fallen from favour with Akbar's son Emperor Jahangir.

When Bharat was asked by his ministers to take his seat upon the throne of Ayodhya, he refused and came to Chitrakoot to meet elder brother Ram. Bharat met Ram and requested him to return to Ayodhya and rule; but Ram did not agree. Then Bharat requested Ram for his sandal, which Ram agreed and Bharat returned to Ayodhya and installed the same on the throne, and lived retired, carried on the government as minister of Ram.

Places of Important Places:

Ramghat - The ghats that line the Mandakini river are called Ramghat. During the exile period Rama, Lakshmana and Sita took bath here and are believed to have appeared before the poet Tulsidas.

Kamadgiri - Kamadgiri, the original Chitrakuta, is a place of prime religious significance. A forested hill, it is skirted all along its base by a chain of temples and is venerated today as the holy embodiment of Rama. Rama is also known as Kamadnathji which literally means fulfiller of all wishes. There is a five KM Parikrama Path around the Kamadgiri Mountain.

Bharat Milap - Bharat Milap temple is located here, marking the spot where Bharat is said to have met Rama and persuaded him to return to the throne of Ayodhya. It is said that the meeting of four brothers was so emotional that even the rocks and mountains of Chitrakut melted. Foot prints of Rama and his brothers were imprinted on these rocks and are still present can be seen in Bharat Milap Mandir.

Janaki Kund - Janaki Kund is situated upstream of the Ramghat where it is believed that Sita bathed in the crystal clear waters of Mandakini river during the years of her exile with Rama.

Sati Anasuya Ashrama - Sati Anasuya ashrama is located further upstream, 16 km from the town, set amidst thick forests that round to the melody of chirping of birds whole day. It was here that Atri muni, his wife Anasuya and their three sons (who were the three incarnations of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh), lived and are said to have meditated. As per description of Valmiki once upon a time there was no rain in Chitrakuta for ten years. There was a severe famine and nothing was left for animals and birds as their edibles. Sati Anasuya

performed hard and intensive austerities and got the river Mandakini down on earth. This led to the greenery and forests to grow which removed the sufferings of all sages, animals and birds as well. Sati Anasuya ashrama at present is a very peaceful place where various streams from the hills converge and form the Mandakini River. It is said that Rama along with Sita had visited this place to meet Maharishi Atri and Sati Anasuya. It is here Sati Anasuya explained to Sita the grandeur and importance of satitva. The dense forests of Dandakaranya start from this place. It was ruled by Ravana. Ravana had appointed strong rakshasas like Khara and Viradha as its ruler. The place was infected by the terror of rakshasas.

Sphatik Shila - A few kilometers beyond Janaki Kund is another densely wooded area on the banks of the Mandakini. One can climb up to the boulder, which bears the Rama's footprint and Sita as well. According to Ramacharita Manas it is said that Rama with Lakshman was sitting on this shila (rock) when Hanuman returned from Lanka after setting it afire and confirmed the news to Rama that Sita has been imprisoned in Ashoka vatika in Lanka.

Gupt-Godavari - Gupt-Godavari is situated at a distance of 18 km from town. Here is a pair of caves, one high and wide with an entrance through which one can barely pass, and the other long and narrow with stream of water running along its base. It is believed that Rama and Lakshmana held court in a cave, which has two natural throne-like rocks.

Pampapur - It is situated in the valley of Devangana. Here we find several caves.

Hanuman Dhara - Located on a rock-face several hundred feet up a steep

hillside is a spring, said to have created by Rama to assuage Hanuman when the latter returned after setting Lanka afire. A couple of temples commemorate this spot, which offers a panoramic view of Chitrakoot.

Bharat Koop - Bharath Koop is where Bharata stored holy water collected from all the places of pilgrimage in India. It is small, an isolated spot a few kilometers from the town. There is a small well and temple situated next to it. The water in the well remains pure and clean round the year. The story goes, that Bharat came to Chitrakoot to convince Ram to come back to Ayodhya, after the death of King Dasharath, to ask Ram to become king of Ayodhya and rule it, thus creating Ram-Rajya. For this purpose, he also brought water from five rivers with him to perform Rama's Abhishek. But, Ram told Bharath that he does not wish to break his vow given to his father King Dasharath of coming back to Ayodhya only after completing vanavas of 14 years. Hence, Bharath asked rishi Vashisht how to use the five rivers water that he brought with him for Rama's Rajyavishek. Rishi Vashisht advised him to put all the water along with flowers he had brought in the well and well will remain pure, will be revered till the end of the universe. Bharat followed his instructions and thus this place was named as Bharath koop.

Ram Shaiya - This place is located on the way between Chitrakoot and Bharat Koop, in an isolated location. It is the place where Rama, Sita and Lakshman used to sleep and rest in the evening after wandering around the forest of Chitrakoot. It is located between mountains with no town nearby, with absolute silence in the environment. It has large flat-bed rocks which bears imprints of Rama,

Lakshman and Sita. There is a tree above it and the entire place is walled by brick structure on either side to preserve it.

