Role of Organised Cultural Events as a Means of Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Tourism
—Tribal Festival of Odisha, A Case Study—

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[ABSTRACT]

Economic benefit of tourism is loud and clear. Organised cultural events of India have been attracting domestic and international visitors alike to many destinations. Apart from showcasing the cultural diversity of India, such organised cultural events instil pride among the Indian youth for the cultural traditions and preserve the cultural heritage for the future generation. It gives economic empowerment to the poor and the marginalised. One such event is the Adivasi Mela or the Tribal festival of Odisha. The festival was represented by all 62 tribes of Odisha, making it largest congregation of tribal communities in festivals anywhere in Asia and perhaps world. Given wide publicity it has the potential to become a world class event.(116 Words)

Key Words : Tourism, Cultural Events, Tribal, Inclusive, Sustainable

Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization tourism has been the ‘basic instinct’ of human beings, and India, being mother of all civilizations, has a long history of tourism on its soil (Sawarkar & Mishra, 2009). Archaeological excavations prove that Harappan civilization had a well-developed dockyard and even maintained a steady trade relation with contemporary civilizations overseas. Thus, international tourism was a regular feature in India some 5000 years ago. Ideologically, Indians consider serving a guest as a pious activity. A tenet in Sanskrit goes like this—“Atithi Devo Bhav”. It means “Guest is the God Himself”. Domestic tourism attained great heights

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when the benevolent emperors like Samrat Asoka understood the importance of tourism and erected sound infrastructure for the ease of travellers including free service of food and shelter. They also encouraged scholars from foreign countries to visit India and thus we had Meghasthenes from Greece, Alberuni from Persia, Huen Tsang and Fa-Hien from China to name a few. Strongly motivated by ‘curiosity’ and ‘quest for knowledge’, these inquisitive souls, despite their limited means, used to set out on long and arduous journeys, bravely facing the en-route risks and discomforts. Their accounts on the life and people of India induced a strong urge in others to visit India. Also those travel accounts today have become an important source of Indian history.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, tourism meant a pastime and thus a trivial activity. Today, one and a half centuries later, it is world’s fastest growing industry having far-reaching socio-economic effects. Undoubtedly, the origin of modern tourism and its speedy growth can be attributed to the remarkable achievements in the field of science and technology. With the information revolution at its peak one can take a virtual tour of the world at the click of a button. Thus, technology creates both awareness and curiosity to travel to alien destinations. Secondly, the advent of cheaper and faster means of transport has removed the time and cost barrier to travel. Thirdly, greater automation at workplace has made tourism both convenient and compulsive. On one hand, it has provided more disposable income and leisure time. On the other, it has created an urge to escape from the drudgeries of monotonous city life. The ever-rising number of players, private as well as public, in the tourism industry has made it very competitive in terms of quality of services and their price. They are vying with each other to attract each additional tourist. The effective marketing strategies have certainly made customer the king and he has a number of alternatives to choose from.

World Tourism-facts and Figures

International Tourist Arrivals, 2011

The majority of destinations around the world that had not exceeded pre-crisis levels in 2010, did so in 2011. Contrary to the long-term trend, advanced economies (+4.9%) posted higher growth than emerging economies (+4.3%), due largely to the strong results in Europe, and the setbacks in the Middle East and North Africa. Europe and Asia and the Pacific (both +6%) were the fastest-growing regions in terms of tourist arrivals in 2011. Europe grew above expectations, despite continuing economic uncertainty, while arrivals in Asia and the Pacific increased at a slower pace over 2010, partly due to the temporary decline in the Japanese outbound market. Arrivals in the Americas (+4%) were boosted by South America (+9%), which continued to lead growth in the region for the second consecutive year. Popular uprisings in a number of countries in Africa and the Middle East during 2011 took a toll on tourism in both regions. Africa (+1%) recorded only a slight increase, due to the loss of visitors in North Africa, while the Middle East saw an 8% decline in arrivals.