



Shree Kshetra As a Tourist Destination

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Shreeksheeta - The soul of Orissa, identified in the ethnographic map of India's east coast has been considered as one of the four dharmas (sacred religious place) in India, and in true sense a high ranking tourist destination. It is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east and known as the summer capital of Orissa near Bhubaneswar. Puri offers not only nature in all its glory with its finest golden sand beaches, rivers, marine drives and tribal life, but also a great tradition of architecture, monuments and sculptural art. Historically Puri bears the magnanimous specimens of sculptural splendour by leading great temples like the Sun temple (the Black pagoda) at Konark (Archa Kshetra) and the Lord Jagannath temple (the white pagoda) kambukshetra, literally meaning the Lord of Universe. The temple of Jagannath built on an altar presents an imposing sight and can be seen from miles away. It is a fine specimen of the Pancharatha style¹ of Orissan architecture. The credit goes to Anantavarman Chodaganga Dev (1073-1147) for its engineering construction. It is approachable by four entrances on the east, west, north and south, known as lion's gate (Simhadwara), elephant gate (Hastidwara), horse gate (Aswadwara) and tiger gate (Byaghradwara) respectively. It is believed they represent Dharma,² Jnana,³ Vairagya,⁴ and Aiswarya.⁵

In fact each one of these monuments is a master piece, the work of so many artisans,

sculptors and architects reflected in stones. However the cult of Jagannath is all pervasive as is marked in the land of Orissa depicting three colours White, Yellow and Black⁶ in the form of Balabhadra, Subhadra and Lord Jagannath. The three deities signify the approach of Oriyas' that is universalism as a matter of principle of co existence⁷.

Besides, the central attraction of Lord Jagannath temple of Puri, the Holy Trinity is guarded by eight Siva temple, i.e Markandeswar, Kapalamochan, Lokanath, Jameswar, Nilakantheswar, Bilweswar, Isaneswar and Pataleswar stationed in eight directions and save the people of Puri from the danger. Similarly eight Mother Goddesses like Batamangala, Alanchandi, Ardhasani, Marchika Narayani, Shyamakali, Dakshinakali and Ramachandi also guard the Holy Trinity. Another site for the tourists is the Panchatirtha stationed in the town premises of Puri adds new feathers in its historical potentialities. These are Markandeswar Tank, Indradyumana Tank, Swetaganga, Mahodadhi and Rohinikunda.⁸

Another unique and distinct feature of the Land of Puri or sreeksheeta is a form of painting known as pattachitra⁹ or palmleaf paintings; Drawing of Chitta¹⁰ and Jhoti¹¹ adore the walls of the traditional thatched houses and on the floors



and ground near by. The village of Raghurajpur on the way to Puri caters to the needs of the tourists in this regard.

The carpet of Puri is considered as a cherished acquisition. It could be termed out to be the single most expensive purchase you end up making on a glorious trip to Puri. A Puri carpet is a multi purpose object that fulfills varying functions. It is an object of decoration, yet lies under the feet of people for giving warmth, smoothness and protection from dampness. It is, as some would say, one of the select few articles of home decoration that has remained unchanged through the centuries. Prized for its warm visual appeal and individual enduring quality, it has embellished the hall of the kings and sultans of bygone times and still a cherished item in modern days.

Sakhigopal is another leading place emerging for the revival of nationalism with the pioneering philosophy of Panchasakhas and the Satyavadi school and for the temples of Radha Krishna and Rama, Laxman and Sita. Lord Krishna is the presiding deity of this temple. The stone image of Lord Gopinath alias Gopal was at Kanchi which was later on brought by king Purusottam Dev to Orissa and established at Sakhigopal. A great festival is annually held here on the Anala Navami¹² day in the Month of Kartika to see the feet of Radha.

Above all from spiritualists to monument lovers, the Sun temple (the Black pagoda) in Puri district distinguished is an enduring symbol of Orissan art and architecture made of grinite. It is an eloquent testimony of excellence in erotic art thus fascinating tourists from the world over. The historical monument like, the Sun temple at Konark has been declared as a Heritage site under UNESCO. This lovely temple on the sea shore was built in 13th century A.D and represents the

mature phase of Orissan architecture. Adding to that charm is the beautiful expanse of the glittering highways with its swaying palm trees, azure sea and the golden sea beaches.¹³ This shares in common with northern temple styles such as Khajuraho in Madhyapradesh, and Tose in Rajstan, but Orissa developed a characteristic local style that is distinct.

The festivals of Puri like the beach festival and the Konark festival provides enormous opportunity to the tourists. By this festival a common cultural synthesis has been emerged. In the month of November and December these two festivals take place with a great pomp. The typical life style and the local food preparation helps a lot for the tourist influx to Orissa and Particular to Sreekhethra. All these conspicuous characteristic made Sreekhethra as the leading tourist destination not only in India but also in the world and opened a new chapter in globalization.

Over the centuries it beckoned people from wide and far. Preachers, saints, philosophers, educationists tourists from the country and outside Lord Mahavir, the Jaina Tirthankar, Huen Tsang, the Buddhist Chinese traveler, Ramanujam, the Vaishnavite saint philosopher, Sri Chaitanya, the exponent of Radha Krishna consciousness, Nanak the founder of Sikhism. etc. who came here for religious pursuits are some shining examples. A meeting point of so many traditions, faiths, and philosophies like Jainism, Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism lead to Sun Worship.

A new concept of tourism has emerged in recent decades in the form of the service economy and can help to the society to respond to global challenges, if its growth is managed properly with an emphasis on ethics and poverty alleviation. The projected growth of tourism sector and its broad direct and indirect impact across all economics,



particularly those of developing states. Puri can contribute a lot to the states economy a tourist destination.

It requires a proper tourism management for large influx of tourists. The following points need to be managed.

- i) Recognition of the rural tourism sector as a special tourism segment and allowing only focused tourists to the sites.
- ii) Well qualified educated guides having the historical knowledge should be appointed at that place to assist the tourists.
- iii) Orissa Government authorities need to expose local entrepreneurs to developed regions in different forms through exhibitions, fairs and festivals, competitions, symposiums etc regarding the historical relevance interpreted generally and in particular with regard to contemporary importances.
- iv) Preservation and adherence to the "codes of ethics" of tourism development as prescribed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 1999.
- v) It is necessary for the Govt of Orissa and the Orissa branch of Indian Tourism, to give priority to other states like Andhrapradesh Tourism, Uttaranchal Tourism, Tamilnadu Tourism, and West Bengal Tourism to open their stalls.
- vi) Imposition of strict and punishable ban on illicit activities, prostitution, drug trafficking and any activity that disturbs traditional culture and heritage.
- vii) Specific and outstanding market facilities should be developed in the vicinity of the city with the availability of foreign commodities in well affordable prices.
- viii) A yoga center with modern facilities should come up in the vicinity of the area.

ix) Developing a special armed professional Tourism Protection Force (non-voluntary) with sufficient caliber to prevent physical assaults to the tourists as well as to the tourism resources to the region.

x) Giving wider publicity to potentially attractive places of tourist attractions, the history, traditions, art, music, climate, and formation about the rural entrepreneurship and formation about the rural entrepreneurship and the availability of accommodation in different cost segments and the smooth convenience of transportation etc.

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