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*Tourism in Assam, Trend and Potentials*, pp - 372,  
Maps, Photographs, Bibliography, Price : Rs. 600

Tourism is emerging as an important activity in India. contributing directly to the national and regional economy. Benefits accrue in the form of infrastructure facilities and amenities, employment generation and placing locations and areas of tourist interest on the national and global scene. Tourism and its potential for development of regions has hardly been given its due importance in our preoccupation in India in the conventional procedures nations economic planning focusing on sectoral and temporal planning which do not yet have regional dimension as a built-in component unlike some of the developed countries which have evolved national planning through regional plans as in Britain, Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany and Japan. Non-availability of natural resources and development of basic and heavy industries have not hampered some of these countries in achieving faster growth of the economy and regional specialization backed by

tourism as an industry. It should be noted that theories of national and regional development all the while have been founded on agglomeration of economic activities in few centers of growth (Theories of Growth Pole and Growth Centres, Trickle down effect, back-wash and spread effect, evolution of Market Centres and Central Places and so on). Case studies in India on regional imbalances in development have provided evidences of accentuation of regional imbalance in development and increasing dichotomy between urban-industrial development and agriculture and rural development. In regions of existing and potential development of tourism (e.g. Kerala, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, North East India) tourism based development needs to be a built-in perspective for development directly contributing to income and employment for the large mass of people who live close to nature and have perceived knowledge of

ecological-economic aspects of development. It should also be emphasized that Indian regions are hardly discovered in their reality of culture, life and living conditions that could provide ground reality for development. It is from this point of view that Prasanta Bhattacharya's study of Tourism in Assam finds its place among very few studies by geographers who are trying to focus on Geography of Tourism as an emerging theme for development of the subject.

Focus of the study is on Assam though the author has rightly pointed out the need for more systematic and rigorous study of the North-Eastern Region (Seven Sisters) of which Assam is an important part with its strategic situation as a 'Gateway' to the North-East. Its pre-eminence as the nodal region performing its due role in interregional trade and socioeconomic transactions with rest of India, more particularly with Eastern States (Bihar, W.Bengal and Orissa) and in intra-regional linkage so vital for socio-economic integration within needs to be, strengthened through tourism as a complementary activity.

### **Design of the Study**

Within the limitations of individual researcher, the author has shown all his commitment and sincerity in portraying tourism in the natural and socio-cultural landscape of Assam. Analysis of literature survey is articulated; and objectives of the study have a bearing on identification of tourist areas and locations against the background of physical and cultural landscape. Since Assam -- as in other parts of India, has its historical vast the author has

provided an interesting account of archaeological remains and monuments, their locations and regional setting (e.g. Tezpur) and Kamakhya Temple most important and visited by people of Assam, North-East and rest of India as part of domestic tourist spots. Popular areas with rich tradition of art and craft, bamboo and cane crafts, wood and ivory carvings, variety of silk, pottery of Assam have been selected and information provided with regional flavour which is unique to Assam and North-East. Likewise, areas of adventure tourism for which Assam has bountiful variety, have been mapped; these include areas of mountaineering, rock climbing and water sports. In spite of these potentials for tourism development these are still in low levels of development for tourist attraction. The author rightly laments that "colourful cultural mosaic and rare topographic expressions silently wait for their exploitation."

Typology of tourism, perception and behavior of tourists, expenditure pattern, duration of stay are studied in detail with a small sample survey of domestic and foreign tourists. It was found that nearly 48 percent of domestic tourists are from West Bengal, followed by those from Maharashtra. Areas of eco tourism attraction seem to be facing, as elsewhere, environmental degradation and they need to be planned keeping in view ground reality. Domestic tourists are generally in the younger agegroups (20 -- 40 years) which indicates potentiality for increased tourist attraction. Likewise, one of the important conclusions through maps and primary data collection is that among the 31 tourist spots identified giving details of their importance only two of them namely, Guwahati (Pilgrimage center, traditional art

and craft products) and Kaziranga (National Park famous for Rhino, Elephants and wild buffaloes in their natural setting) are the major attractions). There is however diversity and dispersal in the choice by foreign tourists for visits to different areas. Problem of insecurity has been one of the impediments to growth of tourism Expenditure pattern and duration of stay also show sharp variation.

The author, with his deep interest and professional skill in cartography and photography has provided supporting evidences that could potentially enrich tourism as an important sector for development. Maps are unfortunately over

reduced while photographs pleasingly portray reality. Printing should have been of better quality commensurate with price of the book. There is an urgent need to integrate such studies with, what is otherwise a monotonous presentation of "information to tourists" by the Tourism information Bureau. These along with well articulated suggestions related to Tourism Development need serious consideration by social scientists.. planners and administrators

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