

Understanding of the Pilgrimage Tourism in India

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Abstract:

In India, tourism has grown to be one of the main economic sectors. India is a popular destination for both domestic and foreign tourists due to its rich cultural legacy, historic sites, renowned temples, architectural wonders, wild animal sanctuaries, and beautiful sports. People have had to travel great distances on foot or in carts or animals on pilgrimages from the beginning of time. Thus, the pilgrimage (Tirth Yatra) was a journey made to improve spiritual endeavours. An essential component of Indian culture and custom is travel or pilgrimage for mental tranquillity and to learn about the country's rich heritage or sacred sites. Pilgrimage tourism is now a multifaceted experience that is entwined with other types of tourism, including cultural, heritage, wellness, and even adventure. It is also a rich tourist destination and stunning historically, culturally, and environmentally. It offers job chances. The present paper focuses on to understand concepts relevant to tourism like Definition of Tourism and to understand Pilgrimage Tourism in India as Tourism information.

Key words: *Indian Culture, Heritage, Tourist Destination, Tourism Information.*

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I. Introduction:

Both internationally and in many economies, tourism is a significant industry. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) claims that during the previous 60 years, tourism has continued to expand and diversify, making it one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors. According to projections from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism contributed 9.2% of the world's GDP and is expected to increase at a rate of more than 4% annually over the next ten years, reaching approximately 9.4% of GDP (WTTC, 2010). Modern tourism has become a major force behind socioeconomic advancement as more and more locations have opened up and made investments in tourism development.

A region's socioeconomic development is greatly influenced by tourism, one of the world's most dynamic and quickly expanding businesses. Pilgrimage tourism is unique among its various manifestations because it meets the deep spiritual and cultural requirements of millions of travellers. Traveling to holy locations including temples, mosques, cathedrals, shrines, and other religious sites in search of spiritual development, vow fulfilment, and cultural connection is known as pilgrimage tourism.

One of the main industries in the globe that creates jobs is tourism. It has been a significant societal phenomenon that is fuelled by business, social, religious, recreational, and knowledge-seeking interests as well as the human desire for adventure, education, entertainment, and new experiences. Economic development is both a cause and an effect of tourism. Because of its backward and forward links and cross-synergistic effects, it has the ability to stimulate other economic sectors.

In addition to being the engine of the economy, tourism has the potential to be a useful instrument for reducing poverty and guaranteeing equitable growth. From the standpoint of global resources, the sector is extremely significant due to its scale and scope. The growth of tourism frequently benefits host communities in a number of ways. Communities' quality of life is improved by improved infrastructure like electricity, water, and telecommunications, access, services like banking, transportation etc., and new investments. Developments that help the community and continue to do so will be supported by the community.

Interaction between communities and tourists includes both local and foreign is facilitated by tourism, which serves as an interface for cultural exchange. Traveling has been described as a way to "discover those things unknown or forgotten within ourselves." The conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, the preservation and transmission of historical and cultural traditions, the preservation of local history, and the rebirth of indigenous cultures, arts, and crafts can all benefit from tourism.

However, tourism also contributes to a wide range of problems that are closely linked to unchecked, unsustainable, and mass tourism growth, such as potential threats to the natural environment due to high

concentrations of tourist activities, such as soil erosion, increased air emissions and noises from vehicles, crowding, improper disposal of solid waste and littering, release of sewage, architectural/visual pollution, loss of biodiversity, alteration of the ecosystem (damage of flora and fauna) and climatic changes brought on by high levels of unethical practices like drug abuse, alcoholism, and sexual permissiveness.

Therefore, the development of tourism in any location has many advantages and disadvantages. When tourism is properly managed, it can contribute positively to the destination's social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political growth. Conversely, uncontrolled tourism growth might have extremely negative effects. Therefore, depending on their beliefs, attitudes, and the kind of resources available for tourist development, many communities, organizations, and individuals are significantly impacted by tourism.

BACKGROUND:

One of the earliest types of travel that people have ever experienced is pilgrimage tourism. It is motivated by religious faith, when followers travel to hallowed locations in search of spiritual merit, to pray, to fulfil pledges, or just to take in the ambiance and sacredness of these places. With destinations like Varanasi, Tirupati, Shirdi, Amritsar, and Bodhgaya Yadagirigutta, Swarna Giri, and Srisailem attracting millions of domestic and foreign visitors each year, pilgrimage has been an essential part of India's cultural landscape for centuries.

Pilgrimage tourism has changed over the past few decades from being solely religious travel to becoming a more structured and approachable sector of the tourist industry. Easy access to pilgrimage sites has been made possible by a number of factors, including better transportation networks, enhanced infrastructure, technological advancements, and more disposable cash. Additionally, pilgrimage tourism is now a multifaceted experience that is entwined with other types of tourism, including cultural, heritage, wellness, and even adventure.

Pilgrimage tourism has a number of difficulties despite its important contributions. Tourist impressions and the sustainability of these locations may be impacted by overcrowding, poor facilities, strain on regional ecosystems, a lack of sanitary services, and commercialization. Unsatisfactory experiences may deter future travellers and restrict the expansion of a location.

Therefore, it is essential to research tourists' perspectives in order to determine their expectations, gauge their level of satisfaction, and discover service quality gaps. This study intends to provide practical insights that can improve pilgrimage experiences, guarantee sustainable destination management, and foster beneficial socioeconomic effects for nearby communities by investigating visitor perspectives of pilgrimage tourism development.

Objectives:

1. To understand concepts relevant to tourism like Definition of Tourism.
2. To understand Pilgrimage Tourism in India as Tourism information.

Definition of Tourism:

Alongside historical changes, the concept of tourism has changed over time. Hunziker and Krapf describe tourism as "the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, insofar as it does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected to any earning activity." Day excursions, business travel, and the blurring of these boundaries with other activities are not included in this definition, which emphasizes travel and lodging.

In 1937, the League of Nations proposed that tourism encompass the social activities of those who travel for a minimum of twenty-four hours in a country other than their home country. However, this definition's drawback was that it solely focused on international travel, leaving out local travel. For the following reasons, the Rome Conference on Tourism in 1963 recommended that the term "tourist" be replaced with "visitor," defining tourism as a visit "to a country other than one's own or where one usually resides and works."

i) Tourism — the activity of temporary visitors staying at least 24 hours for leisure, business, family, mission or meeting.

ii) Excursion — the activity of a temporary visitor staying less than 24 hours but excluding people in transit. This definition also excluded the domestic tourist, although it did recognize the day visitor.

In 1976, the Tourism Society of Britain proposed to define tourism as "the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations, including day visits and excursions."

All manifestations of the phenomenon of leisure activities are now included in the idea of tourism. These days, we may characterize mass tourism as the desire of a person who travels to see something different and is unhappy when he discovers that things are different from what they are at home. This concept captures the

essence of global tourism, which is centered in Western societies, where 70% of visitors come from and 60% of foreign visitors arrive.

The notions related to tourism are inevitably impacted by the social practices of these countries rather than the travel traditions of non-Western cultures and developing societies because the governance of tourism is concentrated in the West.

Traveling from one country to another is referred to as international tourism; traveling within one's own country, or when the origin and destination are in the same country, is referred to as domestic tourism.

Pilgrimage Tourism:

A pilgrimage is a trip to a sacred location that may result in a personal metamorphosis before the traveler returns to their everyday life. A pilgrim is a traveler (literally, someone who has arrived from far away) who is traveling to a sacred location. The word comes from the Latin *peregrinus*. This is usually an actual trip (typically on foot) to a location that holds particular meaning for the follower of a certain religion.

A journey or search for spiritual or moral meaning is often a part of pilgrimages. Though it can occasionally be a figurative trip into one's own beliefs, it usually involves traveling to a shrine or other site significant to one's faith and beliefs.

For generations, numerous religions have flourished in the vast nation of India. Many of these religions have their roots here, and many more have come to the nation from all over the world. India is an ideal location for pilgrimage tourism due to its wealth of holy sites.

These sacred sites in India not only draw devoted followers but also visitors from all over the world who travel to the nation for spiritual tourism. India is home to pilgrimage sites for many different religions, including temples, shrines, mosques, and churches. Unlike other tours, a pilgrimage tour offers an opportunity to sit down and think about oneself rather than a lot of activity and chaos.

However, the trek may prove difficult, with bigger rewards at the end, depending on the pilgrimage destination. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, and Islam are among the major religions practiced in India, and their sites offer a tranquil and peaceful environment for tourists.

Among them, the Indian subcontinent has been blessed with the birth and growth of Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Hinduism throughout centuries, which has led to their global dissemination. Christianity and Islam have also established themselves here, gaining devoted followers.

India Pilgrimage Tourism Information as a Travel Guide:

People learn about vice and virtue as they discover more about themselves, their Creator, and the purpose of their lives. Even though they have been taught spirituality since the day of their conception, they nevertheless fall into a pattern of making mistakes and committing sins, which eventually leads them to carry out penance as they see fit.

Traveling on a sacred journey—a pilgrimage trip is just one of many, but it is the most favoured method of atonement, particularly if the pilgrim is traveling to India. India, the "land of versatility," is unparalleled; particularly when it comes to research, analysis, and focus due to the various religions that it serves as a melting pot.

Every religion has a purpose and an idealized way of living. At diverse pilgrimage locations in India, it is possible to catch a glimpse of each of them and revel in the rich knowledge of how adherents of many faiths attempt to establish a connection with their Creator.

In any of the large mosques located around the nation, Muslims can lay their prayer carpets, close their eyes, and chant Quranic hymns while spreading their palms in adoration of Allah Almighty. Hindus can travel to sacred sites like Vaishno Devi, Amarnath, and Chardham, or they can join hands in devotion and carry out a variety of rituals while visiting temples where God is thought to have taken on various forms and incarnations, such as Saktipeeths and Jyotirlingas.

Just as Christians can locate a church that meets their spiritual and religious needs, Sikhs can select from the various Gurudwaras established by their Gurus, starting with Guru Nanak. On the other hand, Jain Tirthankars have left enough places of worship where Jain adherents seek serenity, such as the stupas, gompas, and monasteries that proudly serve as guides for people who choose to follow the teachings and preaching of Buddhism.

In addition to providing amusement and enlightenment as part of participating in religious festivals and processions, pilgrimage vacations offer a glimpse of life that occasionally seems lost in materialism.

Beyond religious limitations, the mind can still look for answers to questions that most people are afraid to ask for fear of becoming lost in a lack of wisdom. The solution can be found in places like Shirdi and Puttaparthi; Sufi sites of worship, Bahia philosophy, Spiritual Ashrams, and other locations that may provide the serenity you've been seeking. Nothing occurs for any reason, and traveling to India on a pilgrimage journey only deepens one's faith in God, life, and humanity.

Hindu Pilgrimage

India has a large number of Hindu pilgrimage sites because over half of the country's population practices Hinduism. The nation boasts several temples and sites of worship devoted to the gods of Hinduism, including Lord Rama, Lord Shiva, and Lord Vishnu. Due to their religious and spiritual significance, pilgrimage sites in India that are mentioned in the sacred texts of the Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Vedas draw a large number of followers throughout the year.

In order to assist devotees in their religious travel, numerous religious circuits have been established. The Char Dham Yatra, which covers the pilgrimage sites of Badrinath-Kedarnath, Dwarka, Jagannath Puri, and Rameshwaram; Chota Char Dham, which covers the sites of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath; and other sites like Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, and Varanasi are some of the significant religious tours that Hindu devotees undertake.

In addition to these, the riverfronts of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain are some of India's most revered locations and are well-known for hosting the sacred Kumbh Mela, which draws sages, ascetics, devotees, and eager tourists. There are plenty of Hindu pilgrimage sites throughout the nation that provide an opportunity to learn more about India's history and culture.

Buddhist Pilgrimage:

Buddhism, which dates back more than 2,500 years to the Indian subcontinent, is currently one of the world's most popular religions. In this regard, India has been in the forefront of the religion's development and dissemination. The Buddha became enlightened in India, delivered his first sermon, lived as a monk sharing his teachings, and eventually attained Mahaparinirvana before passing away and departing this world.

As a result, these locations are highly revered and revered by Buddhists, who include them in their pilgrimage tours around the nation. They are also famous tourist destinations on the Buddhist circuit. Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath, Shravasti, Kushinagar, and many other significant locations are included in Buddhist tourism.

Other significant locations in India include the historic, excavated sites of Nalanda, Sankisa, Sanchi Stupa, and the Diamond Triangle of Odisha, as well as monasteries like Namgyal, Tawang, and Hemis monasteries. In addition to being significant from a religious perspective, these Buddhist pilgrimage sites are significant historical turning points that aid in our comprehension of the past.

The Buddha made it his mission to alleviate the suffering brought on by the world's miseries. He was a pioneer of Buddhism that led to a new perspective on the world.

Jain Pilgrimage:

Another religion with Indian roots is Jainism, which is founded on the ideas of nonviolence. The religion was founded by Rishabdeva, the first Tirthankara, or Jain spiritual leader, and continued by 23 other Tirthankaras. Vardhman Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, is credited with reviving the religion and laying the groundwork for contemporary Jainism.

There are numerous religious sites in India that can be included in a Jain Pilgrimage Tour, which includes important and well-liked pilgrimage sites all around the nation. These locations include the Palitana Temple in Gujarat, the Shri Digambar Jain Lal Mandir in Delhi, the Gomateshwara Temple in Karnataka, the Ranakpur Jain Temple, and the Dilwara Temple in Rajasthan.

India's culture and lifestyles are influenced by Jainism, which upholds the principles of nonviolence and compassion for all living things. In addition to creating an atmosphere of devotion and spirituality, these Jain temples are among the most exquisite sacred sites in the nation. One particularly noteworthy example is the Gomateshwara Statue in Karnataka, which is renowned for being eighteen meters tall and composed of a single piece of rock, drawing both tourists and devotees.

Sikh Pilgrimage:

Sikhism was created in the fifteenth century by their spiritual leader, Guru Nanak, who advocated for the worship of the only true God and propagated a message of love and equality among all people, regardless of their differences. Nine additional gurus who devoted their lives to propagating Guru Nanak's teachings carried on Sikhism after him. The numerous Gurdwaras, or Sikh houses of worship, located all around the nation are included in Sikh pilgrimage tourism. These gurdwaras are renowned for being hospitable to all and acting as a haven of solace.

The Shri Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, Anandpur Sahib, Gurudwara Shri Bangla Sahib, and Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib are some of the well-liked religious sites to see on a Sikh pilgrimage tour. The most well-known of these is the Golden Temple (Shri Harmandir Sahib), which draws thousands of visitors each year from all walks of life. Sikhism's core principles, which Sikhs uphold in both their daily lives and places of worship, center on ensuring that everyone is treated equally under all circumstances.

Christian Pilgrimage:

Christianity is one religion that has been introduced to India from all over the world, in contrast to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. The religion was brought to the nation at several stages, and it is currently one of the six religions practiced in India. Visiting the nation's major churches and chapels, which serve as key landmarks for Christians, is part of the Christian Pilgrimage Tour.

The Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, the Basilica of Our Lady of Good Health in Tamil Nadu, the Santhome Cathedral Basilica in Tamil Nadu, and the Christ Church in Shimla are some of the top locations for a Christian pilgrimage tour.

Many of these pilgrimage sites are significant sites of worship and are renowned for housing the remains and relics of well-known saints and followers of Jesus Christ, the founder of the faith. For instance, the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa is well-known for housing the remains of the highly honored Christian missionary and saint St. Francis Xavier. Glimpses of modern architecture from their native nations may be observed because many of these churches were constructed during the colonial era, which makes for a stunning picture.

Muslim Pilgrimage:

Another Abrahamic religion that has adherents in India is Islam. Islam is the second most popular religion in India, despite the fact that the majority of people there practice Hinduism. Given the Hajj location in Saudi Arabia, which is regarded as a primary pilgrimage for followers, pilgrimages are significant events for Muslims. Many mosques and other places of worship that have been around for centuries can be found in India as well, and they are frequently among the most popular tourist destinations.

The Jama Masjid in Delhi, the Haji Ali Dargah in Maharashtra, the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan, and the Nizamuddin Dargah Sharif in Delhi are all well-known Muslim holy sites in India. Glimpses of this foreign religion, which has been practiced in India for millennia, can be found in the country's cuisine, language, attire, and various facets of its culture. Since most of these pilgrimage sites were created by the emperors who once ruled India, they are an integral part of the country's history and provide us with insight into the past.

Jewish Pilgrimage:

Judaism is another Abrahamic faith that has made its way to India. The Jewish people, who have gathered in India throughout many centuries, practice Judaism, a religion that holds that there is only one genuine God. Synagogues are Jewish houses of worship that can be found all across the nation. Nowadays, the bulk of Jews are found in West Bengal, Mumbai, and Cochin. They are divided into many groups, including Baghdadi Jews, Bene Israel Jews, and Cochin Jews.

As a result, these locations have a large number of synagogues devoted to prayer and worship. The Paradesi Synagogue in Kerala, the Maghen David Synagogue, the Beth El Synagogue in West Bengal, and the Ohel David Synagogue in Maharashtra are important Jewish pilgrimage sites in India. These synagogues are among the top religious sites in India and provide an opportunity to learn about the history, culture, and way of life of Indian Jews.

Among them, the Ohel David Synagogue in Pune, Maharashtra, is particularly well-liked and worth a visit. It is regarded as the biggest synagogue in India.

II. Conclusion:

Pilgrimage tourism is not a new phenomenon, and it is receiving more and more attention, which makes it necessary to keep a constant eye on it. By itself, the word "pilgrimage" indicated enduring adversity in order to find tranquillity and peace in God's dwelling. Travel is now connected with luxury due to modern improvements that have made it comfortable and luxurious.

With contemporary conveniences, people have long attempted to remove the challenges associated with travel. Travellers' comfort is hampered by some limitations that are unavoidable regardless of the time period. Transportation, lodging, heavy traffic at the destination, trash management, and crowd control at the shrine were some of the common issues pilgrims experienced, according to the study. Pilgrimage tourism in India is quite widespread, and each pilgrimage journey has its own set of challenges.

The government has always worked to grow the tourism industry since it is a significant source of revenue and jobs for the country. The central government is the point of contact for all development initiatives in this area, but no implementation can be carried out without the local management's cooperation. In order to properly develop pilgrimage tourism and address its challenges, these important players must work together.

Only until the difficulties and problems encountered by travellers are appropriately resolved will pilgrimage tourism reach its full potential. Every religion in India has a large number of important locations, which illustrates the enormous potential of religious tourism and pilgrimage.

The government must engage all tourism stakeholders in order to plan religious tourism in a sustainable manner for future demands. Even if the government is working to develop places of religious significance, a research can be started to assess how well these initiatives are working.

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