



## ROLE OF INDIAN FOLK CULTURE IN PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN THE COUNTRY

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### ABSTRACT

A country that has inspired more than its fair share of travel lores and legends - India - offers a hotspot for tourists for unique folk culture exploration and immersion opportunities. The cultural fabric of India is embellished with unrefined yet beautiful performing folk art forms that fall beyond the purview of formal training, powerful guardian folk deities propitiated by locals and outsiders alike, crude folk theatre, folk crafts celebrating Indian religious heritage or the mundane daily life, inspiring folktales teaching the traditional Indian art of living, folk games which claim to be the forebears of Ludo, Chess etc. and folk medicines which promise alternative and holistic healing. The following paper is exploratory in nature providing an overview of the folk culture in India and its role towards the promotion of tourism in the country.

### KEYWORDS

culture and tourism, folk culture tourism, Indian folk culture, Indian folk culture tourism

### I. INTRODUCTION

According to Hofstede (1997), "Culture is the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving." When we use the term 'culture', it indicates a horizon as wide as a nation, state or a particular society as a whole. But when 'folk culture' is taken into consideration, it refers to the identity of a 'folk group' - which can refer to any group of people who share at least one common factor be it a language, caste or occupation. So within the ambit of the broader notion of culture, there are a number of folk groups having their unique cultural characteristics. Therefore, the localized lifestyle of a culture is folk culture and is quite often imbued with a sense of place and is different from tribal culture in the sense that the latter represents the culture of the aboriginal populations of a country.

In the recent times, the focus is increasing on experiential travel - the quest on reclaiming what is real with the travellers seeking to get immersed in the fabric of the destination being visited. Cultural tourism is gradually bringing about transformation in the tourism sector in India and has endowed India with a brand effect. One of the most diverse and specific definitions from the 1990s is provided by International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism : "Cultural tourism can be defined as that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining at first hand an understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historic, archaeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited." According to Hofstede (1997), the core of a culture is formed by the value which in terms of tourism will be the basics for the attraction of a given destinations well. The different levels of culture are the rituals, the heroes and the symbols of a given culture which serve as a basis for tourism purpose travels.

### II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the relationship between Indian folk culture and cultural tourism in India
2. To find out the role of folk culture of India in the promotion of tourism in the country

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following paper is exploratory in nature and is based on a review of the literature, including various research papers, books and websites that carry Indian folk dance, music, arts and festivals related information.

### IV. THE COMPONENTS OF FOLK CULTURE OF INDIA AND THEIR ROLE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY: A DISCUSSION

#### (A) Folk music of India:

One can find India's true rhythm in its folk music, which is the music of the masses. Similar to folk dances, the learning of folk music is achieved by osmosis and not through formal training as economics of rural life do not permit such a thing. The folk instruments used to accompany the music are crafted by the musicians themselves from commonly available materials such as silk, peritoneum, bamboo, coconut shells etc. In India, one has a song for everything. It is much like having a background music score for every possible scene of life. The different aspects of Indian folk music elements attract special interest tourists i.e. cultural tourists, artists and musicians from all over the world. The Rajasthan International Folk Festival held against the grand backdrop of Mehrangarh Fort in the royal city of Jodhpur every year witnesses an interesting fusion of international and Indian folk music which draws thousands of patrons from within India and abroad. The folk music varieties of India can be classified as follows:

#### i. Devotional or spiritual folk songs:

E.g. the Baul Sangeet (the music of the travelling bards), Shyama Sangeet (dedicated to Goddess Kaali) and Vaishnavite Kirtans from West Bengal, Shakunakhar - the Kumaoni form of Ganesh Vandana, the Krishna Bhajans from Rajasthan, the Sopana songs ("Sopana" meaning flight of stairs leading to the temple and the music was traditionally sung by devotees while sitting on the stairs) from Kerala etc.

#### ii. Social folk-songs :

E.g. the Nyiga folk song from Arunachal Pradesh containing sentences of advices for a newly-wedded bride, the Baromashya folk songs from West Bengal sung for welcoming guests, the Panihari songs sung by women in Rajasthan which describe their daily chores and scarcity of water, the Chapeli songs which are an inseparable part of Kumaoni weddings, the folk songs sung in Andhra Pradesh to impart sex education when a girl starts menstruating, the Ropnigeet and Katnigeet sung in Bihar during the seasons of sowing and harvesting paddy respectively, the song of mourning - Alhaini from Himachal Pradesh, the Hakri and the Ladishah of Jammu

and Kashmir describing fairy tales/love stories and socio-political conditions respectively, the lullaby Palane of Maharashtra sung to put a child to sleep, the big crowd-puller at melas named Bair from Uttar Pradesh, the form of singing which is based on debate format - quite similar to the musical face-offs called Kavigaan from West Bengal etc.

### iii. Community folk-songs:

E.g. the Bhatiyali music from Bengal was originally created and sung by boatmen etc.

### iv. Magico-religious folk songs:

E.g. the folk song Artya from Maharashtra to soothe the rage of deities and to ask for protection plague, smallpox etc.

### (B) Folk dances of India :

The inexhaustible variety of folk dances of India are a large body of unrelated non-classical dance forms, characterised by their spontaneity and the cultural nourishment and respite they provide through directness of expression, collective ageless wisdom and profundity of conception. The workshops on folk dances which are organized nowadays by certain state tourism boards (e.g. the Chhau Dance workshop organized in the Victoria Memorial grounds by the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation on the World Tourism Day 2014) are the best ever culture immersion options available to tourists. In India, a home stay experience, a stay at a heritage hotel or a visit to a theme village like Chowki Dhani in Jaipur, Rajasthan is incomplete without a folk dance performance. The main attraction of the desert safaris of Rajasthan are the Kalbelia dance and the fire dance accompanied by music by local Manganiyar musicians. The Indian folk dances can be classified as follows:

#### i. Social folk dances:

E.g. Jagrana from Jammu and Kashmir performed during post-wedding rituals, the Jaago dance of Punjab performed on the night before the wedding, the Chhathi dance from Haryana which is performed on the sixth day of the birth of a male child, the Dandiya (stick dance) of Gujarat and the Dhunuchi naach (censer dance) of West Bengal – both being an indomitable part of the Navratri celebrations, the Bou Nritya from West Bengal – a part of the newly-wedded bride welcoming ceremony, the Lavani dance from Maharashtra, the Chhew or bamboo dance from Mizoram etc.

#### ii. Agricultural folk dances :

Some examples include the Rouf dance from Jammu and Kashmir performed during the harvesting season, Bhangra from Punjab during wheat harvesting, Loor dance of Haryana signifying the sowing of Ravi crops, Nabanna - which is a ritualistic dance after the autumn harvest and the Tushu dance from West Bengal, the latter consisting of villagers praying for agricultural prosperity using expressions like 'ghee (clarified butter) of thirty two (a number depicting wealth) cows', 'rice of fine paddy', 'pots of gur (country jaggery)', the Hurka Baul dance from Uttarakhand during maize harvesting, the Bihu dance from Assam during Assamese New year, the Lambadi dance of Andhra Pradesh depicting the daily agricultural activities, the Nongkrem dance of Meghalaya celebrating ripening of paddy, the Garia dance of Tripura - which consists of paying thanks to the God 'Garia' for a bountiful harvest as the life of the people of Tripura revolve around Jhum cultivation etc.

#### iii. Seasonal folk dances:

E.g. the Gidda dance from Punjab during Lohri, the Gobbi dance from the Andhra Pradesh during Makar Sankranti, the Teeyan dance from Punjab and the Bhadu dance from West Bengal performed by women during monsoons, the Thiruvathirakali from Kerala performed by women during the Thiruvathira season etc.

#### iv. Devotional /religious folk dances:

Examples would be the Dhamali of Kashmir which is a devotional dance by pilgrims going to Ziarat to invoke bless-

ings of God, the Phumania of Jammu for praying to deities to protect the cattle and children from natural calamities, the Chham dance and the Chhanak dance - performed by Buddhist monks of Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti region in monasteries during festivals, the Raut Nacha of Uttar Pradesh which eulogizes the relationship of Lord Krishna with his consort Radha and gopis, the Garba from Gujarat performed during the Shakti Pujas (Navratri, Sharad Purnima and Vasant Panchami), the Deodhani dance of Orissa dedicated to the goddess of snakes - Manasa, the Pala dance from Orissa - associated with the cult of 'Satyapir', the Danda Nata of Orissa - invoking the blessings of Lord Shiva, the Kai Silambu Attam Dance from Karnataka performed in temples during Navratri, the Karagam dance of Kerala - performed in praise of the rain goddess 'Mariamman' and river goddess 'Gangai Amman' etc. Folk dances of India are intricately linked to mythological stories for e.g. the Bharat Lila from Orissa depicts the small incident of Subhadra Parinaya from Mahabharata, the Arjunanritham of Kerala depicts the dancing expertise of Arjuna from Mahabharata, the Bhootham Thullal of Kerala enacts the coming of the ghosts and goblins accompanying Lord Shiva to enjoy the temple festivals, the Veeranatyam from Andhra Pradesh depicts the rage of Lord Shiva in his most fierce avatar Veerabhadra, the Kalikapattadi folk dance from West Bengal depicts the how Lord Shiva calms down Goddess Kaa-li after she is done with slaying the Asuras, the Kirtan dance performed generally at the evening spiritual gatherings in West Bengal's Radha-Krishna temples, the famous Garadi folk dance of Puducherry which is believed to have been performed by the vanaras (monkeys) to celebrate Lord Rama's victory over Ravana in the Ramayana etc.

#### v. Martial folk dances:

E.g. Povadas from Maharashtra which are based on the life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the Bratachari Raibenes dance which consists of sham fighting and acrobatics and the Rampa or stilt dance from West Bengal, the masked Chhau dance from West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa based on different episodes of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the Parichakali or shield dance from the Lakshwadeep islands, the Chaibari Nritya (a dance mastered by the tea garden workers of Northern Bengal) and Kukri Nritya from North Bengal performed by the girls of the community when they ceremoniously hand over their traditional weapon, the Kukri, to their brothers, before they set off for the war etc.

#### vi. Community folk dances:

E.g. the Kalbelia dance by the snake-charmers of Rajasthan, the fire dance by the Rajasthani Banjara community, Kachchi-Ghodi dance from the Shekhawati regions, the Kolyachi dance of the fishermen folk of Maharashtra, Ganga Baidya dance by the snake charmers or Bedes of Bengal etc.

#### vii. Magico-religious folk dances:

E.g. Brita dance from West Bengal which was traditionally performed by a woman to propitiate the angry deities when she was unable to give birth to a child, the Malayan Kettu from the Kannur district of Kerala which was prescribed by healers to women who had miscarriages, the Kolam Thullal from Kerala – a ritual dance to get rid of evil spirits etc.

### (C) Folk theatre of India:

The colourful assortment of Indian folk culture is best portrayed through its unique art of folk theatre which reaches out to a large cross-section of the Indian population. Many socio-cultural institutions nowadays are playing an important role in revival, propagation and appreciation of Indian folk theatre by organization of workshops, seminars, fairs and festivals thereby promoting the cultural heritage and tourism prospects of India on the global map. The Indian folk art theatre is characterised by the following:

i. The presence of a Sutradhar (narrator), a Vidushak (comedian) and an opening prayer song.

- ii. Loud music, dance and make-up, colourful masks and makeshift stages.
- iii. Insight into local dialect, dress, humour and overall attitude.
- iv. The themes could be purely mythological or current socio-political happenings.

Examples of Indian folk theatre includes Bhavai and Akhyana from Gujarat, Jatra from West Bengal which originated from Sri Chaitanya's Bhakti Movement, Yakshagana from Karnataka, Swang from Harayana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Malwa regions of Madhya Pradesh, Nagal from Punjab, Rameela during the Dussehra festival from all over Northern India, Kalaripayattu – a martial dance-drama and Theyyam from Kerala, Terukkuttu – a Tamil street theatre, Tamasha from Maharashtra, Bhand Pather from Kashmir which commemorates the lives of reshis (Islamic rishis or seers) etc. Puppetry is also a very important form of Indian folk theatre and is famous in the states of Orissa, Rajasthan, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Bharat Kala Museum of Udaipur, Rajasthan holds daily puppetry shows for tourists. A short visit to a local fair along with to witness Rameela is a form of offering that features nowadays on Diwali itineraries of many accommodation establishments in India.

#### **(D) Folk deities of India:**

We get to witness a variety of gods and goddesses in the rural areas of India who do not belong to the higher rungs of deities of the pan-Indian Brahmanical Hinduism but they are the regional deities who are closely associated with villages and towns. These supernatural entities sometimes overlap with tribal deities also. They are not pan-Indian, they are specific to a tribal or caste group, extended family, neighbourhood or village and they are worshipped to achieve a specific end for e.g. good harvest, protection from diseases, fertility etc. Some examples of such folk deities include:

##### **i. Manasa Devi –**

the goddess of snakes worshipped mainly in West Bengal and other parts of North and North Eastern India, chiefly for the prevention and cure of snakebite and also for fertility and prosperity.

##### **ii. Bonbibi –**

the guardian goddess of the Sundarbans, West Bengal who protects the forest workers from the predator Royal Bengal Tiger.

##### **iii. The Seven sisters or deities from South India:**

Poleramma, Ankamma, Muthyalamma, Dilli Polasi, Bangaramma, Mathamma and Renuka who are similar to the Saatbibi of West Bengal: Chandbibi, Olabibi, Ajaibibi, Jholabibi, Bahadabibi, Jhetunebibi and Asanbibi whom researchers believe to be the transmigrations of Vedic deities, the Saptamatrikas (Brahmi, Maheshvari, Vaisnavi, Varahi, Indrani and Chamundi or Yami) and are worshipped along with Bonbibi.

##### **iv. Shitala**

from West Bengal– the goddess who causes and cures pox and her consort – Jwarasura- the god who causes fever.

##### **v. Gangamma – a river goddess of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh**

##### **vi. Iravan or Aravan**

– the patron god of the transgender communities – the son of Pandava prince Arjuna and a Naga princess Uloopi

##### **vii. Aiyannar**

of Tamil Nadu – a village guardian god

##### **viii. The deity Ashok Sundari**

from Gujarat who is believed to be the daughter of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati

##### **ix. Golu Devta**

of Uttarakhand – a manifestation of Gora Bhairav (Shiva)

##### **x. Guggaji**

of Himachal Pradesh

##### **xi. Khetlaji, Veer Tejaji, Pabuji, Baba Ramdevji, Gogaji**

from Rajasthan who have been immortalized through the famous Phad paintings of the state

##### **xii. Karni Mata,**

the official deity of the royal family of Jodhpur and Bikaner

##### **xiii. Goddess Mhalsa**

of Mardol, South Goa who is believed to be a manifestation of Goddess Durga

##### **xiv. Goddess Banai**

– the patron goddess of the Dhangars – also equated with the river Goddess Ganga

##### **xv. Khandoba Mahadev or Malhari Martand -**

a form of Lord Shiva, worshipped in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka

##### **xvi. Vitthala, Vithoba or Panduranga**

of Pandharpur in Western Maharashtra, who is considered as a form of Lord Vishnu

##### **xvii. Jalaram Bapa**

of Virpur, Gujarat - founder of the Jalaram movement

##### **xviii. Guru Jambheshwar,**

the founder of the Vishnoi community in Rajasthan

Be it the Manasa temple in the union territory Chandigarh, Jalaram Bapa temple of Virpur, Gujarat, the Karni Mata temple of Deshnoke, Rajasthan; the 'Ganga Jatara' – the annual folk festival of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh which celebrates the powers of the deity Gangamma, the Pandharpur yatra which witnesses the congregation of pilgrims from all over India, the Khandoba Mahadev temple in Jejuri of Maharashtra or the Vishnoi Village near Jodhpur in Rajasthan– the places associated with the folk deities of India witnesses hundreds of tourists every day along with the faithful locals. The Vishnois of Rajasthan are an eco-friendly sect of the Hindu religion, known to be very aggressive in protecting trees and wildlife. The cult was found by great visionary saint Guru Jambheshwar Ji in year 1485 AD and he taught to protect plants and animals since they are important in order to maintain the balance of nature. The Vishnoi Village Safari was started by Rajas and Maharajas of Jodhpur to give the glimpse of the real Rajasthan to the Indian and foreign guests and is now an irreplaceable component of a tourist's Jodhpur itinerary.

#### **E. Folk games of India:**

Games have been an irreplaceable part of Indian culture since ages. We can draw examples from the mythology of India where Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati playing Pachisi is a recurring theme and in the Mahabharata, the Pandavas losing their common wife Draupadi over a game of dice marks the point from whereon the arch nemesis of Pandavas started their journey to the horrific end. In this age of pursuing personal development courses, the significance of Indian traditional folk games lies in the fact that they endowed skills like basic mathematics, logical and lateral thinking, building strategy, aiming, concentration etc. and were environment friendly as well as suitable for all ages, making way for interaction between generations. The traditional Indian folk games can be classified as follows:

- i. Board games like Pachisi, Satranj, Moksha Patamu (ancient snakes and ladders which was based on the concept of reincarnation and Moksha of Hindu philosophy)

- ii. Outdoor games like kite flying, gilli danda, kabaddi, kho-kho, hide and seek, hopscotch, boat racing like Asop Aap

- or canoe race from Andaman and Nicobar Islands , Hiyang Tannba from Manipur and Vallam Kali from Kerala etc.
- iii. Martial games like Gatika (Sikh Martial Art), archery from Meghalaya, traditional wrestling like Kirip from Nicobar Islands, Kalaripayattu from Kerala.
  - iv. Social games including games played before and after social functions like marriage ceremony

The outdoor and martial folk games of India serve as soft adventure tourism options and nowadays are promoted in various tourism festivals. The Snake Boat Race Festivals held at places like Aranmula, Kumarakom, Alapuzza etc. from Kerala or the Canoe Race during Island Tourism Festivals in Andamans are important tourism products from India.

#### **F. Folklore and folktales of India :**

They range from the Panchatantras, the Jatakas, Hitopodeshas, the Akbar- Birbal, and Tenali Rama to the religious Vrat-kathas as well as localised versions of the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Folklore and folktales of India is a mirror to our diverse society and are important for passing on the age-old eternal wisdom and the norms and mores of the society. These aspects draw a number of visitors to India for cultural studies. Examples of important storytelling traditions from India could include "Kaavad Bachana" from Rajasthan where the prop is a 'kaavad' shrine – a colourful cupboard depicting the stories from epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata as well as the Puranas – with which the storyteller takes the listener to a visual and sacred journey. In last year's Jodhpur RIFF, a lecture and presentation was held on the same. It is somewhat similar to "Pater gaan" from West Bengal, where the singer unfolds a scroll painting while singing songs describing the events depicted on the scroll. The organization named Bangla Natak Dot Com organizes a festival named Pat Maya in West Bengal which showcases the tradition of "Pater Gaan".

#### **G. Folk medicines of India:**

India has been placed among the top three medical tourism destinations in Asia (the others being Thailand and Singapore), mainly due to the low cost of treatment, quality healthcare infrastructure and availability of highly-skilled doctors. There are lot many tourists who are travelling from far and wide to India for alternative treatment options as well. Traditional medicine in India can be classified into codified (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) and non-codified (folk medicine) systems. The 'folk medicines' are based on traditional practices, beliefs and on centuries of trial and error experiences, have been passed on orally to the practitioners and their knowledge is jealously guarded. The household "Daadi Maa Ke Nuskhe" could be the examples of folk medicines as well as the preparations of surprisingly high curative value by the hakims and vaidas – the unlicensed but not untrained, superbly gifted faith healers from India. Be it the forests of Himalayas, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Andhra Pradesh or Car Nicobar – Indian wildlife boasts of many a medicinal plant from which several folk medicines are prepared. However, one needs to be careful of quacks as the WHO notes that "inappropriate use of traditional medicines or practices can have negative or dangerous effects" and that "further research is needed to ascertain the efficacy and safety" of several of the practices and medicinal plants used by traditional medicine systems. Some important sites in India where folk healers can be found include Manali in Himachal Pradesh, Panchvati in Nasik, Kapildhara in Amar-kantak, Sakshi Ganapati in Srisailam etc.

#### **H. Folk crafts of India:**

In the Western world, handicrafts are considered as items of luxury and are generally individual pieces created by studio crafts-persons and artists while in a country like India, handicrafts making and selling is one of the biggest means of employment after agriculture. They are simply not objects showcasing skill of the hand but carry a part of the creator, an essence of the culture he/she was born and brought up in and a subtle impression of centuries of tradition. Handicrafts in India form a part and parcel of everyone's life - from the palatial homes of the rich to the mud huts of the poor. In India, a

handicraft may be a simple diya or clay lamp or a gorgeous chandbali earring. The handicrafts of India can be classified broadly into folk crafts and fine crafts. The talent for producing folk arts and crafts are passed on from one generation of folk artists and craftsmen to the next without any formal training and this is a part of their daily lives.

Examples can include the beautiful sindoor-boxes - crafted out of wood/stone/clay and the rainbow-hued bangles of metal/lac/glass which are so very common Indian tourist souvenirs and are found all over India; the rich embroidery from Kutch regions and the Bandhni tie-and-dye fabrics from Gujarat; the mirror-work fabrics, block printed fabrics and Phad paintings (depicting stories of local folk heroes like Gogaji, Pabuji etc.) from Rajasthan; the puppets and weaving crafts from Andhra Pradesh; the terracotta toys, conch - shell crafts, Nakshi Kanthas (based on local folk tales) and Kalighat Patachitras of West Bengal (which were also used as the visual component of what can be considered as one of the earliest forms of motion picture – the "Pat-er Gaan" and they drew inspiration from mythology as well as contemporary socio-political events) ; the appliqué works and the Odissi Patachitras (based on motifs of Lord Jagannath and Radha-Krishna) , paper mache products from Jammu and Kashmir, the bamboo crafts of North-eastern states, the Ramayana-based Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Phulkari fabrics from Punjab, Warli paintings from Maharashtra , the Kalamkari and Tanjore (showcasing the divine pairings of Vishnu-Lakshmi or Shiva-Parvati) paintings from South India, the Chikankari of Lucknow, the floor paintings - a form of Yantra - drawn to welcome visitors at the entrance of a house ( known by the different names of Alpana, Rangoli, Kolam etc.) and even the beautiful Mehendi designs admired by the foreigners which are important forms of Indian folk arts and crafts. We can see that just like other aspects of Indian folk culture, Indian folk crafts and paintings are also steeped in the timeless heritage of Indian mythological concepts as well as local folklores and folktales.

Due to increased connectivity nowadays, both domestic and international tourists are travelling extensively into rural areas - to be a firsthand witness of the life of the local population of which the folk arts and crafts are an indispensable part. Some of the important villages which have gained much touristic significance because of their art and craft traditions are Raghurajpur and Pipli in Orissa, Shantiniketan in the district of Bolpur of West Bengal, the Kutch regions of Gujarat, the regions producing Madhubani art in Bihar etc. They feature on the itinerary of every tourist wishing to enjoy the folk cultural aspects of India. Also, the local folk arts and crafts are highlighted during several tourism promotional festivals held all over India throughout the year like the Taj Mahotsav in Agra, the Ajanta Ellora Festival in Maharashtra, the International Folk Festival in Himachal Pradesh, the Gurez Festival in Jammu and Kashmir, the Pinjore Heritage Festival in Punjab, the Kutch Utsav in Gujarat as well as festivals specially dedicated to arts and crafts like the Surajkund Crafts Festival in Haryana, the Ashtamudi Craft and Art Festival in Kerala, the Margao Crafts Festival in Goa etc. Culture, crafts and tourism being inseparable partners, such festivals are the greatest contribution in the Indian tourism scenario for product differentiation. The opportunity to absorb local culture is a key driver of tourism and festivals which typically possess a local flair are strategic occasions for tourists to experience new cultures. Folk handicrafts help in diversifying the tourism experience to complement home-stays, cultural experiences and thereby facilitate the promotion of responsible tourism principles as they form an important element of purchases made by tourists, providing an important economic input to the local economy.

#### **I. Folk museums of India:**

Museums in India have become an important partner in the tourism industry and they are contributing as leisure venues and by supporting local festivals (e.g. the Soneri Mahal in Aurangabad hosting the Ajanta-Ellora festival). Museums today are viewed as an important tourism cultural product. The folk museums of India are a treasure trove of the Indian race as a

whole as they store the memories of the Indians, the cultural dreams and hopes which create link between the past and the present, the localites and the foreigners. Examples of folk museums in India could include the Folklore Museum of Mysore having more than 6,500 unique folklore exhibits, the Museum of Himachal Culture and Folk Art in Manali which exhibits ancient Himachali clothes, kitchen utensils, musical instruments, handloom, ornaments etc., the Shreyas Folk Museum in Ahmedabad showcasing art forms of various Gujarati communities, the Kerala Folklore Theatre and Museum in Kochi, Kerala etc.

## V. CONCLUSION:

Folk culture of India has helped in the growth and diversification of the Indian tourism industry - yet it is still largely an untapped segment in many states. Folk culture tourism fosters community skill empowerment whilst safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Though this segment of tourism brings with it the impacts of commoditization and trinketization of culture and creation of pseudo culture, yet it can be considered one of the most environment-friendly forms of tourism if we have a pro-poor and responsible approach towards planning it. Because we have to keep in mind that, in the modern age of touristification, folk culture is being used towards meeting consumption ends, therefore their intrinsic characteristics are increasingly getting lost as destinations serve as an answer to the tourists' expectations of the experiences which they wish to live.

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