

## Issues and Challenges of Tourism with Special Reference to Villupuram District



### Tourism

**KEYWORDS :** Pilgrimage-Tourism-Issues-Challenges-Perspective Plan

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourists commonly move in search of entertainment and sensual pleasures. They seek higher returns from every bit of money and time spent. The physical comfort is the main concern. They are important for tourism as 'consumers' and hence their purchasing capacity makes them crucial for pure business purpose(s).

Both of these systems generate opportunities of employment and income. On this front, tourism definitely enjoys an edge over pilgrimage. Still, the economic benefits should be seen with respect to inherent abusive after effects which are pertinent in view of sustainability, etc. However, finally pilgrimage and tourism help creating cultural understanding between people of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds, i.e. a meaningful service to the cause of humanitarian values. In any age-old culture like.

India no way one can draw a line separating tourism and pilgrim in a distinct way, rather they superimpose and fulfil the other side at different levels and digress (cf. Turnbull 1981a, b, and 1992), what metaphorically Turner and Turner (1978: 20) once wrote their intriguing statement that "a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist".

### IMPORTANT PILLIGIRIMAGE CENTRES IN VILLUPURAM DISTRICT

#### Alambadi Perumal Temple

There is a Perumal temple (Kundusatti Perumal) here. The legend is that the Perumal idol is nothing but a stone, which has Sangu-chakra inside it. The speciality of this stone is that it is a part of the Lord Venkatchalopathy idol at the Tirumala-Tirupati temple. So worship at this temple is considered the equivalent of going to the Tirumala-Tirupati temple.

#### Parikkal

A village located off the national highway proceeding to Tiruchirappalli from Villupuram is Parikkal, which is famous for it Lakshmi Narasimhar temple. This is one of 108 divya desams of the Vaishnavas and one of the main temples for the madhwās. Also known as Thiruvahindrapuram.

#### Perumpakkam

A village located 8 km away from Villupuram town. here is a temple for Sri Yoga Hayavadhanar and Sri Vedanthadesikar. <http://www.dakshinaahobilam.info> A village located 14 km Villupuram to Thirukoilur road. There is a temple of Saneeswarar. It is very biggest stone to created Lord. It is one of the biggest of Asia. Villupuram - Mambalapattu - Saneeswarar Aalayam.

#### Siruvanthaadu

A village located 15 km away from Villupuram on the way towards Cuddalore. It hosts on of the famous Lakshmi Narashimhar temples in south India. In Villupuram town, the kailasanthar Shiva temple and the Vaikundavasa Perumal temple are the main Hindu worship places.

#### Thiruvennainallur

A township located from Villupuram towards Tirukoilur. It hosts the famous Sundrar timed temple Kirubapureeswar temple.

### Kalpattu

The Kalpattu 21 Feet Saneeswara Sannadhi was built to commemorate the 50th Maha Samadhi celebrations of Sri Swayam Prakasha Saraswathy Avadhutha Swamigal. Even today this tradition is upheld by Sri Swami Brahmananda at Kalpattu Sri Swayam Prakasha Avadhutha Ashramam and there are no hunds or any commercial activities. Everything including accommodation is free in the Ashramam. Kalpattu R Narasimhan and family has given their life to this temple by performing various services even now. Since the inception from Nov 4, 1998 continuously free annadhanam is offered. All activities are purely through voluntary donations only. During every Sanipeyarchi (Saturn's transit) more than 200,000 are fed with prasadhams. Swami Brahmananda strongly believes charging money for darshan and food is a sin in a holy place like the ashramam.

### Thimmalai

Thimmalai village is located 2 km away from the national highway salem to chennai.agriculture is occupation of thimmalai people. There is

There always appear two groups of thoughts. Some have argued that pilgrimage is a form of tourism, while others have argued tourism is a form of pilgrimage, or even sometimes they refer to the distinction and superimposition between the two groups at different degrees and in different cultures. Others have argued that the two subjects lie at opposite ends of a seamless continuum, while others have argued that there is no difference between the two words at all. The inability to decide what, if any, characteristics distinguish pilgrimage from tourism has recently led to a call for a 'dedifferentiation' of the two terms (cf. Collins-Kreiner 2010: 440). By contrast, a recent argument states the way the words 'pilgrimage' and 'tourism' are used in these discussions in order to specify and evaluate a specific hypothesis about what distinguishes pilgrimage from tourism and concludes that pilgrimage is distinguished from tourism by virtue of the fact that a pilgrimage is claimed to be undertaken for reasons involving religious sacrifice, which can involve the destination being associated with religious sacrifice, the sacrifice of the trip being claimed to have religious consequences, or both (Palmer, Begley and Coe 2012: 72, and 81).

### CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

In the academic discourses, one finds the scale and boundaries of defining the differentiation between pilgrimage and tourism. And, sometimes such contradictions based on experiences of one culture do not suit to other, especially in ancient culture like India, or to say in most part of the Oriental world. The suggestion made by Elsner and Rutherford (2005: 21) refers to 'sacred tourism' as being distinct from pilgrimage, which may be possible if 'sacred tourism' is just being used to refer to religious tourism, but not if it refers to tourism that involves religious sacrifice (Palmer, Begley, Coe 2012: 81). Of course at the theoretical level, they demonstrate that religious tourism may not easily be distinguishable from pilgrimage (Elsner and Rutherford 2005: 21), as in both the cases the sense of deeper or spiritual quest (atma-chetanā) and sacrifice (tapasa) are essential, and to a substantial extent in both the cases rituals are performed as a way to have passage open to interact with the divine spirit. However, those attempting to falsify the definition referring differentiation should also keep in mind that although

a single trip can include parts that are tourism and parts that are pilgrimage (see Schramm 2004: 134); "this does not imply that there is no difference between pilgrimage and tourism. Indeed, it implies just the opposite, because claiming that a trip involves both behaviour that is tourism and other behaviour that is pilgrimage implies that these behaviours can be distinguished" (Palmer, Begley, Coe 2012: 81). Certainly, tourism involving religion should be more like pilgrimage than tourism that does not involve religion. Many of the recent publications address the difference between pilgrimage and various forms of religious tourism (see Strausberg 2011; Vukonic 1996). Tourism involving sacrifice due to the length, difficulty, or discomfort experienced while travelling should be more like pilgrimage than tourism when it is short, easy, and comfortable (see Frey 1998). Such forms of tourism should become even more like pilgrimages when there are claims about sacrifice or some form of self-awakening at such destinations (Palmer, Begley, Coe 2012: 82).

Commenting on the things in common between pilgrimage and tourism Gladstone (2005: 172) remarked that, "Tourism and pilgrimage share many characteristics. Both involve temporary journeys from one's home to some other, often distant place. Both involve 'attractions,'... Both tourism... and pilgrimage are things people do in their spare time and are not work-related activities. Both are socially and culturally sanctioned... Both tourism and pilgrimage are markers of status... In fact, pilgrims and tourists share so many characteristics that we may, like the WTO, subsume pilgrimage under the larger rubric of tourism but with the proviso that it is a form of tourism with special characteristics."

We agree with the claim that both pilgrimage and tourism involve a journey, but even this point requires justification because: "Hindu mystics and some Sufis have developed a concept of the inner pilgrimage by which the person visits sacred places within the microcosm of the mind and body" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 14; see also Morinis 1992: 7). However, "This concept [of pilgrimage without physical movement] provides what in Western terms appears to be a metaphor" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 14).

#### PERSPECTIVE PLAN

In view of the merits of pilgrimage system and economic benefits involved in tourism, blending of these systems to extract greater advantage is already suggested under the banner of 'tourism-pilgrimage' (cf. Preston 1992: 43). On the basis of a simplified system of commonalities between these two (cf. Fig. 9.2) and envisaging greater role of pilgrimage, the idea of pilgrimage-tourism, is proposed (and explained in sequence). It is expected to have effective check on individual behaviour and attitude. Its structural network is planned in a manner to form the cultural capital, cultivate deeper understanding and initiate changes in life style which will censure rationality in use/ consumption furthering (re-)investment processes, etc. (cf. Fig. 9.3). A pilgrim-tourist shall have attachment, respect, and the sense of sharing to the repositories of faiths cape. These qualitative modifications at individual level are capable enough to bring forth miraculous changes, particularly in terms of generation of human values and eco-healing. However, pilgrimage-tourism is considered as Indian-style of domestic tourism that refers to domestic tourists (broadly religiously motivated) who travel within India and stays in 'Indian-style accommodation for pleasure, pilgrimage, religious and social functions, such thematic conferences or study and health' (cf. Rao and Suresh 2001: 208; also Hannam and Diekmann 2011: 101; Jacobsen 2013: 169, 176).

This kind of visitation and quest of deeper envisioning through pilgrimage-tourism is still in pre-natal stage, and possesses good many fruitful promises and prophecies. With deep feelings and intimate sensing, it is to act as imbiber of cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, it will create the feeling of our global heritage — a significant step in the direction of 'saving our mother Earth' — aptly 'idolized in the philosophical conception of Bhu-Devi goddess in Hindu dharma and Gaia, the Greek god-

dess (of the) Earth (cf. Lovelock, 1979). In this way the fostered idea of our common heritage and our common future would get strengthened. In fact, the present age of vanishing (socio-cultural) boundaries demands on us to share the responsibility of saving our home, the planet Earth and pass our heritage intact on to the future generations The pilgrimage-tourism is one of the alternative ways to contribute to effective furtherance of these global humanistic causes.

Aware of the relative poverty of many travellers and of the inadequacy of the pilgrimage destinations, the Government of India, under its tourism policy has determined to improve the condition for travellers at pilgrimages sites (cf. Rao and Suresh 2001). An example of Snake Temple at Haripad, lying between Alleppey and Kollam, may be cited where during 2000-2006 there have been improvements in parking facilities for coaches and also in cleanliness of the washing facilities and lavatories, which altogether help to improve domestic tourism more attractive and pleasant (cf. Baker 2008: 200). For the first time the state government of Tamil Nadu has approved to set up the Bharananganam Development Authority that will develop Master Plan emphasising pilgrimage-tourism in Bharananganam and the adjoining areas including the village councils of Meenachil, Thalappalam and Thidanadu; and at the start a grant of worth Rs 2.5 million (US\$ 51 thousands) has been sanctioned (The Hindu, a daily, 8 June 2012).

#### Effective Pilgrimage-Tourist Resource Management

Hindu pilgrimage places often have an ambivalent approach to the modern pilgrim tourist. Most welcome the revenue pilgrims bring but many are reluctant to become reduced to a 'sight-seen' rather than a religious experience and, ancient sites like the Jagannath Temple, Puri, Orissa, or Padmanabhasvamy Temple, Tiruvananthapuram, Kerala, energetically exclude perceived outsiders (cf. Prasad 2010). New pilgrimage places tend to be more inclusive, for example, Bhagvan Svaminarayan Sanstha's Akshardham, a vast and magnificent new temple complex in New Delhi, aims to provide a showcase for both Hindu and Indian tradition as well as to raise awareness of the Svaminarayan sect and provide a focus of pride for its devotees (Singh 2011a). Akshardham is a part of a new breed of Hindu pilgrimage site, often emerging in places where such developments were long suppressed by foreign rulers, and represent a modern re-visioning of the great ancient temple complexes built through the royal patronage of ancient Hindu kings (Jaffrelot 2010; also Singh 2011 b: 289).

However, elsewhere, the spiritual environments of some ancient holy places are being degraded into tourist spectacles. For example, two of the most popular pilgrimage destinations are Vaishno Devi (Kashmir, in the north) and Tirumala-Tirupati (in the south), where the estimated annual income of the temple trust at each place exceeds Rs 5 billion (ca US\$ 100 million) per annum. Unfortunately, little of this vast income is reinvested in maintaining the serene and sacrosanct environments of these holy places (cf. Singh and Haigh 2013), and to visit salvific-sacred spaces (pilgrim places), "where two aspects of the divine - divine immanence and divine transcendence - have merged" (Jacobsen 2013: 170).

'Place making' and 'place experiencing' are interlinked; however they have their distinct reflections too. Sacred for the religious, aestheticized and commodified for the tourists, these places contribute decisively to the social affiliations and personal identities of those who enter their precincts (Bremer 2006: 34). The old traditions and new lifeways in creating sustainable religious tourism can integrate both the views and help in saving the spirit of place and surrounding serene environment.

Due to use of various audio-visual aids and speakers at religious sites, intolerable 'noise' is considered an integral component of the 'religious environment' rooted in religious rituals and cultural practices, as exemplified in case of Dehu and Alandi (Maharashtra). At pilgrimage places loudspeakers start by dawn for various prayers, such as bhajan and kirtan (religious singing and group chanting), etc., and continue until midnight. Addi-

tionally, the dharmashālās (rest houses) are popular and cheapest venues for marriage ceremonies for more than six months of the year in which not only loudspeakers are used, but fire-crackers, orchestrated music systems and professional celebrations are equally important. Congestion due to vehicular traffic, encroachments, pilgrims' processions, marriage ceremonies, wandering hawkers, and unplanned residential and commercial expansion of buildings in and around the temple and sacred sites are other factors contributing to environment pollution (Marale, et al. 2011). Similar results are also observed in Varanasi City (Trivedi and Agrawal 2003). Also, impact of pilgrimages is resulted into loss of natural habitat, flora and fauna in Gir National Park, Gujarat (Sinha and Sinha 2008).

It is relevant to note again that above all, in pilgrimage-tourism the main intension in no way should be exploitative or commercial gain; instead certainly there is need of sponsorship from various agencies and compensatory rights from the government. The main concern of promoting it on the line of traditional pilgrimage system is to save ecological systems, environment, and reduce sufferings of the mother (goddess) Earth (Gaia) with a sense of respect, reverence, and eternal awakening to serve the Mother through healing her. Of course, the economic aspect is very closely associated with it but with a difference in nature; in the sense it is healthy, sustainable and pro-environment — all lead to human happiness and peace. Furthermore, a person undertaking pilgrimage-tourism shall have an experience — distinct, different, deep and unique. S/he can experience revelation of holy places, undergoing spiritual transformation and more significantly contributing actively to the movement towards protecting our Nature, and our heritage and ultimately our mother (Goddess) Earth.

By simple method of spatial arrangement of all the pilgrimage places over the map of Indian sub-continent the idea of sacrality in respect to spatiality, symbolism and land-affinity become distinct and unique, and will serve as model frame of pilgrimage-tourism. If geography's major emphasis accepted is 'the spirit of place' (genus loci), and the 'Earth as home of mankind' (like Gaia), the divine power of feminine, fertility and forms (symbolic connotations) related to the mother Earth be certainly considered for geographical investigation and revelation of the nature-spirit. The typological character from local to regional and ultimately to the divine realm is a spiral system representing the infinity in the extension; and the manifestation of the pan-Indian to the level of locality expresses circularity — an idea of shrinking universe. These two levels may be projected as 'a march towards micro to macro cosmos', and in the latter case 'from macro to micro cosmos'. This antipodal process of duality is a clear example of continuity and creation. This way the trinity-network of pilgrimage system becomes easily visible on the map of India. The process of pilgrimage regulates this network and system, and every time made active, pertinent and attractive. The liquidity of spirit in the form of 'river', and the stability and coverage in the form of — 'hill/mountain' are given more consideration. Respectively they represent the power of feminine and masculinity, which together result into creation.

Despite its complexity, variety and potential, to date, relatively few geographers have explored the complex relationships between Hindu religion, culture, spirituality, and tourism, especially heritage and religious tourism. Nevertheless, pilgrimage, pilgrimage sites and their related festivities, in combination, are driving motivations for domestic and international tourist travel and the source of much interest in both heritage and its conservation (cf. Singh 2012a; and Singh and Haigh 2013). Of course, the new attention to the conservation of sacred sites also bears witness to the resurgence, redefinition and modernization of a previously repressed Hindu culture. Equally, it is affected by the commercial responses to modern sensibilities and by contemporary cultural developments, for example, much of the recent increase of religiously motivated travel to sacred sites is blended with a modern, middle-class, urbane, New Age spirituality, and brings travellers who have non-traditional demands upon the infrastructures of heritage sites (cf. Timothy and Olsen 2006). The process is magnified by the increasing impact of the

Westernized Indian diaspora at Hindu sites along with their reverence for heritage and expectations for hotels, transport, etc. Currently, around three-fourths of the expenditure of the modern pilgrimage tourism traveller goes to supporting infrastructure, while local stakeholders receive only marginal benefit.

Taking into account of over 1.3 million domestic and international tourists (including 0.94 millions) paid visit to Bihar in 2011, the scope of pilgrimage-tourism is realised by the state government of Bihar and in a seminar on "Journey through Religious Bihar", development strategy has been chalked out. Also, the tourism department's annual budget and expenditure has increased four-fold from around Rs 74.3 million in 2005-06 to Rs. 297.8 million in 2010-11. Under this budget the government has undertaken many projects, some of which include building five-star hotels, beautification of tourist hot spots, building roads and other infrastructure. In the seminar the declaration mentions: "We are here to create a platform to bring together all the relevant stakeholders including travel agents, the hotel industry, airlines and corporate groups who can and want to invest in infrastructure and development of religious sites and centres in Bihar, to put forward different perspectives on tourism related issues and bring to light the different innovative ideas to promote religious tourism in Bihar". The following three considerations are decided to be given priority: (i) for the hospitality industry: a variety of options in construction inclusive of hotels are available; (ii) religious tourism is easier to sustain in comparison to conventional tourism with regards to the pull factors that bring the pilgrimage tourists to Bihar; and (iii) not only South East Asia but even European tourists want to visit Bihar specifically for the Buddhist circuit, as per the interest gathered over the recent past" (Media Club of India, e-news, 7 May 2012).

#### Future Issues on Pilgrimage and Economic Context

Like the large monasteries in Catholic Europe, great Hindu temples have long been important as economic units (Karttunen 2010: 145). Historical evidences refer that this already started in organised form during the Gupta period (CE 4th–5th century), declined in the North during Muslim hegemony (CE ca 12th to early 18th century), but has continued in the South up to modern times as exemplified in the Vijayanagara time in which religious institutions surmounted by temples served as focus of sacred interest, promotion of pilgrimage system and organising society religiously (Stein 1960, 1992). The temple business included agriculture and various kinds of crafts and trade (cf. Bakker 1992). It also invested the money obtained from donors, and offerings were paid from the income.

The major temples were also politically significant and in former times, royal patronage and exemption from taxes added to their wealth.

Pilgrimage can encourage overall economic prosperity too, therefore in promoting pilgrimage-tourism it should be considered as a frame (cf. case of Tamil Nadu, cf. Vijayanand 2012c). In case of southern India Michell (1993: 10) notes that "the simultaneous growth of pilgrimage and trade is an outstanding feature of urban life in the region. Kanchipuram provides an excellent example of a significant religious-commercial centre dealing in locally woven textiles and other goods. Festivals in temple towns are generally sensational events that also benefit business". That this pattern was established in pre-colonial times is clear from inscriptions. Stein (1982: 121) also notes that "fairs augmented urban trade...Regular and periodic fairs were established on the main roads to great temples during the times of major festivals". Even today Indian temples associated with pilgrimage centres serve as important economic centres. Temples were, and are, landholders, employers, and consumers, as exemplified in case of Vijayanagara (Mack 2009: 179, 184). In some cases, an entire town's socio-economic structure may be entirely dependent on the temple (Jindel 1976: 6). Jindel recorded that the temple at Nathdwara, Rajasthan provided work to as many as thousand families, with the rest of the population subsisting on industries which were at least indirectly associated with either temple functions or the needs of pilgrims (Jin-

del 1976: 177-178).

In most of the ancient pilgrimage places there are organisations of Pandās' (local pilgrimage priests') host families, who maintain patron-client relationships with pilgrims who are grouped according to territorial patronage by the Pandā families. They provide shelter to pilgrims and assist them for ritual performances. This way sacred-and-profane transaction of culture and economy works as reciprocal process (cf. Karttunen 2010: 146; also Rösel 1988: 15fn.). The Pandās are also carriers and maintainers of the mythology of sacredscapes and their glorification; in fact, they occupy the sacred landscape and keep pilgrims aware of the sanctity of the sacred centre as in case of Allahabad/ Prayag, where they serve as entrepreneurs and play managerial role works to maintain geographic channels of communication between the sacred centres and client families from all over India (cf. Caplan 1997).

The select group of those wealthy enough pilgrims to make large donations to the temple does not include the majority of those who visit a shrine. Most pilgrims may be able to afford some small gift for the deity, if anything. Nonetheless, this does not exclude them from the larger redistributive process (Mack 2009: 180). Food which was presented to the deity and was thus consecrated became an important commodity for pilgrims. It conferred additional merit for the traveller, either through consumption on-site, or by bringing it home for others to share (Stein 1958: 100). Although in theory this food should have been provided as a service to pilgrims, it was regularly sold by temple functionaries. Pilgrims regularly paid for such food, setting up an important exchange system that was maintained by their demand for the sacred product (Stein 1958: 115). Consecrated food was not the only commodity of exchange for pilgrims. Trade in tangible goods took place in the bazaars surrounding the temples. People bought offerings, purchased food, and even obtained souvenirs which would remind them of the trip and which could be shown to others at home when the pilgrim returns.

A recent appraisal report demonstrates that the social significance of pilgrimage-tourism in India, measured in terms of employment (especially unskilled labour), is very large; therefore, its interventions can play a role in raising the standard of living and poverty eradication in local communities. However, to develop and honestly implement policies that take advantage of the potential benefits of pilgrimage-tourism in socio-economic development are of vital concerns. In some cases, this is simply a matter of increasing awareness among public and stakeholders so that the joint benefits go equally to pilgrimage-tourists and local communities in a rational way. In other cases it may involve reducing leakages (or retaining pilgrimage-tourist spending). In yet other cases, affirmative action may be taken to maximise and equally distribute the benefits (cf. Vijayanand 2012a).

Some of the facets of economic benefits of pilgrimage-tourism have also challenging implications. Firstly, that summarising the development impact of tourism as "jobs and cash" is an oversimplification. Local people have complex livelihood strategies, based on multiple land-uses, and diversification of risk across several activities. These are consequently affected by tourism in many different ways, positively and negatively, directly and indirectly. Secondly, different types of community tourism ventures have different types of livelihood impacts. And thirdly, different people have different livelihood priorities (Vijayanand 2012b).

## CONCLUSION

Increasing pace of many pilgrims every year, a number of hotels, ashrams, restaurants etc. are built in Haridvar area; thus, hotel business is playing an important role in the economic development of Haridvar, the most popular pilgrimage destination at the edge of Himalaya. For fulfilling the necessities of the pilgrimage-tourists, the restaurant owners prepare different types of regional and even international dishes like Marwadi, South Indian, Gujarati, Chinese, Continental, etc. Therefore, the restaurant owners have to deal with various whole-sale supply and marketing of vegetables and food items, together with transportation and economic transaction (Karar 2010). Quite natural that the serene environment and surrounding landscapes are threatened and deteriorated speedily by such impacts, and illegal sprawls and encroachments. These problems will be more drastic and serious in coming future if the sustainable strategy of pilgrimage-tourism would not be implemented.

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