



Tourism in Jharkhand – An Evaluative Study

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Tourism is now viewed as one of the key sectors of economic growth and development of the country, both from the point of view of income and employment generation as well as a source of revenue. Jharkhand needs to take a cue from this and aggressively promote tourism in the state. The present paper carries out a detailed evaluation of problems and prospects of tourism in Jharkhand.

Keywords : Tourism, Jharkhand.

Introduction

Indian Tourism is at present at crossroads. In the backdrop of rapidly changing technology and economic conditions, socio demographic and leisure utilization pattern, customer habits and needs are also changing. And thus tourism systems are becoming more complicated. Tourists are now seeking new forms of tourism and thus mass tourism is giving way to individual “customized and tailor-made tours”. Tourism is now being viewed as a major revenue and employment generator. Even India’s miserable share of the world tourism market fetches about \$ 3,000 million in foreign exchange.

Against this backdrop the present paper is being contemplated taking into account the fact that tourism can be a major source of revenue and economic sustenance for not only the country but various states, too. Particularly the ones that enjoy bounty of the nature. Kerala has already done it. Himachal is doing it. Even states like West Bengal are aiming at it. Jharkhand needs to learn from its neighbour West Bengal as there are many cultural, sociological and geographical similarities.

The comparatively new Jharkhand State comprising 24 districts of mineral rich Chotanagpur Plateau of the erstwhile southern region of Bihar has been endowed with bountiful natural resources. In fact, it has the most of the mineral reserves of the whole country. These facts, however, are well known. But, what is not known is the reality that Jharkhand State has the potential to become a highly attractive tourism destination. Given the number of beautiful tourist spots that the state has, if the Jharkhand Government takes proper steps tourism can be developed into a major revenue earner for the state’s kitty, creating income generation opportunities in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

After the creation of a separate state of Jharkhand on November 15, 2000, tourism is being viewed as an important department of the government. In the erstwhile Bihar, southern region comprising the Jharkhand was only important for minerals. But the Jharkhand government is now realizing that the state can become an attractive tourist destination.

It may be pointed out that in a short duration after the formation of the state, the government of Jharkhand has taken some concrete steps to promote and develop tourism in the state. It had announced a forward-looking tourism policy, which clearly recognizes the strengths and weakness and potential of tourism in the state. This tourism policy is not merely a policy statement but is an attempt to analyse the tourism potential and strengths of Jharkhand along with the weakness and

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challenges, which lie ahead.

The strengths and assets of Jharkhand clearly are pilgrimage, cultural tourism, heritage, eco-tourism, adventure tourism and wellness. Land locked by Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the state has a total area of 79,714 square kilometers which is pre dominantly Rural.

When Jharkhand was a part of Bihar, the region was known for rich mineral deposits and rulers from Patna were only interested in exploiting the mineral wealth of the Chotanagpur plateau. No attempt, what so ever, was made to promote the natural beauty that was so bountiful here. The rich forests, the beautiful hills, the lush green ambience, the pleasant weather and the variety in vegetation. What ever tourism was taking place it was in the name of religion. So Baidyanath Dham the famous temple of Lord Shiva and Parasnath the seat of Jain Tirthankar Parshwanath were the two most celebrated tourist attractions that attracted largely religious crowd. Baidyanath Dham for hindus and Parasnath for jains. There was no attempt to promote pleasure or vacation tourism. In fact, few were aware that the region had tremendous potential for eco-tourism, the in thing today.

With the formation of the new state tourism potential of the state can be exploited to the hilt. ‘Beauty’ as is popularly said is in the beholders eye”. And is largely perceived and suggestive. One of be World’s most famous waterfall is Niagra falls. And it is only around 175 feet high. Compare this with world’s highest cascade; venezuela’s Angel falls at 3200 feet or even our own Indian one, the Jog falls of Karnataka, at 830 feet. This is what marketing does. And this is what the state needs to do— aggressive marketing.

Tourism Potential Of Jharkhand

The state has a tremendous potential for tourism. Its tourism strength lies in several areas. There are some very famous Pilgrimage sites that attract people from all over the world. Parasnath situated some 45 kilometers from the industrial town ship of Dhanbad attracts Jain devotees from the entire globe. However the interesting fact is that it is a fantastic site for pleasure tourism as well. The seat of famous Jain Tirthankar Parshwa nath, the place has temples of all the Jain Tirthankars situated at the top of the Parasnath hills, a group of hillocks that attracts crowds loving hiking and adventure seeking trekkers in big numbers. For the families, too, the place has tremendous attraction. So from tranquility and divine peace to mundane pleasure, the place is a hot spot. With some effective marketing it can become an internationally acclaimed tourist attraction.

Baidyanath Dham, the famous abode of lord Shiva, is well known. Popularly called Baba Dham, the place is the seat of one of the twelve jyotirlingas of Lord Shankar and the legend has it that it was established by Demon King Ravana. A world famous pilgrimage for the Shaivites. Baidyanath Dham is situated in Deoghar town which is well connected with rail as well as road. However, apart from pilgrimage, it is a beautiful place for pleasure tourism. Today Baidyanath Dham is famous for the huge crowd of Lord Shiva’s devotees popularly called ‘Kanwarias’ who come all the way from their respective places to carry the water from the River Ganges at Sultanganj and pour it on the Shivalingam at Babadham. Many of these Kanwarias make a journey of around a hundred kilometers on foot. All dressed in saffron they present a wonderful sight.

There are two very famous abodes of Goddess Durga in the state that attract devotees from all over India. Maithan near Dhanbad and Rajrappa near Ramgarh are two very important Pilgrimages. The interesting coincidence is that these places too have tremendous potential for pleasure tourism.

The state thus has the potential to attract tourists of every hue and colour. The only requirement is to market its tourism potential aggressively. A SWOT analysis of the tourism potential of the state is carried out in the ongoing lines to present a clear picture.

Jharkhand's Rich Heritage

Jharkhand has the potential to become a very popular tourism destination given the various tourist attractions it can offer. In fact there is something for every kind of tourism in the state – right from pilgrimage to eco-tourism. Jharkhand has places, which are famous pilgrimage sites. Apart from Baidyanath Dham and Parasnath mentioned earlier there are a number of religious places, which can be developed into very important pilgrimage sites.

While Rajrappa, Maithan are well known many more such places are there that can attract devotees in large numbers. In fact many of these places can be popular heritage sites also, given the history. Near Dhanbad, around a distance of 25 kilometers there is a small town Nirsa. In Pandra village of this town there is Kapileshwar temple that has a history of thousands of years. This temple of Lord Shiva is also called Panch Pandeshwar temple as it is supposed to be built by Pandavas (famous heroes of the Mahabharat era in the Dwapar Yuga according to Hindu Mythology). The legend goes that the Pandavas spent some time here during their forced exile after the famous defeat in the great gamble with Duryodhana. This temple has five Shiva lingas established by the five Pandava brothers.

Another important religious site is Liloristhan, the temple of an incarnation of Goddess Durga. It is situated at around 12 kilometers from Dhanbad. The place attracts pilgrims from near by regions. This temple also has an old history of hundreds of years.

There is another important Pilgrim site near Topchachi some 30 kilometers away from Dhanbad. This is the Mazar (Grave) of a Pir (saint) called Baba Hazrat Abdul Shah. Many people flock here for boon. Though Baba was a muslim the devotees who throng here every day cut across religion. With a bit of marketing this place can be developed in to a popular site.

In fact, there are several such places, which have a long history and were built by legendary rulers. Basukinath, near Baidyanath Dham is another important place that attracts pilgrims who come to Baidyanath Dham. This also is a temple of Lord Shiva. In fact, Shiva and Durga temples are more common in the region and the erstwhile rulers built these temples taking into account the popular psychology of the people. The interesting thing is that these sites are situated in remote areas and can become important centers for pleasure tourism given the ambience. Most of the famous temples are surrounded by beautiful hills or are atop a hill or near a river or in a forest. With a lot of packaging and marketing they can easily become centers of tourist attraction. Tourist attractions sites of the state can be classified into six categories in Jharkhand. Some Of The Important Tourist Attractions Of The State Are Given Below :-

1. Religious Places – Baidyanath Dham, Parasnath, Rajrappa, Maithan, Basukinath, Liloristhan, Shakti Mandir, etc.
2. Pleasure Sites – Parasnath, Basukinath, Trikut hill, Nandan hill, Maithan Dam, Panchet Dam, Tilaiya Dam, Rajrappa, Ramgarh, Hundru falls, Jonha falls, Usri falls, Gautam Dhara, Dimna Lake, Dasham falls, Topchanchi, Masanjore Dam, etc.
3. Health resorts/retreats – Netarhat, Ramgarh, Ghamaria, Parasnath, Angada, Ghatshila, Hazaribagh, etc.
4. Wild life/forests – Ghatshila, Hazaribagh, Koderma, Chaibasa, Gumla etc.
5. Eco-tourism – Netarhat, Hazaribagh, Chaibasa, Ghatshila, Rajmahal hills etc.
6. Miscellaneous – Central Mining Research Station, Indian School of Mines, Indian Lac Research Institute, BIT Mesra, BIT Sindri, Coal Mines, Forests etc.

The above mentioned list is suggestive and not exhaustive. The places mentioned above are already

popular and with aggressive marketing these can grow into well-known national tourist sites. Another important aspect is that there are lesser-known sites that can be developed into important sites with the help of customized marketing.

Generally, it is effective to market a particular site as a package i.e. offering different things to different class of tourists. For example Parasnath. This hill complex can be packaged as a site for pilgrimage, heritage, eco-tourism, health resort, adventure etc. Most of the sites in Jharkhand are of this category.

Apart from these sites for different classes of tourists, Jharkhand, contrary to popular belief is not just barren, hilly and fruitless forests. It is culturally very rich and if the right packaging is provided the state can be an attractive destination for cultural tourism. In addition heritage sites depicting life and styles of indigenous people, the tribals, can be developed. Folk songs and Folk dances of Jharkhand are significant culturally and can compete with the other popular dances like Kathakali and Bharatnatyam, etc., of Southern India. The 'Chhou' Dance Ceremonially inaugurated on the last day of Chaitra (a month in the Hindu Calender coinciding with March-April) is a case in point. This dance is performed at the open courtyards attached to shrines of village Gods.

The State has some thing to offer to the historians, the naturalists, the anthropologists as well as the Indologist. The region is extremely important from anthropological point of view. The basic population comprises four principal groups, viz., the Bhumij, who call themselves Sardar, the Mura, generally known as Mundas, the Santhal, and, the Kurmi, known also as Mahato or Kurma Kshatriya. They are all independent groups of people who in most cases show cultural affinities.

The Mura worship the Sun God in the name of Sing Bonga, the same God who is worshipped in the name of Dharam by the Bhumij. Sing Bonga is the Supreme God with the Mura. There are other Gods lower in rank like Marang Buru, the Mountain God.

The state government needs to act fast. The boom period of tourism is here and it is prudent to catch up with the mood and wallet of the middle class whose propensity for fun and enjoyment, pleasure and adventure is growing by the hour.

Timely action needs to be taken as threat in the form of competition from other states is intensifying. Even governments of Bihar and West Bengal have gone for aggressive marketing of their respective states as tourist destination. Uttranchal, Chattisgarh are other contenders who are eyeing for a share in the growing tourism market. In addition the established tourist destination like Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have gone for the kill. These are no mean threats and image building of the state has to begin in the right earnest and right now. When Rajasthan can think of promoting tourism in rural areas one can well imagine the kind of competition that is there in the tourism market.

What Needs to be Done

The tourism product is different from other products. A tourism product is the combination of tourism services and offerings being provided by the different constituents of the tourism industry. The landscape, Lush Greenery, Wildlife adventure, stay in hotel, traveling, festival, tradition and culture of the host country/destination, etc. constitute the invisible and intangible structure of the tourism product. These must be identified and properly classified.

The government of Jharkhand should first study the prospects of tourism in a scientific way. The following issues are important :

- ◆ Understanding the tourist needs, wants, tastes and attitudes

- ◆ Achieving sustainable growth in tourist arrivals
- ◆ Increasing tourist traffic during lean seasons
- ◆ Attempting to increase the length of stay of tourist
- ◆ Dispersing tourist to new destinations and
- ◆ Enhancing image and popularity, etc of tourism destinations.

So the government needs to focus its efforts in marketing to a well-defined group of potential customers. Identifying them and then positioning its tourism destinations to them is the strategy that will help.

Some Major Areas Where Action Is Required

So, what are the hurdles that need to be overcome for promoting tourism in Jharkhand. First of all Tourism in Jharkhand has not yet received the focus of a state activity. Tourism Development in Jharkhand is also affected by the fact that awareness and sensitivity about the potential of tourism has not percolated to all sections of the society. The following ground realities should be kept in mind about the state.

- ◆ Inadequate & poor quality of infrastructure
- ◆ Carrying capacity by air, road and railways
- ◆ Clean and comfortable lodging facilities at reasonable prices
- ◆ Trained guides and Tourist Amenities of international standard
- ◆ Adequate entry points
- ◆ Positive image building abroad
- ◆ The need to preserve the heritage and natural resources
- ◆ Safe and secure tourism.

Now keeping these ground realities in mind, what should be the action plan for Jharkhand? The future action programme should revolve around creating adequate infrastructure of international standard to make arrivals easy and a pleasurable experience.

Need For A Thrust In Image Building

In future, the tourist choice will be guided by various factors that create an image about a country. Issues of environmental and ecological preservation, human rights violation, child sex abuses, etc, will be important factors in such decision process. The search for safety and security is likely to extend beyond air travels. So we will need to reorient our image building approach.

For years, Jharkhand was projected as a land of Jungle, tribals, minerals, ancient temples, and backward culture. It is time to redesign the tourism Packages and explore new areas. The state is poised for a major breakthrough in infrastructure development and the growing spread of its Power and Telecom network is bringing its vast region closer. The time is thus ripe for simultaneously giving a powerful thrust to tourism. So it is time of redesign new tourism packages and explore new areas.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the newly formed Jharkhand state has the potential to become an exciting tourist destination. But the important point is that the policy makers will have to consider

a variety of approaches to ensure that the state is showcased properly. The state needs to be positioned properly and in this endeavour the support of travel agents, tour operators, travel writers, representatives of travel and hospitality industry associations, experts in the tourists and cultural sectors, diplomats, journalists and other opinion leaders is crucial.

Effective positioning depends on a number of factors that together determine the attractiveness of the tourist destination. Positioning must promise the benefit the customer will receive, create the expectation and offer a solution to the customer's problem.

Positioning as the first step should identify and select markets or segments that represent business potential. This must be based on thorough knowledge of needs, wants and perceptions of the target market along with the benefits offered by the destination.

The state government needs to go for development of new sites, facelift of existing sites and sprucing up the hospitality arrangement. Attempts are on in this regard but lot more needs to be done. Already the state government has initiated steps to develop a beautiful park at the mining town of Kiriburu in West Singhbhum on the lines of the famous Jubilee Park of Jamshedpur. Similarly Akarshani Devi temple at Saraikela in Kharsawan district is being developed on lines of Vaishno Devi temple. There efforts are going to pay rich dividends. However, careful planning and organizing is required for effective management and exploitation of tourism potential is to be achieved.

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