

# **TOURISM INDUSTRY IN (INDEPENDENT) INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** India is a centre of two ancient civilizations of the world called the Indus valley civilization, and the Aryan civilization. Tourism development in India started in the early sixties. By that time most of the other countries have achieved a remarkable progress in this area and has exploited to maximum possible extent. The best way to introduce India as a tourist destination to foreigners is that 'India is a country of all seasons and all reasons'. India's tourism resources have always been considered immense. The geographical features are diverse, colorful and varied. As such the resource potential is so much that it can cater to all kinds and tastes of tourists. The history of tourism is therefore as old as the civilization of our country and the diversity in cultural heritage of India has a lot of attractions. Its historical monuments, archaeological wealth and relics are spread all over the country. Therefore, people of various countries come to India every year to see innumerable attractive spots, natural surroundings and historical sites and architectural masterpieces, paintings, gardens, and places of pilgrimage make it a tourist paradise. It incorporates a variety of cultural forms, including museums, galleries, festivals, historical sites, artistic performances and heritage sites, as well as any experience that brings one culture in contact with another for the specific purpose in a touring situation. Though India had attained very great reputation as a tourist centre during medieval periods but planned efforts to systematize the process and growth of the tourism industry were made only during the modern period by the English. In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the history of the tourist industry in India and its development up till the very recent times.

## **Introduction:**

**Tourism in India Before Independence:** Tourism of India thrives therefore on the history of a country. India a centre of two ancient civilizations of the world, the Indus valley civilization and the Aryan civilization has an ancient tradition of tourism. It existed as an industry in the informal sector in ancient times and was indulged in by all classes of people.

The history of tourism developed mainly through indirect sources in the early period. In India, in the early days of agricultural abundance, export of cash crops created an important trade link. Manufacture of iron-ore into steel for weaponry was another important item of trade by the later Vedic period. Tools and textiles were other renowned Indian products. Contemporary Greek and Hebrew scholars have noted the wonder of India and her fabled wealth. Owing to the predominance of trade routes over – land crossing between Asia and Europe, trade tours were an important development in this period.

In the early days, pilgrimage or pilgrim travel assumed great importance. Ashoka the great, travelled a great deal in his eagerness to spread the doctrines of Buddha. Throughout his travels, from Pataliputra to Lumbini on to Kapilavastu and Sarnath and finally to Gaya, Emperor Ashoka had special memorials set up at each spot and also rest houses where travellers could rest. Trees were planted along the road sides so that the traveller would be protected from the harsh sun shine. Harsha was another great emperor who gently influenced by the Buddhist scriptures, built institutions and Dharamsalas for the travellers. Rest houses were built in towns and villages. A number of monasteries were also built for the pilgrims. This shows that travel facilities were much improved and travel was not a cumbersome experience.

Brahmin villages evolved into centres of learning attracting scholars. At this time the Buddhist Sangha established the tradition of pilgrimage, when monks went from village to village and court preaching the value of the middle-path. Rest houses were provided for the travellers. Monasteries also attracted the

monks, middlemen and laymen.

The Arthashastra reflects the protection given to merchants and their high status in the Indian society. Insurance and safe passage for goods, regulation of prices, weights and measures and the use of gold, silver and copper as rates of exchange also indicate a well developed mode of trade and travel.

Some of the first foreigners to visit India, were perhaps the Persians. There is much evidence of caravans of Persians visiting India, in the inscriptions dating to the reign of the Persian King Darius. There is also reference to trade, commerce and cultural exchanges between Persia and India. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, Persian customs have been practiced in the courts. Hieun-tsang, a devout Chinese Buddhist journeyed to India in 633 AD, his journey to India was hard and perilous. His mission was to collect and translate ancient Buddhist scriptures. Several expeditions crossed from Greece via Persia or Mesopotamia to India. Greek accounts reveal that in India, chariot roads were well laid out and horses, elephants and camels were a common mode of transport. Trees for shade, wells, rest houses and security were also well organised.

One of the most important developments of this era owing to the emergence of trade and commerce, was the emergence of communication and accommodation. When Alexander the Great reached India, it is said that he found good roads which were well maintained covered with shady trees. Marco Polo was another great traveller who in the 13<sup>th</sup> century passed through India on his way back from China. All travellers were much interested in seeing India and her fabled riches for themselves. This proves that India was a rich and prosperous country in those days.

The Arthashastra also reveals the importance of the travel infrastructure for the state, classification of routes and types of vehicles. This is an indication that there was a well developed mode of travel in India for the military, the commercial traveller and the civilian. Travel on inland waterways was also under state protection and regulation.

In cities, bazaars provided access to goods brought from the hinterland. Travellers were accommodated in overnight places of stay, known as serais at the city gates where all services were provided to them. State regulations insisted on travellers carrying with them a note for safe passage from one territory to the other. Entertainment and dancing halls were allowed, gambling was licensed and was a source of income for the state.

Travelling for pleasure on the rivers and to the hills was a tradition started by the royal courts. However such movement attracted all those who had business at the court to move with it from the heat and dust of the cities to the calm and serenity of the retreat. During the rule of the Mughals, the emperors travelled extensively and contributed towards resort development. Even today the remains of the past like the mile stones, sarais and a network of roads and paths that make all corners of this vast country accessible. With the fall of the great empires, there was a set back in trade and commerce. This reduced the mobility of the people with the exception of pilgrims. The sea side resorts hill stations and spas which were the centres of recreation and pleasure were hardly ever used by the early medieval period. Over the years, however the scenario changed and a complex character of tourism emerged. The growth of modern technology, rising incomes and improved facilities contributed to the emergence of modern tourism.

**Tourism in India on the Eve of Independence:** It cannot be isolated from history especially in a country like India whose cultural heritage has a wealth of attractions. Besides its cultural heritage, India is noted for its natural surroundings, the architectural masterpieces, paintings, music, dance, customs, mountains, valleys, beaches and rivers. All these go to make India a tourist paradise. Though India had attained very great reputation as a tourist centre during the days of the early Maharajas of various dynasties, planned efforts were to systematize the process of growth of the tourism industry were made only by the English men towards the close of their reign. They made organised efforts towards the promotion of tourism in 1945. To start with they set up a high power Committee under the

Chairmanship of Sir John Sargent, the then Educational Advisor to the Government of India, to study the problems of tourist traffic in the country.

The Committee observed that the question of promoting and developing tourist traffic was a matter of great national importance and therefore, it deserved the attention of an organization which should take initiative in such matters as: i) Publicity, both in India and abroad. ii ) Production of suitable literature such as guides books, folders, posters and the like. iii ) Provision for training of guides. iv) Liaison with the travel agencies which would necessarily remain responsible for the detailed arrangements of tourists. v) Liaison with hotels and catering establishments. vi) Collection of tourist statistics. vii) Co-ordination with air and train services with a view to facilitate both air and train journey and to make it comfortable in India. viii) Provision of a chain of firstclass hotels of international standard for the convenience and comfort of foreign tourists. ix) Starting of publicity bureaus in London and New York and in the capitals of other countries from where substantial number of tourists might be forthcoming. The recommendations of the committee had far reaching effects on tourism during the subsequent years. They formed the guidelines for the establishment of tourist organization in the country soon after independence. On the eve of independence, India had a fairly large infrastructure, available for tourism. There was a large network of all types of hotels catering to the needs of both foreigners as well as Indians. There was adequate transport and communication systems operating in the country. Almost all the major tourist centres were easily accessible by rail or by road, or even by air. The country's many airports were in a position to receive international carriers. However, in the absence of a central tourist organisation there was no coordination between the various services. Tourism in India developed properly only after a central tourist organisation was set up as a result of the recommendation of the Sargent Committee. It was only after the creation of a separate Tourist Traffic Branch in the year 1949 that sufficient attention was paid to the development of tourist traffic in India. As a follow up to the Sargent Committee an ad-hoc Tourist Traffic Committee was appointed in the year 1948. This committee was entrusted with the job of suggesting ways and means of promoting tourist traffic in India. A separate Tourist Traffic Branch was set up in the Ministry of Transport in the year 1949 with the main objective of development of tourist traffic in India. With the increase in its activities the Tourist Traffic Division expanded considerably and during the year 1955-56, its Headquarters, could be established and assign each one of the wide ranging duties and responsibilities. The sections these four branches were called upon to take up were, i) Tourist Traffic Section ii) Tourist Administration Section iii) Tourist Publicity Section and iv) Distribution Section.

**Tourism in India After Independence:** Indian tourism industry has recorded a phenomenal growth especially from 1990s in terms of both international and domestic tourists arrivals. The ministry of Indian tourism has launched a new programme called 'Athithi Devo Bhava' which means guest is god. The inspiration behind this expression is to respect because; respect has always been an essential part of Indian soul. Tourism, which is the third largest foreign exchange earner in India, has started gaining prominence to the public agenda only in recent years. Many countries in the world are relying on tourism as one of the fastest growing sectors. In the Chief Ministers' conference held on October 2001 the Prime Minister of India, Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had stated that "Tourism is a major phenomenon of economic growth in major parts of the world."

The Rail network in India placed the needs for recreation within the reach of an increasingly large number of people who had leisure time and the means to enjoy it. Air India came into existence with the enactment of Air Corporations Act on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1963, when the entire air transport industry in India was nationalised. At the time of nationalisation, Air India operated four weekly flights on the India/UK route and three flights fortnightly on the India/Nairobi route. Today, it has an extended network of air routes linking all the five continents of the globe. Air India organises special programmes to give a wide publicity for projecting India. Soon, Indian Airlines began, with a view to establishing an air transport network to link the remotest places in India. Today, Indian Airlines has expanded its wings to nearby countries as well. They have introduced many schemes and offers like the Discover India package. Leave Travel Concessions encouraged domestic tourism. Concessions for the youth and students also promoted travel within the country.

In the early 1960's The ITDC (India Tourism Development Corporation) was started to provide western comforts to International visitors. The ITDC played a major role as a catalyst in developing a modern superstructure (eg, The Ashoka group of hotels) for International tourists. The government set up infrastructure to promote tourism by establishing Air India and tourism promotion offices in London and Frankfurt. The tourism cell in the Ministry of Aviation was upgraded into a department. The private sector was invited to establish luxury facilities for the high spending tourist. The first pioneer in this field was Mohan Singh Oberoi, who began his career in the hotel business with the Clarks Hotel in Shimla and the Grand Hotel in Calcutta.

**Progress of Tourism in India through Five Year Plans:** Although India had a good amount of tourism activity when it became independent over 50 years ago, tourism as a subject did not figure in the Constitution of India, except that some of its components were mentioned in the central or state lists. There was also no allocation for tourism development during the First Five Year Plan. However, during the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) tourism became a constituent of the Planning process with a token allocation of Rs.3.36 crores for both Central and State sectors put together. The development approach during the second plan was mainly on creating isolated facilities in important tourist centres. The Third Plan witnessed the beginning of an era for the development of activities connected with tourism, particularly adventure tourism, by the establishment of a winter sports complex at Gulmarg in Kashmir. The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was set up in 1966 to develop tourism infrastructure and promote India as a tourist destination.

The approach during the Fourth and Fifth Plan was expansion and improvement of tourist facilities with a view to promote 'Destination traffic' as distinct from transit traffic. Integrated development of selected tourist centres like Kovalam, Gulmarg, Goa, Kullu-Manali etc., received much attention and became the symbolic models of resort tourism in India. Cultural Tourism was emphasised with development of Buddhist Centres and heritage monuments in India through master plans.

The Sixth Plan (1980-85) was a major landmark in the history of Indian Tourism. The first ever 'Tourism Policy' of the country was announced during 1982 which specified the development objectives and provided an action plan based on 'Travel Circuit' concept to maximise the benefits of tourism.

The development of tourism was stated as a plan objective during the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) and the sector was accorded the status of an industry. It thus became the watershed plan for Indian tourism. The National Committee on Tourism set up by the Govt. in 1986 to evaluate the economic and social relevance of tourism in India and to draw up a long measure for ensuring accelerated growth of tourism. On the basis of these recommendations a package of incentives were made available for tourism industries and the Tourism Finance Corporation of India (T.F.C.I) was set up to finance tourism projects.

"The development Plan for tourism during the Eighth Plan (1992-97) was based on the National Action Plan for tourism" presented in the Parliament on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1992. It proposed to achieve diversification of tourism product, accelerated growth of tourism infrastructure, effective marketing and promotional efforts in the overseas markets and removal of all impediments to tourism. A major component of the Action Plan was the development of all inclusive 'Special Tourism Areas' and intensive development of selected circuits. The Action Plan did not specify the infrastructural requirements and the investments needed to meet the targets and source of funding for the same. 'The Tourism Synergy Programme' enlisting the activities and infrastructure components to be provided by various agencies including the private sector and State Governments was thus prepared in 1993. It was further modified and converted into a 'National Strategy for the Development of Tourism' during 1996. The documents were aimed at achieving greater realisation of the importance of tourism, a consensus on the developmental needs, positive contribution of all the infrastructural departments on a coordinated manner, high plan allocations and introduction of new schemes for accelerated development of tourism.

The Department of Tourism also constituted special Task Force for the promotion of Schemes/projects

for the development of Tourism in the North Eastern States, Sikkim, J& K, Arunachal Pradesh and Hill districts of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, Senior Officers of the Department along with representatives of respective State Governments and industry visited these areas and action plans for North Eastern States, Jammu & Kashmir were prepared. In order to give boost to foreign exchange earnings, employment and income generation through tourism activities, Expert House status was granted to tourism units in the Ninth Five Year Plan. Govt. also called for effective coordination of Public & Private efforts so as to achieve synergy in the development of tourism in India. in developing tourism, it was to be ensured that the sites are conserved and the environment is not degraded.

#### **Major Thrust Areas in the Ninth Plan Included:**

- Development of selected tourist places/areas for integrated infrastructure development. Since most of the infrastructural components and delivery systems are with in the purview of the State Governments or Private sector the infrastructure for tourism is mainly to be developed by providing financial assistance to State Govts./Union Territories and by providing various incentives to private entrepreneurs.
- Product Development – Diversification of tourism to include holiday and leisure tourism. India has an image which identifies the country as only a cultural tourist destination. But hardly a serious attempt has been made to present its diverse attractions nor developed properly to bring it to tourists acceptable standard. A conscious policy has adopted for the diversification and improvement of tourism product of India including cultural tourist attractions. These included :
  - a) Promotion of festivals and fairs, rural craft melas etc. ;
  - b) Refurbishment of monuments and Heritage buildings;
  - c) Flood lighting and Sound & Light Shows ;
  - d) Development of pilgrim centres;
  - e) Development of specific circuits through external aid;
  - f) Exploring new source markets in regions and countries having cultural affinity;
  - g) Launching of national image building and marketing plans in Key markets;
  - h) Providing inexpensive accommodation in different tourist centres;
  - i) improving service efficiency in public sector corporation.
- Human Resource Development – Human resource development to meet the needs of tourism industries is a major responsibility of the central govt. It was decided to be achieved through the services of :
  - a) National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology;
  - b) Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management;
  - c) Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering;
  - d) National Institute of Water Sports Goa ;
  - e) Guide Training Courses; f) Training of Trainees in collaboration with Department of Personnel & Training. All such training will provide updated knowledge about emerging trends in the tourism field about its various segments and improved in the efficiency of the service providers.

**Promotion and Marketing:** India is a multi-destination country with a variety of tourist attractions and facilities. It, however, suffers from the problems of economic under development including inadequate basic infrastructure, lack of hygiene, cleanliness in public places etc., on the other hand there is fierce competition in tourist generating market from several nations for attracting a large share of the traffic to their countries. Thus special emphasise was put to strengthen its promotional and marketing efforts to maintain its existing market share as also to penetrate into new markets like Korea, South Africa, Israel, C.I.S Countries. Steps were taken to under take Market Research and marketing segmentation analysis. The publicity efforts of the overseas field offices are to be supplemented and integrated with the efforts of Indian Missions and other agencies abroad. Air India, Indian Airlines sales offices abroad also to supplement the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism.

The specific elements of promotional efforts abroad to include:

- a) Advertising; b) Printing of brochure in local languages; c) Brochure support; d) Joint advertising with Tour Operators/Travel Agents; e) Promotion of Charters; f) Production of promotional aids; g) Multi-

vision presentations; h) Festival of India; i) Production of films and audio-visuals in local languages; j) Trade Posters; k) Active P.R; l) Seminars/Tourism Talk Shows; m) direct mail and correspondence; n) Participation in Tourism Trade Fairs; o) Media Relations and Hospitality programme; p) Continuous Market Research and analysis; q) Road shows at strategic centres; r) Regional Promotions with State Tourism delegations; s) Special thematic promotions – Ayurveda, MICE etc.

**Coordination:** Tourism compresses the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for a not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. These persons invariably seek a pleasant and delectable experience on their trips. The most desired tourism product should be:

- an environment of peace and friendly
- an assurance of safety and security
- an affordable host society
- our industry and a govt. that provide the requisite services with a smile
- absence of extortion and hostility
- accessible tourist attractions
- an integrated system of physical infrastructure that does not fail. These include – a) international seat capacity; b) internal transport system; c) hotel & restaurants; d) entertainment and recreated avenues; e) Shopping & Communication facilities; f) Well preserved monuments with tourist amenities; g) basic amenities like drinking water, toilets snack bars etc., at the tourist sites.

Just like raw materials get converted into finished products by moving through various machines in a processing system, the different components of tourism supply should be so organised that the expectations of the tourist while planning the trip get converted into full satisfaction and pleasant memories on his/her return. Thus it will need a perfect coordination and linkages in the availability and performance of all components of tourism infrastructure.

Tourism development is thus a composite subject and does not necessarily mean the development of only the tourism facilities like hotels, restaurants, recreational activities will be meaningful only if the area has the minimum basic amenities and infrastructure like road, water, electricity, sewerage, telecom facilities etc. This aspect was given importance in the Tourism 'Synergy' programme. Subsequently the State Governments were requested to prepare Master Plans for development of Tourism based on the same concept.

This approach was initiated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan period but reinforced in the Ninth Year Plan for effective implementation.

**Conclusion:** Tourism in India has a strong relevance to economic development and employment generation. It creates huge employment opportunities, provides equitable distribution of wealth, helps to acquire the much needed foreign exchange, brings out a speedy development and improvement of infrastructural facilities. Developing countries have given a special importance for the development of tourism, for it is the main source of earning foreign exchange, thereby the economic status of the country goes up. Tourism is one of the few industries which generates high levels of economic output, with minimum investments and has immense socioeconomic development potential. Indian tourism industry has recorded a phenomenal growth particularly from 1990's in terms of both international and domestic visitor arrivals. A noticeable change in the holidaying trend was reported both the international and domestic tourists showed an inclination towards adventure sports. India is slowly but surely awakening to its tourism potential. The outcome of many studies has been done about tourism states that India is best suited for all kinds of tourism rural, cultural, eco-tourism, spiritual, sports and adventure tourism. With small countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are all ready major tourist destinations; India has to struggle to promote itself to the world tourists.

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