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Yoga and its Potential in Indian Tourism Development.

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Abstract

India is the land of Yoga and other traditional sciences. Among these, Yoga is one of the most ancient psychosomatic training known to the human beings for the promotion of both the physical and mental health. The contributions of Indian yoga masters profusely influenced the development of this spiritual discipline across the world. The efforts of the propagation and promotion of the principles and practices in the curriculum of yoga is significantly contributing for the promotion of the sustainable tourism in India.

Yoga is essentially a spiritual science, it is a base for ethical life, accessing the teachings are great means for the revival of the heritage and ancient tradition of the country. It is an opportunity to inculcate the values, principles of ethics. It is potential in the promotion of peace and harmony in the life.

Applications of Yogic techniques are contributing a lot for the health care systems. The preventive, promotive and curative aspects of yoga as natural health care measures for the promotion of positive health and in the management of the various psychosomatic and lifestyle diseases. These are widely appreciated in the area of medical tourism.

Yoga holidays and retreats in India are wonderful opportunities for this personal self-empowerment and growth. These programs are great to inculcate healthy lifestyle to learn the science and art of healthy living. These training programs coupled with Ayurveda, significantly contribute for the wellness tourism in India.

The teachings of yogic life inspired many of the people in the west. Every year many foreign students visit India to join Yoga teacher training courses. The diversity in the Yoga traditions is of great significance for the study and practice of yoga in India. The heritage cities like Rishikesh and Haridwar as well as Dharmasala, Mysore, Gokarna, Goa and few places in Kerala are the most popular destinations of residential yoga courses for western students. Unique geographical features and the salubrious climate, verdant nature of the Himalayas with panoramic view and other scenic destinations of the country make the learning of Yoga as rewarding experience to the visitors.

The current paper focuses on the opportunities and challenges in the field of yoga for the promotion of sustainable tourism in India

Keywords: Yoga, Tourism, Lifestyle, Health care, Heritage

India is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world for many of the western travelers. Every year large number of foreigners visit the country to see the diversity, geographical features, monuments and the fascinating history of the heritages places and palaces. The culture and cuisine of the country is loved by the tourists coming across the world. There is an increase in foreign tourist arrivals in India.¹

Yoga is another significant area of interest in the tourism industry, Millions of people visit India to learn the principles and practice of this ancient art and science of healthily living.² India being the land of yoga has great opportunities to study the discipline in the most authentic way yet with cost effective and affordable learning facilities. It is bringing the various advantages to promote the employment opportunities in associated industries of the tourism. Yoga has the potentiality to tap the many of the unexplored tourism destinations in India.

Historical Development of Yoga and its Origin.

Classically Yoga is one of the six philosophical systems of India,³ the teachings of its principles are found in Vedic periods. Patanjala yoga philosophy is the most authoritative classical work on this ancient spiritual discipline which is based on the Samkhya philosophy of Kapil Muni. There is a history of more than five thousands year for yoga. Many of the yoga modules are found in the ancient scriptures such as Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishads⁴ and the great epics of the country. The ultimate aim of Yoga is the Samadhi. Ashtanga Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Mantra Yoga are the different paths to attain this higher aim. Many Indian Yoga masters and their traditions have huge significance for the promotion of the Principles and Practices of Yoga for the health and wellness.

Popular Destinations of Yoga Tourism in India

India is well known for the deep roots and great history of yoga. There are many such popular destinations for enhancing the experience of Yoga tourism in India. The tourist love to explore the most fascinating destination of the country while they undergo proper training in yoga. These locations have distinguished geographical features such as with mountains, lakes, rivers, a deep dense forests as well as the beach sides of the ocean. The present article explore few of poplar yoga destinations in India

Rishikesh:

This spiritual town is one of the heritage cities of the country. It has been the most important pilgrimage place of India since from several centuries. It is also popularly known as the world capital of yoga. The city is located on the foothills of the mighty majestic Himalayas on the river banks of the great Ganga. Many of the great Indian masters spent their life time in the practice of meditation and teaching of yoga to many of the aspirants coming from different countries of the world. It is the most famous yoga teacher training destination in India because of its salubrious climate. River rafting is most loved excursions for the students of yoga courses.

Varkala:

Varkala is a pleasant coastal town, a spectacular tourism destination of Kerala, The state is known for the well tourism in India. The beach town is also one of the main places of pilgrimage importance in Kerala. Ancient temple like JanardhanSwamy temple, Papanashini beach and Sivagiri Mutt are the places of spiritual tourism interest in the city. It is well known for its religious and rich cultural heritage. It is the cradle of Ayurveda. It is a place for rejuvenation and relaxation because of its ideal ambience to explore the natural beauty. The city enjoys an excellent look with sky blue sea with soaring cliffs along coastal line. Yoga practice with the ocean view in the North Cliff of Varkala beach is truly a great experience and opportunity to enjoy the bliss of the nature.

Mysore:

Mysore is known as the city of palaces. The city is located in the foothills of the Chamundi Hills, The royal heritage of the emperors influenced a lot for the promotion and propagation of yoga in Karnataka with the teachings the legendary master. T Krishnamacharaya .The AshtangaVinyasa Yoga tradition was nurtured in the

first yoga shala of Mysore in the Jagannathan Palace which was established in 1934. Rich cultural heritage of Mysore draws millions of tourists from different countries all around the year. Places like Goa, Dharmasala, Gokarna attract many yoga practitioners every to India

Holistic view of Yoga for health and wellness

The philosophy, science and techniques of yoga are helpful to enhance the health of an individual on multiple dimensions. These are the outcome of the psychosomatic practices of yoga for the balanced and integrated development of the human personality. These techniques promote the Physical, mental and emotional health. The Social behavior for proper code of conduct, cultivation of the strong will power, balanced emotions and sharp intellect are blessed in yogic curriculum. The strength and flexibility through asana and the control of the mind by means of pranayama and the prathyahara techniques increase the productivity of the practitioners. These are highly valued for holistic concept in the promotion of the wellness. The research in the field of yoga has shown that it is an effective method of weight management.⁵

Yoga Teacher Training Courses in India

India is the land of Yoga. Many of the eminent Indian masters and their institutes have the huge contributions for the development of its teaching methods. The study of Yoga in India considered as the great treasure of the life of many yogis across the world. The career opportunities, the fascinating history, wonderful health benefits of yoga attract many international aspirants to learn its principles and techniques. The study of philosophical perspectives deepens the knowledge about the roots of yoga in India. The lessons in the course curriculum of the training program provide the comprehensive knowledge of yoga philosophy and its techniques. It is of great help to embrace the journey of professional yoga teacher to launch career in the field of yoga with international recognitions and teachings standards. The Himalayas are the great places to learn this art and science of healthy living.

Yoga Therapy

Yoga therapy is one of the promising area to promote the health care system of our nation. The techniques of Asana, pranayama, meditation and relaxation techniques are effectively useful in the management of the most pressing health problems around the globe. The system of yoga is widely used as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for many of the psychomatic and lifestyle diseases. The practice of yoga therapy is based on holistic approach and it is sustainable and ecofriendly as well as well accepted system in the society. The contributions of therapeutical applications of this ancient spiritual discipline are increasing the opportunities for the medical tourism in India. The fundamentals of Ayurveda is another added advantage for the promotion of wellness and health tourism.⁶

Yoga Retreats and Holidays

Yoga retreats and holidays play prominent role in the wellness tourism of the country for the attraction of many tourists both from domestic and overseas. These programs are helpful to inculcate healthy lifestyle and wellbeing through the practices of yoga and its principles.⁷ Meditation and relaxation techniques are helpful for the effective stress management and promote positive mental health. The course along with Ayurveda adds the advantages of holistic health. The vibrant ecosystem of different retreat locations offer a range of excursions activities such river rafting, hiking, boating etc. These holidays are rewarding for the participants as they provide the base for yogic life along with cherishing memories of the yoga retreat locations in India.

Study Tour and Exchange Programs for International Yoga Students.

The academic institutions such as the universities across the world are eager to provide an exchange programs through the study tour in India on the cultural studies and yoga for the benefiting the international communities on for yogic life and its applications. Nations like China, South Korea and Russia bring many students to different learning centers in India to experience yoga right the source. They explore the authentic curriculum of yoga and its benefits from the traditional hatha yoga techniques.⁸

Yoga Tours and Pilgrimage

Many Yoga destinations in the country serves to be the prominent places of pilgrimage.⁹ The yoga tours are the customized traveling experiences for the people interested in the spirituality and in the expression of the devotion to the divine nature through their visits to such places. These programs bring a sense of accomplishment and inner happiness to the tourists. Yoga while on the move connects them to their inner self in the spiritual destinations.

The Four Pillars of Sustainability

United Nations World Tourism Organization has proposed 17 Sustainable Development Goals of Tourism. Protection and sustainability of cultural values, diversity and heritage are among them. Yoga is one of the key area for the promotion of the sustainable development. Sustainability aims in the preservation of the resources in the area people, society, environment and the economy. The principles and practices of the yoga are encompass the values to protect all the four dimensions of the sustainability.

Challenges, Threats for the Promotion of Yoga Tourism.

India is peace loving country and the always consider the tourists as the “*AthithiDevo Bhava*’ . But unfortunately there are many fake yogis, tourist guides and travel operators who create lots of socio economic problems to the visitors. Sometime the female solo travelers have been vulnerable to such incidents. Regulation authority for professionals of Yoga and Yoga therapy is essential for checking the mushrooming of the fake yoga schools and teachers. Skill development of Indian Yoga teachers to meet the international teaching credentials is another thirist area.

Promotion of the Health and Hygiene as well as Sanitation initiatives along with enhanced Safety and Security for International tourists is important responsibility to ensure the good will and trust of the tourists. Provision of the appropriate Visa for Yoga courses in India helps in the easy entry for the aspirants. There are many significant influence in the culture of the community of the tourist destinations.¹⁰ There is need to educate the travelers to respect the culture and heritage of the country.

The Support from Ministries of AYUSH, Tourism and MHRD

The government of India is promoting the importance of yoga for health and wellness both at national and international levels through the different ministries. The ministry of AYUSH organizes the Conferences, Yoga festivals and International Yoga day to promote the awareness on the beneficial effects of yoga to the classes and the masses. Ministry funds various research projects in the field of yoga. Tourism ministry has produced thematic promotional films on Yoga. Ministry of Human Resource Development through its arm of University Grants Commission is promoting the education, training and research in yoga at various institutions and the universities of the country.

Conclusion.

The global recognition of yoga and its authentic teachings right at the source for the promotion of health and wellness in order to improve the quality of the life experience attracts many international tourists to India. Yoga has great potential to contribute for the promotion of the sustainable development of tourism in India along with the cultural values, diversity and heritage.

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