

“DARK TOURISM IN INDIA”

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Abstract

Tourism involves the activities of people travelling to places and staying outside their usual environment of leisure, business and other purposes for not more than one consecutive year. Tourism being a part of service sector has become one of the important sources of income. Tourism in India has shown a rapid growth in past decade. Specialty forms of tourism have also emerged over the years, one of these niche tourism markets includes Dark Tourism.

Dark Tourism has been defined as tourism involving travel to places historically associated with death and tragedy (Malcolm Foley & J. John Lennon,1996). People get attracted to dark locations for the historical value rather than their association with death and suffering. This tourism is also referred to as “Grief Tourism” or “Black Tourism”. Every traveler has different motive to undertake the trip in this case, some of the motives could be remembering the tragedy and its effects, interest in human psyche, being nostalgic, desire to pay respect to dead ones etc.

Dark Tourism in India is not much known but there are many places which fit under this category. Few destinations which are best suited for this tourism are Bhangarh Fort Rajasthan, Kuldhara Rajasthan, Jallianwala Bagh Amritsar, Dumas Beach Gujarat, Three Kings Church Goa, Skeleton Lake Uttarakhand, Shaniwar Wada Pune, Cellular Jail Andaman and Nicobar Islands etc.

Keywords: *Tourism, Dark Tourism, Dark Spots, Tourism in India, Grief Tourism, Black Tourism, Dark Tourism sites in India.*

Objectives:

1. To understand the concept of dark tourism
2. To enlist dark tourism sites in India
3. To study the scope of dark tourism in India
4. To determine the challenges faced by dark tourism in India

Introduction

People now-a-days keep on travelling from one place to another domestically or internationally with different motives be it for business trip, leisure, pilgrimage, meeting friends and relatives, attending fairs and festivals, relaxation, adventure and sports, spiritual journey or just for gaining experiencing. Tourism industry is a very dynamic industry which has to deal with ever changing demands of customers and a constant focus on customer satisfaction. Tourism generates employment; create multiplier effect, helps in infrastructure development, foreign exchange, economic diversification, cultural awareness, preservation of natural resources and many more. Tourist choices of tourism have been evolving from decades and

now tourists are moving towards special interest tourism. Special interest tourism focuses on viewing and experiencing something different with a purpose and not only viewing or enjoying scenic beauty. It gives a provision of different tourism activities which are customized and caters to the groups and individual with special interests. It mainly consists of experiences such as enriching, rewarding, adventuresome and learning experiences.

Tourism in India

Tourism industry acts as a powerful agent in both economic and social change. India being rich in culture and heritage travel and tourism has always been an integral part of the country. The country is blessed with plenty of natural resources ranging from Himalayan mountains, Beaches, Valleys, Deserts, Wildlife, Forests etc which has healing abilities and gives a completely different experience altogether. In recent years the country has gained a good growth in tourism industry. Tourism sector is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 6.9% to 32.05 lakh crore (US\$460 billion) by 2028 (9.9% of GDP). Today growth of tourism has created an increase in foreign direct investments as well as created jobs in many sectors. Government of India has introduced a program called “Atithi Devo Bhava” (guest is God) to teach all the stakeholders the importance of tourists and tourists places. The program helps in creating the awareness amongst the people towards preservation of natural resources, culture, heritage and hospitality. Government of India has launched an international campaign “Incredible India” since 2002 to promote Indian tourism. The campaign showcased different aspects of country ranging from culture, art and music, yoga, spirituality etc. India being diverse, gives many options for tourists travelling in India according to their interest levels. Different types of tourism found in India are cultural tourism, heritage tourism, spiritual tourism, religious tourism, health tourism, yoga tourism, eco-tourism tourism, adventure tourism, recreational tourism, wildlife tourism, village tourism, sports tourism etc.

Introduction to Dark Tourism:

Dark Tourism has been defined as tourism involving travel to places historically associated with death and tragedy (Malcolm Foley & J. John Lennon, 1996). People are gradually attracted to and focus on dark tourism in the past decade mainly because of their strong curiosity about death (Lennon & Foley, 2000). It is still a new concept for tourism industry. It can be described as the combination of history, heritage, tourism and tragedy (Niemela, 2010). It was basically expanded from heritage tourism also places that are historically linked to death and tragedy. They are the places of social and political turmoil or conflict or locations and memorial with tragic historical significance and emotional resonance. These places are the destinations that have been previously home to very violent act in very dark times in history. They are also referred to as black tourism or grief tourism. The Institute for Dark Tourism Research (iDTR)'s Dr Philip Stone opened the world's first academic centre into the subject. Dark Tourism can also be seen in various forms such as:

1. Grave tourism
2. Prison and Persecution site tourism
3. Natural disaster area tourism
4. Modern Political sites
5. Industrial Disasters

Traces of dark tourism were seen in roman era where the audiences use to take keen interest in gladiator fights and enjoy it with full enthusiasm. It is evident from the fact that from medieval period to nineteenth century there used to be large gatherings whenever there was any public execution. Thus, Roman

Colosseum were the first dark sites for the people who were interested in tourism associated with deaths and destruction. First research on dark tourism was done in international journal of science of cultural and heritage in 1996. Often pilgrimage tourism is considered similar to dark tourism as it involves psychological journey of a tourist but pilgrimage has a holy significance whereas dark tourism is linked with negative historical events and sometimes it is related to just attain social and economical status. In current scenario dark tourism has become one of the unique forms of tourism. It has gained popularity in market due to its unique nature. Few of the famous dark tourism spots are Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, Ground Zero, New York City, USA, Cu Chi Tunnels, Saigon, Vietnam.

Seven suppliers or seven fundamentals of dark tourism are as follows:

1. Dark Fun Factories: These are places that provide entertainment by revolving around the superficial deaths by commercial and financial ethics. They are with good tourism infrastructure. Ex: Dracula Park in Romania
2. Dark Exhibitions: This concept gives death related attractions to the tourists but only for educational and learning purposes. They are places, sites and exhibitions which portray death and suffering.
3. Dark Dungeons: These are the places and sites that include criminal history and injustice. These are again places that purely educate tourists on history of destination. Ex: Prisons
4. Dark Shrines: These are not so popular sites. They are located nearby to the sites of death and misery. They seem very brutal and are not at all eye appealing. They are visited only to pay respect to the deceased.
5. Dark Resting Places: These are cemetery and graveyards. They are mostly visited to pay respect to the loved ones.
6. Dark Conflict Sites- These are places where major battles were fought in the past. These sites have gained popularity as it co-relates to the history. Ex: Battle of Jhansi
7. Dark places of mass killing: They are places with suffering, death and atrocities which are categorised into the darkest sites and lightest sites.

With these one can understand that threat, insecurity, love, humanity, empathy and superiority are some of the psychological factors that pushes tourists to visit dark places and sites.

Sites and Scope of Dark tourism places in India

India having such a vast history, dark tourism automatically finds its place. India has seen various situations right from natural calamities, wars, civilizations, poverty, cultural diversification, kingdoms and empires, superstition, fight for independence and many more unfortunate events. Thus there is a lot of scope for dark tourism in India. Many destinations can be promoted as dark tourist spots which will add to the economic growth of the country by creating large movement of domestic and foreign travelers. Many places in India have seen some or other event in the past, considering this the places can be promoted as dark places for tourists.

Places of dark tourism in India:

1. Bhangarh Fort Rajasthan- It is the fort in Alwar district, Rajasthan. The fort is strictly closed after sunset and no one is allowed to enter the fort till sunrise. It is believed that the fort is cursed by a Tantrik & is said to be the most haunted forts in India.

2. Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar- It is a historical place in India and memorial in the memory of more than 1500 people who lost lives or got injured during Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The walls of Jallianwala bagh still has 36 bullet marks which are easily visible.
3. Dumas Beach, Gujarat- It is a beach along Arabian sea and is listed in top 35 haunted spots in india. The beach is famous for its paranormal activity during night. People have experienced howling or laughter sounds after the sunset at the beach.
4. Three Kings Church, Goa- It is located at Chondor, South Goa and is established in 1599. It is believed that the church is in complete control of evil spirits and people have reported strange activity inside the church.
5. Roopkund,Uttarakhand- It is mysteries lake popularly know as skeleton lake which is surrounded by glaciers and snow mountains. Roopkund has hundreds of human skeletons at lakes bottom which are quit visible when the snow melts.
6. Shaniwarwada, Pune- It is a historical fort in Pune which was headed by Peshwas before they lost the 3rd anglo Maratha war. People are advised not to visit the place after sunset as it is believed that some evil spirit reside at the place, especially on full moon nights where one can hear loud cries.
7. Cellular Jail, Andaman Nikobar Island- It was a colonial prison popularly known as Kala Pani. It was the place to isolate and punish freedom fighters or activists. Today this place is a national memorial. In india Vir Sawarkar Smaran Yatra is organized to educate people on life of Brave Freedom fighter Vir Sawarkar.
8. Tajmahal Palace Hotel Mumbai – November 26, 2008 Tajmahal palace and Hotels Mumbai faced one of the biggest nightmares of terror attack for almost 2 and a half day. Many tourists now visit Mumbai especially area near Tajmahal palace and hotel Mumbai and inside the hotel where they are taken on a tour by showing places of incidence.

Challenges faced by Dark Tourism in India

Dark tourism being the places of death and destruction are assumed as negative places by the society. India being rich in cultural and spiritual destinations has always portrayed positive sides of the places and sites. The psychology behind the motive of tourist is questioned and thus this concept is really difficult for people to accept. There is lack of understanding and knowledge with respect to the concept of dark tourism and there is a dilemma with respect to the cultural ethics, values and morals of the people in India due to which it has not been marketed well. The places of dark tourism are not well developed and there are no proper services for tourists at destinations. As the places are not well promoted they are quite not accessible for the tourists. Department of tourism in India has not included policies for promoting dark tourism sites.

Conclusion

The article aims at understanding the concept of dark tourism and its seven fundamentals. The increasing interest of tourists towards dark tourism is helping boost tourism and contribute towards socio-economic growth of countries. Tourists usually club this form of tourism with other forms. Dark tourism covers range of different sites that has little or no connection with each other. The study also states that there is still a dilemma of ethics and values while promoting dark tourism in India. With growing popularity dark tourism is also included in curriculum of graduates and undergraduates of tourism studies. It is also attracting the phd researchers. Dark tourism has caught media attention has become a quite often topic for articles and write-ups in magazines, newspapers, journals etc. Places which do not have tourism potential

because of various factors can promote dark destinations as a tourist place which will help the place to boost the economy through tourism. As literature available on dark tourism is very limited a limited study was done on dark tourism especially in terms of Indian tourism scenario.

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