

A HISTORICAL STUDY ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEMPLE TOURISM IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The temple had an enduring ideological importance in the history of any land. It is said that Temples are the off-springs of respective Religions. Temples are a central focus of historical processes like social, religious, economic and political. Earlier, the temples acted as legitimating institutions of the rulers, especially the king in particular. The king acquired legitimacy and tried to convey the authority through the temple and its symbolism. Temple acted as an integrating force for organizing a well-developed society. It is worth noting that even the temple was connected to this ruling elite and was the integral process to the above link, it was inseparably linked to the development of the sectarian traditions, religion, society, economy and the polity.

INTRODUCTION

Temples always have exercised great influence over the minds of the people. It has helped in the preservation of all the best of Hindu traditions, its moulding the lives of the people and in keeping the bond of unity in a country where there is a wide variation of climatic conditions and where there is a bewildering diversity of customs, dress and languages. It is not compulsory for a Hindu to regularly visit the temple. Usually, people visit the temples on auspicious occasions and as a part of pilgrimages rather than as a regular occurrence, because they have home shrines where they can partake in home puja, which is considered as the part of their dharma. However, people are far more likely to regularly visit the temple as it gives them an opportunity to meet with the dispersed Hindu community, as it is important as the temple provides a social environment to maintain the bonds between the communities and prevent the feeling of alone.

The temple is significant in aiding the people in retaining their culture. This is especially important in the places where the majority of people do not share the culture; here it can be easy to lose tradition. The temple acts as a central to festivals, for example Durga Puja, and is often the focus of pilgrimages. The priests speak Sanskrit preventing the language from dying, this upholds the ties to centuries of Hindus. Furthermore, ceremonies are performed to perfection in the temple ensuring that the rituals continue as a constant. The temple acts as a preserver of the religion in all its glory and tradition.

The temple is seen as the dwelling place of God and so is considered the place to receive darshan, which is a glimpse of God. The idols or the god and goddess kept at temples are considered far more significant than the idols kept at home. They are consecrated and so considered to have God dwelling in them. This shows that the temple provides a place for

people to dwell in the presence of God and to be a part of his glory in a far greater way than is possible with home puja.

The temple creates a root where architecture and art evolved creatively, and the handicrafts are well flourished. The temples had discovered the new methods of enriching society both mentally and spiritually. The temple does not have any sort of parallel institution because it acts as an establisher of the rights of its votaries, preserver of life through hospitals, through relief measures in times of famine, floods, wars and fiscal crisis. In fact, the temple is a unique institution as it acts as a keeper of peace and one that helped in the ultimate attainment of spiritual bliss and also the temples reflect a well-developed civilization.

The temple has also helped in the introduction of newer traditions by the annihilation of antiquated and age-worn systems and beliefs. It has dispelled ignorance and lit up the torch of learning. During the 16th-17th, the early Christian era, the temple has a well-versed growth in architectural munificence, ritualistic details and artistic embellishments and in its manifold functions carried out in close collaboration with the reigning monarch for the welfare of the people. This sort of inter connection between the king and the temple and the healthy impact on the society was discovered by the earliest non-Indian scholar Alberuni, who visited in 11th century.

The temple is highly symbolic. It is considered as a giant murti. Temple makes the worshipper to focus on God and to access a well relationship with him. The priest led worship further strengthens this relationship by acting as a mediator between the worshipper and God allowing them to unite. But it does not mean to say that the only place to meet with God is the temple, Hindus believe that God is everywhere and in everything, as such one can meet with him at any time. But the temple is a place where the only focus is on God. It allows the worshipper to be free of the distractions of their everyday life. Temple is built according to Vedic plans and hence its shape is symbolic. It is felt that God is consecrated in the walls, especially in the garbhagriha making it a highly holy and spiritual place. They are kept holy by worshippers and treated with great respect for example the shoes are removed before entering because leather is considered impure, thoughts are purified before approaching the inner sanctum to ensure nothing but God is the focus. Furthermore, there are often myths attached to the sacred places increasing their importance.

Besides, some people consider the home shrine to be more important than the temple. The home shrine is used every day and from it the worshipper is able to uphold a personal and private relationship with God. Usually, the woman leads the worship and is able to bath and feed the idols of the home shrine, which is unable to do in a temple. This makes home shrines a close intimate relationship.

The temple is the centre of social life. The people are attracted from the early hours of the morning to the late hours of the night. The Pujas, festivals and special gatherings attracted the people which held them in its fold, the sensory appreciation of the people is heightened by the sweet rendering, music by the temple musicians, the exotic colour of the paintings, the scented perfumes lingered around the place of worship, by the tasty offerings i.e., the prasada

or offering distributed etc. All the above five senses became cultivated in their fullness in a temple. The visit of a person to the temple develops the regularities in his behaviour not only externally but even regularities in the behaviour internally.

Generally, the religious rites of the temple can be classified into three categories, nitya, naimittika and kamya. Nitya is the ritual which is performed daily, Naimittika are the rituals performed on certain special times during the year, such as celebrations of the festivals etc and Kamya is the ritual which is optional but it is highly desirable. Pilgrimage is one such. Besides, it is very important to note that the rituals, functions and the daily offerings or prasada etc from the temple were mainly through the sources of grants given by the king, the landlords and the wealthy people. As per the belief of the people on God, not only they, but even the poor also granted something to the temple when they had get completed their wish.

THE TEMPLE

The temple or Devalayam is an important institution in the religious life of people. Giving a folk conception, they had given a shape to their deities mostly in a human form chiselled them on the stone, installed them with all rituals and rites, chanting hymns from their sacred Vedas. Then sprang up shelter became the abodes of God. A temple is always conceived as a miniature universe revolving around the creator who is represented by the presiding deity. The temple precincts normally display all the facets of the universe like the animals, trees, planets, human beings, devatas, demi-gods etc. Hence all aspects of panorama of life with its changing patterns are represented in the sculptured panel of a temple. It is a ground to establish communion with the almighty, seek his forgiveness and bountiful mercies. Devotees throng to these sacred places in the popular belief that the benevolent gods confer on the worshipper Santhi (peace) Paushti (prosperity) Jayam (victory) and Sarvakamika (fulfilment of all desires) and explain the grandeur of good-hood adbhuta (wonderful deeds of god).

On a closer analysis it could be observed that these different orders of Gods sprang up due to differences in human intelligence and different levels of spiritual perception among various human beings. There is only one being whom the wise call by many names. (Ekam Satvipra Bahudha Vadanti). Thus, the Hindu satisfies his craving for the adoration and service of a personal god by worshipping images set up in his honour. In many temples worship and prayers are done, through well laid down principles of Puja, to focus, concentrate and lead the devotees mind to the realisation of the infinite.

TEMPLE: A MULTI-FACETED INSTITUTION

Pilgrimage has been defined as, a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding (Barber, 1993). India is a land of temples, mosques and churches. Temples in India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular have a rich cultural heritage of their own. The South Indian temples played a multifaceted role in the religious, social and economic life of the people. Temple is considered as a place of worship, as well as a centre for religion and cultural activities. Tourists' potential of a country or a place mainly depends on its climate, scenery, historical monuments, arts, traditional festival and the people. The temple state of Andhra Pradesh

India, the area for the present research work is not only attracting the regional tourists and pilgrim spots, but also serves as national tourists and pilgrim centre. The number of north and south Indians visiting temples of state has been continuously increasing day by day. Historical evidences show that many cities and towns have developed mainly based on temples, mosques and churches. The entire economic activities of the religious based towns and cities based on temples, for instance, Kashi (Uttar Pradesh), Tirupathi (Andhra Pradesh), Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu) and Palani (Tamil Nadu). These are the places developed as big towns and cities and helped for the economic and other productive activities of the people around the temple complex, due to the visits made by the domestic and foreign tourists.

VISION AND MISSION OF TEMPLE TOURISM

India a land of intense spirituality and religious faith is reflected in the profusion of temples present in this subcontinent. Temples are found everywhere in India from large monumental structures to small stone buildings, each having certain significance and greatly influencing the lives of the people who regard the temple as a place where they could be close to God. Hinduism is the religion followed by the Hindus. Hinduism is the dominant faith, practiced by over 80.0 per cent of the population in India. The Hindu philosophy has a very strong influence on the people, governing various aspects of their lives including their spiritual life. The Hindu temples, apart from being religious, also play the role of a social, cultural and economic centre, influencing the lives of the people both in the cities and villages. These wonderful temples form a part of the Indian cultural heritage. Pilgrimage is an important part of spiritual life for many Indians. Indians see life itself as a journey, coming from God and returning to God. The visitor seeks to separate himself from the everyday concerns of the world, and to spend time in the presence of God as he travels to a place of special meaning. A pilgrimage is a symbol that is acted out. Back in the Middle Ages pilgrimages were very popular. It may have taken many years to complete the pilgrimages.

The pilgrims would usually travel in groups, and stay in monasteries or inns overnight. But now, the situation is totally different. The pilgrims take time out of their busy schedule to keep their mind in peace. Secular India is home to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other innumerable religious traditions. It is also home of sizable followers of Islam and Christianity. Important temples of different religion are scattered throughout the country and Indians from different states travel vast distances to perform pilgrim duties at the temples. There are great temples of pilgrimages like Badri Nath, Vaishno Devi, Bodh-Gaya, Tirupati, Rameswaram, The golden Temple, Jagannath Puri, Mount Abu and countless others. Besides Hindus, Muslims are the most prominent religious group and they are an integral part of Indian society. Even tourists are not new to India. During Chandragupta Maurya's time, tourist like Megasthenes, Huen Tsang or later date Iban Bathutha or Fahien undertook long tours to Buddhist centres or visited educational centres like Nalanda University, Taxashila. In fact, their travelogues are the great treasure for getting information about India, which reflected in the books written by them.

Pilgrimages are the major tools as they form an important item of the spiritual discipline of the people of almost all religions in the world. The symbolic form of people

belief is endowed with the faith to achieve the higher and the highest goal of human life. Indians have nurtured the spiritual genius and utilized every place of sanctity as a perennial source of inspiration affording supreme peace and consolation to the mind and hearts. The Hindus have to their credit the largest number of temples or holy places with different mythological tales are attached owing to which people lead their life of sanctity, when they visit the place of their faith.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEMPLE VISITING:

In India different type of religions has different type of worshipping places called as temples. The core concept and object of worshipping god with a good faith and belief are common in all temple places belong to various kind of religions but the way and approach and the infrastructural appearances appear different. The various kind of temples belong to various religions have different kind of temple' visiting approaches, that have been briefly dealt as follows.

HINDU TEMPLES VISITING: The Hindus conceived the pilgrims as an integral part of the religious systems. The nature of Hindu pilgrimage is encased in the Sanskrit expression tirtha-yatra, which literally means "undertaking journey to water". The sacred places or temples of tirtha form important nodes both as repositories of traditional Hinduism and as propagators of reinterpreted values and beliefs. The temples during the major fairs become visible centres for the diffusion of new ideas, innovations and improvisations. It is mainly because of modern means of mass transportation, communication and services have made it possible for a larger number of individuals to undertake, what were once arduous pilgrimages. According to Eck, (1981) the Hindu tradition of tirtha has three principles sources; namely (i) the Vedic tradition of rituals and sacrifices; (ii) the Upanishadic wisdom and knowledge tradition; and (iii) the locative strand of piety of indigenous India.

In the Vedic and Sanskrit usage, a tirtha means a "crossing place" or 'ford' where one may cross over to the far shore of a river or to the far shore of the worlds of heaven. The Hindu pilgrimage tradition recognizes not merely the sacredness of specific temples but the holiness of vast regions or rather, the entire territory of India. The Indians have nurtured the spiritual genius and utilized every place of sanctity as a perennial source of inspiration affording supreme peace and consolation to the mind and hearts of the people. The Hindus have to their credit the largest numbers of temples with which different mythological tales are attached owing to which people lead their life of sanctity, when they visit the place of their faith. There are different places where the Hindus, the Buddhist and the Jain's visit with Sraddha and Bhakthi simultaneously the shrines and temples have been built there by the followers and the devotees of various religious communities. India is known for its old temples which have idols of every size and shape. The sculptures yore has shown all aspects of life instances and marble each temple is different from the other and the historians from various corners of the world pour into our country to understand how far our country had advanced in civilization.

ISLAMIC TEMPLES VISITING: In many nations, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, Islam is the foundation of society and the order of Law. Several Muslim states

have become important tourist destinations over the years since the end of colonialism in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia in the mid twentieth century. Famous Islamic architecture Taj Mahal (India) and the Ottoman Palaces (Turkey), archaeological sites from other empires (e.g. Romans), business meetings, culture and climate are among the most appealing attractions in the Muslim world (Jackson and Davis 1997). Many studies have examined the dynamics of tourism in countries where Islam is the majority religion, typically all touching on the implications of religion on tourism (e.g. Abdurrahman 2000; Alavi and Yasin 2000; Alhemoud and Armstrong 1996; Baum and Conlin 1997; Burns and Cooper 1997; Cunha 2004; Domroes 2001; Frembgen 1993; Grotzbach 1983; Henderson 2003; Horsfall 1996; Laporte 2003; Poirier 1995; Seddon and Khoja 2003; Timothy 1999; Wiebe 1980).

Muslims face many significant challenges to their cultural traditions and religious lifestyles (Burns and Cooper 1997). Aziz, (2001) acknowledged this and suggested that no Islamic country has yet managed to accommodate the needs of Western tourists without compromising the religious and cultural expectations of most of its own people. The most important travel event for Muslims is the Hajj. It is the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is one of the largest pilgrimages in the world, and is the fifth pillar of Islam, a religious duty that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by every able-bodied Muslim. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslims. The pilgrimage occurs from the 8th to 12th day of Dhu al-Hajjah, the 12th and last month of the Islamic calendar. The Hajj is associated with the life of the Islamic prophet Muhammad from 7th Century, but the ritual of pilgrimage to Mecca is considered by Muslims to stretch back thousands of years of the time of Abraham. Pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people converges Mecca for the week of the Hajj and perform a series of rituals; each person walks counter-clockwise seven times around the Kaaba, the cubeshaped building which acts as the Muslim direction prayer.

CHRISTIAN TEMPLES VISITING: Pilgrimages played a very important role in the religious life of the Christian church, particularly in the Middle Ages, and it is still in vogue among the Christians in different places like Palestine. Pilgrimage, or making one's way to holy places, is regarded by devout Christians as an ascetic practice that lets the Christian find salvation through the difficulties and dangers of temporary exile. It is also a mean of coming in contact with the divine and obtaining grace or the blessings of the supernatural power associated with the pilgrimage site. Pilgrimages to Christian shrines in India have two noteworthy features; mainly in the most popular shrines attract pilgrims round the year not only from among the Christians but also from among Indians of other faiths as well. Secondly, norms associated with most of these Christian pilgrimages reflected a significant impact of Hinduism on them.

For example, a Christian pilgrim suffering from an ailment in any parts of the body offers a wax replica of the affected organ to St. Mary at Bandra (Mumbai). It resembles the practices of offering silver or other metallic replicas of eye, nose, ear, hand or foot to Lord Venkateswara at Tirupathi (Andhra Pradesh, India) by the Hindu devotees for the cure of ailment of particular organs. The walking pilgrimage of the Christians from Howrah (West

Bengal) to Bandel (West Bengal) (in preference to the very convenient travel by train) to visit 'The Lady of Happy Voyage' reminds one of similar pilgrimages by the Hindus to many places like Tarakeswar (West Bengal, India) or Baidayanath Dham (Bihar, India), where they carry water from a sacred river, walking all the distance on foot. The pilgrimage by two Christianity in early fifties to Kedarnath (Uttarkhand, India) and Gangotri (Uttarkhand, India) as an instance of indigenization of Christianity in India and an attempt to understand Christianity with the use of Hindu idioms and vice-versa.

SIKH TEMPLES VISITING: Earlier, the founder of Sikh religion said religion does not consist in wandering to tombs or cremation ground, not of sitting in meditative postures (Bharati 1963; Macauliffe, Oxford, 1909). Guru Amar Das, one of the ten preceptors of Sikhism, tried to prevent the Sikhs from visiting Haridwar, Banaras, Allahabad, etc. However, Sikhs - especially women - frequently go for the Hindu pilgrimage centres, particularly Haridwar, which is close to the Punjab" (Bharati, 1963). Guru Nanak visited the Hindu places of pilgrimage like Haridwar (Uttarkhand, India), Kurukshetra (Haryana, India), Puri (Bhuvaneswar, India), Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu, India), Varanasi (India), Kailash (Tibet) and others as much as the places sacred to the Muslims but only to attack the hollow rituals, the superstitions and the exclusiveness of both.

JAIN TEMPLES VISITING: Jains are "the pilgrims par excellence, ever on the move" (Madan, 1991). Indeed, Jains hold the sramana or wandering ascetic to be the essential examples of the true path of renunciation. According to Eck (1981) the Jain notion of tirth/tirtha has a close connection with the words of passage, tirtha (ford or crossing) and tareti (crosses) in the Vedic and Upanishads literature. These terms were used in early Jain literature express the profound spiritual transition. Thus, the enlightened teacher as a Jain, a victor before long he became known as tirthankara, a ford maker, who has crossed the stream and reached the far shore. Interestingly, the Jain success is attributed by many to the magical power of their sadhus and sacred statutes. There are many sectarian differences among the Jains. The idea and practice of pilgrimage is, however, one of the important features common to all Jains.

BUDDHIST TEMPLES VISITING: The Buddhist circuit promises a deeper understanding of one of the greatest thinkers of India, in addition to serenity and self-knowledge. It is a story that took place 2500 years ago, but still captivates humanity. The legend of the incredible transformation of Siddharth, a worldly prince to Shakyamuni, an enlightened teacher and finally Buddha or the Enlightened One is indeed a touching one. On seeing the misery, sorrow, pain and death in the prime of his youth, Prince Siddharth decided not only to find out their causes but also look on how to end them. He gave up all his worldly pleasures, left home and family and travelled far and wide until he became enlightened under the Maha Bodhi tree. It is from there that he preached his gospel of truth and exhorted his disciples to follow the eight-fold path.

Buddhism was born and has thrived in India for 1,700 years. Between the 5th Century BC and 12th Century AD, the whole of India was rich with the culture of Buddhist life that spread to other parts of the world. Today, the places that Buddha left his footprints upon are

referred to as the Buddhist circuit. The circuit is a pilgrim's journey, through the land of Buddha, where he preached his message of compassion, simplicity and renunciation. The high point of the circuit is the Holy Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, under which he gained enlightenment. The four famous places of Buddhist pilgrimage are Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar, which are associated with the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. Lumbini, in Nepal, is the birthplace of Gautama Buddha. The others are in India. Bodhgaya was the place, under the pipal or Bo tree, where the Buddha was enlightened after practicing meditation for several years.

Sarnath was the site of his first teaching and Kushinagar was the place of his death or final Nirvana. Among the holiest of the places of pilgrimage in the Indian Buddhist circuit is the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya. The Mahabodhi Temple built to the east of the sacred tree stands majestically, 170 feet high on a 50-foot square base, and consists of a soaring pyramidal tower surmounted by a stupa. Vajrasan or the Diamond Throne lying between the Bodhi Tree and the temple marks the actual spot where Buddha sat in meditation and attained supreme knowledge. Thirty-four kilometres from Gaya lies Rajgir in a verdant valley surrounded by rocky hills. Here on Griddhakuta or Vultures Peak, the Buddha, set in motion his Second Wheel of Law and for three months every year during the rainy season, preached many inspiring sermons to his disciples.

CONCLUSION

India being part of the world's oldest civilizations is a land of rich history, countless beliefs, traditions and legends surrounding the religions. India takes pride in the country's rich cultural and religious history as it is the birth land of the traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. India is a land where people of different religious beliefs live in harmony and brotherhood. Hinduism is believed to be the world's oldest religion. Unlike other religions, Hinduism does not have a founder but is instead a fusion of religions. Various ancient manuscripts and scholars describe the religion as a traditional way of living, a religion whose beginning and ending cannot be traced.

Besides the religion, philosophy and temple worship were the major concerns of the society, but now it occupies a peripheral place and people take to them because of their personal linking. Temples today have grown from the humble beginning. Its evolution was in gradual way and not sudden. Hence, the temple played an important role in various transactions of the society and had great influence among the people.

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