

Potentiality and Development of Tourism in Bihar

*** Kumar Arastu**
Research Scholar

Department of Commerce and Business Administration
L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga

**** Dr. Indra Deo Prasad**
Associate Professor (Retd.)

Department of Commerce and Business Administration
L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga

Abstract

Bihar travel and tourism features a large number of tourist destinations spread in various parts of the state. It is located in northern India along the eastern Gangetic Plains. Bihar has a significant place in the cultural history of India for being the birthplace of Buddhism and Jainism. Tourists can encounter some of the finest Mughal and Hindu architectural expertise in this place. The ideal time for travelling in Bihar is between October and March when the weather remains salubrious. The culture of Bihar can be traced through its various handicrafts and festivals. Bihar is known for its bamboo works, potteries, leather products, wall hangings and applique work. The Mithila and Madhubani paintings are important artworks of the place. Festivals like Chatth Puja, Bihula, Mahavir Jayanti, Buddha Jayanti and other Hindu festivals are celebrated in Bihar with extreme enthusiasm. During Holi, people sing typical songs called Phagua. Bihar also possesses a rich theatrical culture. Various forms of theater, which have roots in the state, are Bihula-Bisahari, Sama-Chakeva, Reshma-Chuharmal and Dom-Kach. There are also a large number of pilgrimage centers in Bihar. Against this background, the present paper tries to highlight potentiality and development of tourism in Bihar.

Key words: Bihar, Buddhist Circuit, Department of Tourism, Economic Development, SWOT Analysis.

Introduction

Tourism and its allied sectors (travel and hospitality) have emerged as a key driver of income and employment growth in India. As per the Economic Impact Report 2020 of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel and tourism accounts for 6.8 percent of India's GDP, placing India at the 10th position among 185 countries, in terms of the sector's contribution to country's GDP. Of this, the domestic spending accounts for 83 percent. Further, travel and tourism created employment for 3.98 crore people in India.

The Department of Tourism of the State Government is responsible for promoting tourism in Bihar; Bihar is one of the most favoured tourist destinations in India, for both domestic and international tourists. The state's tourist destinations encompass a wealth of tourism products across a range of themes, like heritage, culture, ecotourism. Spiritual, and adventure. To promote tourism, various tourist circuits have been identified and developed in the state. Among these, the important circuits are Buddhist Circuit. Ramayana Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Jain Circuit, Guru Circuit, Shiv/Kanwariya Circuit and Gandhi Circuit.

The tourism sector has enormous potential to lead the socio-economic transformation of Bihar. The State Government has taken several measures towards all round development of the sector. The decision to develop prominent sites as 'Iconic Destinations' is a significant effort in this direction; it will serve as a replicable model for other major tourist destinations. Further, emphasis on strengthening infrastructure and rural development will have a multiplier impact on the tourism sector. The capital-intensive infrastructural projects, like ropeways, will make the hilly region of the state accessible to tourists. Schemes such as Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD), Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), SwadeshDarshan and others are envisaged to develop ample infrastructure for theme- based circuits and improve linkages between major tourist destinations.

Development of Tourism in Bihar

Bihar is one of the oldest inhabited places in the world with history of 3000 years. The rich culture and heritage of Bihar is evident from the innumerable ancient monuments that are dotted all over the state in eastern India. Bihar is home of many tourist attractions. Bihar is visited by large numbers of tourists from all over the world all the year round..

The documented history of tourism in Bihar region dating back to the fourth century BCE. Greek geographer Megasthenes (ca. 350 BC - 290 BC) visited the region in reign of Chandragupta Maurya. His observations were recorded in Indika. Dionysius was son of Megasthenes, who visited Patliputra in reign of Ashoka the Great(. Hsuan-Tsang and I Ching visited Nalanda to study in the seventh century CE.

In the earliest day, tourism in region was purely based on educational tourism as Bihar was home of some prominent ancient universities like Nalanda University and Vikramashila University.

At present, Bihar Tourism has adopted a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract higher footfalls and position Bihar as a most preferred destination for both domestic and

international tourists. To make Bihar a top destination for tourists and leverage tourism's potential for socio-economic growth, following strategies have been adopted:

- I. Tourism marketing and promotion,
- II. Development of tourism infrastructure,
- III. Development of tourism products,
- IV. Skill development.
- V. Ensuring tourist comfort and safety,
- VI. Making tourism everyone's business,
- VII. Sustainable tourism,
- VIII. IT and digital initiatives, and
- IX. Investment facilitation.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a once-in-a-century global crisis in 2020 and 2021 that has severely impacted global travel and tourism. However, in the coming years, in course of an up-turn in tourism, the domestic tourism is expected to recover faster than international tourism. Through wider efforts to promote tourism and higher allocation for this sector, the focus of the State Government is to create a brand Bihar' in the tourism sector.

Till 2019, the footfall has steadily increased year after year in Bihar (Table 1). However, there was a sharp decline in the tourist arrival in 2020. The primary reason for the lower tourist turn out can be attributed to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and frequent closing down of international borders and restricted movements within the country.

Table 1: Number of Domestic & Foreign Tourist Arrivals

Year	Number of Tourists (in lakh)		
	Domestic	Foreign	Total
2012	214.5	10.9	225.4
2013	215.9	7.7	223.5
2014	225.4	8.3	233.7
2015	280.3	9.2	289.5
2016	285.2	10.1	295.3
2017	324.1	10.8	335.0
2018	336.2	10.9	347.1
2019	339.9	10.9	350.8
2020	56.4	3.0	59.5

Source: Department of Tourism, GoB

In 2020-21, a sum of Rs 14527.10 lakh was sanctioned for the development of various tourism projects in Bihar, followed by a sanction of Rs. 2025.34 lakh in 2021-22. The trend of approved budget and actual expenditure of the Department of Tourism in Bihar is presented in Table 4.30. As is evident from the table, the utilisation of fund has been high in earlier years, but has dropped to 19.6 percent in 2020-21, which is a consequence of the pandemic. Some of the major developments in the tourism sector in recent years are:

- Modernization and upgradation of Tourist Information Center (2021-22) in Bodhgaya at an estimated cost Rs 95.61 lakh
- To construct State Guest House in Bodh Gaya, costing Rs. 13615.00 lakh
- Beautification and upgradation work at Rajju Marg and surrounding areas near Rajgir, costing Rs. 1638.73 lakh
- Upgradation of KoteswarDham Temple in Gaya district at an estimated cost of Rs 786.00 lakh
- Development of tourist amenities and landscaping at seven spots in Purnea district, costing Rs 912.10 lakh.

Table 2: Expenditure on Department of Tourism (2014-15 to 2020-21)

Year	Approved Budget (Rs. Crore)	Expenditure (Rs. Crore)	Expenditure as Percentage of Budget
2014-15	118.1	87.4	74.0
2015-16	66.0	65.4	99.0
2016-17	94.5	86.4	91.5
2017-18	91.0	76.7	84.3
2018-19	84.6	47.2	55.8
2019-20	275.0	82.8	30.1
2020-21	357.9	70.20	19.6

Source: Department of Tourism, GoB

In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the following projects have been planned to promote tourism in Bihar under SwadeshDarshan Scheme of Prime Minister's Special Package:

- **Development of Jain Circuit:** Under this scheme of Prime Minister Special Package, a sum of Rs 5238.95 lakh (revised to Rs 3719.22 lakh) has been sanctioned for the development of Jain Circuit in Bihar. Till date, Rs 2363.14 lakh has already been spent and the construction work is under progress.

- **Development of Kanwariya Circuit:** The sanctioned amount for the Kanwariya Circuit under the SwadeshDarshan Scheme was Rs 5235.00 lakh. Under this scheme, Rs 3976.01 lakh has already been spent till date and the construction work is almost completed.
- **Development of Mandar Hill and Ang Pradesh:** Of the sanctioned amount of Rs 4752.88 lakh for the development of Mandar Hill and Ang Pradesh, Rs. 3334.57 lakh has already been spent. The construction work is under progress.
- **Development of Gandhi Circuit:** For the development of Gandhi Circuit in Bihar, a sum of Rs 4465.02 lakh has been sanctioned. The construction work is in progress and the State Government has already spent Rs 2232.51 lakh for this scheme.

Finally, one may note that the State Government is developing a Cultural Center in Bodh Gaya to promote the city as a popular destination for meeting, conference and other events related to tourism. For this project, the State Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs 14514.00 lakh. The Building Construction Department of the State Government is the nodal agency for the construction of the Center. The work is under progress, and Rs 7834.16 lakh has already been spent till date.

Potentiality of Tourism in Bihar

Bihar draws its name from the word “vihara” or monastery, and was the early home of Buddhism. It is a “Land of Enlightenment” and “centre of Learning” having ancient heritage includes Stupas, temples and Buddha’s life activities with rituals and traditions. Magadha is a place where Siddhartha Gautama became Lord Buddha after getting supreme knowledge under Bodhi tree at BodhGaya. The magnificent Mahabodhi temple and revered Buddha Tree attract Buddhist pilgrimage from all parts of the world. The sacred footsteps of the Buddha, evolved into pilgrimages are trailed through Buddhist circuit comprises the sites of BodhGaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Patliputra, Vaishali, Kesriya, Vikramshila and many least popular sites have immense potential.

Bihar is one of the most sacred place of various religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Islam, Many tourist travel to Bihar to visit their pilgrimage. Mahabodhi Temple, a Buddhist shrine and UNESCO World Heritage Site is also situated in Bihar. Mahatma Gandhi Setu, Patna, is one of the longest bridge in the world.

Hindu Pilgrimages

- Mahavir Mandir

- Sitamarhi
- Madhubani
- Punausa
- Buxar
- West Champaran
- Munger
- Jamui
- Darbhanga
- Anga
- Patna

Sikh Pilgrimages

The capital of Bihar, Patna is one of the holiest city in Sikhism, as the tenth Guru of the Sikhs Guru Gobind Singh was born here in 1666 and spent his early years before moving to Anandpur. Patna was also honoured by visits from Guru Nanak in 1509 as well as Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1666.

Takht Shri Harmandir Saheb -is, one of the Five Takhts of the Sikhism. The Gurdwara at Patna Sahib is in remembrance of the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh, The tenth Guru of the Sikhs. Gurdwara Pahila Bara commonly known as Gurdwara Ghai Ghat, is dedicated to Guru Nanak Dev, who during his visit in to Patna stayed here in 1509 A.D. and later by Guru Tegh Bahadur alongwith his family visited this place in 1666 A. D.

Gurdwara Gobind Ghat- is where the child Guru Gobind Singh used to play with his playmates on the bank of the Ganges. It is situated on the bank of river Ganges and hardly 200 yards from Takht Shri Harmandir Saheb. It's also known as Gurdwara Kangan Ghat. Gurdwara Guru ka Bagh - This Gurdwara is situated 2 miles far from the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh.

Gurdwara Bal Leela - This place is just few meters away from Takhat Patna Sahib. Guru ji were playing with other children during his childhood.Gurdwara Bal Leela is also known as Maini Sangat.

Gurdwara Handi Sahib - This Gurdwara was built in the memory of Guru Teg Bahadur. As Guru Teg Bahadur with Mata Gujri and Bala Preetam stayed here in 1728

- Gurdwara Taksali Sangat
- Gurdwara Chacha Phaggu Mal

- Gurdwara Pakki Sangat
- Gurdwara Bari Sangat Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Chauki

Buddhism Pilgrimages

- Mahabodhi Temple
- Bodhi Tree
- Bodh Gaya
- Gaya
- Vaishali
- Pawapuri
- Nalanda
- Rajgir
- Kesariya
- Vikramshila
- Areraj
- Patliputra

Islamic Pilgrimages

- Sasaram
- Maner Sharif
- Bihar Sharif
- Phulwari Sharif

Jain Pilgrimage

- Rajgir
- Pawapuri
- Patliputra
- Arrah
- Vikramshila

Other Pilgrimages

- Padari ki haveli

SWOT Analysis of Tourism in Bihar

A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis is being made hereunder in the context of Tourism in Bihar:

Strengths

- Bihar comprises a rich inventory of high-end tourism services with natural resources and a glorious cultural heritage.
- Buddhist religious places are spread across the state. Bodhgaya, where Buddha gained supreme illumination, is the most prominent Buddhist pilgrimage site in Bihar.
- Other Buddhist and Jain pilgrimage sites, including Rajgir, Nalanda, and Vaishali, also attract large numbers of foreign tourists.
- A good number of Hindu and Sikh pilgrimage sites including Sitamarhi (birth place of Mata Janki) and Patna Saheb (birth place of Guru Govind Singh ji) are attracting sites of religions tourism.
- The Gautam Buddha Sanctuary, Rajgir Sanctuary, and other wildlife and bird sanctuaries also attract domestic and overseas tourists.
- Heritage monuments in Bihar are located in Vikramsila, Nalanda, and Kumrahar.

Weaknesses

- ☞ Issues of safety and security for tourists affect the image of the state of Bihar.
- ☞ Tourism suffers from lack of infrastructure (e.g. public conveniences, transportation facilities, etc.).
- ☞ Tourism suffers from a lack of concerted marketing efforts.
- ☞ Tourism suffers from lack of awareness and publicity among domestic tourists.
- ☞ Tourism suffers from lack of professional training services.
- ☞ The four major rivers in Bihar which make 16.5% of its area are prone to flood.

Opportunities

- ✓ Develop heritage tourism and promote religious places, historical places, forts, and archaeological sites.
- ✓ Promote cultural tourism related to festivals and fairs.
- ✓ Encourage health tourism by promoting spring sites that offer health and wellness features such as yoga.
- ✓ Improve safety and security along with increased tourism infrastructure.

Threats

- ❖ Bihar stands to lose tourism to other competitive Buddhist circuits (e.g. neighbouring ones in Uttar Pradesh and Nepal).
- ❖ Neighbouring international tourist destinations such as Thailand and newly opened Myanmar may compete for the same visitors.
- ❖ Lack of awareness among international and national travellers may allow Bihar's potential as a tourist destination to remain untapped.

Summing-up

The Bihar Tourism plays a vital role to invite policy makers, entrepreneur's coordinators and stimulators and asked these for balanced economic and social development programmes for tourism sector. It can help the every community of state become more attractive and prosperous. It becomes so because the community acquires the capacity to draw and satisfy visitors who spend money. Visitors who enjoy and appreciate a community will recommend it to increase the demand for Bihar Tourism. Government should go forward as get them to stop, to stay, to spread the word and to return.

The rapid growth of tourism sector has produced both problems and opportunities on the vast scale for societies, and its impact has been economic, socio-cultural, environmental and political. These days, tourism is frequently offended for its adverse impacts on the lost country. It is to be critical while the basic nature of tourism makes it particularly difficult to assess its likely consequences. There are so many different types of tourism which occur in a wide variety of settings leading to a diversity of effective combinations. In the economy of Bihar, tourism is now considered a largest industry in view of earning sources of foreign exchange and generate opportunities of jobs than any other industry at a faster rate as well as at a lower cost. It helps to sustainable human development, poverty alleviation; employment generation and environmental regeneration especially, in Northern Bihar. Development of tourism needs to be taken up on priority basis as Bihar has enough untapped tourism potential, which can be successfully harnessed for the benefit of the development of means which have required underdeveloped despite all possibilities of development.

References:

1. *Agrawal, S (2015), Role of Service Sector in Indian Economy with Special Reference to Tourism Industry, Voice of Research, Vol. 3, No.4, pp.59-60.*
2. *Bhatia, A K (1978), Tourism in India, Sterling Publisher, New Delhi.*

3. *Burkart, A J and Medlik, S (1974), Tourism-Past, Present and Future, Heinemann, London*
4. *Choudhary, Anand Kumar (2020), Marketing Strategies for Developing Rural Tourism in Bihar International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management, Vol.2, No.9, November, pp. 833-836.*
5. *Economic Survey 2021-22, Finance Department, Government of Bihar, Patna*
6. *Greay, D. (2008), Destination Enlightenment: Branding Buddhism and Spiritual Tourism in Bodhgaya, Bihar, Anthropology Today, Vol. 24, No.3, pp. 11-14.*
7. *Jha, S M (2005), Tourism Marketing, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai.*
8. *Malik, Mosarrat (2020), Tourism Promotion of Bihar: An Economic Game Changer, Global Journal for Research Analysis, Vol.9, No. 10, October, pp. 69-70.*
9. *Sharma, N K (2012), Tourism: Development and Management, Prism Books, Jaipur.*
10. *Singh, S R (2013), Bihar on Move, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi.*
11. *www.tourism.bihar.gov.in*