

Heritage and religious tourism (A case study of Bodhgaya, Bihar)

Deepanjana Kundu

55 Bose Para Road. P.O. Barisha, Kolkata: 700008

Abstract

In 1981, The International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism defined tourism in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home. Now- a - days tourism is gaining its significance as it plays important role in accelerating the development of the economy of certain place. Among different types of tourism, heritage tourism is mentionable. Heritage tourism has a positive economic and social impact and establishes and reinforces the identity of a region by preserving the cultural heritage. Our India has always been famous for its rich heritage and ancient culture. The glorious past and cultural diversity of India make a potent blend which attracts million of tourists each year. The one of the most popular heritage tourism destinations in India is Bodhgaya. This article focuses the heritage religious tourism of Bodhgaya highlighting the existing problems and probable prospects of tourism of this place. About fifty tourists were surveyed to prepare this article.

Keywords: Tourism, Bodhi Tree, Enlightenment, Tourists

Introduction

Bodhgaya is generally known as the ancient and hallowed place on the earth. Being the spot of the enlightenment of Lord Buddha, it is considered as the holiest place to the Buddhists of the world. Geographically Bodhgaya is located at the intersection of 24°41'45"N and 85°02'22"E in Bihar. It is part of Urail village (previously known as Uruvela village).

According to the early Buddhist text, after realizing that meditative Dhyana was the right path of awakening, but the extreme asceticism did not work, Gautama discovered the middle way a path of moderation away from the extreme of self-indulgence and self-mortification of noble eight fold path. It was identified and described by Buddha in his first discourse. In famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened, he is said to have accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata. Following this incident, Gautama was famously seated under a papal tree, now known as the Bodhi tree. After a forty nine days of meditation, he is said to have attained enlightenment. From that time, Gautama was known to his followers as the Buddha or "Awakened One".

Objectives of the study

The study has set before itself the following objectives that are: to study the demographic and socio-economic background of the tourists. This study also focuses the infrastructural facilities (like accommodation facility, transport, fooding etc. of Bodhgaya. This article is also prepared keeping in mind to discuss the impact of tourism on the economy of this place. Moreover this article highlights the existing tourism related problems of this place also.

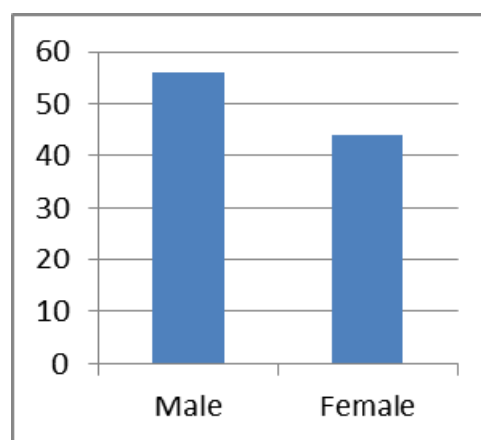
Database & Methodology

The study is generally based on primary survey. About

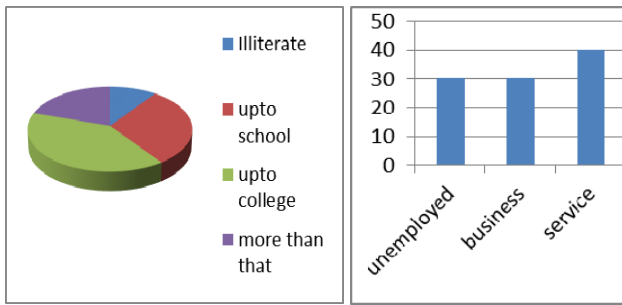
hundred tourists came from different parts of the world were surveyed for this purpose. Apart from this hotel survey, market survey and transport survey is done for more information. Necessary maps and secondary information were collected from different administrative offices and related books.

Discussion

Tourists are one of the most important components of tourism. So tourist survey is very much important to discuss the tourism of any place. As Buddhism s spread all over the world, people from different parts of the world gathered here every year. The tourist survey done by the surveyor tells that 70% of the total surveyed tourists were foreigners and 30% tourist came from different parts of India. Sex wise percentage of the tourists Education and occupation status of the tourists in percentage.



Sex wise percentage of the tourists



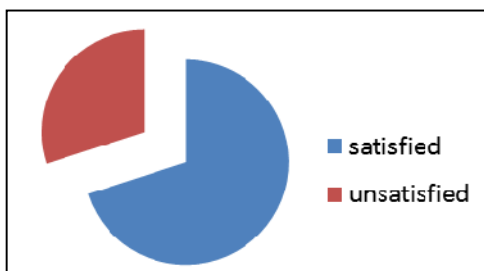
Education and occupation status of the tourists in percentage

As per the tourist survey 30% of the tourists spent 3000-70000 rupees, 45% tourists have paid 70000-12000 rupees and 25% of them have spent more than 12000 rupees for the trip respectively. Tourist from different parts of the world come to visit this Bodhgaya and most of them have spent more than a fortnight here for spiritual purpose.

The attractions of the markets of Bodhgaya are the beautiful ornaments made of stones, handicrafts etc. Generally the Indian tourists which is 40% of the surveyed tourists have stated that the price of different things is too high and the 60% of the surveyed tourists said that items are cheap.

Analysing the data collected by the primary survey it can be said that 72% tourist concluded that they have used tangas and autoes as mode of transport in Bodhgaya whereas 28% have travelled in this place in their own private cars.63% tourists who have used the tangas and autos said that the transport fare is high here and as per 37% of that group of tourist transport cost is not very high.

Most of the hotels of Bodhgaya is highly decorated and specially designed to welcome the foreigners. In restaurants most of the food items are cooked keeping the preferences of the foreigners in mind. But Indian foods are also available here.



Satisfaction of the tourists regarding accommodation and fooding

Problems Faced By the Tourists in Bodhgaya

The tourists come from out of India have to face communication problem here. As the literacy level of the local people of Bodhgaya is very low, they can not speak in English and other foreign languages. As a result they communicate with the foreigners. Shortage of electricity is one of the problems of Bodhgaya. The quality of supplied drinking water is not very good as per the tourists. In this context lack of

sufficient vehicles in nighst is mentionable lack of trained guides is a major problem of tourism of Bodhgaya. Snatching is reported by 30% tourists.

Conclusion

As Bodhgaya is an international tourist spot, tourism contributes a lot in the economy of this place. So proper measurers should be taken to overcome the above mentioned problems. Both central and state government should extend their help to make the future of tourism of Bodhgaya bright.

The report and the diagrams are prepared according to the primary survey done by the author in 2015.

References

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