

Opportunities and Challenges Faced in Re-Engineering Religious Tourism in India

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry. For the year 2020, tourist growth of 1.6 billion, corresponding to receipts of two trillion U.S dollars is projected (WTO 1999). The main growth in tourism in the next decade is expected to take place outside the industrialized countries. UNESCO has pointed out that travel and tourism "is one of the few sectors which have major growth potential. For example, it provides opportunities for job creation and economic development; enhances social progress and strengthens communities, encourages the protection of the environment and contributes actively to conservation. Over the next decade, international travel and tourism is expected to add 5.5 million jobs annually, while the share of tourist arrivals in "developing countries has increased from 19% in 1980 to over 30% today. Cultural heritage has not contributed much to tourism in developing countries. However, cultural tourism is a noteworthy part of leisure travel and it has a potential to contribute to an areas" sustainable development. This development includes five dimensions, and these same dimensions have direct link with tourism. These include economic, cultural (the protection or affirmation of cultural identify, self esteem and empowerment) and the full time paradigm (systems, symbols, and beliefs in society) components. It also includes social health, education and housing, and political dimensions (human rights, and political freedoms and expressions). Cultural heritage may thus warrant the economic base of given area and contribute to a higher standard of living and local population's quality of life (Pereira et el 2003).

Tourism, which literally means traveling for pleasure, has been defined as traveling away from home for a period exceeding 24 hours. Tourism has increased due to more leisure time, more income and high mobility, a result of increased car ownership, national and international road/sea/air public transportation systems and information technology. Tourism is arguably the largest industry in the world, generating close to million dollars in GOP – which is 12% of the world total (UNESCO 2003). It is a highly productive sector, which has the capacity to create jobs, and boost local and national economies. Tourism is a development indicator. Indeed, it is an index of mobility and a factor of socialization. It calls and creates an opportunity to transfer income from the more privileged to the less privileged, access to knowledge, expansion of partnerships, enhances diversified involvement and participation and cross-fertilization of cultures. It is also an indicator of levels of cross boundary achievements (Kamamba 2003)

Cultural heritage which is another touristic attraction is a vast concept that transcends the old time realm of artifacts, architecture and history. It includes language, folklore, ethnographical objects, traditional natural environment and intangible culture such as group legacy. Tangible cultural heritage assets include old constructions such as roads, buildings, graveyards, archaeological sites, rock paintings, old settlements, museums and immemorial site only to mention a few.

Religious Tourism can be defined as Tourists travelling for religious purposes, is the person to visit the holy places and religious centers.

Types of Religious tourism

Religious tourism can be divided into two main types. These are -

1. Pilgrim tourism;
2. Religious tourism excursions and cognitive orientation.

Religions and India: a conceptualized projection

India the birth place of four world religions namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and heaven for several more is so vibrant, vivacious and varied. She is disarmingly tolerant. Down the ages, She has embraced differences in belief, religions and cultures woven them all into an exquisite tapestry that's a part of life here. And enabling her indulgent free spirit to flourish are the laws and customs of the land. Constitution of India protects her religious diversity and the Right of every citizen.

A **pilgrimage** is a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith, although sometimes it can be a metaphorical journey into someone's own beliefs. Many religions attach spiritual importance to particular places: the place of birth or death of founders or saints, or to the place of their "calling" or spiritual awakening, or of their connection (visual or verbal) with the divine, to locations where miracles were performed or witnessed, or locations where a deity is said to live or be "housed", or any site that is seen to have special spiritual powers. Such sites may be commemorated with shrines or temples that devotees are encouraged to visit for their own spiritual benefit: to be healed or have questions answered or to achieve some other spiritual benefit. A person who makes such a journey is called a pilgrim.

Pilgrims usually put forward is much less demand for the level and quality of service, food, accommodation. They stop for the night in the cells of monasteries in ashrams in tent camps, can spend the night in the temple on the floor or even on the street. Food choice is usually small, and it is quite modest. In Christian countries during fasts Lenten food in India - a vegetarian.

The main regions of pilgrimage tourism: -

- Orthodox CIS republics: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova;
- Foreign Europe with dominant Catholicism and Protestantism (including its numerous downstream);
- Foreign Europe with dominant Catholicism and Protestantism (including its numerous downstream);
- North America with significant Christianity;
- Latin America, with a predominance of Christianity and traditional folk beliefs of the indigenous population;
- North Africa dominated by Islam;
- Eastern and Western part of Africa dominated by Islam and there is a centre of Christianity and traditional folk beliefs;
- Western Asia with the dominance of Islam and Christianity and Judaism enclaves;
- South Asia with the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Islam;
- South-East Asia, with a predominance of Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism enclaves;
- East Asia dominated by Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism;

- Central Asia (Tibet), dominated by Islam and Lamaism, Bon religion;
- Central Asia dominated by Buddhism and Islam separate enclaves.

When thinking of religious tourism most communities tend to believe that this form of tourism does not apply to their locale, unless they are a major pilgrimage destination. Religious tourism, however, is not only destination oriented. It can also imply attracting large segments of the market.

Religious tourism is not only a visitation to a particular holy destination, but may also be travel for a humanitarian cause, for reasons of friendship or even as a form of leisure. Religious travel can be the primary reason for a trip but it can also be part of a trip and provide a destination with additional attractions. A common mistake is assuming that a traveller must be of a particular religion in order to visit a specific religious site. For example, although the Vatican holds special meaning for followers of the Catholic faith, millions of non-Catholics also visit the Vatican both for its spirituality and for its architectural beauty. The island of Curaçao is home to the Western Hemisphere's oldest synagogue and this synagogue is not only a national monument for Curaçao but also one of its major tourism attractions both for Jews and non-Jews alike.

- **Missionary travel** : A missionary is a member of a religious group sent into an area to proselytize and/or perform ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care, and development. The word "mission" originates from 1598 when the Jesuits sent members abroad, derived from the Latin *missionem* (nom. *missio*), meaning "act of sending" or *mittere*, meaning "to send". The word was used in light of its biblical usage; in the Latin translation of the Bible, Christ uses the word when sending the disciples to preach in his name. The term is most commonly used for Christian missions, but can be used for any creed or ideology.
- **Crusades, conventions and rallies**: In the sense of a meeting, is a gathering of individuals who meet at an arranged place and time in order to discuss or engage in some common interest.
- **Monastery visits and guest-stays** : A monastery is a building or complex of buildings comprising the domestic quarters and workplace of monastics, monks or nuns, whether living in communities or alone (hermits). A monastery generally includes a place reserved for prayer which may be a chapel, church or temple, and may also serve as an oratory.
- Buddhist monasteries are generally called vihara (Pali language). Viharas may be occupied by males or females, and in keeping with common English usage, a vihara populated by females may often be called a nunnery or a convent. However, vihara can also refer to a temple. In Tibetan Buddhism, monasteries are often called gompa. In Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, a monastery is called a *wat*. In Burma, a monastery is called a *kyaung*.
- A Christian monastery may be an abbey (i.e., under the rule of an abbot), or a priory (under the rule of a prior), or conceivably a hermitage (the dwelling of a hermit). It may be a community of men (monks) or of women (nuns). A charterhouse is any monastery belonging to the Carthusian order. In Eastern Christianity, a very small monastic community can be called a skete, and a very large or important monastery can be given the dignity of a lavra.
- The great communal life of a Christian monastery is called cenobitic, as opposed to the ascetic (or anchoritic) life of an anchorite and the eremitic life of a hermit. There has also been, mostly under the Ottoman occupation of Greece and Cyprus, an "idiorrhhythmic" lifestyle where monks come together but being able to own things individually and not being obliged to work for the common good.
- In Hinduism monasteries are called matha, mandir, koil, or most commonly an ashram.

- Jains use the Buddhist term vihara.

Religious tourism comprises many facets of the travel industry including:

- Pilgrimages
- Missionary travel
- Leisure (fellowship) vacations
- Faith-based cruising
- Crusades, conventions and rallies
- Retreats
- Monastery visits and guest-stays
- Faith-based camps
- Religious tourist attractions

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the most diverse and fluid of religion. Most Hindu places of pilgrimage are associated with legendary events from the lives of various gods... Even as it evolves with the ages, continuously four distinct branches of it exist. Shaivites worship Lord Shiva as the Supreme God; Vaishnavas worship Lord Vishnu as Supreme God.

Almost any place can become a focus for pilgrimage, but in most cases they are sacred cities, rivers, lakes, and mountains." Hindus are encouraged to undertake pilgrimages during their lifetime, though this practice is not considered absolutely mandatory. Most Hindus visit sites within their region or locale.

Smartha are the followers of the philosophy of unity (Advaita Vedanta) as put forth by Sri AdiShankaraAcharya and Shaktism is the worship of divine in a feminine form. Though distinct different, they are united in being tolerant and open to all religions and beliefs.

The **Jagannath** cult has an all-inclusive philosophy that reflects unity in diversity. The way all caste barriers are erased while partaking Mahaprasad at the temple. The vital role tribals still play in attending to Lord Jagannath, believed to have been originally worshiped by a tribal ShabarBiswabasuas **NelaMadhab** are testimony to a classes society with humanism as its backbone.

Sikhism:

Respect and dignity for all being, human and otherwise is intrinsic to Sikhism which is why, the lessons in **SriGuruGranthSahibji** (a compilation of what various gurus and saints across religion have said) are eternal . In 1699 the 10th Sikh guru ,**Sri Guru GobindSinghji** founded the **Khalsa** , making it responsible for protecting the weak and defenseless. Today a growing number of Eco Sikhs take this as a sign to protect our vulnerable Mother earth we human are destroying.

The Sikh religion does not place great importance on pilgrimage. Guru Nanak Dev was asked "Should I go and bathe at pilgrimage places?" and replied: "God's name is the real pilgrimage place which consists of contemplation of the word of God, and the cultivation of inner knowledge." Eventually, however, Amritsar and HarmandirSaheb (the Golden Temple) became the spiritual and cultural centre of the Sikh faith, and if a Sikh goes on pilgrimage it is usually to this place.

The birthplace of Sri HarmandirSahibji, Patna Sahibji is one of the five takhts" seats of power" of Sikhism. The magnificent havelies turned gurudwara originally belonged to SalisRaiJohri a disciple of Sri Guru Nanak Devji. Over the years it underwent several architectural changes and the credit for its present 108 feet high and seven storied form goes to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Many relics of Sri Guru

GobindSinghji are preserved in the museum within it. Like the gilded cradle the Guru used in his Childhood, his iron arrows, sacred sword, and sandals, swing, a portrait of Sri Guru GobindSinghji and a book containing the Hukamnamas of Sri Guru GobindSinghji and Sri Guru TeghBahadurji. Sri Guru GobindSinghji's 350th birth anniversary celebrated in January 2017

Islam

Islam, the second largest religion in the world made its way into India years ago. The pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) is one of the five pillars of Islam and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey, and can support their family during their absence. The gathering during the Hajj is considered the largest annual gathering of people in the world. Another important place for Muslims is the city of Medina, the second holiest site in Islam, in Saudi Arabia, the final resting place of Muhammad in Al-Masjid al-Nabawi (Mosque of the Prophet).

Standing tall in Kerala is the first concrete proof of its CheramanJuma Masjid, the country's first mosque built in 629 A.D. Yet another famous mosque is the Jama Masjid in Delhi built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan between 1644 to 1658. Walking through this architectural wonder with three gateways, four angle tower and two towering 40 meter high minarates, is an experience which is both humbling and enriching. The mosque in red sand stone and white marble is a classic blend of Indo-Islamic architecture. One of the largest in India its inner country yard can hold 25000 devotees at a time. It is believed that the first great expansion of Islam into India took place during the Umayyad dynasty of Caliphs in 711 when the seventeen years old Muhammad Bin Qasim was chosen to rule Sindh.

The message of respect for all given in Surat-al-Ma'ida reverberates in the lanes of Fatehpur Sikri, an Indo-Islamic master piece made by Emperor Akber. When a boon from Sufi saint Shaikh Sali Chishti blessed him with an heir and three sons.

Akber made the city his new Capital complete with a mosque. The Chief attractions of this historical city are the Dian-i-khas the Persian style royal chamber of Emperor Akber, the Panch Mahal--a five storied building meant to be the shelter of the royal ladies and mistresses the intricately carved tomb of Salim Chishti and the Buland-Darwaza--an enormous 54 meter high gateway, so far the largest gateway in the world.

Jainism:

Back in the 6th century B.C a new religion was born in India --Jainism. Its 24 teachers who we know as 'the trithankaras', paved ways for this peace loving though rather austere religion which preaches non-violence-mental, physical and verbal. And every Jain must follow a set of 5 vows- non-violence, truth-speaking, non-stealing, no-sexual immorality and non-attachment to worldly things.

Lord Adinath's temple is the main temple on the Shatrunjaya hills sprinkled with over 1300 temples carved in marble and made over a period of 900 years. Aptly called the Satrunjay Mahatrith temples, this place is believed to be the eternal shrines and the most sacred tirtha by the jains. The main temple has a white marble idol of Lord Adinath. He is said to have given his first sermon beneath the rayan tree at the summit. There are 108 names of this shrine in the scriptures.

Buddhism:

One of the major world religions, Buddhism has its roots in India. It can be traced to the Prince of Sakya tribe Siddhartha Gautama (ca 563-483 B.C) who relinquished his throne and luxury in the quest for

knowledge. Enlightened under the Bodhi tree, Lord Buddha” the enlightened one” proclaimed the 8-fold path as the guide to a right ways of living. While Buddhism never once insisted on people following the faith, it asks people to think before they act—to be ethical and balanced in whatever they do and not cause injury to other being: be it with words or actions.

Buddhism has travelled far and wide .But close to where it all started, right next to the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya is the 80 feet tall Great Buddha in a lotus position, drawing you to it. The majestic Buddha in sandstone blocks and red granite meditates under the endless, ever changing hues of the skies, radiating calm and inner strength.

Christianity:

Founded on the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ, Christianity is said to have come to India not once but twice. The First time it was with Apostle Thomas in 52A.D when he visited Kerala. Another version exists where his namesake, a Syrian merchant called Thomas of Cana established a Christian colony in Travancore.

And then, it came again in 1498 with explorer Vasco-da-Gama who opened up the European –Indian sea route. Christianity in India dates back to almost the same time when it arrived in Europe- 2000 years ago. Today, there are several branches of it chiefly Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism which in turn have sub categories.

The Mac de Deus Church at Saligao, Goa situated in the Bardez taluka, was built in 1873. Amongst the finest expressions of neo Gothic architecture, it has a Christmas-cake style top and a row of elaborate turrets each crowned with a cross. The church houses the miraculous statues of Moe de Dues (Mother of god), an exquisitely Chiseled wooden statue painted in gold, rescued from the ruins of the convent of Moe de Dues in old Goa.

Initiatives to be taken for development of Religious Tourism in India

New tourist circuits to be developed across the country to facilitate travel to and stay at religious places. Buddhist Circuit, Jain Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Christian Circuit, Hinduism Circuit, Sarva Dharma Circuit.

Issues being faced in the development of Religious Tourism in the Country:

- 1) Carrying Capacity.
- 2) Waste Management
- 3) Pollution
- 4) profit motive
- 5) Security

Challenges faced by Religious Tourism in India

1. Inadequate support infrastructure at tourist destinations.
2. Inadequate road, rail and air connectivity to various tourist destinations.
3. Inadequate availability of hotel rooms.
4. Inadequate availability of skilled labour.
5. Limited availability of hygienic and quality food outlets, restaurants at destinations.
6. Inadequate cleanliness at tourist destinations and surroundings including lack of clean public toilets.
7. Poor visitor management at site especially religious destinations.
8. Lack of conservation of Heritage Sites.

9. Limited availability of certified tourist guides.
10. Harassment of tourists from miscreants & notorious elements.
11. Safety of tourists.

Opportunities for Development of Religious Tourism sector in the country:

1. Formation of Hub.
2. Holistic package around the religious spots.
3. Appointment of special trained guide.
4. Establishing adequate infrastructure and information to avoid unnecessary hurdles by religious tourists.
5. No profit no loss system of management in the religious sites.
6. Nominal pricing of religious tourist products.
7. -Inclusive development - Community participation
8. -Ensuring Equitable benefits to local community
9. Pro-Poor Tourism Approach
10. -Capacity Building, Skill Development, Training Modules
11. -Inclusive development focusing on Women through SHG's etc
12. -Ensuring availability of clean drinking water and public
13. Conveniences at all destinations and circuits.
14. Yoga, Ayurveda / Unani – Promotion, training, funds
15. Preventive Health Care – tie ups with PHCs for locals
16. Medical Tourism
17. Promoting Eco-friendly modes of transport
18. -Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Carrying Capacities.

The Tourism Policy is aligned on robust foundations catering to stakeholders with focus on being inclusive.

- Promoting Entrepreneurs in Tourism Sector Through incentives and subsidies
- Skill Development and capacity building
- Addressing key infrastructure gaps through convergence & PPP.
- Eco-Tourism Guides, Nature Interpretation Centers
- Ensuring reduced tourist carbon footprint
- Tourist trails & infrastructure to respect the natural habitat / non-intrusive

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