

**SOCIO ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM – A CASE STUDY OF MAHAKUMBH MELA 2013 AT ALLAHABAD****SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA**

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**Abstract-** Tourism in India is one of the major sectors of the economy development. India possess its rich cultural heritage, ancient monuments, world famous temples, architecture masterpieces, wild animal's sanctuaries and scenic sports, and also holds a great attraction for foreign and the domestic tourists. The growth of pilgrimage tourism in India has been improved astonishingly. India is blessed with plenty of well-known religious destinations bring enormous economic gain to local residents. The pilgrimage (TirthYatra) journey undertake for the betterment of spiritual pursuits. Travel or pilgrimage for mental peace and to gain knowledge about rich heritage or religious places in the country is an integral part of Indian culture and tradition. Allahabad is one of the famous pilgrimage tourist's destinations in India. It is famous for magnificent historically, culturally, and It has great potential in the field of tourism as kumbh Mela at TriveniSangam (confluence of three river Ganga, Yamuna and Invisible Saraswati), historical monuments, temples, holy places and other scenic places, which reflect the culture and tradition. Uttar Pradesh Tourism provides good infrastructure facilities for domestic and international tourists.

**KEYWORDS: Tourism, Pilgrimage tourism, economic development, Mahakumbh Mela.**

**Introduction-**Tourism plays a vital role in the economic development of a country. Tourism is the second largest foreign exchange earner in India. The tourism industry employs a large number of people, both skilled and unskilled. It promotes national integration and international brotherhood. Tourism is an important catalyst in the socio-economic development in the modern times, contributing in multiple ways and strengthen the inter-connected processes. While often portrayed as panacea for many evils such as underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty eradication, social discrimination and so on; its contribution in creating a global and regional socio-political environment for peaceful co-existence of the cultures and societies has been equally established at various levels. Perhaps, this realization took many advocators to position tourism as one of the biggest 'peace industries', a means to strike equilibrium of global peace process though development. Because, tourism practiced in responsible and sustainable manner bring about the peace and prosperity of the people and that its stakeholders share benefits in fair manner, which is a necessary condition for the equilibrium of sharing to sustain

**Objectives of the study**

- To study the Socio-Economic impact of Religious Tourism.
- To study the History of kumbha Mela as Religious Tourism
- To study the Socio-Economic impact of Mahakumbha Mela with special reference to 2013, at Allahabad. To study the problems and provide some valuable suggestions for further improvement in organising the kumbh .

**Methodology-**The data for this study were collected from local residents which engaged in tourism activities. tourists were identified as a key factor in developing tourism in local communities. This

research is mainly based on secondary data such as broucher, pamphlets,books,newspapers, internet, advertisement etc.

**Review of Literature-** David (2005) The socio-economic impact of religious tourism can be seen in its contribution to a large population of the country, the largest contributions to religious tourism is seen in the many religious places in India. Many small places economies are highly depend on religious tourism as evidenced by the significant share of religious tourism in their total earnings in 2009, pilgrimage tourism alone contributed 44.5% of the total export earnings of Indian tourism.

The informal tourism sector and pilgrimage tourism tradition and today the bulk of domestic informal tourism in India consists of poor people participating in some religious pilgrimage trip, although, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between religious and non-religious trips. The tourism impact of each of the four sectors according to four levels, economic, social, cultural and environmental, broadly defined, economic refers to total income from tourists, number of jobs generated, tourist expenditures or costs (land, commodity, wage inflation and import leakages) social impact refers to population displacement, migration, what class owns the tourist establishments, impact on the quality of living, increase or decrease in crime, cultural impact looks at degree of commoditization of symbols and performances, increase in undesirable activities, cultural influences derived from tourists and hostility towards tourist. Pilgrimage tourism is a modern trend, and the changing history and nature of religious pilgrimage in India”.

**Religious Tourism-** Religious Tourism can be defined as travel with the core motive of experiencing religious forms, or the products they induce, like art, culture, traditions and architecture.

Being one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, India has been in contact with almost all the major religions of the world, and despite being dominated by Hinduism in the present context, religions like Islam, Buddhism and Christianity have also influenced a sizeable portion of the population, apart from niche religions like Sikhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Judaism that grew as an offshoot to the major religious schools of thought.

### **Perspective of Religious Tourism in India**

There are two distinct aspects to Religious Tourism in India; one, the faith of the domestic tourist, who has a spiritual attachment to the deity/ destination in line with their religious beliefs; the other is the 'foreign' tourist, someone belonging to a different religion, region or country, for whom the destination and the religious practices have the dimension of 'novelty', a spiritual experience different from their own, despite the ethical values being delivered remaining the same.

From the domestic market's perspective, there is a fine line dividing business and belief. Many temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras and other major religious centers, in today's socio-economic structures, are tangible assets in terms of infrastructure and the workforce they employ, thereby implying that the institution has to monetize itself in order to be able to meet its everyday survival in societal environments. Based upon the nature of the product, intensity and region of travel.

The interconnectivity and reciprocity between religious and tourism are integral part of human travel. That is how 'religious-tourism' is conceived as an alternative for the solution; of course this is more inclined to metaphysical issue and life philosophy: meeting sacred-and-profane. Religious-tourism is considered now as strategy for heritage awakening, deeper experiences and transferring the religiosity

into global humanism and spirituality. The sustainable frame of religious-tourism and heritage should be promoted in three ways: philosophical, organizational, and managerial. The eco-healing approach to religious-tourism is considered as a post-modernist way to consider religious as a bridge between recreation and spirituality; this way religious-tourism will provide a rational alternative for cultural consciousness and strategy for poverty alleviation. Realization by personnel and trusts involved in promoting religious will further help in better development programmes.

**History of Kumbh Mela-** kumbh derives its name from the immortal Pot of Nectar, which the Demigods (Devtas) and Demons (Asuras) fought over, described in ancient Vedic scriptures known as the Puranas. It is these Vedic literatures that have stood the test of time, out of which the tradition has evolved into the one that the world now knows as The Mahakumbh Mela. Legend tells a tale from the bygone days of the universe when the demigods and the demons conjointly produced the nectar of immortality. The demigods, because cursed, were crippled of fear that eventually made them weak. The task being too sturdy for them alone, the demigods made a mutual agreement with the demons to complete it in full and share the nectar of immortality in half. It is said that the demigods and the demons assembled on the shore of the milk ocean that lies in the celestial region of the cosmos. And it began!

For the task of churning the milk ocean, the Mandara Mountain was used as the churning rod, and Vasuki, the king of serpents, became the rope for churning. With the demigods at Vasuki's tail and the demons at his head, the churning began. At first, the churning of the milk ocean produced a deadly poison which Lord Shiva drank without being affected. As Lord Shiva drank the poison, a few drops fell from his hands which were licked by scorpions, snakes, and similar other deadly creatures. Also, during the churning, the Mandara Mountain began to sink deep into the ocean, seeing which Lord Vishnu incarnated as a great tortoise and supported the mountain on His back. Finally, many hurdles and 1000 years later, Dhanwantari appeared with the Mahakumbh of immortal nectar in his hands. The demigods, being fearful of the demons' ill intent, forcibly seized the pot with its safety entrusted onto the four Gods - Brahaspati, Surya, Shani, and Chandra.

Demons, after learning that their part of the agreement has not been kept, went after the demigods and for 12 days and 12 nights, the chase continued. Wherever the demigods went with the pot of nectar, fierce fighting ensued. It is believed that during this chase, a few drops from the Mahakumbh fell at four places - Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik. There is also a prevalent legend that it was actually the demons that were being chased by the demigods for 12 days and 12 nights, during which the drops of elixir of immortality fell at these four places. These four places are since believed to have acquired mystical powers. Because 12 days of Gods are equivalent to 12 years for humans; the Mahakumbh Mela is celebrated once every 12 years in each of the four places - banks of river Godavari in Nasik, river Kshipra in Ujjain, river Ganges in Haridwar, and at the Sangam of Ganges, Yamuna, and Saraswati in Allahabad, where the drops are believed to have fallen. Millions of devout, come together to partake in ritualistic bathing and ceremonies to cleanse themselves of all sins.

### **Mahakumbh Mela 2013-**

The Kumbh Mela (Kumbh Congregation) is one of the greatest festivities of the world. Held every 12 years, the festival attracts millions of Hindus. In 2001, an estimated 100 million Hindus congregated, over a period of a month, at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna rivers at Prayag in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The author is a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and was the Secretary, Urban Development, the Government of Uttar Pradesh at the time the Kumbh Mela was held in 2001. He was the official overseeing the administrative arrangements for the Mela. This book is an account of how the Mela was managed by the government.

The government defined the challenge as primarily a municipal one: how to create a temporary city in which millions of people could live for a brief period without stampedes, outbreak of epidemics, crimes, and violence. The challenge was obviously gargantuan, for, an average of two million persons per day, peaking to 30 millions on MauniAmavasya (literally, the dark night of silence), had to be housed, their human wastes safely disposed of, their medical needs met, the availability of food and other provisions for them ensured, and their transportation to and from the Mela site facilitated. The world's 'largest city' had to be created on a site that was 80 per cent submerged during the monsoon months and available for construction work only during the two and a half months before the beginning of the Mela. The state government sanctioned over Rs 1,350 million for the management.

Kumbh Mela is a mass Hindu religious of faith in which Hindus gather to bathe in a sacred river. It is considered to be largest peaceful gathering in the world with over 100 million people visiting during the Mahakumbh Mela in 2013. It is held every third year at one of the four places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad (Prayag), Nashik and Ujjain. Thus the Mahakumbh Mela is held at each of these four places every twelfth year. Ardh ("Half") Kumbh Mela is held at only two places, Haridwar and Allahabad, every sixth year. The rivers at these four places are: the Ganges (Ganga) at Haridwar, the confluence (Sangam) of the Ganges and the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati at Allahabad, the Godawari at Nashik, and the Shipra at Ujjain.

Kumbh means a pitcher and Mela means fair in Hindi. The religious is held for about one and a half months at each of these four places where it is believed in Hinduism that drops of nectar fell from the kumbh carried by gods after the sea was churned. The festival is billed as the "world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims". There is no scientific method of ascertaining the number of pilgrims, and the estimates of the number of pilgrims bathing on the most auspicious day may vary; approximately 80 million people attended on 14 February 2013.

MauniAmavasya traditionally attracted the largest crowds at the mela, held here every 12 years. The current Mahakumbh Mela held on 14 January 2013 at Allahabad. The day marked the second and the biggest ShahiSnan (royal bath) of this event, with 13 akharas taking to the Sangam. 10 Feb 2013 was the biggest bathing day at the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela and probably the largest human gathering on a single day. Over 30 million devotees and ascetics took holy dip on the occasion of MauniAmavasya.

### Places of Kumbh Mela

Mahakumbh Mela takes place every twelve years at one of four places: [Allahabad](#), [Haridwar](#), [Ujjain](#) and [Nashik](#). The Mela in its different forms alternates between Prayag, Nashik, Ujjain and Haridwar every third year. The *Ardh* (half) kumbh Mela is celebrated every six years at only two places, Haridwar and Prayag.

- Kumbha Mela: Held at all four places. ArdhMahakumbha Mela: Held at Haridwar and Prayag, every 6 years.
- PurnaKumbha Mela: Held only at Prayag every 12 years.
- Mahakumbha Mela: Held only at Prayag, every 144 years.

### Timing

Planetary positions during 2013 Mahakumbh Mela at Allahabad (Prayag)

kumbh Mela is celebrated at different locations depending on the position of the planet of Brhaspati (Jupiter) and the sun. When Jupiter and the sun are in the zodiac

sign Leo (SimhaRashi) it is held in Trimbakeshwar, Nashik; when the sun is in Aquarius (Mahakumbh Rashi) it is celebrated at Haridwar; when Jupiter is in Taurus (VrishabhaRashi ) and the sun is in Capricorn (MakarRashi) Mahakumbha Mela is celebrated at Prayag; and Jupiter and the sun are in Scorpio (VrishchikRashi) the Mela is celebrated at Ujjain. Each site's celebration dates are calculated in advance according to a special combination of zodiacal positions of Sun, Moon, and Jupiter.

### **The Ritual**

The major event of the festival is ritual bathing at the banks of the river in whichever town kumbh Mela being held:Ganga in Haridwar, Godavari in Nasik, Kshipra in Ujjain and Sangam(confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati) in Allahabad (Prayag. Nasik has registered maximum visitors to 75 million. Other activities include religious discussions, devotional singing, mass feeding of holy men and women and the poor, and religious assemblies where doctrines are debated and standardised. kumbh Mela is the most sacred of all the religious. Thousands of holy men and women attend, and the auspiciousness of the festival is in part attributable to this. The sadhus are seen clad in saffron sheets with Vibhuti ashes dabbed on their skin as per the requirements of ancient traditions. Some, called nagasanyasis, may not wear any clothes even in severe winter.

After visiting the Kumbh Mela of 1895, [Mark Twain](#) wrote:

It is wonderful, the power of a faith like that, that can make multitudes upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such incredible journeys and endure the resultant miseries without repining. It is done in love, or it is done in fear; I do not know which it is. No matter what the impulse is, the act born of it is beyond imagination, marvelous to our kind of people, the cold whites.”

### **High Points of Mahakumbh Mela-2013 At Allahabad**

1. The total area of the Mela premises is 50.83 sq km, almost double the size of that in 2001.
2. One hundred million people expected to visit Mahakumbh Mela. About 1 crore are expected to visit on MakarSankranti day alone and 3 crore on MauniAmawasya that falls on February 10.
3. One million foreign tourists are expected at the mela.
4. The total budget for the Mahakumbh is Rs 1,200 crore, which is Rs 200 crore more than that of the last edition.
5. The UP government is expected to earn revenues worth Rs 12,000 crore from the mela. The mela would also provide employment to over 6 lakh people.
6. Temporary roads made of chequered steel plates have been laid on the river bank for the occasion. The length of the road is 156 kilometres.
7. Water pipelines worth 570 kilometres have been laid besides 800 km of electric wires and nearly 50 power sub-stations.
8. Over fifteen pontoon bridges and 35,000 toilets have been set up for the two-month long mela.

9. Four godowns and 125 ration shops have been set up in the Mela premises to facilitate pilgrims.
10. Over 115 CCTV cameras have been installed in the mela premises and Allahabad city.
11. Thirty new police stations, 30,000 police officers and 72 companies of paramilitary forces to be deployed during the Mela days.
12. Over 20 doctors and 120 ambulances will be on duty round the clock at the 100-bed central hospital in the Mela premises.
13. 2,500 religious and social organizations from all over the world are set to participate in the Mela. Hollywood actors like Richard Gere, Michael Douglas and wife Catherine Zeta Jones besides spiritual guru Dalai Lama and former US presidential candidate John Hagelin. Are expected at the Mela.
14. Digitized maps of the entire Mela premises have been uploaded for the convenience of the visitors. They can also avail GPS to locate their spiritual and religious leaders and the camps that the latter have set up in the Mela. The government has sought help from the ISRO and Remote Sensing Application Centre to get an estimate of the number of visitors at the Mela. They will take photographs of the entire Mela every 24 hours.

**The Socio-Economic Development Through Religious Tourism-** The pilgrimage (tirthyatra) was therefore a journey undertaken for betterment of the spiritual knowledge and peace. Travel or pilgrimage to religious place in India is considered an integral part of culture and tradition. In traditional societies like ours, the pilgrimage journeys performed to god's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community. Because sacred rituals and texts sanctified at certain places are associated with divine revelation. This is true in all religions. With this long and religiously entrenched tradition, the flow of people started to places of religions of importance in India. It has increased in the last couples of decades. The modern travel, like the road transport, railways and air travel have increased very consequently the number of tourist and pilgrims visiting the various pilgrim centers also increased many of the country. The pilgrimage and heritage tourist destinations the countries old glorious temples and colorful religious festivals attract millions of domestic and international tourists. In India lot of pilgrimage potential are there as well as in Uttar Pradesh Allahabad is second ranked in the list of major tourist of India. Pilgrimage tourism plays a major role in economic generation in India and in Uttar Pradesh. Every year pilgrimage tourist is doubled in pilgrimage centers. It shows that pilgrimage potentials in Uttar Pradesh are flexible.

**Conclusion-** The results of the foregoing study have clearly demonstrated that pilgrimage tourism is playing a major role in socio-economic development. Among other observations, it has shown that, for many countries of the region, the economic significance of pilgrimage tourism is very large when measured against GDP and exports. For many countries in general and the least developed countries in particular, pilgrimage tourism is a sector in which they have comparative, if not competitive, advantages for which they can efficiently convert domestic resources into foreign exchange. If appropriately used such foreign exchange can purchase the investment goods necessary to support more broadly based economic development policies. . The study has demonstrated that the social significance of pilgrimage tourism, measured in terms of employment (especially unskilled labour), is very large. It has also illustrated that appropriate pilgrimage tourism-related interventions can play a role in raising the standard of living and in reducing poverty in local communities. It is often necessary, however, to develop and implement policies that take advantage of the potential benefits of pilgrimage tourism in socioeconomic development.



**SUGGESIONS & RECOMMENDATION**

After Careful Study of the Present State of affairs of of Religious Tourism with Special reference to MahaKumbh Mela-2013 regarding its Socio-economic the following suggestions & recommendations may be given for improvement in future. The complete Research proves to be a lot of immense help in my learning process. I came across various practicalities during the study of the project.

- In order to make Religious tourism as an all season as well as purposeful activity in the state of Uttar Pradesh especially in Allahabad, it is necessary to develop as well as promote adventure tourism, sport tourism, wild life tourism, in addition to religious tourism. The efforts should also be put to combine general tourism with religious and spiritual tourism in the form of yoga; meditation etc. tourism is another activity which has to be promoted immediately nationally as well as internationally. A large chunk of foreign tourist visit Allahabad and nearby places for the purpose of yoga and meditation. This activity should not only be promoted among the foreign tourists but also be promoted among the domestic tourist so that they will be motivated to visit Allahabad region not only for religious but also for recreation and other purposes.
- It has been suggested that while constructing and upgrading the accommodation facilities, the requirement of the tourist at different places for accommodation should be considered.
- Tourist information centers should not only be located at important tourist destinations of the region but also at national and international gateways. So, the tourist particularly foreigners will not be misguided by the touts or other persons and will get the right information but the places. Furthermore. In order to make correct as well as speedy information all the information centers should be connected with each other through computerization. All these information centers should be provided related literature and brochures, booking services for package tours and so on.
- Local people should also be motivated as well as involved in the tourism process. It has been suggested that the people of the region should come forward help in providing safe and secure atmosphere for the tourists.
- Problem created by tout should be checked so that foreign tourists would not feel cheated or disturbed or so on. Besides, law and regulations may be introduced to check the heavy rush of tourists at a peak time at different major tourist attraction.
- There is an urgent need of eco-tourism. Planned infrastructure and tourism development without disturbing the ecological balance of Allahabad region is to be given top priority.
- It has been suggested that in order to attract more and more foreign tourists, advertisement in foreign journals, magazines and newspapers should be given in foreign languages. Besides, translation of tourist's literature in foreign language through different agencies in another positive steps in this direction.
- Many tour operators from European and Asian countries in world tourism seminar in London confirmed Allahabad Region as their future tourist destination. Familiarization tours of travel writers as well as travel agents from different part of the country should be organized immediately. These groups should be invited for a free visit of the major places of Allahabad Region in order to enable them to popularize Allahabad as a religious destination of tourists. Such programmes will be definitely boosting the tourism in Allahabad Region.
- It has also been suggested that different independent tourism organizations like tour operators, hoteliers, restaurants and so on should also be involved in promoting tourism in Allahabad Region. These organizations should make use of various promotional tool as different time. During the off-seasons, the tourism industries should make use of personnel selling tool for persuading MNCs and other institutions to choose Allahabad Region as a venue for conference

and seminars. Besides, the frequency of advertising should also be increased. A reputed advertising agency should be engaged for promotion of tourism in the state.

- There should be ban on pollution of river water. During the Kumbh Mela, there should be arrangements for the promotion of pollution free festival otherwise we have to face the problem of polluted river during the next KumbhMelas. There should be sustainable use of river during Kumbh Mela.

The assessment of present state of affairs would give the direction for future improvement regarding Kumbh Mela to be organized in future. I hope that the above recommendations and suggestions would be incorporated in Governments policy formulations regarding religious tourism promotions.

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