

Developing unexplored tourist destinations “A plan to curb ill effects of Mass Tourism”

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Abstract

Tourism is playing a very important role in the socio economic development of the state of Himachal Pradesh and help in earning foreign exchange to the country. Mass tourism is slowly but surely decimating the natural beauty of the state capital and queen of hills “Shimla “and other popular tourist destinations and turning their once idyllic towns into urban nightmares. Considering the immense potential of tourism in the state and overcrowding of main tourist destinations like Shimla, Kasauli, Kullu, Manali, Dharmshala and Chamba,. There is a dire need to develop efficient strategies to exploit new unexploited areas in such a manner where the local community is involved and benefit goes to the people of the area. Unexploited areas like Janjhali in Mandi, Rajgharh area in Sirmour, Shoja and Jalori-Pass in Kullu and Sangla valley in Kinnaur, Pabbar valley in Shimla.

KEYWORDS: - Mass Tourism, Unexplored, Idyllic, Deities, Nightmare, Chakravayuh, Monastery

Tourism has a vast material and human potential and has major implications for the economy and society and international relations. Tourism is a stimulating element of the global economy acting as a lever to mitigate inter-regional imbalances and active mean of education, of raising the level of education, culture and civilization of the people. Tourism as an industry began developing in Himachal only in the 19th century, when the British weary of the sweltering heat of the plains, started search for hill stations for rest and peace. A small village named Sabathu, 20 miles from Kalka was first such stations, where the British political agent selected for residency. Major Kennedy constructed the first *pucca* house in Shimla in 1922. He invited the Governors General Lord Amherst to stay with him in 1927. This visit resulted in the expansion of Shimla, which was located near the ‘*Shamla Devi*’ temple. Later on Lord Dalhousie shifted his summer headquarters to ‘*Chini*’, now known as Kalpa, to keep watch and check on the activities of Sikhs, on the western side of the river Satluj. Since the British era Shimla had great attractions like the football matches, horse racing, sports and gymkhanas. These competitions were first time held by Lord Auckland in 1838 at Annandale, after his victory in the first Afghan War. During the British period Shimla was the venue of national and International Conferences and policy decision meetings. After Britishers left in 1947, Shimla became capital of Punjab State till 1953. With the reorganisation of the Punjab, areas having rich tourists potential like those of Kullu, Manali, Kangra, Dharamsala, Shimla, Kasauli, Chail and Dalhousie came over to Himachal Pradesh; today is next

to none in the matter of potential that it holds for tourism. For the beginning it is important to say that despite wars, political turmoil, natural disasters, medical scares, terrorist attacks, or economic and energy crises in various parts of the world, international trade in tourism services has grown spectacularly since the 1970. Year 2017 proved to be another successful year for the Travel & Tourism sector in India as 10.04 million foreign tourists arrived India which is 14% over the previous year earning 27,310 million US\$. Total Travel & Tourism GDP is estimated to grow on average by 3.8% per year from 2015- 2025. It is expected that Travel & Tourism will provide a total of 72.9 million new jobs, 23.2 million of which will be provided directly within the sector. The contribution of total Travel & Tourism GDP to the wider economy is expected to rise from 9.8% in 2014 to 10.5% in 2025, and from 9.4% to 10.7% for employment (WTTC, 2015). As per the latest estimates of UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, International tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long term forecast Tourism Towards 2030.

TOURISM IN INDIAN CONTEXT

The 'Incredible India' campaign, together with efforts taken by individual state tourism boards and facilities like augmenting tourism infrastructure, easing of visa regime, assurance of quality standards in services of tourism service providers, projecting the country as a 365 days' tourist destination, promoting tourism in a sustainable manner helped in increasing sustainable tourist footfall in the country. The growth in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India during the eighties & nineties did not follow any consistent pattern. While 3 Years, viz. 1986, 1992 and 1995 saw double-digit positive growth, there was negative growth in the years 1984, 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1998. Since the year 2003 there has been a consistent growth in FTAs except for the year 2009. Further, the number of foreign tourist's arrival in India increased to 10.04 million @ annual Growth Rate of 14.0 % in 2017 as compared to 8.80 million count for the year 2016. Besides international tourist's arrivals, number of Indian Nationals Departures from India was 16.63 Million with an annual Growth Rate of 11.4% in 2013. Further, number of Domestic Tourist Visits to all states /UTs was 1145 Million with an annual Growth Rate of 9.6%. The total Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism in INR terms was 107671 with an annual Growth Rate of 14.0%. In terms of US\$, Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism was 18.44 Billion with an annual rate of 4.0%. The share of India in International Tourist Arrivals was 0.64% in 2013 as per the report publishing by ministry of Tourism, India. As per the latest data released by ministry of Tourism, Out of all the top 10 source countries for foreign tourist arrival in Indian, U.S.A tops the list followed by U. K Further out of total 10 countries, 4 are European nation and 4 are from Asia. As per the latest data published by the ministry of tourism, Indian's rank in "World Tourist Arrivals" is 42 and share of Indian in International Tourism Receipts (in terms of US\$) 1.59% and also India's rank in World Tourism Receipts was 16th in 2013. The Foreign tourist arrivals in India continued to grow from 2.37 million in 1997 to 10.04 million in 2017. If we compare the percentage growth in foreign tourist footfall in 2014 over 2013 is 10.2% and it reached 14.0% in 2017 over 2016.

TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH:-

Three prime movers of mountain economies are horticulture and select agriculture, hydro-electricity and tourism. At the moment, only 7% of

Himachal's GDP comes from tourism. Yet, it is estimated to be much higher as there is substantial income generation even in the non-organised sector. For example, it is estimated that at least Rs. 150 crores is earned per annum by the hospitality sector, another Rs. 100 crores are earned by food and bar sales. Shopping by tourists sweeps in about Rs. 150 crores into the State's economy. Transport generates another estimated Rs. 100 crores, and ancillary services provided by porters, guides etc. generate at least another Rs. 20 crores. It is estimated that a million rupees invested in tourism creates 47.5 new jobs. This compares favourably with other sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, where a similar investment yields only 44.7 new jobs. Tourism can play considerable role in the economy and development in a land-locked state with a hill terrain like Himachal Pradesh. Job opportunities are limited since the economy is basically agrarian and the scope for industrialisation is limited due to geographical and ecological reasons. (Sharma Manoj, 2007)

At present, there are two broad zones of tourism ; natural and manmade. There is another tourism segment that comes in the form of pilgrims to the many religious places in the State. Himachal has been generously endowed by nature. Its forests have the uniqueness of being temperate to alpine ones in what is otherwise a tropical zone. These forests still have a substantial amount of wildlife and the area covered by sanctuaries and National Parks is over seven thousand square kilometers. There are 32 Sanctuaries, 2 National Parks and 3 Game Reserves. The sanctuaries include Simbalwara (Sirmour), Churdhar, Chail (Solan), Maharana Pratap Sagar (Kangra) Manali (Kullu), Kanwar (Kullu), Kalatop Khajjiar (Chamba), Daranghati (Shimla). The National Parks are Pin Valley National Park, Spiti and the Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu, the Nature parks are at Kufri (Shimla), Manali (Kullu) and Gopalpur (Kangra). The major rivers of the State are the Yamuna, the Satluj, the Beas, the Ravi and the Chenab. There are several lakes all over the state and water in some form or the other, covers over 1% of the State land area. Many of these lakes are home to a variety of aquatic and avian life, for example, the Maharana Pratap Sagar (formerly known as the Pong Dam Reservoir) is a declared bird sanctuary and over 220 species belonging to 54 families have been sighted. These include black-headed gulls, plovers, terns, ducks, water-fowl and egrets. The lake's location at the head of the Indian plains has made it a suitable habitat and stopover for migratory birds that enter India from Central Asia. Twenty-seven species and sub-species of fish belonging to six families have been recorded in these waters. Some of the important commercial varieties are - *Labeo dero* (Gid), *Labeo rohita*, *Labeo calbasu*, *Tor putitora* (Mahsir), and *Mystus seenghala* (Singhara).

The State has several ancient Hindu temples and places of pilgrimage. Himachal is home to many of the 'Shaktipeeths' revered by Hindus. These are (Vajreshwari Devi) at Kangra, Chintapurni (Chinmastika Devi), Jwalaji (Jwalamukhi), Naina Devi and Sarahan (Bhimakali). There are other shrines that draw thousands of pilgrims like Chamunda Devi, Deot Sidh, Baba Balak Nath and Trilokpur. Centres of Sikh pilgrimage are at Manikaran, Paonta Sahib, Baba Badbhag Singh and Rewalsar. Many of the towns have charming churches and these are at Shimla, Dagshai, Kotgarh, Kasauli, Palampur, Dharamsala, Dalhousie and Chamba. Practically every village has its own deities housed in temples that speak eloquently of local building skills and refined aesthetics

There are several Buddhist sites in Himachal. With dozens of old and new, large and small monasteries, Buddhism has a powerful presence in the

State - which is also home to His Holiness “the Dalai Lama” and his followers. McLeodganj, the seat of the Dalai Lama attracts several visitors from overseas. Tabo monastery in Spiti dates back to 996 AD and in terms of sanctity for Trans Himalayan Buddhism, this is considered only second to the Tholing monastery in Tibet.

Himachal’s attractions include the unique ‘hill stations’ that were built by the Britishers. These include the State Capital, Shimla, which was the ‘summer capital’ of British India and from where one-fifth of the human race was ruled for a century. These towns hold excellent examples of colonial architecture and provide a window to a by-gone age. Other smaller towns that were developed by the British are Kasauli, Kullu, Dalhousie, Palampur and Dharamsala. There is the dramatic landscape and unique culture of the Trans Himalayan districts of Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti. A portion of the district of Kinnaur lies south of the Greater Himalaya and the remainder lies across the mountains. The district of Lahaul-Spiti lies wholly in the Trans-Himalaya. This is a unique part of the world where thick forests steadily give way to the almost lunar-like landscape of the cold desert.

In the century-old Kalka Shimla Railway line and in the Kangra Valley railway, Himachal has two of the country’s five heritage railway lines. Also in the last few decades, a range of activities have grown in Himachal Pradesh. Much of this is nature and outdoor related and the State is rapidly becoming a focus for adventure sport. This is the only place in India that hosts heli-skiing. Activities already available and which are likely to grow in the coming years are trekking and camping, skiing, para-sailing and para-gliding, water- sports and white-water rafting, ballooning, ice-skating, mountain cycling, vehicle safaris, mountaineering and rock climbing, golf and angling. Himachal’s built heritage includes age-old forts and palaces, its remarkable wood and stone ‘towers’, the architecture of the colonial towns — and practically every village is a picture of pastoral perfection. Remarkable wall and miniature paintings of the Kangra region, Buddhist *thangkas* and folk carving in wood. Culturally, the State is rich in its folk lore, costumes, shawls, jewellery, dance forms and the ‘karali’ dance-dramas.

‘Health tourism’ is likely to grow rapidly in the coming years. The clean and invigorating environment, the substantial forest cover and the number of herbs that grow in the State, provide a natural setting for this.

PROBLEMS OF MASS TOURISM

Mass tourism is slowly but surely decimating the natural beauty of the state capital and queen of hills “Shimla “and other popular tourist destinations and turning their once idyllic towns into urban nightmares. It is also imposing an unbearable burden on its infrastructure-roads, water supply, transport, waste disposal systems – thereby degrading the quality of life of its permanent residents. The state govt. so far has been going on an unplanned expansion mode, happy that the numbers keep going up every year. It has done little to regulate or guide this human tsunami; to the contrary, by misconceived and populist moves such as regularisation of illegal constructions it is only encouraging mindless concretisation of the state. It is time for it to sit back, take a hard look at the damage being caused and take some remedial measures to limit the adverse effects of this model of tourism which may be acceptable in the plains but is totally unsuited for a mountain state like Himachal. The mass-tourism model is gradually getting discredited throughout the world and citizens/residents (if not yet governments) have begun to oppose it precisely because of its adverse cultural, landscape and infrastructural impacts. In near past, large scale

protests by local populations have been held in Barcelona, Venice, Thailand, even Nepal and Bhutan (which has imposed a cap on the number of tourists). We need to learn from this and accept that Tourism too is an Industry and, like all industries, has to be regulated. Given the ever increasing numbers, the “Chalta hai” attitude will no longer do. We do not need any more evidence of the damage being caused by the existing form of tourism in the state: the condition of Shimla, Manali and Dharamshala; the traffic jams on Rohtang; the desecration of Khajjiar and Triund; the mounds of plastic on the railway tracks between Kalka and Solan; the road in Kufri ankle deep in horse dung ; Lakhs of “shradhalus” defecating all the way to Manimahesh lake, the regular hours-long traffic jams on all major highways are the evidence that a state is collapsing under the weight of tourism. Its only answer is to build or widen even more highways (the Parwanoo-Shimla and Kiratpur-Manali National Highways being prime examples of this myopic vision: all they will do is increase traffic exponentially and destabilise the hills in next few decade promising landslides on the highways).

The numbers tell their own story. The state was visited by 17.53 million tourists in 2015- almost three times its own population & the figure is growing by 7.5 % per annum, thanks largely to the unrest in Kashmir. It is an important contributor to the economy of the state, providing 400,000 jobs and generating about Rs. 1200 crores, which is between 8% to 10% of the state’s GDP. But there is a hidden story beneath these numbers. First, only some parts of the state benefit, not the entire state. Almost 50% of these tourists visit only three locations: Kullu (33.15 lakhs), Shimla (32.65 lakhs) and Kangra (24 lakhs). The tribal districts of Kinnaur (1.80 lakhs) and Lahaul Spiti (1.76 lakhs) are badly neglected. The implications of these figures are twofold: not only are the monetary benefits of tourism badly skewed, the three favoured towns/districts are unable to bear the burden of these huge numbers and are turning into concrete slums. Permanent residents live under a constant siege, their roads, open spaces, markets, parking all taken over by the hordes from the plains, prices of everything hiked, water supply being rationed to cater to the visitors. Their towns are being ruined by ever increasing construction to meet the needs of these millions of visitors. Hotels, Motels, restaurants, parking structures, roads; most of them built in violation of the building bye-laws. Second, the revenue earned by the states Rs. 1200 corers is a pittance compared to the huge number of people coming to the state: on a per capita basis it is little more than Rs. 600 per tourist. Any proper cost benefit analysis factoring in social, economic, environmental, health costs would reveal that the benefits to the state from this kind of low-cost mass tourism are minimal. This is happening because the state has been consistently unable to attract the high-end tourist. A study carried out by AC Nielson Org-Marg in 2011-2012 underpins this dismal finding. It gives the percentage of tourists visiting State, income slab wise are given below:-

INCOME SLAB	%AGE OF TOURIST
BETWEEN RS. 100,000 – 200,000	12
BETWEEN RS. 200,000 – 500,000	84

ABOVE RS. 500,000

4

The overwhelming percentage (84%) of tourists to the state are budget tourists who drain the state's public resources and spoil its natural assets but contribute very little to its economy and we have got into a vicious cycle: as their numbers keep increasing more and more of this second grade (if not substandard) infrastructure is created for them, more and more of the natural landscape is being destroyed. As a result, the space for higher priced, premium tourism keeps shrinking even more. The govt. has shown no initiative in breaking out of this "chakravyuh". There have been some policy initiatives in the past, like: eco-tourism, home-stays, and ropeways but these are too sporadic. A complete paradigm change of this is needed.

ALTERNATIVE TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH:-

As per the latest government policy papers, development of alternative tourist destinations are under the scanner of the state government. New unexplored areas like Janjhali in Mandi, Jalori- Pass and Shoja in Kullu, Rajgharh in Sirmour, Nichar in Kinnaur and Pabbar valley in Shimla are in the pipeline for the development. The booming tourism industry in Himachal Pradesh is an engine to economic growth in rural areas of the state. In this direction, recently the government has launched a new initiative "Har Gaon Ki Kahani" in order to exploit the tourism potential of historically rich villages with the objective to divert the rush of tourists from the over-crowded destinations like Shimla, Mandi and Dharmshala to lesser known places so that the villages also reap benefits of the tourism industry.

VALLEY OF THE PABBAR RIVER

The Valley of the Pabbar river is accessed from Theog on the Hindustan Tibet Road and Rohru (131 Kms from Shimla) is its main town. It is also a good location for trout fishing, sightseeing and trekking in the area. Jubbal (21 km) is famous for its palace which is an interesting mix of European and vernacular elements and the classical temples of Hatkoti (11 km) are another major attraction. Pabbar Valley is ahead of Shimla in Himachal Pradesh and located in the still non-touristy mountains amongst the most prosperous apple orchard belt of India, with deep forests of deodar and oak. The route for Pabbar Valley branches off the national highway NH22 (the old Hindustan-Tibet Road) from Theog, and heads towards the Pabbar Valley and beyond. Lying in the lap of virgin nature below the breathtakingly beautiful Chanshal mountain range, the Pabbar Valley is a haven for offbeat travelers and lovers of nature and adventure. River Pabbar with numerous tributary streams, rich in trout fish, it stretches from the southern boundaries of the legendary land of Kinnaur to the borders of the sacred land of Uttarakhand. The Pabbar, rising high in the snow-capped mountains and fed with glacial ice, meanders its way to join the Tons at Tiuni to feed the waters of the Yamuna. Majestic mountains, splashing streams, natural beauty of shimmering lakes and breathtaking landscapes, Pabbar valley is a paradise of travelers. This valley is known for the dynamic and adventurous tourist activities. The amazing opportunities of trekking like Kuper Valley Trek and Chanshal Trek in Pabbar valley are praiseworthy. Hatkoti, 120 km away, and Rohru, 131 km away, are the

two main picturesque places on the bank of river Pabbar, known for trout fishing. Hatkoti has a splendidly built temple of Goddess Durga with green fields all round and Rohru has a typical hill town market. There are options for Jeep Safaries and natural walks in the spectacular valley of Pabbar. The banks of Pabbar River are ideal for fishing activities including trout and Mahasheer fishing. Pabbar valley is a virgin land waiting to be explored. This valley is an ideal retreat from the busy life in the urbanized regions.

CONCLUSIONS :-

Tourism is playing a very important role in the socioeconomic development of the state of Himachal Pradesh and help in earning foreign exchange to the country. Considering the immense potential of tourism in the state and overcrowding of main tourist destinations like Shimla, Kullu, Manali, Dharmshala and Chamba, authorities needs to develop efficient strategies to exploit new unexploited areas in such a manner where the local community is involved and benefit accrue to the people of the area. The need to frame policies which encourage public-private participation in the creation of quality tourism infrastructure to facilitate tourists throughout the state. Unexploited areas like Janjhali in Mandi, Rajgharh area in Sirmour, Shoja and Jalori-Passin Kullu and Sangla valley in Kinnaur, Pabbar valley in Shimla. Similarly, The global warming and climate change is resulting into less snowfall and erratic monsoon which are resulting in floods and dry spells in these tourist places. Therefore, the government need to initiate necessary steps in order to restore and sustain the conservation of green forests in all these places for the sustainable development of tourism in the state. Himachal Pradesh is not capable of attracting high-end tourists Government should build link roads to all such places so that every tourist can easily visit these places. Adequate accommodation and catering management need to be strengthened in various tourist destinations to cater the budget and high class tourists travelling by road to visit different locations. Hence, the state of Himachal Pradesh has vast potential for the tourism throughout the region but there is a need for an effective strategy towards holistic development of tourism in integrated manner.

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