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TOURISM AS A FACTOR OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF BIHAR

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to discuss the tourism as factors of regional development for Bihar. Bihar is a crisis-State today where socio-economic performance score stands at the bottom of the table, which is really deplorable. The condition has more accentuated otherwise after the segregation of Jharkhand. The state now needs to reorient its socio-economic status after harnessing its abundant natural and cultural heritages. Agronomy and tourism may be the base for all developments here. Since long the former had been the lifeline of the State but the later has been ever neglected. How the time has come to realize the importance of tourism as a smokeless industry through which a region can redress its relegated socio-economic conditions. It provides opportunities for huge current earnings and enough jobs – the two essentials for the regional prosperity. Really Bihar is fortunate to have ample and various tourism potentials to boast of. The State owes its very name from “Vihara” – the Buddhist monastery – as this is the land from where the great religions of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism sprouted and spread all over the world. Hundreds of places are to-day thronged by tourists and pilgrims inflow from home and abroad. Likewise, natural beauty-sights or in the latest form, Eco-tourism are equally catching. Therefore, it has become imperative for Bihar to develop its tertiary industry – tourism with all priority and sincerities for its correction of all maladies.

Introduction

Tourism has become an essential factor for all-round development. The developed and developing nations have adopted tourism on priority basis simply because it develops a lucrative and self-sustaining socio-economic system. It earns money and enriches foreign exchange. It creates job opportunities and thus alleviates poverty. Countries like Costa Rica, Belize, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and several others have set their traditional economy on modern pattern through developing tourism as a measure of regional development (Kumari, 2002). Even the older countries like China, Egypt, India, Myanmar, Japan, Korea etc. have been developing their tourism heritages for their betterment. Moreover, the formations of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) justify the growing importance of tourism at global level to raise income and employment –

the two basic pre-requisites of any society. The United Nations Conferences on Trade and Development point out that tourism has become more sustainable and holds the status of the industry in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). As per the WTO statistics in 2001, about 700 million people travelled throughout the world as tourists and pilgrims and thus generated 4,494 billion dollars, contributed about 12 percent to the global GDP and employed 9.4 percent labour force (Rajuvedi, 2004). Similarly, in India, tourism has become the third important industry only after Cotton-textiles, and Diamond Jewellery as foreign exchange earner and employment giver (Sinha, 2001). It accounts for 5.6 per cent of the GDP, supports 5.8 per cent of the total employment and shares 10.8 percent of the total exports. During 2001-02, the country earned about 3000 million dollars when 2.6 million foreign tourists visited here. But this figure is not satisfactory when it is compared

with China's 65 million arrivals. Recently the Indian Government has taken the issue on priority raising its budget allocations from Rs. 595 Crore in the IX Plan to Rs. 2900 Crore for the Tenth Plan (2002-07). The above facts support that tourism plays an important role in the development of a region. Thus, the paper attempts to highlight that Bihar may also prosper through its tourism, if it is taken in right earnest to develop it as factors of prosperity.

Possessing an area of 94,163 Km² and a homogeneous population of above 8.28 million, Bihar holds a formidable position in the Indian Geopolitics. The State is caused to continue in a paradoxical situation, blessed with plenty of natural, human and histo-cultural heritages, is one of the most economically lagging states with low literacy, low industrialisation, low per capita income and minimal growth rate etc. all combined to cause the worst performance score as surveyed by the news magazine, India Today in 2004. The performance of all the 35 States/Union territories was judged on the basis of about 100 variables like Human Development Index (HDI) etc. Bihar stands out as the worst performer (India Today 2004). The situation has become more pathetic after the partition of the state – as Jharkhand from 2000. Here it is suggested that the state should take care of and cater for its heritage resources. Tourism can be used here as a boosting measure.

Indeed, Bihar is enough fortunate to have ample and various tourism potentials to boast of. The state owes its name from 'Viharas – the Buddhist shrines which are opulently found here. This is the birthplace of religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The region has its past glory when it has honour to be once the land of King Janak, Devi Sita, Lord Buddha and Mahavira and of the emperors like Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka the Great and others (Ram, 1991). Besides, natural beauty-sights are equally catching. Now it is the need of the hour to realise the importance of this tertiary industry, which is recognised today as the tool of the regional development.

However, this is an attempt to discuss the present status of tourism in Bihar. How much the sector has been helpful in providing earnings, employment and boosting the socio-economic conditions. All these have been tried to explain.

Besides, the geographical accounts of the tourist centers, their importance, their category etc have been highlighted. Moreover; the major constraints and their solutions have been suggested. The discussion has been based on the primary and secondary sources of information.

The review of literature points out that, though the topic is interesting but has not been dealt with broadly in the regional perspective. Very few attempts have been made in the local perspective of the particular centre 'Tourism Perspective in Bihar' is the only endeavour in a book form, which has given exposures of the social, cultural and economic facts of the state (Sinha, 1999). The book has been written by a non-geographer and hence emphasis has been laid on monumental and cultural aspects. The book lacks the geographical tint. Moreover, a number of research papers and related Ph.D. theses have been advanced. Mention may be made of Singhal (1972 and 2002), Pathak (1986), Pratap (2000 and 2002) Patel (2001), Singh (1990) Asghar (2002) and Kumari Geeta (2002). Here most of researches highlight the importance of tourism in the respect of Gaya and Bodh-Gaya the main tourist centres of the State. Definitely, Asghar has tried to present state level accounts of tourism as recreational resources. He has also proposed the planning for development of tourism in the state. A detailed account of tourism of the State in its truly geographical perspective still lacks, and hence this endeavour is an attempt towards it.

Tourism Resources of Bihar

Bihar possesses a wide range of resources of tourism. The State has very ancient, glorious history replete with heritages. Therefore, heritage and cultural tourism dominate the scenario. Moreover, natural beauties are equally in abundance and hence natural-beauty-sights/ Eco-tourism also provides better scope. Thus, on the basis of resource-potentials, tourism centres have been categorised broadly into four groups as shown in Table 1. A brief account is given to assess their importance.

I. Tourist Centres of International Importance

Bodh-Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali and Kesaria are today considered as the international level tourist centres. These centers are prominently facilitated from the countries of the Buddhist world

Table - 1
Tourism Category of Bihar: 2004-05

Sl.	Category	Status	Centers
1	Group A	International/National Level	Bodh-Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali and Kesaria.
2	Group B	National/ Regional Level	Gaya, Pawapuri, Patna, Maner, Sonapur, Buxar, Rohtas, Sasaram, Munger, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga etc.
3	Group C	Regional/Local Level	Lauria, Areraj, Rampurwa, Deo, Bhoire, Singheshwar Asthan, etc.
4	Group D	Natural-Spots &	Hills, Kakolath water fall, Centre of Eco-tourism Kabar Lake, Valmikinagar, Bhimbhandh, River Ganga etc.

and hence the centres receive a huge currency in the form of foreign exchange. Bodh-Gaya is among the largest centers only after New Delhi and Kolkata, which earns foreign exchange in the country. Actually the foreign tourists and pilgrims extend new dimension to these centres in the development of tourism in Bihar. A separate brief discussion will expose their tourism status.

Bodh-Gaya (30,883 persons) is a small urban centre located in the southern part of the South Ganga Plain Region of Bihar. The place is 12 kms. South of the Ancient Town of Gaya and is a abode of Buddhism where countless numbers of visitors come inflow to worship and meditate (Kumari, G. 2002). The Buddhists respect the centre as 'Holy of the holiest' (Rastrapal, 1992). It is also venerated as 'Navel of the Earth' (Dhammika, 1996). This is only because of the Old Shrine or Mahavihar as the Great Bodh-Gaya Temple, Bodhi-tree, and the Vajrashana – the three associated to Lord Buddha – the Exponent of Buddhism, are the main attracting features. Besides, a number of other features like the Lotus Tank full of verities of fishes and lotus flowers, Ancient Railings, The Great Statue of Lord Buddha (80 feet in height) in sitting and meditating posture and about two dozens of Viharas or Monasteries belonging to the different Buddhist nations (Japan, Korea, China, Thailand, Tibet, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam and others) etc. are the causes for pulls of visitors from far and wide. The centre had has been in name and fame since the time immemorial when the Prince of Nepal,

Siddhartha attained the Enlightenment or 'Gyan' and was transformed from a tiny village of Uruvela to Buddha-Gaya – "a Vibrant centre of Cultural opulence today" (Bodhipal, 1999). At present on the left bank of river Niranjana, the place has developed into a tourist town spreading over an area of about 20 kms with religious cum historico-monumental and architectural importance (Pratap, 1999). The Main Temple of Bodh-Gaya – the Focal Point of tourism has been enlisted recently into "the World Heritage Group" by the UNESCO in June 2002. It has given an impetus on the aspect of tourism in Bihar. About 82 thousand tourists from abroad and about 3 lakh tourists from the domestic areas visited during 2002-03 which was an upward trend from 2000-01.

Besides, a number of other local places around Bodh-Gaya have recently been added into the tourist fold. These places are linked with Lord Buddha. For example, Bakroure, a village on the eastern side of river Niranjana is coming as a 'Satellite Spot' of extension where the Tibetan Lamas are developing tourist facilities and are constructing a new temple of Lord Buddha and Sujata – a legendary local woman who served 'Khair' – a pious food to meditating Siddhartha and after that he achieved 'Bodh' and became the Great Master of the World. Very soon the Spot will come under the spanning urban folds of Bodh-Gaya (Pratap, 2002). Another point is of Dongeshwari – a recently developed hilly site about 25 Kms. in the north-east, apposite of River Phalgu from Bodh-

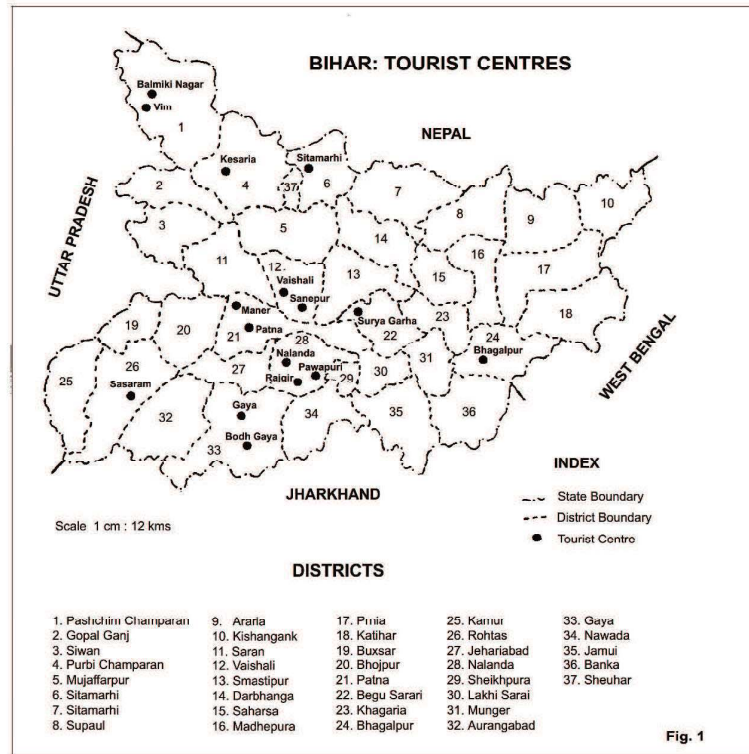


Fig. 1

Gaya. This is the place where several caves are and Lord Buddha was staying here during rainy seasons. It is also told that Lord Buddha highlighted his concept of “Madhyam Marg” – the Middle Path here. The Korean People have developed the centre as a place of mediation and education organized by the Joint Together Society (JTS). A Hospital named as ‘Jivak’ has been built to provide free medical aids to the local poor people. The spot is regularly visited by the foreign tourists. Moreover, the hills of Barabar, (45 kms. from Bodh-Gaya) the Jethians and Tapovan (60 kms) and the Gurpa etc. are also developed as Buddhist place and tourists coming to Bodh-Gaya must visit these hills. Thus, Bodh-Gaya creates an inner region of tourism which is very important from socio-economic point of view.

Rajgir (33,691 persons) is another centre of international tourism. It finds its location in the shadow of five hills, at a distance of about 70 kms. from Bodh-Gaya and 105 kms. from Patna. It is an ancient capital town of several kings like Bimbisar, Ajadshatru and others and it is also known as

‘Rajagrih’ – King’s Palace and is full of remnants of archeological values. Mythologically it is also called the place of King Jarasandh. Besides, the place is equally important and sacred for Hindus, Muslims, Sikh, Buddhists and Jains. Lord Buddha had visited the place time and again. The First World Buddhist Council was held here where ‘Tripitika’ – the holy book of Buddhism was completed. At present, Rajgir has turned into a resort of natural beauties having five hills covered by thick forests. The largest Viswa-Shanti Stupa established by Japanese Monks at Ratnagiri hill is the main attraction and is facilitated with electric Ropeway. The Venuban, the Virayatan (a Jain-faith Centre), the hot springs etc. are the other attractions for which thousands domestic and foreign tourists visit the place particularly during the winters. In the year 2002-03 more than 6 lakh visitors and pilgrims came to the place in which 70 thousands were foreigners.

Adjacent to Rajgir another centre, 7 kms. in the north lies Silao which is famous for its ‘Khaja’ – edible special bought and carried from here in the

different parts of the country as gift a item. The tourists passing by must purchase it and it has become a comfortable source of income to more than hundred families.

Nalanda, a small place of the day has a very glorious past where the ruins of the great ancient University, Nalanda – was founded by the Gupta emperors in the 5th AD. The place is directly linked by highway roads about 90 kms. from Patna and 12 kms. to the north from Rajgir. This world-famed site had been visited by thousands of tourists to have a glance of the ruined complex of Buddhist education system where at that time more than ten thousand students and above one thousand teachers were residing in the different monasteries. Foreign students mostly coming from Tibet, China, Burma, Japan were also admitted. The Chinese traveller, Hsuen Tsang lived here for a decade as a student and later as teacher also. The enormous pyramidal type *stupas* with beautiful sculpture are studded with small and big statues of the Lord Buddha in various poses. In the opposite of this, lies the building of the Archaeological Museum in which terra cotta jars of the first century stand intact. The other collection includes the images of Lord Buddha, copper plates, stone inscriptions, coins, potteries and samples of burnt rice etc. These items are belonging to the 12th century A.D. Nav Nalanda Mahavihar is a new educational institute, which imparts education of Buddhist Philosophy and Pali Literature. Hundreds of Buddhist monks from the North Eastern parts of India and also from abroad are being educated. The Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese take special interest. A new built up Hsuen Tsang Memorial Hall is very attractive. Besides, the place is blessed with a great lake and green trees, which gives a calm and quite surrounding.

Vaishali (186477 persons) is another locality of national and international repute. It is located about 60 kms. in the north from Patna across the river Ganga. The place is historical being the first capital of the powerful democratic republic of Lichchavis in the world. It is identified as the birthplace of Lord Mahavira, the 24th Trithankar of Jainism. Lord Buddha had visited the place thrice and had delivered discourses. He accepted Amrapali, the famous dancer of the time into his faith as the first woman. The 2nd Buddhist council

was also held here. The renowned Chinese travellers, Fa-hein and Hsuen Tsang visited the place in the early 5th and 7th AD respectively and have narrated about the rich culture. The Chaumukhi Mahadeva – the Statue of Lord Buddha, Peace Stupas I and II, the Museum, the Ashokan Pillar, the large Pagodas are the features of attractions. Recently, Vaishali has also developed Eco-tourism resources like river-streams, water tanks, wetlands and dense vegetative cover with a peaceful environment. (Ataullah, 2002)

Kesaria (22826 persons) is a block town today located in the south western part of Purbi-Champaran district and is about 45 kms. northwest of Vaishali. It is recently excavated site of archaeological value related to Buddhism. A large stupa has been surfaced which is larger than the Stupas of Vaisali. Lord Buddha while going to Kushinagar from Vaisali stayed here. Hsuen Tsang had also visited the place. The recently found *Stupa* is 35 meters in height and is the tallest in the world and is the main attraction of local and foreign tourists in large numbers though the centre is not very popular and is less facilitated by infrastructure.

The above mentioned centers are internationally known since these are associated with Buddhist heritage. Thousands of tourists and pilgrims visit mostly from Buddhist countries and tourism activities have developed. These provide good earnings in the form of foreign exchange and hence the State Government has tried to develop a route-circuit of all weather roads and is known as 'The Buddhist Circuit' or the 'Lotus circuit' (Pratap, 2002). The route starts from Bodh-Gaya to Rajgir, Nalanda, Biharsharif, Patna to Vaisali and Kesaria and again from Kesaria to Lumbini, Kushinagar, Sarnath, Varanasi and again back to Bodh-Gaya. The circuit is completed within six or seven days. But the circuit has yet to be fully developed with boarding and lodging facilities.

II. Tourist-Centres of National/Regional Importance

India is a country of various religions and people mostly on auspicious occasions and holidays prefer to visit the places of their favourite dities. Here Bihar is again one of the leading states where several places are religiously endowed with. Some places are historically more renowned and attract tourists. These places are located in different

parts of the state and deserve a brief discussion.

Gaya (353197 persons) is a sacred Hindu place believed to be Pre-Vedic City, among the oldest places of the world. The city is preferably known as the Vishnudham – the place of Lord Vishnu, where a magnificent Vishnupad Temple is located at the left bank of river Phalgu. The Temple is made of hard granitic stones in the special style with eight rows of beautifully sculptured pillars supporting the mandap. The Temple was renovated in 1787 by Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore. The footprint of Lord Vishnu in the Sanctum mesmerizes thousands of Hindu devotees every day. Moreover, the Pindadan or offering oblations to the departed soul of one's forefathers are essentially performed by lakhs of Hindus for a fortnight in September-October every year. For this four to five lakhs pilgrims arrive in the holy town and its surroundings (Banarjee 2000). Gaya has five hills namely Brahmyoni, Rmsila, Pretsila and other, which are holy and associated with religious feelings of Hindus. The river Phalgu is very pious and every visiting pilgrim must take bath to have final deliverance. Manglagori Temple is another point of devotion, where thousands of local people throng specially during Durgapuja for worshipping.

Pawapuri, a tiny sinless hamlet located about 35 kms in the southeast of Bihar Sharif town of Nalanda district is related to Lord Mahavira – the 24th Tirthankara who propounded Jainism. The Lord preached his last sermon and took 'nirvana' here. An impressive Jal-Mandir situated in the middle of a pious Tank full of water and lotus flowers is very attractive. The place is variably visited by thousands of tourists and several others.

Sultanganj in Bhagalpur district stands at the right bank of the River Ganga where lakhs of Hindus take holy baths and proceed to Deoghar, now in Jharkhand State to offer carrying Ganga-Jal on the Lord Shiva. Every year in the month of Sravana (August) this pious acts are performed by countless number of devotees from all over the country.

Patna (13,76,950 persons) is the capital and the largest urban city of the state, located at the bank of the Ganga River. It has its rich history and culture developed through a period of thousand years from 6th century BC to 6th century AD. Pataliputra, as the ancient named, had been the kingdom – capital of so many emperors like,

Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka the Great and several kings of Gupta and Pala dynasties. Being the old cultural site, the place has archaeological importance which attracts tourists throughout. Actually it holds a central position from where tourists visit to Gaya, Bodh-Gaya in the south, Nalanda, Rajgir and Pawapuri in the southeast, Vaishali and Kesaria in the northwest and Maner in the west. In this way it becomes a gateway for the Buddhist and Jain Pilgrims. The temples of two goddesses – Bardi and Chhoti Patandevi are worshipped by Patanaites and other people for peace and prosperity. Moreover, Patna Sahib is birth place of the 10th Guru, Sri Gobind Singh Jee, the preceptor of Sikh faith. A pious Harmandirjee, one of the holiest Sikh Shrines in India is located in the Chowk – area of the Old Patna City where thousands of Sikh people visit the place with religious fervor coming from Punjab, Delhi and other states. Likewise, Patna is full of Muslims architects, which are monumental heritages worthwhile to see. Besides, Agamkuan and Kumhrar are the ancient famed sites which are points of attraction. At Kumhrar, about 12 kms., from Patna Junction is an excavated locale where an important find is, the 80-pillered huge hall belonging to the Maurya dynasty. Moreover, Golghar, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, Patna-ki-Masjid, Patna Museum and Patna Biological Garden are the places of interest for tourists.

Sonepur (33389 persons) is a block level centre in Saran district located at the western side of the river Gandak. It has a holy temple of Lord Harihar Nath (Vishnu) where Hindus in large number congregate and take holy bath in the river on the day of Kartik Purnima. Here a large international level cattle fair is organised every year for a month and people with different purposes come from all over Asia.

Maner (26912 persons) is a block level rural centre located 29 kms. west from Patna is a tourist spot. The place has been named after Sufi Saint Maneri who lived during the 13th century. Bari Dargah, his cenotaph and the tomb of his disciple Shah Daulat are attracting monumental features, which attract thousands of tourists in general and Muslims in particular. A large pond full of water facilitates a picnic spot. It is also famous for its 'Ladoo' – a sweet item liked by all.

Buxar (82975 persons) is a pre-historic place important from tourism point of view. The locale is about 120 kms. from Patna and forms the western margin of the State. It finds a location at the meeting point of the river Ganga and the river Karmanasa. Buxar is historic also since several wars had been fought. Lord Rama killed Taraka – a lady monster during pre-historic time. In 1539 Shershah defeated Humyun in Chausa near Buxar. Moreover, the British forces and the joint armies of Mr Qusim and other Indian Nationals fought and Indians were defeated in 1924 at Buxar. Its site at Ganga makes the place interesting to visit. Really it is pity that the place with such historical events in past is completely neglected.

Sasaram ((131042 persons), the district headquarters of Rohtas is located on the National Highway No. 2 (Old G.T. road) and forms a nodal locations from all-round. It is about 120 kms in the southwest from Patna and had been a centre of Afghans. The town is important from tourism points since it has the famous tomb of Shershah in the side of a large pond full of water. Moreover, another centre of historic importance is Rohtasgarh, about 25 kms south where an ancient fort on Kaimur hills is worth to see.

Deo is another small place in Aurangabad district, which is famous for the Temple of Lord Surya (The Sun God). Lakhs of devotees visit twice in a year and perform the worship.

In the extreme east Munger and Bhagalpur are other centers, which have features of tourism. Vikramshila, the ancient seat of learning is popularly known through out the State. It is located about 40 kms. southeast of Bhagalpur where ruins of the ancient Buddhist Viharas are found.

Moreover, Munger at the south bank of the river Ganga is an interesting place where the Fort of Mir Quasim still narrates its historical glory. Similarly, Darbhanga in the North Bihar is a place of tourism. A fort, several important palatial buildings made by Darbhanga Naresh, several temples of Hindu gods and goddesses and more than dozens of ponds are pleasantries to attract the visitors.

III. Tourist-centres of Regional/Local Importance

It is a happy trend that local people are also on move to visit locally important places during the free time. Such places are generally historico-cultural. Again, religious centres are also playing

an important role in boosting of local tours. The Ashokan Pillars at Vaishali, Lauriya, Areraj and Rampurva are the major attractions of local and regional people. Sometime, these attract people even from far-flung areas. Likewise, Borey in Gopalganj district where a temple of goddess Durga, pulls the crowds of devotees in thousands on every Tuesday and Sunday. Singheshwar-asthan in Madhepura is a sacred Hindu place of Lord Shiva where an annual fair for a week is held and people thronged from distant places. Similarly Aami – a tiny place on the north of the river Ganga between Dighwara and Chapra pulls crowd during Dashahara festivals where goddess Durga's temple is established. People pay homage and worship for their betterment. Bhartiharwa in the eastern part of Champaran district is a place of national importance from where Mahatma Gandhi started his movement against the Britishers. Though the centre is in neglected form, yet, the nationalists prefer to visit the place and hence important one. Again the ancient rock cut caves at Barabar Hills in Gaya district are notable since the outstanding monuments of archaeological interest belonging to Buddhism. These attract tourists from the country and abroad. Such a place provides economic incentives to the local people for earning their livelihood.

IV. Natural Spots and Centres of Eco-tourism

The State is equally important from eco-tourism spots. After the bifurcation of the State the major natural beauty sights indeed have gone to Jharkhand, but still many falls within the state and need to be developed. A brief account of each is essential to highlight their tourist importance:

(a) **The Hills:** The present state has several hills, which are geologically known as 'outliers' and these break the monotony, standing in the midst of vast riverine plains. Among these the Kaimur Hills, the Gaya Hills, the Jethans, the Rajgir Hills, the Kharagpur Hills (Munger) and the Mandar Hills (Bhagalpur) are important. These hills are now developed as tourist spots due to their natural beauty and associated religious temples and caves. For example, the Guptadham Cave located in the central Kaimur Plateau is a rare sight. It is about 22 kms. from Sasaram and 10 kms. from Chenari Block of Rohtas district. The Cave is about

100 meters inside the hills where a hall like place opens and the idols of Lord Shiva is established. The spot is religiously important and is visited by lakhs of pilgrims especially during the Mahashivaratri and Sharvani festivals. Besides, the cave is divided into several channels full of depositional features of limestone like stalactites, stalagmites, cave-pillars etc., which are attracting for geomorphologists in particular. The sight may be developed on better scale to encourage tourism on the national level.

The hills of Gaya (Barabar, Dongeshwari, Brahmyoni, Ramshila, Pretsila etc.), Jethians and Rajgir are closely associated with Buddhism. Lord Budha visited these hills and hence these are venerated sights where thousands of tourists and pilgrims visit every day. Moreover, these hills are equally important for Hindus where several temples have been built mostly on top and devotees visit the spots for paying obeisance. Similarly, the hills of Kharagpur and Mandar have also religious importance especially for Hindus who visit in good numbers on religious occasions.

- (b) **The Sight of Kakolath Water Fall:** This is a wonderful and the only natural waterfall site of the State at present. It is located in the Gobindpur block of Nawada district, about 130 kms from Patna and 32 kms. from Nawada town. The smaller rivers descending from Hazaribag Plateau meet at the Ektara Hills and fall through Losdand Hills from a height of 52 meters. The fall has carved out a large ditch, which has developed into a small lake. The water is very cold and provides immense pleasure and freshness to the persons who visit and take bath in during the hot seasons. It is believed that the water of fall possesses medicinal qualities since it flows through the herb filled forests. The period extending from March to June is supposed to be the best time to visit this spot. On the occasion of the Maker Sankranti (14th January) a large fair (Mela) of the local people is organised every year for a week. The place gives picturesque landforms of 'spur' and 'valley' full of forests. The abrupt rise of hills from plain forms the escarpment and through valley side hundreds of steps

have been carved out to approach the waterfall point. The spot is getting popular as a picnic spot where thousands of people congregate, prepare foods, take bath and enjoy the gift of the nature. The place is still waiting for the governments attention for its better development as eco-tourism centre.

- (c) **The Kabar Lake – a Bird-Sanctuary:** The Kabar Lake lies in Chria Bariyarpur and Bakhri blocks of Begusarai district. It is an important wetland, which covers an area of about 60 km² and gives a panoramic view of ever expanding water body. The depth of lake varies from 3 to 6 metres where thousands of seasonal migratory birds of different varieties come from Siberia, Eastern Europe and Uzbekistan and stay here for three months upto March. This site has abundant potentials to develop as a tourist resort. Similarly, the Sarotar Jheel (Lake) in the river Gandak catchment area of Purbi Champaran can be developed into an attractive tourist spot of eco-tourism. This is a potential site, which needs an immediate attention for development.
- (d) **Valmikinagar:** At the foothills of Someshwar (Himalaya) it is located in the northern most part of the Paschmi Champaran on the river Triveni. There is a dam on the river, which adds scenic beauty in the midst of dense forests. It has been developed as a 'Tiger Reserve'. The wonderful wild life sanctuary spreads over an area of 461 km² and this has been declared as the National Park since 1989. Tiger, spotted deer, other wild animals, gharial and large varieties of water birds are the main attractions. But unfortunately the site has been totally neglected as a tourist spot.
- (e) **Bhimbandh – the Doon Valley of Bihar:** Bhimbandh, about 40 kms. from Munger is very reminiscent of the Doon Valley of Uttranchal and has immense potential to develop as a sight of eco-tourism. The spot is famous for its hot springs and wild life sanctuary. The water of spring is boiling at some points while it is quite normal for bathing at another place. The area is hilly and full of thick forests. The wild life sanctuary is spread over 681.99 Km² and one can see tigers, panthers, spotted deer, barking deer, nilgai, wild

boar etc. Bhimbandh is so beautiful that unless one visits the place one cannot realise its importance (Sinha 1999). But this place is again not advantageous as tourist-centre due to the apathy of the state and the central governments.

(f) The River Ganga, a great potential of tourism:

Bihar is definitely fortunate to have a source of perennial water channel in the form of river Ganga which traverses the state almost from the middle part. The river provides not only potable water to the people of the region but enriches agricultural activities also. The lakhs of people mostly from the southern Indian states assemble, take holy baths in the river and spiritually purify themselves particularly on the auspicious festivals of Kartik Purnima, Makar Sankranti, Chhatt Puja etc. Buxar, Munger, Patna, Sultanganj, Bhagalpur are the places of Ganga Ghats meant for. The river can be used in better way on the Pattern of Mekong River of Bangkok (Thailand) as the most developed tourist-artery for the better socio-economic perspectives. Other rivers of the region may also be adopted for harnessing the natural tourism. The State Government and the people have to take initiatives if they want to develop their socio-economic status.

The above discussion has highlighted the tourism potentials of the state. Rich history with high monumental heritages, sacred places of archaeological importance, great temples of ancient landmarks have provided a rich-base of tourism. Moreover, the nature has also blessed the region with beauty and scenic spots. But the potentials are partially utilized. The places of archaeological importance and cultural aspects are marked where tourism has been playing a role of socio-economic upliftment with half hearted attempts. Natural tourism is almost in its initial state without showing any impact on socio-economic aspect.

After 1984, the State Government realised the importance of tourism and started developmental attempts through Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation (BSTDC). Again visualizing the huge potentials of tourism as a source of income and employment, the tourism was granted a status of 'Industry' in 1987. Since then this sector of economy

has witnessed a remarkable progress, which can be shown through the table 2.

The above data show the better trends of development of the sector. But when these data are compared with other Indian States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, UP, MP, and Orissa in totality it gives a gloomy picture. For example, about 58.6 lakh tourists visited Kerala during 2001. Likewise Andhra Pradesh was allocated about Rs. 42.0 crore during the IX Plan. The State of Uttar Pradesh earned above Rs. 136 crore in 2001. Even Orissa earned the thrice of earning of Bihar through tourism in the year 2002. The dwindling figure of tourists, lesser earnings and employment, all present a shabby picture. It needs an immediate correction for allround betterment of the state.

The state Government has taken recently some important measures to improve the tourism activities for better income and employment. The annual celebration of cultural programmes like Bodh-Mahotsava, Rajgir Mahotsava, Vaisali, Anga, Kosi, Dev and other Mahotsavas at the popular tourist venues have been organised to encourage the inflow of arrivals from home and abroad. Moreover, daily deluxe bus survives have been started from Hotel Kautilya Vihar, Patna to Ranchi, Bodh-Gaya and others to facilitate the visitors to destinations with comforts. Again with the help of Japan, a 'Buddhist circuit' road-route – connecting all the important Buddhist centres has been developed. Besides, the BSTDC has started building up hotels, motels, cafeterias and rest houses with all modern amenities for alluring the tourists. Bodh-Gaya has been given "The World Heritage Site" and since then it has been selected as the "Pilgrim Tour" to promote the place as an international tourist destination (The Hindu, 2004). The Railways has started new trains, i.e. The Gaya-New Delhi Mahabodhi Express (Daily), Dhikshabhoomi Express from Gaya to Nagpur (Weekly), Buddha Purnima Express (Weekly) from Rajgir to Varanasi via Patna, Gaya, to boost up the tourists inflow. Moreover, Gaya has been facilitated with the International Airport to encourage the incomings of visitors. Definitely all these measures have given an impetus on the development of tourism economy of the State.

TABLE – 2
STATISTICS RELATED TO TOURISM IN BIHAR

A – Total Arrivals of Pilgrims and Tourists (in Lakh)					
Sr.	Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total	
1	1985-86	5.5	2.8	8.3	} Including Jharkhand
2	1995-96	14.4	2.11	16.51	
3	2000-01	10.6	1.4	12.0	} Separated Bihar
4	2003-04	12.1	1.5	13.6	
B – Important Tourist Centres with Visitors in 2002-03.					
1	Bodh-Gaya & Gaya		5.60	0.75	6.35
2	Rajgir		6.03	0.25	6.28
3	Nalanda		2.12	0.16	2.28
4	Vaishali		0.90	0.13	1.03
C – Employments Provided by Tourism					
1	1985-86			1.9 lakhs	
2	1995-96			2.7 lakhs	
3	2000-01			4.1 lakhs	
4	2003-04			5.3 lakhs	
D – Allocation of Funds, Plan-wise on Tourism in Bihar from the VIth Plan					
1	VI Plan (1980-85)			1.6 Crore	
2	VII Plan (1985-90)			7.0 Crore	
3	1990-95 Annual			Not marked	
4	VIII Plan (1992-97)			8.3 Crore	
5	IX Plan (1997-2002)			12.0 Crore	
6	X Plan (2002-2007)			26.0 Crore	
E – Earnings from Tourism (in Rs. Crore)					
1			1985-86	05.7	
2			1995-96	17.3	
3			2000-01	28.0	
4			2003-04	36.2	

Source:- Collected from different sources by the author.

Major Constraints and Planning Suggested for development

In spite of several incentives taken by the State Government, the expected tourist incoming has not been achieved. This is simply because of certain constraints, which are prevalent and have actually gagged the very growth of tourism. First of all, the availability of poor infrastructure is the main cause. Tourism is a tertiary industry (Thimmaich, 1978), which requires better and developed infrastructure. Bihar is badly lagging here with only 120 kms. of roads per lakh of population is far below of the national average of 212 kms. (Pratap, 2000). Roads are by an large in dilapidated condition throughout including the tourist destinations of international level. For example, the road between Gaya and Rajgir via Hisua till recently was in such a worst condition that merely a distance of 70 kms. was taking 5 hours journey. The road from Fatehpur to Kakolath waterfall is hardly of 16 kms. and it takes more than two hours. Again a distance from Sasaram to Guptadham Cave is about 22 kms. and it takes three hours of journey. Similar is the case with rail journey. Generally trains passing through the region are over crowded, delayed and meeting with eventualities like robberies, looting and even killings. Naturally this gives an adverse impact on and tourists avoid coming to the state.

Moreover, above all the state is defamed from law and order point of view. Loots, arsons, abductions, killing, snatching etc. are very common practices. Foreign tourists are targeted. A Taiwan owned tourist bus was looted in between Nawada and Gaya on the 13th October 1996 in the evening in which one tourist was killed several others injured. Again another Thailand tourist bus was looted on the 23rd March 1997. The occurrence of such unfortunate incidents adversely affects the touristic activities of the State.

Again, it is really very disgraceful to know that the almost all natural hilly spots meant for eco-tourism are occupied by naxalites who kidnap and harass tourist group. The Guptadham of Rohtas plateau, the Kakolath Water fall point, the Barabar and Jethian hills, the Valmikinagar area, all are affected by radical activities and hence tourism is marred with.

The hotels, motels, restaurants etc. are not adequate in numbers and are not even up to standard leveled. Poor accommodation, dirty foods, polluted water supply, unhygienic conditions, irregular power supply, bad transportation system etc. necessarily deteriorate the inflow of tourists.

The region fails to market its local heritage products. The Madhubani Painting – the world famous items are rarely in sale. The local art and craft products are not properly propagated. The wooden and stone made idols of Lord Buddha and the replica of the Great Temple of Bodh-Gaya, malas, photos, foot-prints, leaves of Bodhi-tree etc. are in good sale. But the exorbitant rates, cheating tactics, befooling of tourist etc. are caused of annoyance of the tourists. The beggars' menace is acute at the tourist-places. The non-availability of educated and genuine guides is another factor, which restricts the progress of tourism. Thus, the poor people, lack of capital and charged environment with social tensions are other hurdles, which hinder tourism development and affect socio-economic system.

The above-discussed problems have to be taken on priority. Development of infrastructure is a must, which includes better hotels, motels, cafeteria, avenues of entertainment and shopping etc. Bihar possesses mostly religious places where pilgrims come only for a few hours. Even foreign pilgrims come in hired buses and taxis from Patna and Banaras and after spending few hours they return immediately. This trend must be changed. For this, places must be facilitated with better stay services. Programmes for entertainments, music and drama, cultural show, light and sound facilities be made available so that the tourists must stay for more and more days. Besides, service agencies like tour-operators, tourist guides and well-trained people are involved to take care of visiting persons. Brokers, cheats, beggars, thief etc. have to be avoided. Security and tourism are highly correlated. Security measures have to be extended up to the extent of tourists' satisfaction. The local people should come forward to help the visitors with all sincerity in good manners to boost up incoming of the tourists.

Lastly, Bihar has been deprived of the basic industries after the creation of Jharkhand. Therefore, tourism has to be developed like

industries with all attempts for better income and employment. The government and the people have to come with determined missions to tap and tackle its unbounded and everlasting resources of tourism. The central Government be taken into confidence for development of tourism as a special package programme. Besides, the J.J. Irani and recently recommended, the Chandra Committees Reports must be implemented for connecting Buddhist sites with good roads on the lines of the Golden Quadrilateral Project.

Conclusion

The above discussions justify that the State of Bihar is a region of paradoxes. This is a region full of resources – natural and cultural heritages both. The cultural heritages are exposed in the form of monumental, archeological and religious centres, which are enough to provide and sustain the socio-economic system in a better way. Similarly, the natural heritages need to be developed for the scoring of better socio-economy status. But the region is today plagued with several maladies. These maladies are basically concerned with the people of the region. The socio-political system has been paralysed. The poor infrastructure, the ailing and closing of existing industries, the lack of capital generation incentives, poor people with poor markets, and deteriorating law and order situation, all have resulted poor economy. The bifurcation of the State has further precipitated and perpetuated the situation otherwise. Now it needs to start with new vigor. The people of Bihar are known as hard working second to none. Bihar requires a new vision to day to stand with its heritages. Tourism has been taken as industry. The government has realised the importance to this sector and hence it has proposed several incentives. The tourism provides above 5 lakhs direct employment of educated, non-educated and women. It has earned above 36 crore current money. Thus this sector must be taken on priority basis to care of and cater for the both heritages – natural and cultural. The existing constraints on the part of government and the people have to be corrected. The law and order has to be improved since security and tourism go hand in hand. The problems of naxalism be solved with better understanding and mutual cooperation to

live and let other live. The people of Bihar have their glorious past, they have to understand it and have to create and formulate a present Bihar with vibrant economy of tourism. Unless and until, the mission of development is taken through tourism as favourable industry, the region would continue in destitute inspite of potentials.

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