Archaeological Heritage and Tourism
(Developing underdeveloped Regions)

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Archaeology, simply stated, is the study of human antiquities. An Archaeological Site is a place where the remains of an old civilization exist, sometimes visibly but mostly under the cover of the earth. It needs a lot of careful digging and sifting which in archaeological terms is called “excavation”. After excavation the site reveals the existence of human settlement with houses, streets, temples, potteries, tools and other implements, sculpture, painting, writing etc. This ancient human settlement discovered or unearthed during the modern times is called archaeological heritage. The passion by the past is something inherent to the human being. As it says well: “Town that does not know from where town comes that does not know to where it goes”.

The Archaeological tourism is ideal for which they look for a higher knowledge and sublimates, tie to the meditation and the relaxation, in perfect synchrony with the surroundings or ecosystem that is, integration with the Mother Nature, but always in old places, next to the ruins of the “enigmatic missing civilizations”.

Knowledge about archaeology and archaeological sites adds to the expertise of those tourism professionals who package tours or work as a guide and escorts. There has been an increased interest in cultural and heritage tourism. In some countries like Egypt, Mexico, Italy, Peru, Cambodia, India etc, tour operators package archaeological sites and monuments as tourism products and offer archaeological tours as special interest tours. In the modern days with evolution of new age tourism, the travellers particularly youngsters were very much interested to explore the heritage high ways to peep into the past through the material remains for which tourism has provided as tool.

India, virtually has repository of Archaeological Sites and Monuments which serves the backbone of Indian Tourism development. Although the sole aim of archaeology is to provide historical truth, laid bare material culture, enriches the contemporary knowledge on Architecture, Religion, Society, Art, Medicine, Town planning etc. The development of Indian Society was revealed, only when in 1921 Harappan Civilization brought to limelight through archaeological excavation which covered an area as wide as 1.8 million square kilometers. Archaeology has established that it was a long-forgotten civilization almost five thousand years old and contemporary with the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. This civilization covered a wide variety of land and climate. While the settlements in Beluchistan developed and survived in inhospitable dry climates and
unapproachable hilly terrains, the settlements in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab enjoyed all the bounties of the nature. Hundreds of kilometers of desert-land separated the Harappan settlements in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The premier Harappan settlements in the Ghaggar-Hakra-Indus region was situated in the flood plains and the land was fertile making it possible for the cities to procure food from the adjoining villages. The great Indian civilization has been dated between 2700 B.C to 1400 B.C. The early and mature sites discovered at places like Mehergarh, Amri, Kot Diji, Gunla, Harappa, Kalibangan, Mohenjodaro, Banwali, Lothal are simply amazing. The Great Bath, Great Granary, Great Dock etc., discovered at these places not only present huge settlements but the science of city planning is the attraction on which now tourism could be looked upon.

Similarly, the historical cities like Hastinapur, Kosambhi, Rajghat, Rajgir, Pataliputra, Kapilavastu, Mathura, Tosali have discovered in India with substantial material remains which were well focused on the rich culture that was developed during early historical periods. Likewise, the historical sites such as Ujjain, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Sanchi, Saranath, BodhGaya, Sisupalgarh, Arikamedu, Kaveripattnam, Kurukshetra, Hampi etc., has enriched the science of civilization and known to us by way of archaeological process. The great Cave and Buddhist sites like Ajanta, Ellora, Nasik, Bagh, Kanheri, Elephanta, Mahabalipuram, Khandagiri-Udayagiri and Bhimhetika etc, bear the testimony of our great culture and civilization in the form of art, architecture, religion and above all glimpses of human settlement. Besides, the temple sites of India like Khajuraho, Halbed, Belur, Kanchipuram, Pattadakal, Aihole, Madurai, Tanjavur, Bhubaneswar, Konarak, Martand, and the medieval forts and tombs like Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Fatepur-Sikri, Amar Fort, Hawa Mahal, Palaces of Udaipur, Jaisalmir, Jaipur, Forts and tombs of Aurangabad, Hyderabad, Bijapur etc were also centre of attraction and served as benchmark to the respective State Tourism Departments. These are all archaeological wealth that has taken as resource for tourism development. A matter of fact that a heritage trail could be explored from Khajuraho to Konarak which could combine efforts of three states. Of course Chhattishgarh Tourism Board and Orissa Tourism, now has taken initiatives in this regard. However, a trained Archaeologist is required to work as a consultant to every Tourism Board to bring down the cultural enigma of each site. The border state of Chhattisgarh has closer link with the Buddhist and Temple sites of Orissa. The mighty Mahanadi had its origin in the Sihawa rocks and travelled 1000 kms and met the Ocean near Paradeep. The Mahanadi valley has rich archaeological sites like Rajim, Arang, Sirpur, Sonepur, Binika, Kusaleswar, Boudh, Paragalpur, Bhattachrika, Kantilo, Baneswaranasi, Dhavaleswar, etc. So also the coastal line of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh has also rich in Buddhist sites like Ratnagiri, Bandareswar, Kuruma, Palur (Orissa) and Salihundam, Ramatirtham, Nagarjunakonda, Dhanyakatak etc. (AP). All these cultural sites are interrelated and had close cultural interaction in the past. Now, Tourism should use the resources so that inter-state tourism could be expanded and the regions could also be developed.

In this background let us focus on the archaeological sites of Orissa and its strength for tourism development. Orissa like Karnataka and Tamilnadu, is rich in historical remains in shape of temples and heritage sites. Since long, Orissa was enochasing its tourism resources based on temples of Konarak, Bhubaneswar and Puri. The forty
years journey of Orissa tourism concentrated on Golden Triangle, which was its main USP. Hotels, Resorts, communication and other related activities were taken up. Now, the tourist flow to these places are overwhelming. The gift of tourism to these places could be reckoned through the activities undertaken by the local people and engaged for their bread and butter. Konarak is the best example. The 100 number of guides, equal number of photographers, souvenir sellers, hotel owners and also government earn revenue due to the importance of our historical monument built in 13th century. Thanks to the Archaeological Survey of India and the Archeologists who have brought the heritage of mankind to limelight. It was in 1901 A.D., the great monument was discovered from the heap of sand and the archaeological conservation that has brought life to the monument and tourism gives the strength by popularizing and marketing the monument. Now, it is a world heritage monument and the responsibility of conservation of the standing monument has gone to the world body like UNESCO. The tourist flow to Konarak is more than 3 million.

The other archaeological sites of Orissa, like the Buddhist Sites discovered in the last decade could be utilized for the development of local area as well as serve the marketing benchmark for Orissa Tourism. The widely spreadover sites like Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Langudi, were just wonders in Indian heritage. While working in the Archaeological excavation process during the year 1989-92, we know the strength of these sites which has changed the course of historical science of Orissa. The discovery of bone relics from Lalitgiri had just thrilled the Buddhist world as that of Sanchi and Rajgir, this place again has a huge Stupa and Chaitya dated to 2nd century B.C/A.D. The gradual development of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism could be clearly visible with its marvellous settlement pattern. So also the sites of Ratnagiri and Udayagiri are the repository of historical truth which could be marketed throughout the world for its landscaping, settlement pattern, construction pattern, use of scientific water system, drainage system and plethora of sculptural art besides religious growth that is Mahayana and Tantrayana or Sahajayana. Of course, almost all the big excavated historical sites like Kosambhi, Kurukshetra, Hampi, Nalanda has the same story to tell but, our sites has the more interesting stories. We have worked in the Mahabharat site at Kurukshetra for about three years (1987-89) which has brought out many new theories like dry bed of river Saraswati, development of settlement during Iron age etc and the site now is a major tourist attraction in Haryana. So also Hampi became the major attraction in Kamatak, Nalanda in Bihar also taken up for tourism brand. Here, our sites could be more value based product, by incorporating the marketing ethics and management process not only as Buddhist site but as major resource for culture and civilization.

All the major Buddhist sites, Lalitgiri, Udayagiri, Ratnagiri and Langudi has their own unique stories for growth and development of science of religion, culture, way of life, technological advance etc. For example, the rain water harvesting system at Lalitgiri particularly at Monastery –I is a wonder to the technocrats. Similarly, the use of bricks for double storied building, again astonishes the engineers. As said earlier, the potentials should be properly ventilated in the world of people. The uniqueness of Lalitgiri is the relic casket together with Buddhist monuments, Ratnagiri provides huge monastery with thousands of images, so also Udayagiri
presents the construction pattern of the brick built structures and an epi-center for Vajrayana form of Buddhism, Langudi tells the story of earliest phase of Buddhism with its narrative panel in the shape of rock-cut sculptures. It is all wonder in the Buddhist world. The living Buddhism prevailed in the Himalayas has its roots in these sites. The Lamaism of Tibetan Buddhism could also be visible from these sites so also the Buddhism prevailed in Sri Lanka and Thailand has its close interaction. The Chinese Buddhism had its close connection with Orissan Buddhism since 7th-8th century. Theoretically, we have all the potentials, only the need of the hour is to package and promote in a phased manner. Our motto is not only present Buddhism only to woo Buddhist tourists but attract the world of people by presenting the leafs of technological advances, artistic excellence, science of religion and culture, to whom most of the people like to experience, even a layman enjoys to look at the temple or a monument. The modern day visitors often search, the cultural corridors. Tourism organisations should have a cell for Resource Management and well-qualified tourism personnel may be engaged for product development. The Chhattishgarh Tourism Board is planning to develop a cultural corridor or tourism circuit from Khajuraho to Konarak which will be helpful to three states and its resources are almost all archaeological and ethnic sites. So also Orissa Tourism is working on Mahanadi Circuit which includes important archaeological sites of Chhattisgarh like Rajim, Siripur, Arang and the Orissan sites like Sambalpur, Huma, Sonepur, Binika, Boudh, Kantilo, Bhattarika, Singhathan, Banki, Baneswarnasi, etc. This is wonderful concept but the need of the hour is to how we present it in a professional way, for which, trained and qualified tourism professionals only can do wonder.

For sustainable development of the isolated regions having Archaeological sites and Monuments due care and respect is needed, as these are regarded as important assets for tourism. There is a Law governing these assets which is known as “The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958”. The main objective of this Act is to provide for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance, for protection of sculpture, carvings and other likewise objects. The Act extends to whole of India. As the Act takes care for its protection and preservation, tourism takes care for its economic viability. Since, Indian tourism is still largely cultural tourism and the main motivation for 70% of the total tourist arrival is only the cultural attraction of our country, so the viability of the Archaeological Sites and Monuments as tourism product has already been proved. The states like Orissa should now come forward to develop these sites as new product as we should project and present differently. The sites should be merged with capacity building programmes, rural tourism projects or even roads, drinking water supply, landscaping, establishment of interpretation centers, trained guides, village heritage workers and if possible establishment of good standard hotels (depending on tourist arrivals) etc are the need of the hour, so that, it will be easier to create heritage awareness, tourism promotion as well as local area development. ICOMOS - International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism has issued specific guideline in this regard. We should cite a local example that the Vindusagar development project with establishment of herbal garden which is unique in whole of Eastern India, undertaken by Orissa Government, is a step forward for heritage conservation and attraction management. Now the wonderful archaeological site Khurda Fort may
be taken for development. The Fort ruins could be developed as that of Hampi (Karnatak). It needs careful conceptual designing because, it is located in the mid-way of NH-6 and NH-203. The access is very easy from NH-6 near Khurda and the ruins are visible with huge entrance, moat, and palatial structures. The Fort is the signature site of Oriya militancy and valour. It bears the whole heritage of freedom struggle since historical days. It could be developed with landscaping, information kiosks, picnic areas, interpretation center and guide service. A special project from State Archaeology and State Tourism Department is necessary for making it sustainable for tourism purpose. Some of the remote sites like Langudi Hills, Sisupalgarh, Jaugarh, Potagarh, Vikramkhol, Baneswarnasi, Manikapatna and the heritage sites along the river Mahanadi starting from Rajim, Sirpur in Chhattisgargh down to Sonepur, Bhattarika, Baneswarnasi to Cuttack etc. may be developed with all possible inputs from tourism and culture so that local area benefit could be visible and underdeveloped regions could be developed and linked to the travel circuits.

References:


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