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Concept of Tourism in the Period of Chanakya

Meenakshi Saxena

ABSTRACT

In ancient times like that of Mauryan Period, India was viewed as one of the most civilised, learned, educated, prosperous and worth visiting group of small Janpadas. Travellers from Greece, other part of Europe and Asia like China used to tour India in search of their good fortune, higher education, trade, spread of their religions etc. travellers outnumbered their counterparts who ventured out of their Indian Territories for such gains.

In the period of Mauryas, such travelling was regulated in a meticulous way by the King Chandragupta Maurya 's famous Prime Minister Acharya Vishnugupta better known as Chanakya or Kautilya (hereinafter called Chanakya)

To enhance the foreign relations and for the well being of self, family or State, people used to travel other states very often. There were many reasons of tourism as exist today, i.e., business, education, spread of religion (though not a reason today), Tirthatan i.e., pilgrimage etc. One of the prevalent reasons was entertainment, which has taken complex form of leisure today, etc. Entertainment included dance, music, mimics, reciting, jugglery, etc. The shows used to be a day and night affair. Foreign entertainers paid a special tax. Some families specialized in the entertainment business. Arthashastra specifically states that any beautiful, young, talented girl could be appointed as head of the entertainment establishment.

Apart from peripatic people like entertainers, traders and foreign merchants, ordinary people also travelled. They did so for family reason, to go on pilgrimages or to attend fairs and festivals. In those times when transport system was not so up to date, most journeys had been done on foot, some rode animals, or carts. The traders and caravans of merchants used to travel either by road or ferries, and they paid a road access and escort charges. Boats and ships could also be hired.

There are many references when foreign merchants used to travel in Indian subcontinent. A few foreign countries like Ceylon, Barbara and Arachosia used to send their traders to India for selling pearls. Custom duty as per today's system also existed in Chanakya's period. The chief controller of shipping was responsible for the welfare of sea traders and seamen, elimination of piracy, ensuring the seaworthiness of vessels and rescuing vessels in distress. It is also mentioned in Treatises of Chanakya that whosoever was coming for any business activity, was given full protection by boundary guards (Anant Pals). They all entered into the country with valid passport and visa duty stamped by appropriate officer with about one year's validity. It was a very appropriate concept of Acharya Chanakya, which was later, followed by whole of the world

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This research paper explores compares and contrasts of the concept of Tourism then and now. There is not much literature available from that period but whatever details related to Regulation of tourism taken up in Chanakya period are surprisingly worth mentioning

Keywords: Chanakya, Tourism, Arthshastra, Magadha, Maurya, Tirthatan

In ancient times like that of Mauryan period, India was viewed as one of the most civilized, learned, educated, prosperous and worth visiting. Travellers from Greece, Europe and Asia used to tour India in search of their good fortune, higher education, trade, and spread of their religion. Concept of tourism was developed in three forms since ancient period. Initially it was Tirthatan, which means touring for spreading their own religion, acquiring knowledge of religious places and traditions of other states (later such independent states were called nations). Later on it took the form of Deshatan, which comprised of touring for trade, sight-seeing and good fortune. Present form of tourism is mix of all other past formats including Vidyatan i.e. tourism for acquiring knowledge and higher education in other state or nation and it is called 'Paryatan'.

In the period of King Chandra Gupta Maurya, his famous and learned Prime Minister Acharya VishnuGupt better known as Chanakya or Kautilya regulated travelling or tourism in a most meticulous way. For the material well-being of the people, for earning livelihood any economically productive activity was supported by Acharya Chanakya as it enriches the Kosha or wealth. Wealth only multiplies more wealth and wealth only makes the backbone of the nation, according to Chanakya's concept in his treatise Arthashastra.

The source of wealth in India in olden or ancient times was agriculture, when agriculture resulted in accumulation of surplus, it became necessary to export it

by natural water ways or rivers, resulting in more trade commerce and tourism. Agriculture gave birth to internal tourism. The famous cities of Varanasi, Champa, Rajagriha, Ujjain, Kosambi, Saket, Kusinagar grew into market places and attracted artisans from far and near for the availability of raw material and for ready products ¹. With accumulation of wealth these cities were called Kubernagri and they became the capitals of new states.

The volume of trade and commerce and its export outside states could be gauged from the fact that textiles were next most important trade in Indian states. The flourishing agriculture made cotton industry so important that a separate Vibhag was created for textile industry under a superintendent during the Maurya Period. The superintendent of weaving was responsible for getting complete knowledge of the material and engages qualified persons to manufacture threads, coats, cloths, ropes, cut wool, fiber, cotton, panicle, hemp and flex ². Employment was also given ³. Kashi, Vanga, Vatsa produced best cotton fabrics. In costly fabrics Kasi, Magadha, Bengal, produced silk and linen and they were chief regions of textile industry. Their silk competed with China. It is however, unfortunate that in later Gupta period textile trade with Roman Empire declined as they learnt technique from China.

Woodwork also took the shape of industry. The art of carpentry attained a high skill. India excelled in ivory work also. Various ornaments and useful articles were prepared from this material. The

skins of deer and goat were used for clothing. Leather workers prepared a great variety of things. It is mentioned by Acharya Chanakya that there are five kinds of fragrant wood such as Chandan. They further have variety according to their origin and colour. These fragrant woods came from Kamrupa (now Assam) the Himalaya region.

India had developed extensive inland trade. One trade route was from East to west. Principally they ran along the great rivers. (It started from Champa and ended at Sindhu) Second route was from North to South West, i.e. from Saravasti to Godavari. Third route was from North to South East, i.e. Saravasti to Rajgriha. Fourth route was from Punjab (from five rivers) to Central and Western Asia.

There are references that merchants travelling from Kashmir and Gandhara to Videha, from Banaras to Ujjaini, from Magadha to Sauvira etc. A lot of wealth came from inland trade⁴. However trading was not easy. Robbers against whom merchants hired the services of forest guards invested roads. Deserts were crossed at night with the help of land pilots, guiding the caravan by the stars. Some roads were called Royal or great Roads (Rajpatha or Mahamagga). However rivers were not bridged so ferries crossed them. There are references to merchants voyaging from Bharukachcha on the western coast to the same destination. There are references to merchants travelling from Banaras to Babylon.

The rise of Maurya helped greatly to improve India's inland and foreign trade. Mauryas brought all great inland trade routes under their control. Their rule was helpful for the growth of trade in other ways. Mauryas had a special department for the construction of roads. The officer

in charge had to construct roads and at every ten stadia set up a pillar to show the bye roads and distances. The most famous road of that time was the Royal road connecting the North West frontier with Patliputra and leading thence to the mouth of Ganges. The stages of that road together with their distances have been given a special mention by the Roman writer Pliny in his work called Natural History. External trade was carried on with Syria, Egypt, Greece, etc. in the West. After the conquest of Kalinga with its seaport on Eastern Coast of India trade and tourism was carried with South East Asia and China. The chief articles of export were – spices, pearls, diamonds, sandalwood, ivory, cotton cloth, silk yarn, muslin, etc. The principal imports were linen, silver, gold, dry fruits, etc.

The Mauryan state exercised a rigid control over all the trades and industry that yielded profit. The superintendent of commerce fixed the prices of commodities. The superintendent of weights and measures enforced the standard weights and measures. The superintendent of market safeguarded against the fraudulent practices of the trading class. The superintendent of ships regulated river traffic and collected ferry charges⁵. The superintendent of tolls collected custom duty ranging from 1/5 to 1/25 from the traders.

An important aspect of Mauryan Economy was the state monopoly of mining and metallurgy. It was a source of great income. The largest number of punch marked (mostly silver) coins are assignable to the Mauryan period and came from Eastern UP and Bihar. Besides the coins there was a considerable use of instruments of credit. The great merchants in the large towns gave letters of credit on one another⁶. There are references to promissory notes. There is a reference

to the charging of interest although the rate is not given. A written record of the transaction was kept.

According to Jataka story merchants used to go to Burma and Siam and traded in silk, muslins, cutlery, armour, brooches, rugs, perfumes, ivory, jewelry, gold, silver. The state enjoyed unrestricted monopoly in the trade of salt. And a superintendent looked after the salt ⁷. Indian merchants carried their goods to the various parts of the vast Persian Empire that added to the Commercial prosperity of the country.

To enhance foreign relations, tourism was done for entertainment also. It included dance, music, mimics, reciting, jugglery, etc. The foreign artists used to come to India to conduct a show. The show used to be a day and night affair. People of villages shared cost of putting on shows. Foreign entertainers paid a special tax. Amount earned thereby was enormous. Some families specialized in the entertainment business and Arthshastra specifically states that any beautiful, young, talented girl could be appointed as head of the entertainment establishment ⁹. These establishments used to produce extra revenue in the time of financial distress and half of their earning was realized as tax and thereby enriched the state revenue.

Besides that Indian scholars and philosophers moved freely in the Persian empire and that led to the closer relations with Western countries in general and Greece in particular ¹⁰. Indian philosophers have been referred to as putting question to Socrates. In India Takshashila or Taxila and Kashi were centers of learning. Ambitious men from all over the country went to Taxila to acquire knowledge. Even princes were sent there for education. According to Dr. A. S. Altekar Heir-apparent of Banaras were usually seen being educated at Takshashila. King

Prasenjit of Kosala a contemporary of Buddha was educated in Takshashila. Prince Jivak (an illegitimate son of Bimbisar) spent seven years in Takshashila in learning medicine and surgery. Panini (writer of Ashtadhyayi, Great scholar of Sanskrit Grammar) was an alumnus of Takshashila. Chanakya himself was also associated with Takshashila. Three Vedas and eighteen paranas were taught in the institution of Taxila. Taxila was famous for teaching of medicine, law and military science ¹¹. Kashi was another center of learning. The king of Banaras used to send their sons to Taxila and in return students prepared at Taxila taught in Kashi which became famous for high-class teachers and attracted a very large number of students.

Apart from it sports and games were also given preferences. But Acharya in his Arthshastra has cautioned the King, not to spend too much on sports and they should not disturb other activities of the town and they should not be like a luxury activity ¹². Along with education sports, and other entertainments influence of Persia is evident like ChandraGupta Maurya borrowed the concept of "hair washing" ceremony from Persian kings. The utmost faith with friendly state like Persia is noticeable when Mauryan Kings employed Persian nobles as their Governors. Persian women (Yavanis) were employed by Indian rulers as their bodyguards and that must have brought many families from Persia to India in search of fortune. The Persian taught the Indians the technique of giving lustrous polish to stone. The example of the great empire of Persia must have given birth to the idea of the unification of Northern India.

In all the activities and strong influence of neighboring countries on India and India's impact on far and near countries,

it proves natural and abundant tourism and travelling of people in the period of Acharya Chanakya. This travelling and tourism was done to meet many responsibilities of the state, but one major cause of tourism in that period was due to spread of religion. It is very well accepted that religion of Buddhism started in one corner of India and spread not only in India but also made its way to Ceylon, Burma, Tibet, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Champa, China, Japan, Siam and Central Asia.

Buddhist Sangha was responsible for the spread of Buddhism. They had no worry about finances as they got royal patronage also. Buddhism had no serious rival. The success of spread of Buddhism was its adaptability. The changes were made in the religion with the new time and with the new countries and this is the reason that Mahayana was adopted by most of neighboring countries while Hinayana spread within India in general. Even today tourism is done inside and outside India for religion. It may be any religion. As far as Hinduism is concerned – Chardham Yatra within India is done. Amarnath Yatra, Mansarovar Yatra (Passing through China and Tibet), Pashupatinath Darshan (Nepal).

Though we do not find the official arrangements for issuing passport, visa to incoming and outgoing tourist, it can

be safely presumed that Chanakya’s prescription was being followed.

Author could not lay hands on data related to purpose of visits of incoming and outgoing tourists during Maurya or subsequent period in the past, but present day trend prevailing in India reveals that tourism and hospitality continues to be a major factor in prosperity of India. Trend of tourism has not changed as purpose of visits of foreign and domestic tourists is almost same i.e. business, leisure, meeting friends, education and learning, etc. However, present day data reveal that share of leisure has become prominent i.e. about 26% in ‘Paryatan’ form of tourism as against insignificant during ancient times i.e. Trithatan days. Present new trend in India tourism is medical tourism, which is picking up @28% and now contributes to about 4% of total foreign tourist arrival. It is because of medical treatment facilities in India. So, a comparison of purpose of visits of ancient and present day tourists would reveal that tourism was meant for elite class in past except that traders used to visit for imports and exports. Tirthatan was prominent in ancient India.

As per data available at website of Market Research and Statistics, Ministry of Tourism¹³, Government of India, following are the purposes of outgoing and incoming domestic and foreign tourist:

S. No.	Year	Total No. of Purpose of Visit (in percentage)						
		incoming Tourist/ Foreign Tourist	Business	Leisure	Visiting friends or relatives	Medical Tourists	Edu- cation	Others
1	2013	6.98 million	20.9	30.3	25.9	3.4	1.9	17.6

S.No.	Year	No. of outgoing Tourist (in million)
1	2009	5.17
2	2010	5.78
3	2011	6.31
4	2013	16.0

The number of foreign tourist arrival FTA in India during 2013 was 6.98 million. The share of India in International Tourist arrivals in 2010 was 0.61%. India's rank improved to 40th in 2010 from 41st in 2009. India accounted for 2.83% of tourist arrival in Asia Pacific Region in 2010 with the rank of 11.

Tourism continues to play an important role as foreign exchange earns for the country. As per latest data as available on Government of India website foreign exchange earnings (FEE) from tourist are USD 18.13 billion registering a growth of 18.1 percent over the last year. Tourism in India now accounts for 6.8% of the GDP and is the third largest foreign exchange earner for the country.¹⁴

According to the available information it appears that in ancient times most of the tourist used to go out or came to Magadha for the purpose of trade, commerce and second main category appears to be those who wanted to learn religion and philosophies followed by entertainment (leisure) purposes.

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