

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANTS OF TOURISM IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT – AN ANALYSIS

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Tourism is arguably a very fast growing medium for the blending of cultures in our ever shrinking global village. The rapid communications revolution and the globalisation of the world economy has meant that there is virtually no part of the world which cannot be accessed easily for the unique attractions and diversified qualities that it offers.

The Tourism has brought many changes in cultural issues. Tourism in short period has led to a closer association and mingling of people of different races, religions and cultures. Mass international impact on local cultures and customs or that a local area will distort its local festivals and ceremonies to stage spectacles for the benefit of international visitors.

The socio-cultural impact of tourism is manifested through an enormous range of aspects from the arts and crafts through to the fundamental behaviour of the individuals and collective groups.¹

Tourism-Melting Pot of Different Cultures

Tourism acts as a melting pot of different cultures. It has also led to resurgences of cultures. Cultural Tourism has enabled the countries to accord importance to the development of cultural product intended for visitors and to the protection of natural environment. “The positive impact is preserve and even resurrects the crafts skills of the population or the enhancement”.²

Staged Authenticity

Art

The tourist demands instant culture, an opportunity to sample. This staged authenticity is a search by tourists for authentic experiences of another culture leads to locals of that culture either providing those experiences, or staging them to appear as realistic as possible. Culture in this way is in danger of becoming commercialised and trivialised, as folk dances are staged for the package tourists as a form of cabaret in hotels are arranged, often in an artificially shortened form, as performances for groups of tourists,

Food

Tourist will seek out local restaurants not frequented by other tourists in order to enjoy the 'authentic' cuisine and environment of the locals, but by the very act of their discovering such restaurants, these become in turn tourist attractions and ultimately the 'tourists traps' tourist sought to avoid. The locals move on to find somewhere else to eat.³

Crafts

Tourist seek local artifacts as souvenirs or investments. In case of genuine works are purchased, this can lead to loss of cultural case treasures from a country and many countries now impose strict bans on exports of such items. Tourists are often satisfy to purchase what they believe to be an authentic example of local art, this has led to the mass production of poorly crafted works (sometimes referred to as airport art). It alternatively encourages the freezing of art styles in pseudo traditional term. Tourism helped to regenerate an awareness and pride in local culture and traditions. Dying local arts and crafts have been revived arts. Cottage industry in rural areas which have benefited economically from the impact of tourism.⁴

Commercialisation and bastardization of arts and crafts and the commercialisation of ceremonies rituals etc., have become the fashion in Tourism. Tourism helps people to become acquainted with the usages and customs to visit the museums and to admire work of art. As Medlik says, "When the tourist comes in contact with the place he visits and its population, a social exchange takes place. His social background affects the social structure and mode of life of his destination; he is in turn affected by it and sometimes carries back home with him new habits and ways of life".⁵

Mass tourism can contribute unique benefits to the exploiting of the cultural heritage of a nation and can serve indirectly to improve the individual cultural level of both nations and foreigners, at the same time developing into national wealth. The developing countries, possessing an ancient civilization or an original culture, gain greatly from tourism as many people like to experience the exotic culture. Tourism means the prospect of contact with other civilizations, their original and varied. Customs and traditions with their distinct characteristics. It is a vehicle for international understanding by way of bringing diverse people face to face. It helps to break down barriers, prejudices, and suspicions between nations. Thus tourism leads to the disappearance of traditional human environments and replaces with towers of artificial concrete ideas, ethics and morals in effect, threatening the whole fabric of tradition and nature.

In many of the countries is foreign ownership and management of tourist facilities which may create the feeling that indigenous people are fit to perform only menial tasks. Tourism may be regarded as a threat to the indigenous culture.

Restoration and Preservation

But a carefully planned well organised tourist destination can benefit local residents through exposure to a variety of ideas. People, languages and other cultural traits, it can add to the richness of resident experience by stimulation and interest in the area's history through restoration and preservation of historical sites.

Organized cultural tourism development can provide opportunities for local people to learn more about themselves. This increases the feeling of pride in their heritage and a heightened perception of their own self-worth. There is evidence of socio-cultural impacts, ranging from the clothes we wear, the food we eat and our general life styles and attitudes, influenced by places we visit.⁶

The cultural distinctions between the residents are tourists from more prosperous countries and regions are strongly marked, local culture and customs may be exploited to satisfy visitors, sometimes at the expense of local pride and dignity.

Cultural Revival

Tourism also can contribute to cultural revival. Tourism provided unique opportunities for tourists to experience art, music, dance, food, literature, language, religion and history different from their own. At the same time tourists bring to the local area their own socio-cultural manifestations that have positive or negative results depending on the way tourism is handled in the receiving country.

Cultural Impact of Tourism in Kanyakumari District

In Kanyakumari we can see intermingling of different cultures. The locals are mostly astonished by the unique culture, dressing and behaviour of foreigners and domestic tourists. Their admiration reflects in their way of dressing and styles.

One of the best impact of tourism on Kanyakumari people is they forced to learn other languages like Hindi and English for improving their business. So Kanyakumari is a melting pot for different cultures because here more locals from other parts of our country are frequently visit here as pilgrimage.

The name Kanyakumari is mentioned equal to Kasi as a important pilgrim centre. Tourism helps to preserve folk arts like Bow song, Kalial, Karaga Dance and Kalari. The Kathakali, Ottam Thullal,

Thriuvathirai Kali are also performed here but the staged authenticity leads commercialisation and bastardisation of these arts. Now a days the originality lost its beauty because of commercialisation. Artists performing just to satisfy tourists especially international tourists curiosity. For tourists these arts are very novel to them. They do not know the original art. The artists performs as they like. The result is traditionality losts in these arts.

In Kanyakumari most of the hotels and restaurants are run for the purpose of tourists only. Mostly tourists interested to enjoy authentic cuisine. In Kanyakumari foods are selling in high rates than other places. Hence the local are suffered by this. In seasons because of overcrowding locals forced to other places.

Crafts works are also just made for commercialisation. Artists are producing handicrafts and crafts just like original them. But they are selling that for high prize of original peace. Again the youngsters are now-a-days imitating foreigners. They feel inferior in front of tourists. Because they have no idea about their own proud of cultural value. Locals surprised by foreigners wealth which hastened to the thieves to cheat tourists.

Even Poojas in temples also performed whenever tourists want it. The systematic way has been changed a lot due to the influence of Tourists. In Kanyakumari using panparak rate is in high. But this bad habit imported from other parts of tourists only.

More social crimes are taking place here. Like prostitution and drug distribution are taking place. Even locals use this place for their illegal activities. Cultural impact leads locals to know about their own culture. Because of tourism local people work hard to achieve a lot for emulate way of the life of the tourists.

END NOTES

1. Eris Cooper, John Fletcher, (et.al.). *Tourism Principles and Practice*, New York, 1998, p.169.
2. *Ibid.*, p.74.
3. *Ibid.*, p.31.
4. A.K. Rain, R.C.Lodha, *Fundamental of Tourism System*, New Delhi, 2004, p.36.
5. *Ibid.*, p.38.
6. Eris Cooper, John Fletcher, (et.al.), *Op.cit.*, p.170.