

# TOURISM IN WESTERN ODISHA: PROBLEMS & PROSPECTS

\*Miss Sujata Ranbida PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of History Berhampur University

\*\*Dr. Sadananda Nayak Reader, Dept. of History, Berhampur University

## Abstract:

Travel for recreation, leisure, religious purpose, family outing or business purposes, usually for a limited duration is known as 'Tourism'. Historic sightseeing, pilgrimage travel, adventure travel, cultural vacations etc. are many forms of tourism. From the tourism point of view, Western Odisha is a most suitable place for different types of tourism as the area having some beautiful tourist spots, like historic place Vikramkhola rock art site, sanctuaries like Ushakothi, Deer park, religious centers like famous Samaleswari temple, Huma Leaning temple, Ghanteswari temple, Astakoni Rameswar temple, Chausathi Jogini temple, some beautiful waterfalls like Pradhanpat, Nrusinghanath, Khandadhar, Phurlijharan, Harishankar etc, world largest Hirakud dam many such places of tourist attractions are located in the area. It plays a major role in the growth of an economy as it generates large scale employment and is also a large foreign exchange earner in the state. Tourism carries the picture of our culture and hospitality. It is because of the tourism sector, western Odisha has gained brand image in the minds of domestic and foreign tourists. The study is undertaken to analyse the tourist attractions in Western Odisha; assess the contribution of tourism in the foreign exchange earnings and find out the problems and obstacles and what may be the prospects related to tourism in this area.

**Keywords:** Historic sightseeing, pilgrimage travel, adventure travel, sanctuaries and hospitality.

## INTRODUCTION:

Odisha is situated on the eastern coast of India. It extends from 17° 49' N to 22° 34' N latitude and from 81° 29' E longitude. It is bounded by West Bengal in the north-east, Bihar and Jharkhand in the north, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh in the west, Andhra Pradesh in the south and the Bay of Bengal in the east.<sup>1</sup>Orissa enjoyed a unique position in the geography of India.<sup>2</sup>Western Odisha is a territory in western part of Odisha, extending from the Kalahandi district in the south to the Sundargarh district in the north-west, with her beguiling charm, rural tranquillity, hundreds of temples, wild life sanctuaries, park, indigenous tribal people and their varied culture, colourful and vibrant cultural festivals, hospitable environs offer most everything on a platter, any visitor expects from a dream destination. Nature's beauty is seen in forests and around rivers.<sup>3</sup>West Odisha includes the districts of Balangir, Bargarh, Boudh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Sundargarh and Athmallik subdivision of Angul district.

## MEANING & DEFINITION OF TOURISM:

Tourism is a means of understanding history and culture of the people of various regions and countries. The spirit of enquiry and inquisitiveness to know the environment and habits and to enjoy leisure and freedom makes people to travel and visit places of tourist importance. Tourism signifies “meeting the other people”, “leisure loving mission”, work with pleasure, a business of ideas, visiting historical, religious and cultural places etc. In fact tourism is to promote “physical invigoration, mental rejuvenation, cultural enrichment and spiritual elevation”.<sup>4</sup> Tourism depends on historical monuments, cultural centres and environmental beauty including beaches, resorts, gardens, river basins etc. The high-products of tourism is the creation of jobs in the form of guides, travel, transport, hotels and motels and other sister concerns. It has been recognised as an industry. But tourism is based on history, historical monuments and the culture and civilization built around. Hence to develop tourism, the study of history, historical monuments secular and religious, their art, architecture, sculpture and the technology involved is necessary. Odisha provides great opportunity for the promotion of tourism based on its contribution to history, culture, heritage, art, architecture and beautiful natural environment with forests, rivers, beaches and temple complexes.

Travel and tourism have been a part of human life since long and is at once associated with pleasures, adventures, gainful experiences and knowledge. However travel in the present scenario has become a commercial proposition. It has grown into an industry under the name of tourism, which fills the coffers<sup>5</sup> of the state. It is an important means to earn precious foreign exchange. Indeed tourism has become the second large-scale industry after oil and is growing very fast. Every nation is today tapping its tourism potential.<sup>6</sup>

## TOURIST PLACES IN WESTERN ODISHA:

Western Odisha abounds in hills, forests, dales, springs, rivulets and temples, forts and caves etc. Nature's beauty is seen in forests and around rivers. There are many wonderful places of scenic beauty and of historical monuments all of which have no easy access. A short and selective account of those that can be accessed easily is given below.

*Athamallik* – It is a town situated on the bank of Mahanadi in Angul district towards the south of Boinda, is a Sub-divisional headquarters and has a picturesque forest covered surrounding. It is known for its hot spring called ‘Deuljhari’.<sup>7</sup>

*Boudh* – At a place called Gandharadi (Gandhar Badi) near Narayan Nagar (said to be the ancient capital of Boudh) about 10 kms from Boudh are the twin temples of Nilamadhab and Siddheswar Shiva. Built of stone on a stone pedestal and very much unlike any other temple in Western Odisha, they present a

wonderful sight. Also known as Charisambhu Mandir, they are exactly alike and have beautiful images of different deities besides many figures carved out on the stones.

*Puruna Katak* – About 30kms from Boudh, at Puruna Katak, there are attractive temples of Goddess Bhairavi and Mahadeva.<sup>8</sup>

*Balangir* – About 25 kms from Patnagarh, Harishankar, situated on southern slopes of the Gandhamardan range of mountains, is a place of uncommon natural beauty and religious sentiments. By the side of a perennial brook trickling from the top of the mountain and forming small waterfalls on its way are situated the main temple of Shiva and small temples of Bhairavi and Lord Jagannath at the foothills. People from far and near including Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand gather here during Shivaratri and Nrusingha Chaturdasi melas. Both Hari (Lord Vishnu) and Shankar (Lord Shiva) are worshipped here.

*Ranipur Jharial* – These two adjacent villages near Sindhekela in Titlagarh Sub-division have extensive ruins of medieval monuments. The temple of 16 Yoginis and the bricks temple of Lord Vishnu are both places of historical antiquity and religious significance.<sup>9</sup>

*Charda* – It is a village near Binka has a beautiful temple of Kapileswar Shiva. It is also known for Hanu Jatra and Kalasi Jatra celebrated in the month of Kartik.

*Sonepur* – It is situated at the confluence of Mahanadi and Tel is a very picturesque place referred to as another Varanasi. It has numerous sacred shrines of Shiva and Parvati built by the Chauhan kings including the temples of Astasambhu (including Subarnameru and Rameswar), Asta Chandi (Sureswari), Asta Vishnu and Lankeswari.<sup>10</sup>

*Kalahandi-Asurgarh* – About 5 kms from Narla, Asurgarh has the remains of an old fort with four entrances, one in each direction, where deities of Ganga Devi, Kalapahad, Vaishnavi and Budharaja are installed. Inside the fort there are ruins of a palace and a small hamlet where Goddess Dokari is worshipped. In Bhabanipatna both Phurlijharan and Raban Darha are places of great scenic grandeur. The first is 60 waterfalls surrounded by ever green forests and second is a small waterfall inside a mountain gorge. The panorama provides delightful contrasts of scenery in mountains and overlooking dales, in bare rocks and thick forests and in the eternal calmness of the surrounding broken by the music of the falls.<sup>11</sup>

*Badarama Ghati and Ushakothi Sanctuary* – About 45 kms from Sambalpur on N.H.6 both the Ghati and sanctuary have wonderful forest scenes and many wild animals.

*Ghanteswari Shrine* – Near village Chipilima, about 37 kms south of Sambalpur is the shrine of a village deity Ghantei known as Ghanteswari where devotees come and tie bells. Nearby is natural fall of about 80 in height in the Mahanadi which makes the place very attractive for picnickers as well.

*Hirakud Dam* – About 10 kms north of Sambalpur, it is a multipurpose river project on the Mahanadi having the largest earth dam in Asia. The vast expanse of water in the Hirakud dam, spotted with hills all around, presents one of the most majestic scenes that the eyes have ever met.

*The Leaning Shiva temple at Huma* – Built on the bank of Mahanadi about 25 kms downstream, it is a unique piece of architecture. The large size kudo fish, with a reddish appearance, found throughout the year in the river, are a great attraction for the visitors as they are not shy of human beings. Despite the floods and the perennially flowing water in the river, the fishes have managed to inhabit the same place for several years.<sup>12</sup>

*Pradhanpat* – Very near the headquarters of the present Deogarh district, it is an impressive waterfall on a perennial stream that flows down a high hill that can be seen from afar. The pool of water at the bottom of the hill with the forest background presents beautiful scenery. Within the nearby beautifully laid out gardens, Basant Nivas are delicately carved stone statues including that of Venus.<sup>13</sup>

*Kuilighoghar* – A temple situated in the jungles of Chuikhanch near Kudabaga in the present Jharsuguda district on N.H.201 towards Raigarh is dedicated to Maheswar Baba and is supposed to be of superhuman construction. There is a waterfall near the temple and the deity is said to live in a pool at the foot of the fall which is full of fish and snakes. There is also a cave in the adjoining rocks called Maheswarnath said to be a place of retreat of the deity.

*Vikramkhol* – Around 25 kms west of Jharsuguda, it is a cave containing pictographic inscriptions of antiquity which historians are trying to decipher. This pre-historic site is having remarkable importance.<sup>14</sup>

*Mandira Dam* – A dam across river Sankha constructed to supply water to Rourkela and other industrial units at a place where the river water passes through a gorge flanked by hills presents a picturesque sight amidst luxuriant forests.

*Khandadhar* – Karapani Nala, a perennial rivulet in Bonai, creates a waterfall in its journey down a tall hill. This waterfall presents grand natural sight luxuriant forests.<sup>15</sup>

*Vedavyas* – Situated at the confluence of rivers Sankha and Koel. Vedavyas is one of the many beautiful spots in Sundargarh district not very far from Rourkela. It is regarded as a place of religious sanctity. Of the three temples built here, two are Shiva and the third is a Ram temple having the images of Ram, Laxman and Sita. A dip at the confluence is supposed to wash away sins. Sage Vedavyas is supposed to have lived here in a cave now in ruins. It has a Vedic Ashram established by Arya Samaj.<sup>16</sup>

## PROBLEMS OF TOURISM IN WEST ODISHA:

There are some problems in Western Odisha related to tourism like security threats, environmental degradation, poor transportation, service and accommodation facilities etc. Tourist arrival in Western Odisha has kept a very low profile. As per the official estimates, the annual foreign tourist arrival in Odisha is limited within 25, 000 to 30,000 while inland tourist arrival is limited to about 40 lakhs. Again more than half of them are found to be local tourists. It means Odisha gets a very negligible share of tourists coming into the country. The arrival of tourists into Western Odisha is very few in numbers. There are a number of factors responsible for such sorry state of affairs and immediate attention is needed to develop it. The growth of tourism depends on the existence of attractive tourist spots, proper transport and communication facilities including well connected rail network and frequent air services. Airports of international standard are a must for the tourism industry to prosper. It also depends on safe accommodation for which we need motels, hotels and guesthouses of high standard. Besides, the mind-set of the local people and the cordiality with which they accept tourists has a lot to do in this regard. A close look at all these aspects reveals that a number of snags are there to act as stumbling blocks on the path of tourism industry in Odisha. Some of the important problems are as follows.

- (a) Except attractive tourist spots, Western Odisha lacks satisfactory connectivity. Transport and communication facilities are not developed enough for the convenience of the tourists. The total area does not have rail network all-round.
- (b) Apart from poor transport and communication facilities, the absence of good accommodation acts as a bottleneck in the field of tourism in Odisha. There is insufficient number of hotels and rest houses of international standard in the vicinity of tourist spots. Safety rather than luxury matters and here also we lag behind.
- (c) Though Odias are known for their hospitality since time immemorial, some unwanted changes have now crept into the mind-set of the local people. Tourists are often subject to harassment even by the servitors at different religious places. There are incidents of robbery, extortion, exploitation, molestation and manhandling of the tourists in different tourist spots. These acts have a damaging effect on tourist arrival to which the authorities give blind eye.
- (d) People world over are now concerned over the issue of environmental degradation while we in West Odisha are sitting idle. We find garbage here and there, hoards of polythene bag and sachet wherever we go. What is more disgusting is the fact that people often answer the calls of nature in open spaces, road sides or even in public places, thereby creating unhealthy atmosphere. This is partly due to overcrowding and lack of sufficient number of public toilets and partly to lack of consciousness. Parking fees and entry fees are collected everywhere from the tourists but not much attention is given to the improvement of the site in



particular. Be it Hirakud dam, ghanteswari temple, Harishankar or Pradhanpat water fall, everywhere we take note of the same thing.

(f) There is also the absence of effective promotional campaign to woo the tourist's into West Odisha. A proper tours and travel campaign depicting the rich cultural heritage and scenic beauty of different tourist spots along with other essential information on the lines of "incredible India campaign" should be aired in Television channels as well as World Wide Web. It is proved beyond doubt, that a well thought-out tourism policy will help a lot in this regard.

(g) Security threats: It is a very serious matter that Naxals are active in this area specially in Kalahandi, Sonepur, Balangir and Sundargarh districts.. It is a big challenge for the government to face this problem as it would decrease the economy a lot.<sup>17</sup> Tourist inflow would be minimum as they would be afraid of this situation. They will not dare for all the activities.

### **PROSPECTS OF TOURISM IN WEST ODISHA:**

Promotion of "Tourism" is essential for a less developed area like Western Odisha to earn revenue and to generate employment. Some of the recent initiatives taken by the Government of India to boost religious tourism include grant of export house status to the tourism sector and incentives for promotion for promoting private investment in the form of income tax exemptions, interest subsidy and reduced import duty. The hotel and tourism related industry has been declared a high priority industry for foreign investment which entitles automatic approval of direct investment up to 51 percent of foreign equity and allowing cent percent non-resident Indian investment and simplifying rules regarding the grant of approval to travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators. The major constraints in the development of tourism in Western Odisha are the non-availability of adequate infrastructure including adequate accessibility to tourist destinations, accommodation and trained manpower in sufficient number. Besides the poor visitor experience is another obstacle in the growth of tourism sector which is due to inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor hygienic conditions and incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some places.

The area of West Odisha can be successful tourist destination if the industry is encouraged. So far, tourism has been developed by the state. The state Government should focus on the importance to develop and enrich tourism from an ecological and cultural point of view. For this reason, the following suggestions are put forwarded.

1. Attempts should be made to conserve the ancient temple architectures, monuments and other related factors through proper repairing with the permission of Govt.

2. There should be a crackdown on illegal encroachments of the heritage sites. Permission for construction of structures within these zones should be denied.
3. Every tourist destinations should be having sufficient number of public toilets for tourists.
4. There should be some effective promotional campaign to woo the tourists in West Odisha. A proper tour and travel campaign depicting the rich cultural heritage and religious centres along with other essential information on the lines of 'incredible India campaign' should be aired in television channels as well as world wide web. It is proved beyond doubt, that a well thought-out tourism policy will help a lot in this regard.<sup>18</sup>

## CONCLUSION:

Promotion of Tourism is essential for a less developed area like West Odisha to earn revenue and to generate employment. Some of the recent initiatives taken by the Government of India to boost tourism include grant of export house status to the tourism sector and incentives for promoting private investment in the form of income tax exemptions, interest subsidy and reduced import duty. The hotel and tourism-related industry has been declared a high priority industry for foreign investment which entails automatic approval of direct investment up to 51 per cent of foreign equity and allowing cent per cent non-resident Indian investment and simplifying rules regarding the grant of approval to travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators. The government joined hands with leading airlines, hoteliers, holiday resorts and tour operators, and offered them a wide range of incentives and bonuses during the period between April and December, 2009. In spite of the aforesaid initiatives, the major constraints in the development of tourism in Odisha is the non-availability of adequate infrastructure including adequate air seat capacity, accessibility to tourist destinations, accommodation, and trained manpower in sufficient number. Besides, the poor visitor experience is another obstacle in the growth of tourism sector which is due to inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor hygienic conditions and incidents of touting and harassment of tourists in some places.

## REFERENCE:

1. Mohanti, Nivedita, "*Oriya Nationalism: Quest for a United Orissa*", Manohar publication, 1982, P.11.
2. Mukharji, P., "*The History of the Gajapati kings of Orissa*", Cuttack, 1981, P.29.
3. Guru, Prof. Giridhari Prasad, "*West Orissa: Past & Present*" Western Odisha Development Council, Rajib Bhawan, BBSR-751001, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition-2009, P.65.
4. Bezbaruah, M.P. "Culture, Heritage and Indian Tourism", India: Tourism and Heritage, Challenge: 21, Souvenir of 4th International Conference cum showcase, December-2-4, 2003, P.25.
5. Coomarswamy, A.K., "Arts and Crafts of India and Cylon, London, 1927, P.75.
6. Mansingh, M., Reflection on the Wonder and Enigma of Konark, Marg, Vol.XII, No.1, Bhubaneswar, 1958, P.p.27-31.

7. Bhatt, S.C., "The Encyclopadic District Gazetters of India", Eastern Zone, Vol.9, 2000, Gyan Publishing House 5, Ansari Road, New Delhi, 110002, Pp.526.
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Senapati, Shri Nilamani, "Odisha District Gazetters Sambalpur", Pp.44.
15. Bhatt, S.C., "The Encyclopadic District Gazetters of India", Eastern Zone, Vol.9, 2000, Gyan Publishing House 5, Ansari Road, New Delhi, 110002, Pp.787.
16. Ibid
17. Busby, G., & Klug, J. (2001), Movie-induced tourism: The challenge of measurement and other issues, Pp.5.
18. Journal of Vacation Marketing, Pp.316-322.

