
A STUDY ON ROLE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURAL TOURISM IN TRIPURA

Dr. Milton Kumar Acharjee

Assistant Professor, Tripura Government Law College, Agartala

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism plays a significant role in economic development by generating income for local communities through tourist spending, creating jobs in various sectors like hospitality and guiding services, promoting the preservation of cultural heritage, and attracting investment in infrastructure development, thus boosting the overall economy of a region, particularly in areas with unique cultural assets. Simultaneously cultural tourism plays a significant role in Tripura's economic development by leveraging the state's rich tribal heritage, traditional crafts, and unique cultural practices to attract tourists, generating revenue through accommodation, local goods purchases, and guided tours, thereby creating employment opportunities and boosting the local economy, particularly in rural areas where artisans and communities can directly benefit from tourism activities. The aim of this paper explore how cultural tourism can drive economic development and economic transformation in Tripura. The objectives of the paper is to analyse to study the present scenario of cultural tourism in Tripura.

Keyword: Economic Development, Cultural Tourism, Tourists, Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism is the subject of tourism concerned with a country or religious culture, specifically the lifestyle of the people in those geographical areas the history of those people their art, architecture, religion and other elements that helped their way of life.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism is “movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art, and pilgrimages.”

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Tripura is a hilly North-eastern State of India nestling amid Bangladesh and Assam. The grandeur and awe-inspiring beauty of its several hill ranges, valleys and rivers amidst the moderate climate throughout the year are its perennial attractions. The state's interesting topography, stunning landscapes and wetlands make it an abode of rich floral and faunal biodiversity. Its beautiful palaces, spell-binding rock-cut sculptures of archaeological significance, Buddhist pilgrimage sites and revered places of worship add to its irresistible charm. The harmonious inter-mingling of Tripura's nineteen indigenous tribes, Bengali and Manipuri communities, their diverse cultural streams and faiths, traditional arts, music and festivals, beautiful handloom and handicrafts all give Tripura its own unique identity reflected in its royal and religious ambience complemented with secular and hospitable nature of people. Key aspects to consider in such a study:

❖ **Cultural Assets:**

- **Tribal Communities:** Analyze the potential of showcasing the unique cultural practices of various tribal groups like the Reang, Jamatia, and Tripuri, including their dances, music, attire, and traditional crafts.
- **Festivals:** Explore the economic potential of major festivals like Garia, Kharchi Puja, and Hojagiri, promoting tourism during peak seasons.
- **Religious Sites:** Investigate the potential of historical Hindu and Buddhist temples, including their architectural significance and religious rituals.
- **Folklore and Oral Traditions:** Examine the potential of incorporating local folklore and storytelling into tourism experiences.

❖ **Economic Impacts:**

- **Job Creation:** Assess how cultural tourism can generate employment opportunities in sectors like hospitality, tour guiding, handicraft production, and event management.
- **Income Generation:** Analyze the direct economic benefits to local communities through the sale of souvenirs, homestays, and food services.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Evaluate the need for improved infrastructure like roads, transportation, and accommodation facilities to support increased tourist inflow.

❖ **Community Engagement:**

- **Community Participation:** Study the importance of involving local communities in tourism development initiatives to ensure sustainable practices and equitable benefits.
- **Capacity Building:** Explore programs to train local people in tourism-related skills like hospitality, guiding, and craft production.

❖ **Sustainability Concerns:**

- **Cultural Preservation:** Analyze strategies to protect the authenticity of cultural practices while promoting tourism.
- **Environmental Impact:** Assess potential environmental concerns related to tourism development and propose mitigation strategies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. The objectives of the paper is to analyse to study the present scenario of cultural tourism in Tripura.
2. To study the how cultural tourism can drive economic development and economic transformation in Tripura.
3. To study the challenges faced by the cultural tourism in Tripura.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

In recent times, literature on tourism circuits' have been confined to tourism reports, plans, master plans and policy decisions in majority of the tourism practising countries. It hardly finds a place in the intellectual discourse of tourism experts all over the world. Naturally, little literature has thrown light upon the development and promotion of tourism circuits.

Riyanto et al. (2008) have reported that Bali International Circuit is a plan to build an international circuit in Indonesia. The study concluded that the design process of the circuit must comply with standard international circuits so that it can lift the image of the country abroad. **Mandal and Das (2012)** have noted that the

Alipurduar Tourism Circuit (ATC) in West Bengal, India developed as a spontaneous result of preference of tourists' visiting Eastern Dooars region. As tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped in adjoining places, tourists' are bound to stay at Alipurduar for night halt and other services.

Bond and Ladman (1972) emphasized that for a developing nation possessing the elements of an appealing tourism package - culture, climate, history, and geography - the tourism industry holds the potential to play a leading role in fostering development. The global demand for tourism has risen and is projected to continue its expansion.

Ghali (1976), through an empirical study of Tourism and Economic Growth, discovered that the growth of tourism correlates with increased personal income compared to scenarios without such growth. **Diamond (1977)** explored the significance of tourism as a solution for consistent balance-of-payments deficits, attracting developing country governments and international aid agencies. His research centered on the economic rationale of tourism, which had been relatively unchallenged. While acknowledging successful cases like Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Thailand, Diamond recognized the economic achievements some nations enjoyed through tourism.

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary data. The data on the pattern and volume of circuit tourism have been collected from different sources i.e. articles, reports, books, newspapers, internet documents, etc.

PRESENT SCENARIO OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN TRIPURA:

As the discussing of cultural tourism in Tripura there are some key important tourism sites as follows.

Archaeological sites

- ❖ Unakoti, Pilak, Boxanagar, Chabimura, Bhubaneswari Temple.

Eco-tourism sites

- ❖ Sepahijala wild life Sanctuary, Trishna, Rowa, Baramura Eco -Park, Jampui Hills, and various
- ❖ 236 Eco/nature parks.

Religious sites

- ❖ -Tripurasundari Temple, Chaturdash Debata Bari (Temple of 14 Gods) , Jagannath Temple,
- ❖ Umamaheswar Temple, Kasba Kalibari, Benuban Vihar, Gedu Mia's mosque, Mahamuni
- ❖ pagoda, Mariamnagar Church etc.

Heritage sites

- ❖ -Ujjayanta Palace, Neermahal, Old Rajbari at Udaipur.

Rural Tourism sites

- ❖ Durgabari, Debipur, Kalapania and Banabithi,

Adventure Tourism sites (Planned)

- ❖ Damboor Lake, Rudrasagar Lake, Jampui Hills

Home Stay sites (Planned)

- ❖ Jampui Hills under North Tripura, Darchoi under Unakoti , Debbari under Gomati District.

Table-1: Tripura Tourism At A Glance

1. Number of Tourist Lodge	31 nos.
2. Number of Tourist Lodge run by TTDCL	09 nos.
3. Number of Tourist Information Centre	06 nos.
4. Number of Cafeteria	13 nos.
5. Number of Museum	01 nos.
6. Number of Tourist spot (State Government approved)	25 nos.
7. Number of Rural Tourism spot	04 nos.
8. Tourist Cottages	03 nos.
9. Number of log hut	39 nos.
10. Tourist Booking Centre	02 nos.
11. Registered Tour Operator/ Travel Agent	32 nos.

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Tripura.

Major Achievements of the Tourism Department in 2022-2023.

1. Tripura is a place of diversified tourist attractions like Archaeological sites, Religious tourism, Eco tourism, Wild life sanctuaries, Heritage sites, Adventures tourism sites etc. The Tourism Department has taken a comprehensive plan towards promotion of tourism in the State by improving the last mile connectivity, creation of accommodation facilities, development of infrastructure in tourist destinations and strengthening the manpower skills engaged in this sector.
2. Development of Infrastructure facilities have been undertaken under **Swadesh Darshan- I** in major tourist destinations like Sepahijala, Udaipur, Chhabimura, Neermahal, Ujjayanta Palace, Dumbur Lake, Jampui Hills, and Unakoti. So far, total amount of **Rs.8941.33 Lakhs** has been released by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, under Swadesh Darshan and out of which expenditure for an amount **Rs. 8403.29 Lakhs** has been incurred.
3. To improve the accommodation facilities for the tourists in natural Eco-friendly destinations total **39 Nos. Log huts** have been constructed under Swadesh Darshan Scheme and made operational. Construction of additional **10 Nos. log huts** is in completion stage. **A Light and Sound Show** based on the history of the Royal dynasty of Tripura has been taken up under Swadesh Darshan Scheme **at Ujjayanta Palace**.
4. Under **PRASAD Scheme** Development works of **Mata Tripura Sundari Temple**, Udaipur is going on. Total amount of **Rs.3780.00 Lakhs** has been sanctioned by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. So far, an amount of **Rs. 2117.91 Lakhs** has been released by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, under **PRASAD Scheme**.
5. Tourism Department has introduced multiple **Adventure Tourism** activities like Paramotoring, Paragliding, Water Scooter, Water Ski, Zorbing, Bannana boat, Hot air balloon etc. at Dumbur Lake, Chhabimura and Jampui Hills.
6. The Tourism Department has constructed one **Helipad at Dumbur** (Narikelkunja) and made operational for the tourists. A **package tour** in the name of —**Tripura Howai Safar**” has 237 also started by Tripura Tourism covering the **To and Fro** journey from Agartala to Dumbur and Agartala to Kailashahar.
7. To highlight the cultural taste, preference and thinking of the Kings of this State, the Govt. of Tripura has declared the —Pushpabanta Palace and Darbar Hall “ of Old Governor House into Maharaja Birchandra Kishore Manikya Modern Art Museum and Cultural Centre.
8. **StateInstitute of Hotel Management (SIHM) at Anandanagar**, West Tripura has been inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 18-12-2022. The Hotel Management Institute will fill the gap of skill man power shortage in tourism and hospitality sector in the State.
9. As a result of positives initiatives of the Tourism Department, tourist footfall increases in the State and created employment opportunities for the youth.

CULTURAL TOURISM CAN DRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN TRIPURA:

Cultural tourism is a prominent aspect of Tripura's profile. The state has a rich cultural heritage influenced by its indigenous communities, including the Tripuri, Jamatia, and Reang tribes. Tourists can witness vibrant festivals such as Kharchi Puja and Garia Puja, which showcase traditional dance, music, and rituals. The Ujjayanta Palace, once the royal residence of Tripura's monarchs, now serves as a museum and displays a remarkable collection of artifacts, artworks, and historical treasures, providing insights into the region's royal past. Swadesh Darshan 2.0 says that Tripura holds great historical significance, making it an appealing destination for history buffs. The ancient ruins of Unakoti, featuring rock-cut sculptures and murals dating back centuries, is listed as a tentative UNESCO World Heritage site and a testament to the region's rich cultural legacy. Tripura is also religiously significant with important temples such as the Tripura Sundari Temple in Udaipur, considered to be one of the 51 Shakti Peethas, and hence, is one of the holiest Hindu shrines in North East India and witnesses the highest number of visitors, after Kamakhya Temple in Assam. During 2018-19, total 5,29,879 tourists visited Tripura including 1,12,955 foreign tourists. The bulk of foreign tourists are from Bangladesh followed by tourists from USA, Canada and UK. Though in small numbers, tourists from Serbia, Sweden, Hungary and New Zealand visited Tripura in 2018-19. Tourist arrival registered 10% annual growth during 2018-19.

Table: 2 Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrival in Tripura:

Year	Domestic Tourist	Foreign Tourist	Total Tourist
2017-2018	403394	80094	488488
2018-2019	416860	112955	529815
2019-2020	431142	154993	586135
2020-2021	74344	01	74345
2021-2022	196820	36	196856
2022-2023	249712	35124	284836

Source: Tripura Tourism Development Corporation Limited

Fair and Festivals in Tripura.

Fair and Festival	Venue and Time
Posh Sankranti Fair	At Tirthamukh every year in January
Pilak Tourism and Archeological Festival	Every Year Nov-Dec
Rajarshi Festival	Bhuvneswar Temple every year in the moth of may
Ashokastami Festival	Every year in the month of April
Buddha Purnima Festival every year in J	Every year in the month of May at Udayan Buddha Vihar, Lord Buddha Temple& Mahamuni Pagoda.
Kharchi Festival	At Chaturdash Devta Temple in July.
Dumboor Festival	Every year in October/November at Gandachhara
Diwali Festival	At Matabari every year in October/November

Source: Tripura Tourism Policy 2020-25 Swadesh Darshan 2.0

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CULTURAL TOURISM IN TRIPURA:

Tripura faces several challenges, including infrastructure deficits, unemployment, and environmental degradation. However, the state government, in collaboration with various stakeholders, is working towards addressing these challenges and promoting sustainable development initiatives. With its untapped potential for tourism in Tripura holds immense opportunities for economic growth and cultural exchange.

Lack of promotion, shortage of skilled and professional manpower, lack of government attention, cultural diffusion, uneven distribution of cultural benefits, and lack of awareness are some of the challenges of cultural tourism. Cultural attractions, good infrastructural development, peacefulness of the city, and ancient history of the Tripura are considered as opportunities. The current condition of cultural tourism in Tripura is improving time to time. In order to solve these problems active involvement of tourism stakeholders play a vital role. Plans, policies, and strategies that are go in line with cultural tourism, strong promotional campaigns about the culture through marketing mix elements, creating new and strengthening the existing participatory discussion stages, work in collaboration, conducting researches, bringing attitudinal changes can have a significant role regarding with minimizing the challenges and for efficient use of the opportunities of cultural tourism resources.

In essence, Tripura is a land of hidden treasures, where ancient traditions meet modern aspirations, and where the beauty of nature is matched only by the warmth of its people. Whether it's exploring historical sites, trekking through pristine forests, or immersing oneself in the vibrant culture of its communities, Tripura offers an unforgettable journey into the heart of India's northeastern frontier.

CONCLUSION

Tripura Tourism sector is one of the largest employment generators and plays a very significant role in promoting inclusive growth of the less-advanced sections of the society and poverty eradication. The State Government is attaching due importance to promote tourism sector. A comprehensive plan for promotion of Tourism has been taken up covering augmentation of accommodation facilities, improving the existing infrastructure at major tourist destinations, developing the communication network and strengthening the skill of the manpower engaged in this sector.

Cultural tourism in Tripura presents a unique opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of tribal traditions, vibrant festivals, ancient temples, and diverse communities, making it a captivating destination for those seeking an authentic experience of Northeast India's cultural heritage, all while supporting local economies and preserving the state's distinct identity through responsible tourism practices; however, careful planning and community engagement are crucial to ensure sustainable development of this cultural tourism potential.

Finally if well planned could be raised to an important income and employment generating sector and could also provide an incentive for increasing cultural awareness and activity and therefore produce a wide range of social benefits too. The indigenous cultural tourism of India requires integration of the components, like, the desire of the community to share cultural legacy with the tourists, an intact cultural resource base which could provide the foundation for a community's cultural heritage product and also an accessible travel market for its growth and development.

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