

North Asian International Research Journal Consortium

North Asian International Research Journal

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Welcome to NAIRJC

ISSN NO: 2454 - 2326

North Asian International Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi, Urdu all research papers submitted to the journal will be double-blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in Universities, Research Institutes Government and Industry with research interest in the general subjects

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THE WINDS OF CHANGE: BEYOND CONVENTIONAL TOURISM

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BACKDROP

People, since time immemorial, have always looked for opportunities to get out of their monotonous and mundane life for seeking leisure. In earlier days, when life was not very complex and relatively hassle free, people had some free time at their disposal to indulge in leisurely pursuits be it dining outside or traveling to see places of interest. Today, with life style becoming increasingly complex, need is felt all the more to take a break from hectic scheduled and fly to some exotic destination or go on a cruise on a pleasure voyage.

Tourism all over the world largely relies on local heritage and cultural resources. The cultural wealth of India is not limited to its massive monument and sites, but it is also about its natural landscape and the charm of everyday life including old houses, streets and markets, rituals and festivals, crafts, dances, music and traditional cuisine. India is renowned for the diversity and richness of its cultural heritage. Destination India is providing a unique opportunity for

- Physical invigoration;
- Mental rejuvenation;
- Cultural enrichment and
- Spiritual elevation.

India's share in world arrivals currently stands at 0.5% and its share in revenue generated from tourism worldwide is 1.11% (**World Tourism Organization**). India receives the largest number of overseas tourists from the United Kingdom, its largest source market, followed by the United States, Sri Lanka, France, Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia and Singapore.

Since times immemorial Indians have been well known for their hospitality (the way in which guests are served and taken care of). **Atithi Devo Bhava** is a very old slogan. What does it mean? In the olden days when the means of communication were limited and slower than they are today, it was not possible to be prepared for the arrival of a guest. The word Atithi means a guest whose data of arrival is not known, or a person who arrives unexpectedly. Atithi is made up of A+tithi, in which "A" stands for not known and "tithi" means date, "Deva" means God and 'Bhava" stands for is. Atithi Devo Bhava hence means that the arrival of a guest at any time is like the arrival of God and the guest shall be treated thus. This

sentiment is deep —rooted in our culture even today. In recent times the Government of India through the Ministry of Tourism has used this slogan to promote tourism in India. Tourism industry in repercussion helps to grow:

- Hotel Industry,
- Air. Water and land transports,
- Tourism services,
- Tourist Places, and
- The domestic and foreign markets of local Arts and crafts.

TOURISM IN INDIA

The Indian tourism industry is now witnessing exponential growth and it has outperformed the global tourism industry in terms of growth in the volume of international tourist as well as in terms of revenue. The key driver for this growth in Indian tourism industry has been a fast growing economy for the last 2-3 years. Despite lagging in the basic infrastructure that supports the tourism industry: Indian tourism sector has been showings an impressive double digit growth. The government, of late, having fully realized that this sector offers, has been investing in infrastructure such as transport and accommodation with a view to sustaining this growth.

Tourism industry in India has emerged as a major driver of social and economic development on account of its potential to contribute to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), foreign exchange earnings and employment generation. It is a labour intensive industry and as per **World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2010)** Worldwide estimates is expected to contribute 8.1% to total employment, 235 million jobs or 1 in every 12.3 jobs in 2010, that is further projected to rise to 9.2% of total employment, 303 million jobs, or 1 in every 10.9 jobs by 2020. Its contribution to job creation in Indian economy is equally encouraging with one in every 15.6 jobs and a total of 30 million jobs in 2008.

A research report on manpower requirements by **Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2004)** forecasts employment of 3.5 million people in hotels, 2.73 million in restaurants, 1.3 million in small restaurants and dhabas on highways and 0.24 million in travel trade by 2020. **WTTC (2010)** projects that India will generate second largest travel and tourism employment (in absolute terms) by 2010 and 2020 at 49 and 58 million jobs respectively, coming at a second place only after china. **WTTC (2002)** report notes that the jobs generated by travel and tourism span throughout the value chain, benefiting both direct players and supplier/partner enterprises. These jobs employ a significant proportion of women, minorities and young people and are predominantly in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). SME make up a considerable proportion of the travel and tourism industry and this encourages entrepreneurship while providing diverse job opportunities and enabling entry to slightly lesser skilled workforce.

The employment generation capability of tourism sector can transform the future of India's large young population that currently stands at 58% in the age group of 15-59 and is forecasted to be 63% by 2011 and 64% by 2016. This seems plausible considering the fact that Indian tourism industry employs 70 to 80 percent of its workforce below 40 years of age (**Ministry of Tourism, 2004**). This is a win —win situation for the country that has a large young population looking for employment opportunities and a fast growing industry requiring competent manpower.

According to the latest tourism ministry data, the number of foreign tourist visits during the year 2010 was 17.9 million as compared to 14.4 million in 2009. This shows an impressive jump of more than 24% in comparison to 2009.

While the foreigners visiting India declined marginally in 2009 in comparison to previous year. Despite this impressive performance in the year 2010, only ten states count about more than 90 % of total foreign tourist visiting the country. Maharashtra (5.1 million), Tamilnadu (2.8m), Delhi (1.9m), Uttar Pardesh (1.7m), Rajasthan (1.3m), West Bengal(1.2m), Kerala (0.66m), Bihar (0.64m), Himachal Pradesh (0.45) and Goa (0.44) more the key states where foreign tourist headed for. This figure shows that we have a huge unexplored tourism potential to be developed and marketed to the world.

Domestic tourism is one of the major contributors in the sector with over 500 million visitors. The domestic sector adds to the resilience of this sector and ensures capacity utilization in the otherwise lean tourist season. As per the estimates, tourism sector amounts for 5.92% of India's GDP and about 9.24% (or 49.8 million) of total employment generation (both indirect and direct). The planning commission, in the Eleventh plan document has also commented that it is the largest service industry in the country, its importance lies in being an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in the remote and backward areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** forecast that the international tourism will grow at the average annual rate of 4% (Source-Long term prospects: Tourism 2020 vision, world tourism), Many countries have attempted to build their international tourism industry because of its potential to contribute to the national economy through foreign exchange earnings. A strong association between international tourism development and economic performance is hence generally assumed and has been found in Taiwan. Research studies reported that the tourism industry was one of major contributors to Taiwan's economic growth.

Chen et al. (2009), Kim et al. (2006) and Jang and Chen (2008) revealed that the tourism sector has contributed more than the agriculture sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Taiwan.

Kim et al. (2006) and Chen and chiou-wei (2009) further showed that International tourism development in Taiwan could promote economic growth. [Source-International journal of Hospitality Management 30 (2011).

A review of HR status and practices in tourism sector presents a disturbing picture. There are many bottlenecks such as skill gaps and a consequent struggle for industry to meet its demand for qualified personnel. Successful human resource management, in the shape of training and education, is crucial to bridge this demand supply gap and to achieve the economic prosperity that can be accrued through tourism (**chaudhary, 2009**).

The economic significance of this industry can be appreciated from the fact that this industry provides employment to about 200 million people or 8% of the world employment- making it one in every twelve jobs. In financial terms, the size of the industry is \$ 463 billion or 11 percent of the world gross product (**Wood and Brotherton, 2008**).

DESTINATION BIHAR

Tourism in Bihar boasts of beautiful landscape and forests teeming wildlife, rich cultural, heritage/monuments, ethno-handicrafts from various ethnic groups, colourful fairs and festivals, music and ethnic dances. Tourism has been recognized as an industry in Bihar and sizeable revenue is earned for the state from domestic as well as foreign tourists. Bihar is well known as a Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain pilgrimage destination. The state is the perfect spot to get drenched in the nature's endowments. The unique tribal culture distinct by its intimacy with nature is a treasure for ethno tourism in Bihar. The state is also rich in folk dances.

At the time when economic recession in 2009 had impacted tourism, Bihar had attracted more foreign tourists than Goa. Bihar remains a "Gold mine" for tourism; it has the potential to usher a sea change in the lives of people by tapping the historical heritage sites besides promoting religious and eco- tourism. The state of Bihar can be an attractive tourist destination if the tourism industry is properly encouraged.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE: BEYOND CONVENTIONAL TOURISM

Bill Gates of Microsoft identified tourism as one of the three major industries of the future. With the projected arrival of 1.6 billion tourists by 2020 generating tourist receipts of US \$2000 billion, creating one job in every 2.5 second, tourism, today has emerged as one of the biggest industries of the future.

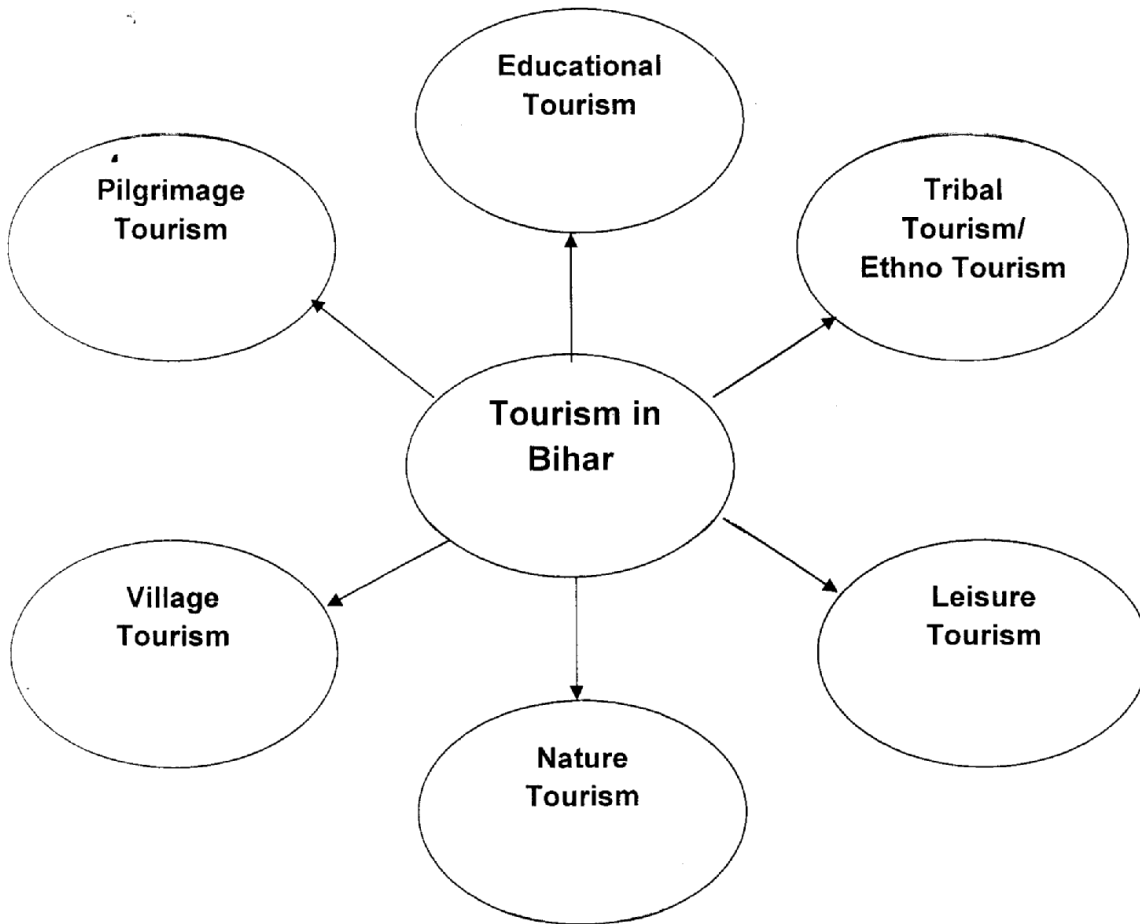
God's earth in all its fullness and beauty is for the people" **Thomas Cook.**

The travel and Tourism industry has all the following characteristics

- ✓ An industry which constitutes over 10% of the world's GDP.
- ✓ An industry, with one of the highest growth rate.
- ✓ An industry, which is employment -intensive.
- ✓ An industry, which is a universal export earner.
- ✓ An industry, which is not confined to urban agglomerations but spreads its benefits throughout the country.
- ✓ An industry whose very survival is closely linked to the well being and growth of the arts, crafts and cultural heritage.
- ✓ An industry, which is universally acknowledged to promote friendship and understanding amongst the peoples of the world.

Tourism sector is now penetrating into newer dimensions which were not present in earlier days. Now, tourists have so many reasons to visit. Some other places than their regular domicile. Emerging dimension of tourism include Rural Tourism, Medical Tourism, Educational Tourism, Eco- Tourism etc. By promoting Educational Tourism Bihar can be an attractive destination of tourists. The flow of money generated by tourists will accelerate socio- economic development of the locality. As Tourism sector needs quality human resources for managing the travellers, it generates a number of jobs for both the semi-skilled and un-skilled local population.

EMERGING DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM IN BIHAR



EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN BIHAR- NEXT GENERATION'S HOPE

Bihar in eastern India is one of the oldest inhabited places in the world with a places in the world with a history going back 3000 years. The rich culture and heritage of Bihar is evident from the innumerable ancient monuments that are dotted all over the state, Bihar is home to many tourists attractions and is visited by large number of tourists from all over the world. Around total 6 million tourists visit Bihar every year.

The documental history of tourism in Bihar region dating back to the 4th century BC Greek geographer **Megasthenes** (350 BC- 290 BC) visited the region in reign of **Chandragupta Maurya**. **Hsuan Tsang** and **I Ching** visited Nalanda to study in the 7th century, tourism in region was purely based educational tourism as Bihar was home of some prominent ancient universities like **Nalanda University** and **Vikramashila Universities**.

Bihar saw a revival of its education system during the later part of the British rule when they established Patna University (established in 1917) which is the seventh oldest universities of the Indian subcontinent. In the present times, Bihar established several new education institutes between 2006 and 2008. Steps to revive the ancient Nalanda University as **Nalanda International University** is being taken. Bihar is pioneer in the field of Yoga with its internationally renowned institute **Bihar School of Yoga in Munger**. The list of educational institutions is long and broadening day by day. The state has the possibility to become educational hub not only for Indian learners but also for foreigners. So, this is high time to take benefit of this new emerging dimension of tourism- Educational Tourism which is next generation's hope.

Weaknesses of tourism in Bihar

The following are the weaknesses of tourism in Bihar;

- ✓ Lack of infrastructure development as well as poor connectivity to tourist destinations
- ✓ Lack of commercial attitude in recovering the cost of capital assets generated in tourist spots
- ✓ Inefficient marketing strategy of officials as well as local inhabitants
- ✓ Paucity of fund allocation for tourism development

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The industry with highest potential in India is tourism; unhappily, its performance has fallen far short of its promise. The reasons for this are many: political ignorance, bureaucratic incompetence and the fact that the private sector has, for many years, been so browbeaten by license-permit raj that even today, when of these hurdles have been removed, some of the older leaders still look fearful over their shoulders wondering how the big Brothers in govt. would react if they tried to blaze a new trail.

Unfortunately, our policy makers have not appreciated the benefits and advantages of Travel and Tourism as a business and as an industry. One would have thought that this important industry would have been embraced by our central and state government as a key instrument to promote employment and raise economic growth. The reality, however, is somber. For the past 60 years story of tourism in India has been one of sheer neglect. The progress of Indian Tourism as unfolded in the 68 years since independence. Not that we were late starter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **Make Tourism a Priority Agenda:** For all the reasons mentioned earlier Travel and Tourism deserves priority attention. This can be achieved by:
 - a. Creating a TOURISM MISSION. Entrust this body - a public-cum-private sector venture-to drive towards Bihar's TOURISM VISION 2020.
 - b. Declaring Tourism as an Infrastructure Industry, thus giving it access to low cost capital, technology and resources to keep it globally competitive.

- ✓ **Ensure Easy Access to Bihar:** The air seat capacity to and from India on international sectors needs to be increased urgently. Here, as in the case of visas, the principle of reciprocity has been, and continues to remain, counterproductive. Through a civil aviation policy, which restricts foreign airlines, we are perpetuating not only tourism, but also on trade and investment.
- ✓ **Liberalise Visas:** Today, obtaining a visa to visit India can be a tedious experience, which may take several days. In some countries (like Thailand) there is an automatic entry facility on arrival for visitors from most countries. Even in Sri Lanka and Nepal, visas can be obtained on arrival. These countries do not insist on reciprocity - indeed they recognize that the principle of reciprocity is obsolete and against their own interests. Flexibility is the key.
- ✓ **Improve our Airports:** Our airports are sadly neglected. The facilities and hygiene cast a smear upon our capacity for excellence. The Airports Authority seems incapable of constructing and managing airports that are internationally competitive, we must float global tenders for private companies to design, build and operate airports to world standards.
- ✓ **Promote Bihar Professionally:** Bihar unfortunately, has a poor image overseas. Despite our attractions, we are seen as a long-haul destination 'with poor infrastructure and an unhelpful bureaucracy. Over the years, our Tourism Promotion Offices have not managed to dilute these images, let alone convey the magic. The charm and the ever-changing faces of India. We need to "re-launch" Bihar not to hide her blemishes, but to present her with all her contrasting facets. India should be marketed as a land of mystery, fun and adventure, yet also modern and vibrant.
- ✓ **Rationalise Taxation:** Travel and Tourism is a very competitive industry. Taxation policies must, therefore, be thoughtfully re-designed to keep the, industry competitive. In formulating tax policies for this industry, it must be borne in mind that the burden of taxation is on the traveller. On hotel rooms the traveller pays a 10% Central Hotel Expenditure Tax plus a State Luxury Tax (between 10% and 20%). Then, there are also State Sales Taxes on food and beverages.
- ✓ **Let the Private Sector manage Heritage:** Bihar's archaeological and cultural heritage remains its unique selling proposition. Whilst our heritage is distinct and irreplaceable, the condition of our monuments is pitiable. We must create a management system where our priceless assets are managed intelligently whilst ensuring aesthetic and environmental integrity. An arrangement like a 'National Trust' may work well, where the State owns the assets and the private sector manage them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

None of the measures suggested above involve huge investments. Neither are they revolutionary in concept. However, they require political will, administrative persistence and good management. It is high time that improvement is made in air, road and water transport network to facilitate easy movement of tourists from one place to another. In India, the systematic development of tourism marketing badly requires professionalism. Training facilities are to be arranged to impart skill and proficiency among the personnel directly involved in tourism with a view to employing sophisticated techniques in the promotion of tourism industry. Middle class tourists have been increasing in number ever year with the changes in the economic scene, the dollar is unlikely to buy as many as comforts. There is every possibility for generating

more and more employment to a considerable extent to the skilled and un-skilled workers through the promotion of tourism in our country. Further than the eye can see, vision leads the way to success.

The state of Bihar can be an attractive tourist destination if the tourism industry is properly encouraged. For this reason, Firstly, we have to ensure basic amenities for the tourists and try to develop quality human resources for managing the travellers. There must be meaningful interaction among tourism officials and tour operators for betterment of industry. Secondly, to attract more tourists from foreign soil to rural Bihar various projects must be undertaken under Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode and adequate investment is needed in giving professional touch to the sector. Lastly, the ethnic communities should be encouraged to enrich their ethnic heritage and skills so as to make their traditions more attractive rather than less in the face of change. Educational —tourism should provide an opportunity for local communities to generate more income from the tourism business in a dignified manner.

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