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Improving Tourism

Worldwide tourism > \$ 4000 b (1998)

India's share \cong \$ 5.03 b (2005)

Of \$ 4 trillion, how much flows into Europe and US is anybody's guess. This is one major reason of their bubbling economy and a very large and flourishing service sector. Every place is attractive and inviting. They keep their countries remarkably clean and attractive and are ready to receive you with warmth and smile. Why should they not possess all the riches of the world? Back home the foreign tourists encounter a repulsive ambience right from the time they alight the aircraft, the rigmarole and harassment at the immigration counter, at the airport and as they pass through sordid, unplanned and crowded cities full of filth, stink and poverty-stricken and illiterate people. Now the rising incidents of eve teasing, fleecing, rapes, even murders.

- A vivid description of our cities will tell (we are not talking of villages) of roads with potholes, dusty side lanes and bylanes with mud and filth, open and scattered garbage dumps at every nook and corner, filthy and foul odour filling the surroundings, seas of sewage flowing through the open drainage system (in most cities) and human excreta on its sides. Stray cattle feeding on filth. Pigs making fun and frolic on the garbage and refuse of our homes. The milkman milking the same cow in the evening and supplying us milk further adulterated with polluted water to feed our children. Mosquitoes and flies abound in the open, cockroaches and rats flourishing in most Indian kitchens. Every sight is dejecting and repulsive.
- Nearly at all sight-seeing spots a flock of children selling small low-priced items will surround you and pester you. Some will despise them with disgust and move forward or snub them, some may feel repulsed and blurt out a few indecent words, while others may oblige them with small purchases. After such episodes one would think many times before visiting such places again, unless he is an adventurer. And then what does one see during sight seeing - herd

of pestering petty vendors or the monuments and art works that have long lost their glory, splendour and reverence and have become old and sordid. The pace of deterioration is now rapid in the face of overcrowding of cities and neglect by the local authorities. One can comprehend lack of direction, lack of will and competence, paucity of funds or the local administration consuming the funds on themselves rather than maintaining the speechless monuments. Possibly all? Everything is disgusting and pathetic. The greenbelts and parks have long vanished. Tourists inflow is dwindling and many places of sight-seeing bear a deserted look. One may take a pledge, oh! never again!

- One more dimension added to this already sordid and dilapidated situation is scarcity of water and shortage of power at most places. Even our hill resorts face scarcity of water and discourage even the willing home tourists. The lush green hills are long turned into denuded hillocks.
- Tourism is a high revenue-earning sector on which many affluent countries of the world thrive but in our country tourist spots are sights of neglect, filth, apathy and galoring poverty. Tourism handled by our polity and bureaucracy was destined to be ruined and so it has been. They have been developing tourism on files. They would come out with incentives offering different tour packages. But, tourism is not providing attractive tour packages, rather making tourist places attractive. There should be an invitation in the place of visit not repulsion like to the child for his village school. Such packages may attract a few tourists for sometime but cannot boost tourism on the long term. Tourists would like to carry with them the pleasant memories of their holidays and souvenirs but all that are grossly missing.

19.1 Art and culture

- Ours is a highly glorious past, history starting from Indus Valley civilization. We have inherited a rich culture, imposing historical monuments and very rich and heart consuming artwork. We also possess lots of individual skills and talents like local folk dances, fables (story telling) and craftsmanship. All these can be sources of enormous potential for tourism if developed properly. Many of our old monuments are like our lost primary resources. These can be restored to revive our rich art and culture to become sites of tourist attractions. They can improve the overall condition of the local people besides changing the cultural and economic scenario of our country.

Many of our magnificent monuments and rich art works are in shambles, restoring them to their old glory and grandeur shall be a Herculean task but all this will be done. We can take services of hoteliers, businessmen and industrialists in restoring these. Ample in-house expertise and artisans are available to restore and conserve our architectural and archaeological heritage. There are many NGOs working in this field like INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) who can help us in developing neglected monuments, even identifying the forgotten ones.

Government tried to restore some of our monuments during the tenure of Mr Jagmohan the then minister of tourism (2000-2004). Delhi's Red Fort is one of them that we visited after restoration. The refurbishing carried out by tourism and archeological departments is indeed a shame on our capability to restore our dilapidated monuments to their lost glory and reverence. The work carried out by them is so shabby that it has tainted the originality of the monument and its artwork. The outer redstone palace is painted white and inside wall and ceiling paintings are mutilated. It seems the work is carried out departmentally or by some local contractor who knew little about archaeological heritage and its sanctity and our system played a novice.

19.2 Coastal development

- We are blessed with a long coast line surrounded with vast oceans on three sides. All these have enormous treasures at their depths that we have yet to explore. We will give special attention to the development of our coastlines and develop them into attractive tourist spots, besides fishing and marine businesses and exploring for the hidden treasures of natural resources. We are sure the development of coastlines will put our country on the world tourist map and extend a lot of opportunities to our people for better living. In developed countries we can see people enjoying by their lakes, rivers and beaches. Back home neither we realise their importance nor have fun. Our coastlines and wonderful beaches and islands remain neglected. The development of coastlines and management of water resources will give a new impetus to tourism, tremendous boost to the development of flora and fauna and multiply our domestic and export incomes through seafood, fisheries and a variety of flora. For developing them to be amongst the best beaches in the world we will take services of consultants, hoteliers, industrialists and businessmen.

- *We* will also develop Andaman and Nicobar islands on the south-east and Lakshdweep on the south-west coast into attractive tourist spots.
- Similarly we will also develop our botanical and zoological gardens (zoos), lakes, canals and ponds.

India has enormous potential of tourism, at least up to 1000 times (1 lac%) of what it is now. We have plans that will raise our income from foreign tourists alone, from roughly Rs 23,000 cr, to at least 100 times (10,000% i.e. to Rs 23 lac cr) within 5-7 years besides income from home tourists. The remaining will be a gradual process and shall be achieved along with the **city centres** (say in 20-25 years). This sector alone can make it a neat and attractive country and change its economic scenario. All this shall require detailed working by experts in the field and working relentlessly until we achieve the desired goal. We will make development, maintenance and upkeep of tourist sites, historical places and identifying the new ones a continuous process.

Here *we* have tried to provide just a brief panorama to peep into the large potential that this sector possesses. Work on it will be enormous and will take long years to reach the goal. But all this is achievable and shall be achieved.