



Pilgrimage Tourism in Tamil Nadu an Overview

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ABSTRACT

Tourism in India is one of the major sectors of the economy development. India posses its rich cultural heritage, ancient monuments, world famous temples, architecture masterpieces, wild animal's sanctuaries and scenic sports, and also holds a great attraction for foreign and the domestic tourists. The growth of pilgrimage tourism in India has been improved astonishingly. India is blessed with plenty of well-known religious destinations bring enormous economic gain to local residents. The pilgrimage (Tirth Yatra) journey undertake for the betterment of spiritual pursuits. Travel or pilgrimage for mental peace and to gain knowledge about rich heritage or religious places in the country is an integral part of Indian culture and tradition. Tamilnadu is one of the famous pilgrimage tourist's destinations in India. It is famous for magnificent historically, culturally, ecologically and it is also the most popular state which provides distinctive platform to sell traditional handicrafts in the Tourist markets. The cradle of culture and civilization through centuries dating back to the early phases of the dawn of history. It has great potential in the field of tourism as edifices, monuments, temples, holy places and other scenic places, which reflect the culture and tradition. Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation provides best infrastructure facilities for domestic and international tourists. Current position, infrastructure facilities and role of pilgrimage tourism development have been focused in this paper.

KEYWORDS : Tourism, Pilgrimage tourism, infrastructure, economic development.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries. It is growing very rapidly. India is a land of geographical diversity. In ancient India, there were no travel formalities for travelling in the period of Chandragupta- II, and that time the famous Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien travelled between A.D 401 without a passport. Or mudra was essential according to Kautilya's Arthashastra for all travelers. During the Vedic period, the tourists were accommodated at 'dhams' or holy place of the country. During the British period, tourism in India becomes more organized; they built Dak Bungalows on the road side for the convenience of dak traveler the finest of India's cuisines is as rich and diverse as its civilization. The famous three words In Sanskrit Aththi Devo Bhava means guests are like God truly represented the fact that's Indians have been highly hospitable people and this trend is still present in modern India. A guest is considered as highly revered person.

In recent years the country concerted efforts are being put in to develop and promote industry in a big way by introducing various schemes of ministry of tourism in various states. India, with its rich culture, heritage, ancient monuments, world famous temples, architecture, masterpieces, wild animals, sanctuaries and scenic sports remains a great attraction for the tourist. India is famous for its temples and that is the reason that among the different kinds of tourism in India, pilgrimage tourism is increasing most rapidly the various places for tourists to visit in India for pilgrimage which are Vaisno Devi, Gold temple, Mathura Vindavan and Madurai Meenakshi temple.

India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) on October, 1966. India Tourism Development Corporation is the main agency of the ministry of tourism and civil aviation, which promoted tourism in India. India is a land of great variety and contrast. Its unique cultural mystique, exotic heritage aesthetic environment and outstanding natural resources have attracted international tourists. Tourism has emerged as one of India's important industry. Today tourism is a major source of Foreign exchange earnings and it is providing job opportunities to millions of people. India is a huge market for tourism for outbound and inbound tourists.

Objectives of the study

1. To know the current position and infrastructure facilities available in tourism in Tamilnadu.
2. To discuss the pilgrimage tourism in Tamilnadu.
3. To identify the importance of pilgrimage tourism for growth of economic development in Tamilnadu.

Review of literature

Laukush Mishra (2000) "Pilgrimage tourism is being recognized as a prime industry in most parts of the world for the purpose of earning maximum foreign exchange. Social significance of pilgrimage tourism cannot be said of less importance. Tourism industry requires variety as it is very essential capital and India is land of diversity. Here diversity is present in every walk of life, from natural such as air, and water to social factors such as language and behaviour all varies from place to place. Pilgrimages are not a destination only for our religious faith but they also strengthen our national unity and promote brother hood-less also. The time has to come when these should be used to earn foreign exchange also keeping guarded our cultural heritage. In fact the other part of world may learn many things from India. Indians might be poor from pocket but the wealth what they have in their behaviour is match less in the world. Domestic front religious tourism can be very helpful for regional development, employment generation, and can enroot again the cultural values. Many modern social evils which are caused by materialism can be cured with the help of religious tourism".

David (2005) "The informal tourism sector and pilgrimage tourism tradition and today the bulk of domestic informal tourism in India consists of poor people participating in some religious pilgrimage trip, although, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between religious and non religious trips. The tourism impact of each of the four sectors according to four levels, economic, social, cultural and environmental, broadly defined, economic refers to total income from tourists, number of jobs generated, tourist expenditures or costs (land, commodity, wage inflation and import leakages) social impact refers to population displacement, migration, what class owns the tourist establishments, impact on the quality of living, increase or decrease in crime, cultural impact looks at degree of commoditization of symbols and performances, increase in undesirable activities, cultural influences derived from tourists and hostility towards tourist. Pilgrimage tourism is a modern trend, and the changing history and nature of religious pilgrimage in India".

Current position of Tamil Nadu Tourism

Tamil Nadu, the southern state in India, is home to visit the pilgrimage tourism in various places. Tamil Nadu's tourism industry is the second largest in India, with an annual growth rate of 16 percent. People from across the globe come here to see the temples with their exquisite Dravidian architecture, hill stations, and the heritage sites. Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation promotes tourism in the state as enchanting Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has a long tradition

venerable culture. The most visible legacy of this protracted cultural flowering is a crop of astounding temples, whose gigantic gateway towers, or gopurams, still soar above just about every town large enough to merit a railway station. It is the image of these colossal wedge-shaped pyramids, high above the canopy of dense palm forests, or against patchworks of vibrant green paddy field that set Tamilnadu from the rest of India. Indeed the garishly painted gods, goddesses and mythological creatures clinging onto the towers linger long in the memory of most travelers.

Tamil Nadu stands second next to Maharashtra in Foreign tourist arrivals, and third in domestic tourist arrivals. The Minister attributed the increase in the flow to aggressive promotion and marketing campaigns, creation and up gradation of basic amenities and infrastructure at tourist spots have resulted in the increase in foreign tourist's arrival. He noted, Vision 2023 envisages an investment of Rs 10,000 crore in Tourism and Hospitality sectors through Government and Private investments by 2023. The foreign tourist arrivals targeted for 2023 is 15 million tourists. The numbers of domestic tourist's arrivals was at 244.2 million making the state the most popular destination in the country, and foreign arrivals amounted to 3.99 million. The second highest in the country, and the combined aggregate gives it the most popular state for tourism in the country. Meanwhile, to boost the sector further the Government is formulating a new Tourism Policy and to take up Rs 500 crore worth project, with Asian Development Bank (ADB's) assistance. Tamilnadu with a GDP of \$98 million is the fourth largest economy of the country and tourism is one of the main sources of its revenue. Tamilnadu is one of the year-round tourist's destinations in India, and the tourism industry is the largest and fast growing industry in India.

Infrastructure Facilities in Tamil Nadu Tourism

Tamil Nadu is the fourth largest state of India. Tamil Nadu enjoys the best infrastructure a facility that any industrialist could dream of. The district is facilitated with a major sea-port with single window clearance. Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation provides best infrastructure facilities for domestic and international tourists. Domestic and international airport, national and state highways, broad gauge and meter gauge railways, excellent communication facilities, and power, banking facilities, industrial estates, industrial complexes and industrial parks.etc. A tourist spot in Tamil Nadu says about significance of tourists' spots and seasonal arrivals of tourist in Tamil Nadu. Tourist spot in Tamil Nadu has been classified into six themes as pilgrimage destinations, heritage locations, historical monuments, destinations of scenic beauty, forests and sanctuaries, tourist festival locations, adventure destinations, and leisure destinations.

Infrastructure facilities for tourism is very important for the tourist also for the state government for promotion of long-term tourist activity depends on preservations of culture and promotion of national and international tourist in the name of tourism promotion, a large amount of money is spent construction of recreational facilities and innumerable beach resorts. This seems for people who come from the neighboring districts also outside and national.

Pilgrimage tourism in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu was ruled by three kingdoms called the Pandyas, Cheras and Cholas. The Chera Kingdoms the modern Kerala state. The Pandyas ruled the South and the Cholas the North. The Sangam Age is supposed to be the Golden Age of Tamils. No Indian state is more dominated by its temples than Tamil Nadu where temple architecture catalogues the tastes of successive dynasties and testifies to the centrality of religion in everyday life. The multiplicity in culture and religious performance in Tamilnadu has led to setting up of several places of worship, which belongs to the followers of diverse religions. Since the Hindus exceed in population their places of worship temples dot the whole landscape. Most temples are built in honour of Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and their consorts. All are characterized not only by their design and sculptures but also by constant activity, devotion, dancing, singing, puja, festivals and feasts.

Tamil Nadu is the land of pilgrimages and it has a history that dates back to several thousand years. It is a land where traditions and culture blend and continue to live in harmony. The state abounds in monuments and temples that are ancient and each has its own story of religious, artistic and cultural accomplishment and specialty wait-

ing to be heard. Thousands of temples occupying the land of Tamilnadu. The state is also called the land of temples. Tamilnadu tourism was incorporated during July 1971 under the companies act 1956. The entire share capital of Rs.678.63 lakhs has been subscribed by the state government. Tamilnadu tourism was formed with the objective of promoting pilgrimage tourism in Tamilnadu by providing infrastructure facilities of transport and accommodation and others. To fulfill this objective, Tamilnadu tourism has expanded its activities into 3 main operations viz hotels, transport and fairs.

Tamil Nadu has been astonishingly impressive in pilgrimage tourism. It is blessed with plenty of well known religious destinations. Pilgrimages to these destinations bring enormous economic gains to local residents. The number of person visiting pilgrimage centers is almost equal to the population of Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu has lot of pilgrimage potentialities, some of the major places are Kancheepuram, Karaikal, Mahabalipuram, Vellankani, Pondicherry, Chidambaram, Tanjore, Tiruvanamalai, Madurai, Rameshwaram, Karaikal, Trichy and some of the most visited temples are, Meenakshi Temple, Brihadeeswara Temple, Ramanatha swamy temple, Palani Andavar temples, Paratha Sarathi temple, Swami Malai, kapaleeswarar temple, Chayavaneeshwara temple, Kumbeswara temple, Mailapur temple, Annamalai temple, Manakulavinayagar temple. These are some of the famous pilgrimage sites visited by all over the year. The Kanyakumari temple in Tamil Nadu is an important center for pilgrimage people for years. The Meenakshi temple complex in Madurai in Tamilnadu is one of the largest temples in India. The Ramanathaswamy temple is one of the most sacred shrines of the Hindus in India and considered as holy in Varanasi. Pilgrims from all over the world come to pay homage to the deity. The inhabitants of Tamil Nadu also include Muslims, Jew, Jains and Sikhs. A number of mosques, synagogues, and gurudwaras, ets represent the sentiments of their respective religious. Of all the worship places temples are the oldest. Tamil Nadu was also influenced by Christianity during the Portuguese and British invasions. Hence the travelers will also come across a number of churches.

Pilgrimage Tourism in economic development

The pilgrimage (tirth yatra) was therefore a journey undertaken for betterment of the spiritual knowledge and peace. Travel or pilgrimage to religious place in India is considered an integral part of culture and tradition. In traditional societies like ours, the pilgrimage journeys performed to god's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community. Because sacred rituals and texts sanctified at certain places are associated with divine revelation. This is true in all religions. With this long and religiously entrenched tradition, the flow of people started to places of religions of importance in India. It has increased in the last couples of decades. The modern travel, like the road transport, railways and air travel have increased very consequently the number of tourist and pilgrims visiting the various pilgrim centers also increased many of the country. The pilgrimage and heritage tourist destinations the countries old glorious temples and colorful religious festivals attract millions of domestic and international tourists. In India lot of pilgrimage potential are there as well as in Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu is second ranked in the list of major tourist of India. Pilgrimage tourism plays a major role in economic generation in India and in Tamilnadu. Every year pilgrimage tourist is doubled in pilgrimage centers. It shows that pilgrimage potentials in Tamilnadu are flexible.

Domestic pilgrimage tourism plays a vital role in achieving the national objectives of promotion social and cultural cohesion and national integrations. It creates direct and indirect employment opportunity for all kind of people. The potential for domestic pilgrimage tourism has grown substantially during last few years. Realizing the importance of pilgrimage tourism. The government of Tamilnadu has accorded high priority to pilgrimage tourism promotion and has taken initiatives to improve and create infrastructure in tourism potential centers and geared to encourage private sector investment in this regard. Tamilnadu has plenty of pilgrimage destinations which attract the foreign tourists. In recent days maximum foreign tourist's arrivals has increasing which directly increase the foreign exchange earnings for our country. The pilgrimage tourism industry has managed to become a significant provider of employment Opportunity for different types of jobs like hotel manager, guides, tour operators, chefs etc. It helps to the increase the sale for traditional handicraft in tourists market and also helps to the small and large scale business.

Today all countries of the world are striving to develop pilgrimage tourism in big way. It brings better understanding between different nations and civilizations. Likewise it help in protecting environment old monuments and cultural.

Conclusion

Tourism sector now playing a major role in the economic development of India. Particularly Tamilnadu is second ranked in the list of major tourist state of India. Tamilnadu has been astonishingly impressive in pilgrimage tourism. It is blessed with plenty of well known religious destinations. Pilgrimages to their destinations bring enormous economic gain to local residents. Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporations provides best infrastructure facilities for domestic and international tourist. Tamilnadu has many magnetize places. It attract by the foreign tourist. Tourism helps to earn huge foreign exchange reserves and creates direct and indirect employment opportunity to a large section of the society. Tamilnadu tourism authorities have to act seriously to build a competitive environment for the pilgrimage tourism promotions of quality tourism. The central government has to take up the responsibility of augmenting the developmental activities initiated by the state government, with allocation of adequate funds at proper time. In order to develop the pilgrimage tourism is not only particular places but throughout the country.

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