

History of Tourism in Ancient India

Dr. Milind Baburao Thorat Associate Professor Bhogawati Mahavidyalaya, Kurukali

Tal. Karveer Dist. Kolhapur Cell-9850774830 Mail ID:-mbthorat10@gmail.com

Ancient India has a very long historical and religious tradition. The culture of ancient India was advanced. Due to the vastness and isolation of India, tourism has developed in our country. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his book 'Discovery of India'. It is said “that the learned art of our ancient times has made our cultural history and has been alive for thousands of years”.¹

Objectives of Tourism in Ancient India

India is the origin of many religions. Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism arose and developed here in ancient India. Buddha Dhamma spread throughout the world. And that's why tourism developed here. Tourism has been given importance in several Hindu texts. So Char Dham Ke Yatra started.² Ekashmeshwar of Kanchi, Brahadeshwar temple of Thanjavur, Chola temple were developed as religious centers.

After the establishment of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, began his pilgrimage to the holy places. Lumbini Buddha's Birth, Gaya-Enlightenment, Sarnath-First Sermon and Kushinagara Buddha's Mahaparinirvana visit these places.³ Emperor Ashoka started Dhamma Yatra to spread Buddha Dhamma. Vardhaman Mahavira, the 24th Tirthakar of Jainism, spread Jainism. Many kings of ancient India patronized Jainism. Temples were built to spread Jainism. It has a Jain temple built in Abu Parvat and Shravanbelgol of Karnataka is a famous Jain religious site.⁴

Business Purpose

Another important purpose of tourism in ancient times was trade. The cities of Harappa Mohenjodaro, Taxila, Ujjain, Vaishali, Pratihasthan, Pataliputra, Champa, Benares and the ports of Kalyan, Sopara, Kaveripatnam, Machalipatnam, Tamralipti were famous for trade. People used to come to these cities and ports for trade. Merchants of China, India, and Sumatra, Iran used to come to Rome for trade through the sea.⁵

Educational Objectives

In ancient India, Nalanda, Taxila, Vikramshila were famous places of education. People from home and abroad used to come here to acquire knowledge of Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. After completing his studies, princes used to travel to other countries to acquire knowledge. In ancient times tourism was developed through education.⁶

Dhamma Conference & Tourism

In the early days of tourism development, the conference held an important place. Tourists from many countries used to come to participate in these conferences. Buddhism played an important role in this. Four important councils of Buddhism were held. The first council was held after Mahaparinirvana of Mahatma Gautama Buddha in BC. In 483 under the chairmanship of Mahakashyapa, 500 monks from home and abroad participated in this council.⁷

Second Buddhist council in B.C. In 385 BC King Kalasoka of Vaishali organized it. 700 Buddhist monks participated in it.⁸

The Third Buddhist Council was organized by Emperor Ashoka at Patliputra under the chairmanship of Moggalliputta Tishya. More than 1000 monks participated in it.⁹

The fourth and final council was held by Emperor Ashoka in AD. K. In the first century it was organized under the presidency of Vasumitra in Kundalvan of Kashmir.¹⁰

Like Buddhism, Jainism organized two councils. First Jain Dharma Parishad in A.D. In 313 it was completed in Madura. The second conference was held in AD. In 512 it was completed in Vallabhi. Both these conferences were attended by thousands of tourists.¹²

Emperor Harshvardhan organized a religious conference at Kannoj in honor of the Chinese tourist Hiu-en-tsang. Kings and tourists from home and abroad participated in this Dharma Parishad.¹²

Foreign Tourists in Ancient India

India has been the attraction of the world since ancient times. Foreign tourists used to come here to study Indian culture specially Buddhist Dhamma.

Fa-Hian came to India from China in 399 AD. Mathura, Sravasti, Kapilavastu, Vaishali, Pataliputra, Rajagriha, Gaya, Varanasi, Tamralipti were visited by Fa-hian.¹³ AD in 630 Hu-en-tsang came to India. He came to study Buddhist Dhamma tradition and Buddhist culture. He studied all the Buddhist sites and scriptures. Translated about 74 Buddhist texts into Chinese.¹⁴

In AD 673, a Chinese tourist named I-Tsing came to India. He visited many Buddhist sites and studied Buddhist Dhamma at Nalanda University.

All these tourists studied the social, cultural, political, religious customs of India and wrote all the things about India. This made it easier for historians to study the ancient Indian civilization.

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