

Heritage Tourism of India: Problems and Suggestions

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Introduction :- According to Mahatma Gandhi “A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people”. Incredible tangible and intangible heritage of India play a vital role towards the nation’s overall growth and development. Heritage can act as an important pious development tool for the integral community development of any nation.

Why Heritage Tourism? :- The study of heritage tourism includes three perspectives viz. geography, sociology and anthropology.¹ the present study confines to the heritage tourism in India. India is one of few countries in the world, which has a continuous tradition of peopling, since the period of apes, homo sapience and Paleolithic period to latest cyber age and we always speaks that atithi devo bhava means “A guest is akin to God”. The tradition of hospitality and tourism depends mutually on each other. India has very rich cultural traditions because of its philosophical ideology, religious faith, rites-rituals, colorful festivals, languages, literature, art-architecture, folk lore music, tribal festivals and dance etc. However, it is tragic that despite such vastness of area and richness in all types of cultural heritage, there are very few items listed in ‘World heritage list’ of UNESCO. The reason is very simple: lack of identification and recognition. In India most of old monuments are in shamble condition. The lack of civic responsibility of the local people, administrators and policy makers are equally responsible for their pathetic condition. In India, cultural tourism has largest share from the economic point of view. From ancient times, there is a tradition of making visit to the sacred places of the country. For example, journey by the Hindus to offer prayer to the four Dhams. The sacred places have been preserved since long by the local priest. But, now it is necessary to draw proper attention for the integral development towards these heritage tourism places. The pleasant changing towards thinking among the people of the country forced the administration, local

government, state government and central government to preserve and develop the heritage tourism places which are scattered throughout the country.

Increase in the awareness for heritage properties and sites among the people of the country will ease to preserve and maintain the heritage sites of the country. The appearance of the articles in local and national newspapers shows the increase in the awareness. Some of them are national importance. Taj Corridor case, Ram Setu (Adam’s bridge) case etc. In India, the major form of tourism is cultural tourism. UNESCO Director Minja Yang has rightly said: Spirituality and culture are very significant for whole of South-East Asia and South Asia.²

The Concept of heritage :- The term ‘heritage’ may be defined as the traditions, qualities and culture of a country that have existed for a long time and that have great importance for the country. It may also be defined an object, tangible or intangible, natural or manmade, which has been inherited, not created by present generation. It may be classified as:

- A. Natural** e.g. air, water, beautiful landscape, pristine environment etc.
- B. Cultural-** It has two types.

- I. Tangible :-** which can be seen, touched and felt, e.g.; forts, palaces, temples, sculpture etc.
- II. Intangible :-** This cannot be touched but can be felt, e.g. religion, mythology, rites, rituals, traditions, music & dance etc.

The heritage places take a long time to germinate and grow, but their existence depends on several factors like

- people’s interest to maintain that place or object;
- quality and condition of the concerned place or object;
- cultural importance of the place concerned or object;

- accessibility of the concerned place or object,
- People's will and association of inheritor to protect the heritage tradition.

At international level UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization) is responsible for the exploration, protection and preservation of natural and cultural heritage. UNESCO convened a general conference in 1972 in which the world heritage convention was adopted. The world heritage convention fixed its two fold objectives as follows:-

- To encourage countries to sign the world heritage convention and ensure the protection of their own natural and cultural heritage.
- To encourage state parties to the convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the world heritage list.

At present, more than 180 countries have ratified world heritage convention to protect the cultural and natural heritage. India ratified the convention on 14th November 1977.

Heritage sites in India :- In India, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the premium organization for archaeological researches and protection of cultural heritage in India.³ It protect, conserve, discover and maintain most cherished tangible and intangible heritage for the enjoyment of the world. It was established in the year 1861.⁴ at present the ASI has declared 3656 monuments of national importance in the country which includes 23 world heritage moments and objects.⁵ We can classify Indian heritage items into three categories

- Those properties or sites which are inscribed on the world heritage list of UNESCO.
- Those properties which were sent to WHC for approval, but could not get World heritage (WH) Status. (iii) Other heritage items which worth to be world heritage sites but due to lack of proper steps, they are out of any list.

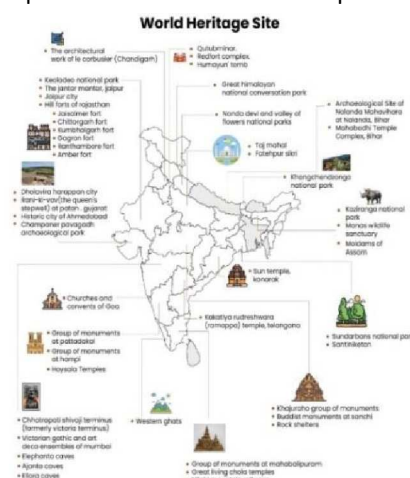
1. Properties which are inscribed on the world heritage list (26 items) :-

- Cultural properties

b) Natural properties

Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List (with year of inclusion)

- Taj mahal (1983) (included among seven modern wonders of the world).
- Agra fort (1983).
- Ellora Caves (1983).
- Ajanta Caves (1983).
- Sun Temple, Konark (1984).
- Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984).



- Kaziranga National Park (1985).
- Keoladeo National Park (1985).
- Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985).
- Churches and Convents of Goa (1986).
- Groups of Monuments at Hampi (1986).
- Group of Temple Monuments at Khajuraho (1986).
- Fatehpur Sikri (1986).
- Sunderban National Park (1987).
- Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987).
- Brihaddeshwer temple at Thanjavur (1987).
- Elephanta Caves (1987).
- Nanda Devi valley of Flowers National Park (1988).
- Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989).
- monuments, Delhi (1993).
- Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993).
- Himalayan railway, Darjeeling (1999).
- Mahabodhi Temple, Bodh Gaya (2002).
- Rock Paintings, Bhimbetka (2003).
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai (2004).

- Champaner Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004).
- Rigveda (2007).
- Red fort, Delhi (2007).
- Kalka- Shimla Railway (2008).

2. Properties which were submitted on the tentative list. (These are also very important and famous properties from historical, architectural, natural and tourist point of view but due to lack of proper methodology, could not get place in the W.H. List.).

Properties submitted on the Tentative List :-

- Temples at Bishnupur, West Bengal.
- Buddhist Monastery Complex, Alchi (Leh).
- Golconda Fort, Hyderabad.
- Dholavira, A Harappan City in Gujarat.
- Rani ki Bavari (Queen's Step well) , Patna, Gujarat.
- Mattanchery Palace, Ernakulam, Kerala.
- Tomb of Sher Shah Suri, Sasaram, Bihar.
- Group of monuments at Mandu, Madhya Pradesh.
- Buddhist site at Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh.
- Hemis Gompa, Leh.
- Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab.
- River Island of Majuli, Assam.
- Matheran Railway, Maharashtra.
- Western Ghat sub cluster.
- Namdapha National Park.
- Wild Ass sanctuary, Kutch, Gujarat.
- Kanchendzonga National Park.
- Chandigarh city.

3. Other heritage objects which are not less important but due to sheer negligence of government, lack of awareness among local citizen and lack of publicity they could not get their proper place. There are a number of such natural and cultural heritage objects.

Few of them are mentioned here :-

A. Natural Heritage :-

- Aru, a beautiful ravine on Lidder River and Lakes of Srinagar Valley.

- Barapani, a vast lake area in Meghalaya.
- Bhera Ghat, a rift valley of marbles in Madhya Pradesh through which Narmada River flows.
- Cherapunjee, world famous place for world's highest rainfall and Rolling Meadows.
- Hill stations like Coonoor, Matheran, Khajjiar, Mahabaleshwar, Munnar, Pachmarchi, Sarahan etc.
- Islands e.g. Diu, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar island group.
- Loktak Lake, famous for floating islands & dancing deer in Manipur.

B. Cultural Heritage :-

- Temples – Palitana & Somnath in Gujarat, Rameshwaram, Madurai, and Sri Ranganatha Temples of Tamilnadu.
- Monasteries – Pemayangtse in Sikkim, Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, Lamayuru, monastery in Ladakh.
- Unnakoti in Tripura famous for numerous rock cut figures.
- Warangal, Lepakshi in Andhra Pradesh.
- Imambara in Lucknow.
- Dayalbagh of Radhaswami Sect in Agra.
- Khandagiri and Udayagiri Caves in Orissa.
- Ram setu bridge, Rameshwaram-sent to UNESCO.

Problems of Recognition of heritage sites :-

Inclusion of any monument or natural site is very prestigious phenomena. It attracts attractions tourists not only from India but from all corners of the world. The tourists makes visit to the heritage places which forced the government and concerned authority to renovate and maintain them. Funding to maintain heritage sites are great issues as it needs difficulty on the part of the government and others also.

Problems of heritage sites :- At national level ASI is the responsible authority to look after the heritage sites. But ASI itself is facing following problems:

- I. **Absence of Master Plan :-** It seems that ASI lack the concept of master plan with respect to development of heritage sites which do not belongs to the world heritage category sites. In

the absence of any proper plan, several beautiful structures have lost their beauty. Especial reference may be given to

- Palamu Fort of Jharkhand.
- Maluti (A small village in Jharkhand which consists of 72 extant terracotta temples) etc.

II. Encroachment :- In India it is common that whenever and wherever tourists start to visit a place, several types of encroachment develops. These encroachments are done by local shopkeepers, souvenir sellers, local residents or government themselves. These structures can be wooden – brick & stone built temporary or permanent structures which demolish the beauty of the architecture of monument or environment. They are soaring to eyes. In South India, the market in and around the Meenakshi Temple (Tamil Nadu) is one example where the souvenir sellers have covered the carvings of beautiful granite pillars with their partitions, lightening and selling objects. They put their items on the road to narrow the same. In the front of temple, the shopkeepers have covered the monuments with sheds, tarpaulin cover etc. They have tied ropes with sculpted horses and beautiful statues. This case is common in Rameshwaram, Kanchipuram and several other temples of Tamilnadu. The same situation exists in Viswanath temple in Varanasi. Mostly such encroachments are done by local priests and their families who began to live within the precincts of temples. Matura and Vrindvan is burning example of this situation. They expand their rooms and other structures. In Ajanta, a two storied hotel and restaurant is constructed at the entrance. Similar structures of ticket house and officers are common everywhere. The approach road to Dwarkadheesh temple is Dwarka, Meenakshi temple in Madurai etc. are blocked with haphazard growth. The tourists cannot take a long view of these temples. Even they cannot stand to see the marvel of architecture.

III. Irresponsible tourists :- Recent news from Goa is an example of irresponsible tourists which forced local people of Goa to request not to do photography in the precincts of their houses.

But the biggest problem is the lack of civic sense among Indian visitors who try to inscribe their names on historical monuments. One can see the names of people on the painting (e.g. Ajanta), Dholavira monuments (throughout the country) and natural places. Such ugly evidence of irresponsible activity can be seen everywhere, right from very popular sites e.g. Ajanta, Ellora, Golconda fort, etc. to less known monuments of the country. We need to educate people in this regard because it is not possible to depute the guards everywhere.

IV. Light & Sound Shows :- The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) started light and sound Programmes at several places of tourism interest. Its main object was to highlight the historical glory through light and sound medium. Such Programmes became very popular among the tourists wherever it has been introduced e.g. (a) Shalimar Bagh in Kashmir (b) Cellular Jail, Port Blair in Andaman & Nicobar. However, its physical execution has become a controversy. It needs fixture of high voltage lightings, sounds systems. Most of the old monuments are houses of bats, birds several animals which are disturbed by intense light, high pitch sound system. The vibrations create cracks. The heat by light also harms the plaster works and colors of monuments. The former ruler of Mysore has objected such a show on the ground of sound vibrations and lights which may harm the famous Mysore Palace.⁷

Suggestions :- The above problems can be solved by the implementation of following measures:

- 1. Public awareness :-** There is a great need of general awareness among the people of India. Indian citizens lack knowledge, self-esteem, self-respect and national proud of their glorious past which our heritage sites represents. In 2007, there was a world wide campaign to include some heritage sites in modern 'seven wonders'. From India only Taj Mahal & Meenakshi Temple (Madurai) were selected, while United Kingdom tried its best to include the Stonehenge. India have better caves of that age (or thousand times better

and older than Petra of Jordan, which is included in seven wonders), but due to lack of awareness very few people participated in this campaign.

- 2. Law & Administration :-** Protection of heritage sites is a major problem. The safety of tourists is very important factor. There are several states which are facing terrorists and Naxalite problems e.g. Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh etc. Most of monuments are located in far from populated areas e.g. Bhimbetka, Saanchi and Ajanta etc. In such condition, the safety of monuments and visitors is a major problem. The unscrupulous elements, snatchers and teasers disturbs the tourists within the monument areas e.g. Old Fort, Delhi, Golkonda Fort, Rajgir-Gaya etc. This is the reason why Rajasthan, Goa and Kerala have become popular destinations while Bihar or Jharkhand are not.

It is necessary to create specific statute in this regard through which police personnel may be posted as 'tourist police' for which special training should be given to them. It is very important which will be very clear from a decision of UP police department through a special training has been given to the police posted in Mahakumbh of 2025 to treat with the pilgrimages.

Challenges of identification and Presentation by Ravi Bhushan Kumar).

- 8. The Hindu Jan 3, 2009).
- 9. <https://d2av8kbir6lh9m.cloudfront.net/uploads/JblSSQ7HxQEnCsc6lBy7TNbdJviy1X2qP39AZ2bz.jpg>.

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