CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter endeavors to introduce the concept by presenting an outline of the selected topic. This chapter is supported by an overview of the study and provides a primary introduction to the Silk Route and its linkage to India. Following this, the present status of the Indian Silk Route destinations and the need for branding Silk Route destinations will be presented. The study is also supported by maps depicting the Silk Route connectivity; to make the study viable to understand. Eventually, the research background will be presented, as an introduction to the tourism sector, on which this study will be based. It will give a short introduction to the concept of tourism and its impacts on the world’s economy and further may present a support to Silk Route branding and revival in a new or contemporary terminology.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Being defined as one of the largest and fastest growing industries, tourism has given its significant contribution to the world’s economy. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) Report 2013, the market share of rising nations has improved from 30% (in 1980) to 47% (in 2012), and also has been anticipated to meet 57% mark by 2030, which is meant to be equivalent to one billion international tourists’ influx, thus increasing the competition among the various destinations to gain largest tourist attraction. Looking to the history of real development of civilization, Silk Route has led a landmark in the history of travel and trade concept. The ancient Silk Route formed a land ridden bridge extended between the Eastern and Western countries and had remained an imperative medium to trade among primeval territories of India, China, Rome and Persia. With the emergence of new terminologies in the travel and trade forms the concept of Silk Route faded among the trades’ reformers and even has lost its identification to the existing world.

The long distance travel and exchange across this trade route has remained flourishing for thousands of years and some of these conventional routes are continuing to serve this aspect and bear commercial exchanges. On the first in a series of Silk Route, international organizations of the World Tourism Organization held a meeting in Xi'an
(China) in July 1996 in which a new global marketing strategy was approved by all the participating nations. It was a milestone in the history of Silk Route Marketing, but its relevance was limited to fewer countries especially that participating and not to the other countries that are also a part of this historical and heritage route. The expert committee considering the routes as an element of our cultural heritage, met at Madrid, Spain in November 1994 and defined the heritage route as an amalgamation of substantial characteristics through which the cultural effects derives from interactions & also a multidimensional discourse across nations or regions is obtained, thus demonstrating the relations of movement, along the route, in a definite gap and moment.

One of the foremost steps towards the revitalization of Silk Route is to drive the attention of the tourists towards it. In other words, there is a need of creating awareness and image among tourists. According to Meer (2010), awareness signifies the level of the brand’s presence in the customer’s psyche so that the target could perceive the quality of the product being offered. Whilst the potential for the development of tourism along Silk Route has been predicted but growth of the industry is constrained by a variety of factors. Also, defining or redefining the concept of Silk Route in modernized and competitive era is quite challenging and in such perspective emergence of ‘branding’ in tourism terminology could be consent for the development of Silk Route and its induced destinations. A key output of this study is to provide a set of practical guidelines and scenario for the application of the branding strategies for Silk Route that make a complete circuit of local destinations in India.

In addition to enhancing the socio-cultural, economic as well as environmental sustenance of such post-communist civilizations, tourism can also be used to reveal the national distinctiveness of these formerly lesser known destinations or lands (Harrison, 2001). Whereas increase in the competition in this industry has made it difficult for the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to create an image among tourists and to make it sustained for a long time especially when there arises the concept of intangibility, which is one of the prime factors to be considered in the destination branding. Moreover, the level of competition among destinations having five-star deluxe facilities and attractions is no longer been enough for the recognition as each destination is substantially defined with such perspectives. Thus, defining the Silk Route through this point of view needs a strategic and contemporary approach. However, the strategic
marketing approach should raise the tourists’ awareness about a destination, motivate them throughout the quality perception or influence their loyalty towards the destination (Krajnovic, et al., 2013).

Some observers illustrated the concept of ‘Route Development’ as the world’s best way to safeguard sustenance of tourism sector (ECI Africa, 2006). No doubt the UNWTO and other related organizations are looking further for such aspect, but realistic approach by the induced destinations as India is very much important to understand and present the perception and perfect image of these destinations thus making its marketing easily affordable as well as approachable. The branding of tourist destinations has been discussed in every aspect in various developed and underdeveloped countries. Consequently, the strategic marketing should cautiously define the major premeditated objectives of the tourist destination branding (Konecnik and Gartner, 2006). However, increase in competition and change in the scenario of trade and travel trends has made the Silk Route’s concept as an undefined part. Hence, in the extremely competitive and comprehensive tourism milieu, there is a requirement to extend a different identity or a brand based on reality that reflects the basic potency and individuality of its product (Crockett and Wood, 1999).

In terms of India that has also been remained a part of the Silk Route, revitalization of this concept needs to be understood primarily at the regional level. The stretch from Jammu and Kashmir State towards Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim shows evidences to justify India’s linkage to Silk Route. Change in the scenario of travel and trade has also changed the identification of all these destinations of Silk Route thus fading or changing their background. In context to Silk Route various countries have acquired their significant positions in the tourism industry as they have received all kinds of attention and requirements for marketing in the world over. But the negligence and avoidance of Silk Route on the part of India has made it unknown to the tourists as well as the industry itself. Cai (2002) in his study has revealed that the title of a destination brand is reasonably predetermined by the real geographical title of the destination. However, geographical isolation from the main resource market may be one of the reasons for the Silk Route destinations that create difficulty in attaining tourism attention.

The present study proposes to study the impact of Silk Route as a destination brand. In a destination of developing country such as India, tourism can be generally
defined to comprise the avenue of goods and services required to sustain tourists, like transport, lodging and bistros. Silk Route is a remarkable case for analysis. As the nation is endowed with various natural resources that form a basis for tourism activities, defining all the intact destinations of Silk Route under a single tourism brand name may help to lessen this gap and create a complete destination range among tourists. Furthermore, creating an awareness of Silk Route may add to the advancement of new resources and branding available ones, especially in the terms of tourism as a most valuable field. Even for the Local Economic Development (LED), tourism routes are of concern as they include tourism planning in a cooperative and collaborative manner to facilitate the area to have advantage from combined marketing efforts (Rogerson, 2007).

Silk Route tourism may provide an interesting phenomenon in cultural studies, as well as tourism studies, for numerous reasons: it demonstrates the neglected causal link between various cultures and tourism, it provides insights into development which leads to the establishment of tourist destinations and the significance that not just the industry of cultural inheritance that tourism sector have, but also the significance of tourists’ exchanging their earlier travel and trade understandings. Supporting this Meyer (2004) has added that routes appear to be predominant prospects for lesser developed regions with efficient cultural assets that could attract special interest tourists who usually not only stay longer but could spend a lot on their particular interest. Also, integrating and presenting all these differences into one unified brand name as ‘Silk Route’, may serve as a variety to the tourists. It is gradually more evident that the competitive future of Silk Route and its destinations depend upon the key factors such as destination identification, destination awareness and destination competence. And, if such factors are to be accomplished, incorporation of branding to the Silk Route is required. Branding is conceivably the most influential marketing tool that exists for contemporary destinations’ marketers dealing with tourists who are largely looking for existence accomplishments & experiences, rather than distinguishing them in the more tangible characteristics like accommodations and attractions, etc. (Morgan et al., 2007).

It has been discussed by Quinlan (2008) that the well-being of a tourism destination recalls for exertion, competency, partnerships and equilibrium between various segments. The biggest confront particularly for developing nations like India as a late entrant is how to generate new position and impression in the market. The foundation
of a destination as a brand has to concentrate on various groups of stakeholders, socio-cultural characteristics & understanding of all the intangible and comprehensive characteristics of a place (Munar, 2011) and same is applicable to destinations of silk route with distinct features, climate and tourism resources and attractions as well.

The necessary initial point for development of a route is thus the expansion of a shared custom of teamwork to participate (Rogerson, 2007). Council of Europe (2004) under the title “Idea of shared culture” illustrated the four main objectives:

- To raise the people and young Europeans about the importance of a European cultural identity and citizenship. The European culture resulted from historical mutual exchange, influence across boundaries, and development.
- To encourage intercultural and inter-religious discourse as an information for protecting a better thought and admiration for a European history.
- To safeguard the cultural and natural heritage for improving quality of life. The importance of heritage in relation to the economy, socio-cultural development.
- To give people have pride of place, and to strengthen cultural tourism for sustainable development.’

This statement extends an example and also provides a justification to develop Silk Route as a complete tourism brand for the tourists. At first there is a need for the industry to generate the knowledge among the people about the identity and importance of Silk Route. Secondly, there is also a need to safeguard the cultural and natural heritage and to define it in relation to economic as well as socio-cultural benefits to the intact destinations. And thirdly, there is a need to focus on to provide a sustainable development approach to Silk Route destinations. Major aspect of cultural exchange and the expansion of new fiscal associations and expertise to facilitate export, along with the complete stimulation of a journey and adventure, can be described through historical explanation of the Silk Road. However, the entire route is endowed with impressive monuments and heritage but almost the entire and original road has been disappeared and even lost under the influence of new and emerging routes and highways. Still some uncertainty exists in adopting a best possible practice to implement and the missions required cooperating in the improvement of a strategy and technique for recognition & recommendation of such cultural route (Feng, 2005).
A study was conducted under Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) in 2010, jointly by European Commission and Council of Europe which revealed that in order to support cultural routes for addressing the existing challenges, to cooperate more efficiently trans-nationally and to recognize their prospective as a center for cultural tourism development, defined action is suggested in five major areas:

1. Capacity-creation.
2. System authority.
4. Brand image and marketing.
5. Support of the key stakeholders.

And while considering Silk Route for the stake of tourism activities either pilgrimage, heritage or cultural route, the same statement stands ethical. In other words, creating a brand name is essential for Silk Route destinations so as to attain a successful hold up strategy and process which is liable to be widespread & exclusive, especially when the transformation in tourism segment continues to shift rapidly towards future and struggle for sustenance from the developed nations remains vicious. For this, an extensive level of harmonization and collaboration is required among the different organizations in destination marketing because of the fragmented character of tourism segment (Roberts and Simpson, 1999; Hall, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). The one basic reason is the lack of vision among stakeholders and industry practitioners about such concept and its utility as a tourist destination.

Nonetheless, the Silk Route regions needs to be identified in terms of potentially productive untouched investment locations. If we look towards the business perspective and consider Silk Route as a product, the foremost notion is “to prepare the final product there is a requirement for identification of its core assets that may finally be branded and offered to the ultimate consumer”. Recognition of Indian subcontinent as a part of Silk Route cluster is just a mere start to the Silk Route initiatives. All that cannot make it a complete tourism brand. Its identification cannot be denied in absence of the small intact regions or destinations available within the country that led the Silk Route foundation in some or other way. In the context of a destination being the central spot for the promotion and mechanism for economic growth, it formulates an intellect that the
destination should be administered as a brand to maintain its individuality & perceived importance in an increasingly viable market (Blackadder, 2006).

The aim of this study is to analyze awareness and knowledge about Silk Route destinations in India among tourists, travel agents and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs). This work focuses to highlight the emerging or already emerged Silk Route destinations which are even modestly recognized and can be of interest to tourism industry practitioners and tour operators whose customers look for newer or nascent destinations. Silk Route requires proper management to develop tourism activities involving tourists, and to make them realize the significance of the various events that formed the route.

The Silk Route itself presents the destination images of the induced countries or destinations that have the resources to attract diverse categories of travelers and most prominently offers corporeal and expressive association among the collaborating destinations. Furthermore, the term “Silk Route” as a brand may provide a multidimensional avenue for the tourism industry. In professional terminology when we think about a brand the very first insight that come to our minds are logos and taglines associated with concerned product. This concept of Silk Route as a destination product is still an unidentified term to Indian tourism industry. According to Munar (2011), the shortage of such possession of the destination goods creates the slogans, logos as well as business promotion the center of the destination brand and signifies the formal components of the brand. Also, at present the requirement is not just the reopening of Silk Route, instead it requires re-visioning to attain a maximum tourism and trade benefits.

As little concentration is given towards the advancement in destination branding theory, this study could present framework to the managers involved in same area & provide a foundation for future research (Hankinson, 2009). In order to endure the competition as a destination, Silk Route has had to scrutinize not only the experiences but also find out the ways that make these experiences stand in destination competition. Along with all this, better home work is required to be done, before making practical references for the Silk Route brand, keeping in mind the political, economic and cultural modifications that have taken place along these regions, even at international level.
In other words, it can be said that the potency of developing tourism along Silk Route in India lies in cooperation, coordination, competence and management of various induced destinations. Besides of considering the various factors involved in the creation of tourism destination this study also intends to focus on four major aspects: destination branding, destination awareness, destination perception and brand communication and development in context to Silk Route destinations in India. Thus, being a service intact industry, Silk Route branding as a tourism destination has to focus even more on entire branding process as the destinations that have efficiently implemented branding strategies recognizes the conduct for branding destination as it can facilitate to reduce any voids existed among destination’s potency & perceptions of potential tourists (Morgan et al., 2010).

Furthermore, dynamic nature of the destination itself makes the task of branding of tourist destination difficult for the industry practitioners. All these difficulties may include the difference in the interests and choices of the stakeholders available in the tourism market, the distinction between the presumption and explicit decision making procedure involved and similarly on the other side, respectively the benefits to involved community. And on the other front, approach to analyze the gap of the target market, and also the problems related to financial support of the brand adds to such problem and difficulties.

The major issue of the region is to describe the history, evolution and earlier vigor of the primeval Silk Road into trade prospects for the present and future. It is expected that the procedure of revitalizing the financial system of the Silk Road evolved from centuries of reasonably poor financial performance. The importance of the commercial and merchant groups amongst the various racial classes of the region through the prime period of the Silk Road, and their capability to act as mediators in one of the globe’s supreme trading atmospheres, signifies the trade potential of the province.

It is against this backdrop that the study aims to focus and identify the vital success factors in the development of tourism along Indian Silk Route. However, the study also intends to provide a set of practical planning guidelines for the application of the branding concept to Silk Route destinations. Beyond this, the concept of destination branding on Silk Route perhaps induce a potentially significant part in cross-cultural communications. As an alternative to emphasizing previous stereotypes & generating
fresh ones for short-term fiscal profits, branding Silk Route would help different nations to promote better communal understanding and improve global relations.

1.2 SILK ROUTE AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Silk Route covers an approximate distance of 5.9 million square kilometers approximately. From 200 B.C., the route has been a mode for contact between people and cultures, promoting the exchange of dialogue, art, religion, ideas & technology. This ancient route was not only a medium for circulating goods, but also been a source of exchanging the splendid societies of, India, China, Persia, Arabia, Greek as well as Rome. In 19th century, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (a German geographer) firstly used the title ‘Silk Road’ that connected Xinjiang (in China) to Central Asia. Afterward, it was extended steadily to connect West Asia, Europe and Africa. It was not only an essential hauling route that connected the prehistoric communities, but was also an alternate source for profitable and civilization interactions among the western civilizations and the oriental communities. Also, it can be termed as a synonym to cross-cultural and economic development between the countries. According to UNCTAD (2009) report; Silk Route represented a joint market of about $312.3 billion, with an approximate gross domestic product (GDP) of $2,151. Half of the Silk Route was located in Xinjiang. It was broadened along the Xian towards the east coast of Mediterranean. Xinjiang has remained a major hub as well as a meeting place of ancient western cultures. It was one of the sources of religious interactions like Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. However, during the Mongol empire’s reign, it experienced an era of decline.

Silk Route actually was a medium for the silk producers to export silk products to various regions. China was the major destination for hybrid silkworms and manufacture silk. A diplomat from Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), Zhang Qian travelled along this road between138B.C. to 139 B.C. He actually led a carnival to take gold and silk products to the regions of Loulan (presently known as Ruoqiang), Hotan, Huqa, Kashi and Wusum; which is presently known as river Ili valley, and also Dawan, Dayuesi, Kangju, and various other regions of Xinjiang. It was this route that made the introduction of silk items of China, iron products; gold, platinum & bronze sculptures; lacquer war & bamboo artifacts; medicines, farming & metallurgy practices to the region of Xiyu (Xinjiang of ancient times), India and Europe. On the contrary to this, vegetables like cucumber and animal species like lion, peacock, elephant, camel etc. were transferred to central parts of
China. The middle route rambled west next to the southern base of the Tianshan hills speckled by Korla, Loulan, Churcha and Aksu and further extended towards Pamir’s and Mari (in Russia).

The southern part of the route moves west besides the northern base of Kunlun Mountains, by Charkhilk (in Ruqiang), Cherchen (in Quemo), Minfeng (in Niya), and Hetian (in Hotan), further joined Kashgarh – as an additional link to Silk Route, further moved towards the Pamirs, and joined India, Afghanistan and Central Asia across Russia to travel towards the Mediterranean coastline or Arabia (Refer to Map 1.1). Generated interests in Fargana Horses led the Han emperors to increase political associations with western sovereignty of the Silk Route. This led to the foundation of silk products of China in the Roman realm. On contrary to this, merchants from India and other like the Kushans, the Sogdians, and the Prathians, took the advantage of such trade opportunity as middlemen. They led the silk trade to afar to the gold, ivory and many other things. Later on the Sogdian merchants became the leading traders in the cities of Samarkand, Balkh and Chanh located along Silk Route.

Occurrence of Buddhist disciple has also led a new dimension to the Silk Route perspective, i.e. religion. India’s renowned monk also visited central China’s region called Henan via Pakistan (in 147 A.D.) and Afghanistan through Silk Route (in 401 A.D.) correspondingly, to translate books related to Buddhism and make it to join thousands of followers. Chinese renowned monk named Fa Xian from Jin empire (from 265 A.D to 420 A.D.) and Xuan Zang from the Tang empire (from 618 A.D. to 907 A.D.) respectively travelled to India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, many other lands and regions performing disciple rituals in those regions which are situated along the Silk Route (www.Tianshah.net, 2007). It was during the reign of Tang Empire that Buddhism got well flourished in China. However, fall in Tang dynasty created various factors that ruin the significance and vitality of Silk Route. A famous poet of Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) Yilu Chucai and Qui Chuji (Taoist patriarch) travelled by Silk Route and portrayed the colorful civilization and local custom in Xinjiang and Central Asia.

The western part of this route is supposed to have developed prior to its eastern side, predominantly due to the growth of realms in the west, the territory of Syria and Persia. Being controlled by Middle East, the Iranian empire of Persia also extended its aura to Indian Kingdoms with trade that already started to influence their cultures.
However, Chinese silk had already been introduced to Mediterranean when Alexander moved to Indus River into Central Asia, i.e. by 4th century B.C. At that time, India was not really known to the outside world till 7th century after which information sources began along Silk Route. During this period, the increase in Islam commences that create an impact on Asia, thus created a gap between the east and west. Further the Muslims started to work as middlemen to induce the trade relations between these regions (Hopkrik, 1984; Wild, 1992). But the conflict between Muslims and Christians worlds adversely affected the trade and due to this reason Christian world started moving towards Central Asia.

On the other hand Mongols led a change in scenario of Silk Route. Several of the communities of Turkestan which had increased offensively westwards towards Persia and Arabia, started accepting Islam and which further led Islam to increase across extreme areas of Central Asia, but did not spread much far as the tribes moved across the large Mongolian grasslands (Alikuzai, 2011). In order to expand their aura of influence they elected Genghis Khan as their leader in 1206. Setting an empire they conquered the Central Asia that involved the regions from China to the regions of Persia and further extended to the extreme west towards Mediterranean. Though they moved towards the west they ruined earlier Han city of Jiaohe, and Turfan. Death of Genghis Khan and raise of Kublai Khan led a change and emergence of Yuan dynasty in south China.

Map 1.1: Network of roads and trails which make up the ancient Silk Route
(Source: Angelanealworld.com, 2011)
Kublai Khan, in particular, has been stated to have been quite considerate to the majority of religions and in lieu of this a great community of various countries and belief participated in trade across Asia and further settled in China (Hopkrik, 1984). It was during this period people observed religious liberalism. In 1275, Marco Polo (adventurer form Italy) visited Dadu, presently known as Beijing along Silk Route and described the culture and traditions of Pamirs, Kashi, Shache and Hotan. Before returning to Italy by ship through Sumatra, he travelled quite extensively in China and further India, Hormuz and Constantiople (Bohong, 1989).

Political volatility in China created economic decline and lower aptitude to get luxurious products into the nation, and eventually the Ming empire (from 1368 to1644) blocked China to the exterior world (UNCTAD, 2009). On the contrary, other countries started their own production for silk and travelling pattern got diverged to sea route as sea transportation was cheaper than land transport system. However, the conflicts in trade relations among various regions gave a way to sea route. Besides the overland problems of tribal policies, sea route also suffered bad weather conditions and pirate attacks. It also supported in maintaining political relations with other countries which further helped in increasing the trade volume of China.

Along with this a new religion Islam started making its extension from west all over region of Taklamakan. This region also represents the best example of grottoes to the world. Surrounded by the desert, hills are mostly of sandstone that lies along rivers or streams carving cliffs. Further, it was converged to cross Iranian plateaus, and finished on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean in cities- Antioch and Tyre (Elisseeff, 2000).

Under the influence of different tribes and dynasties Silk Route had witnessed various art forms and religious structural formations as well as destruction. Silk Route holds many passes many passes, castles, grottoes, tombs, post houses and beacon towers. The generated interests of foreign scholars in 19th century added a revitalization perspective to the Silk Route. Though, the existence of many ancient cities was duly confirmed only after 1863 when an official trip was conducted by Survey of India to explore the lost cities of Silk Route connectivity. After the visit of a delegation related to trade in Kashgar (in 1890), the British worked to set up consulate in 1980 whereas, Russia was assumed as a threat to trade development among India and Kashgar. Such struggle among these destinations was entitled as ‘Great Game’. British agents travelled
along Himalayan regions, i.e. from Ladakh to Kashgar and collected the every possible information regarding Silk Route. On the other hand, Russians entered from the north; most of them were botanist, geologist or cartographers to gather the information about Silk Route cities. On reaching to the hands of European Orientalists, prepared manuscripts and detailed information made the people to move for Silk Route expedition.

Journey of Swede Sven Hedin in 1985 led a stepping stone to Silk Route revival. He travelled across the Pamirs to Kashgar, and other isolated parts in the region. He also travelled across Taklimakan. At the later stage of his expedition he discovered Loulan and other the ruined destinations on the south side of the desert. Located in the northwest area of Lop Nor the prehistoric citadel of Loulan represents a rich history with affluent travel and trade. At present only the remnants of the citadel enclosed by desert can be seen. The ancient relics are properly conserved in citadel of Turpan's Gaochang and Jiaohe. Also more than hundred mummies were discovered from the prehistoric Astala group mausoleums near the citadel.

Besides the Russians, French and Japanese followers of such expeditions, Sir Aurel from Britain and Albert von Coq from Germany are much renowned. They discovered and wrote about the previous Buddhist culture that existed in the region of Taklimakan. A large number of manuscripts, silk temple posters and Buddhist paintings were found at Mogao grottoes in Dunhuang. Written in Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibet, Uyghur and other lesser known languages, manuscripts depicted stories and folklores from Tang dynasty. The frescoes at Dunhuang were from finest across whole Silk Route, and several of the finest ones were taken by Langdon Warner (an American professor) and his colleagues (Alikuzai, 2013).

Restoration of Silk Route destinations and related assets are still in progress. However, the assets and evidences that support the Silk Route existences are scattered all around the museums of various countries. Such collections can be observed in the Delhi (India), British Museum and in Berlin. Taklimakan has a regained its position to some extent among the people that further led to the existence of different races other than Han, like Tibetans and Mongolians in the east part of the area and other like Tajik, Kazakhs and Uzbeks of the west. The most of the travelers visiting Silk Route destinations are from Japan who prefers to visit Buddhist sites (China pages, n.d.)
As an initiation to the Silk route revival, Foreign Ministers of twelve Asian countries signed an agreement to restore the Silk Road in late 1990s. In the first step to this agreement, three-lane highways were constructed whereas they were already existed in Turkey and Iran. And other portion of such development is being considered in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The political and fiscal scenario of the modern Silk Route was changed significantly in 1991 with the disintegration of Soviet Union (UNCTAD, 2009). Trades inside Central Asia get distorted after the break-up of Soviet Union, because of broken business links and impeded transportation system due to the restrictions along the borders. Due to the restrictions across new borders and political unrest in the region, intraregional business deals declined to approx 50% between 1992 and 2002 (Asian Development Bank, 2004). As result of this Central Asian countries adopted a new economic approach like privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), thus presented an integrated and liberalized approach towards development process.

On estimation to Silk Route economies UNCTAD (2009) had analyzed that besides of facing the economic crisis, the Central Asian countries would grow by 2010. In the meantime, there existed considerable chances for governments to drive ahead with desirable monetary and trade reforms; in fact it appears that the Central Asian markets have been reasonably progressive with their economic and fiscal alternatives to the crisis (ADB, 2009). Restructuring and reconsideration of trade and business opportunities among the Silk Route countries may provide a futuristic aspect of economic development and prosperity. And once development be considered and prepared at regional or destination level like India, in terms of intraregional travel and trade activities like movement of resources, freight and community, the Silk Route will regain its essential place for utilizing business and other investment prospects with South, East & Western Asia and Europe.

Institutionalization of Silk Route connectivity was led again in the limelight by 21st century. As an advent to this initiative the thirty-sixth annual Smithsonian Folk life Festival on the National Mall (in Washington, D.C.) in 2002 led an example to this. Entitled as “The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust”, the fiesta represented the contemporary and discrete cultures of various Silk Route countries and it was also intended to raise the sympathetic issues among the nations as a response to 9/11 attack.
Hitherto the countries like Russia, China, Tibet, India, Pakistan and Kazakhstan and so on, share the boundaries with each other; the number of people in all these countries is still unaware about this historical linkage at international level within these neighboring countries. In order to uplift the linkage between all these countries the China in 1990 took initiative in reframing this Route and same was put with the WTO for implementation but in our India it is still unattentional even at the regional level as this route falls in the conflict sensitive areas may it be international (China- India, etc.) or national (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura etc.), so putting it back to the track the study is emphasized to make branding and marketing strategies for its upliftment and acquaintance within and outside the country.

1.3 INDIA’S LINKAGE TO SILK ROUTE

Trade has always remained a major cause of development of Indian civilization. In fact it has been responsible for the emergence of various empires, merchants and artisans in India. Overall ‘Route’ led a significant role in Indian perspective. Silk Route was a major cause of cross cultural development in India. It was one of the major causes of connectivity to rest of the world. Over the time, it emerged to be linked not only with a sequence of transport corridors, but also with new ideas and associations between India and Central Asia.

Based on a defined network of routes it mainly stretched from east to west, other than with linkage into southern Iran, the northern part of Eurasian grassland and further south, above Hindu Kush to the Indian subcontinent (Khan, 2005). Much of the region of Central Asia lies with deserted area. On the north east area it is covered with Gobi desert whereas from the south it is covered with it is intact with Himalayas, Karakorum and Kunlun ranges that separates India from central Asia. And from the north it is covered with Tianshan and from west there lies Pamir ranges. The travel was certainly facilitated by the large numbers of available entry points from Kashmir in the north to Sindh in the south of the north-west boundary (Gopal, 2001)

The period from 2nd millennium to end of the 3rd millennium B.C that the evidences for cultural and economic exchanges among India and Central Asian countries through Silk Route can be driven. Ancient Vedic literatures like- Rigveda, Ather Veda and various Samithas contain information about the presence of Indo-Aryan tribes on the
territory of Kazakhstan and Central Asia (Fazylovich, 2006). Much emphasis has been placed on the India’s association with Central Asia from the 16th century when Mughals established their existence in India. Conversely the relationship between Silk route and India is much older than this. India’s contribution to the Silk Route came into limelight in 5th century with the spread of Buddhism. It was accounted to the linkage to outside world with the journey of a Chinese monk Xuanzang, who travelled to India through the northern suburbs of the Tarim Basin and further travelled across Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Silk Route had also been a source for the flow of Greek art from Europe to India and Buddhism from Indian subcontinent to the outer world. The sites that showed the evidences for linkage with Buddhism had also supported the existence of Sogdians around those places or destinations. From their homeland in Samarkand and the Zerafshan River Valley (today known as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), they spread their approach towards west towards Black Sea, south across the peaks of Kashmir valley, and to the Southeast Asia harbours (Waugh, 2010). Fa Hein and Hiuen Tsang were also among the Chinese travellers who visited India through these routes. The name of Kashmir valley was also inscribed in Hanshu, the annals of the Hun dynasty of China written between 125 B.C and 25 A.D. According to Hanshu, Kashmir was large state which entailed, greater Kashmir and at that time some part of Punjab and Sindh, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Tibet were part of Kashmir kingdom.

Research notes by Fa Hein's on Buddhist Country and Hiuen Tsang on Tang's Xiyu added a remark to the testimony of prehistoric Xiyu, India and the Silk Road. It was also through this route that Indian monk visited central China's destination Henan all the way via Afghanistan and Pakistan (in 147 AD and 401 AD respectively), to interpret Buddhist manuscripts & enrol followers to Buddhism. Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was one of the first traveller from west who travelled along Silk Route. During his conquest for around 10 years, he travelled across Central Asia, the Persian Empire and North India. All this opened ways for trade between the East and the West.

Further, in 637 a renowned Chinese Buddhist scholar and translator, Hieun Tsiang during his overland journey to India (c. 602 – 664) visited Lumbini, before he was moving to Kushinagar (the place where Buddha passed away), and to Sarnath in present India (where Buddha had delivered his first oration) (Bernstein, 2001; Wriggins, 2004). These travellers and researchers left the Silk Route from Kashgar or Khotan,
navigating the deserts of Taklamakhan and Gobi and moved across the Karakorum or Himalayan stretch towards India to arrive at Buddhist road connecting Peshawar (in today’s Pakistan) and Pataliputra (modern day Patna, India), in order to reach the destination of their pilgrimage. They took the voyage to Ramagram (in present Nepal) and covered an estimated distance of about hundred kilometres and also visited the holy places of Kapilvastu, Lumbini (Von der Heide, 2012).

Considering significance of Mathura (India), which was a major business and trade source, situated on the juncture of Uttarapatha and Daksinapatha, through a route which passed through Indraprastha (modern Delhi) and further was linked with Central Asia and China. By the fifth Century B.C., all through the period of Buddha, it was a main conurbation. It was the center of the Surasena territory (one of the sixteen Mahajanapadas of the era). During the reign of the Kushanas, Mathura observed its ‘golden age’. In proficient authority of sovereigns like Kanishka, Huvishka, and Vasishka, the skills flourished and economic possessions developed. It emerged as a seat of authority at the time of Mauryan age, during the progressive reign of Emperor Ashoka up to the Gupta period (4th Century A.D.).

After the two decades of the visit of Hieun Tsiang to Lumbini, a Chinese scholar named Wang Huen Tse (approximately 643 A.D.) from Xian visited the destination through this route. It has also been identified that Wang Huen Tse travelled across Tharchindo and Thindafu/Sindafu (located presently in Sechuan), Lhasa and Shigatse along the Trans-Himalayan range. In this way he travelled across Kathmandu valley to become the Chinese representative of the king of Magadha (in Pataliputra) (Chopra, 2003). Offshoot of the ancient trade route which enters Sikkim came from Lhasa, passing through Chumbi Valley via Nathula Pass & ultimately covered the docks of Tamralipta (present known as Tamluk, West Bengal). It was from Tamluk, the route took a way to the sea and moved to Sri Lanka, Bali, Java and rest parts of the Far East. Significance of Tamralipta has also been mentioned in Fa Hein’s accounts (400 A.D.) as a busy sea-route on Bay of Bengal.

For about 400 years, the south west part of Silk Route via Nathu La was frequently maneuvered by Lhasa Newars. They were the leading émigré merchants from Kathmandu valley who do business in Tibet for centuries. They travelled along Tibet, Nepal and Gangetic plains of Eastern India through the Silk Route, and developed a
major cultural and economic connection between Central Asia and South Asia. The Lhasa Newars carried their trade over the Nathu La and Jelep La passes which were approachable through Kalimpong (located in West Bengal) and Gangtok (located in Sikkim). In 1962, Sino-Indian War ended the trade due to the shutdown of Nathu La Route. For centuries, traders and herdsmen travelled through Nathu La towards the Chumbi Valley, a part of Tibet between Sikkim and Bhutan. The doorway for muleback silk procession — the other bypass taken was Jelep La which connected Lhasa to Kalimpong. It is also even believed that Dalai Lama in 1956 travelled though this route to join the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations.

Much of archaeological evidences have been found along Kali Gandaki River in Nepal that depicts the trade relations of India, Tibet and Central Asia. Connecting the land of Varanasi, Bodhgaya (Uttarpradesh) to Kapilavastu and Lumbini, Bhutwal and Ridi areas of Nepal further it move towards Mustang region of Nepal. The extended version of this area is then located to the West Tibet and Brahmaputra valley from where it moves towards the Khotan and Kashgar via Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir). Being used as a major connectivity route, Jammu remained a connecting destination for the valley to the rest of the India. Hieun tsang, the famous Buddhist monk who supposed have travelled to Kashmir in 633A.D. mentioned about Pan-nu-tso (modern day Poonch) and Ho-lo-she-pu-to (modern day Rajouri) (Beal, 1981). He entered India through Udabanda (presently known as Muzaffarabad); Urasa (present Uskara) and further came the valley via Baramulla ravine (Schewartzerg, 1980).
However in 1812, Mir Izzatullah travelled along this route and was the first to provide a detailed account of this route and related experiences (Izzatullah, 1843). It was also due to such advent of religious concepts, that obscure cities like Lhasa emerged as benchmark for religious empowerment even by being situated at the remotest nook of the Himalayas. In other words, Silk Route travel emerged as powerful tool of development for such underdeveloped and remote areas thus, make to get highlighted in the market for their potential assets and resources.

Looking from the trade point of view, India has been considered as chief exporter of goods from the prehistoric times. Apart from other products, Delhi was a centre for export of copper and brass vessels and Agra as well as Bihar exported copper, brass articles, salt, pulses, and forks and knives (Khan, 2005) (Refer to Map 1.2). Keen interest of Delhi Sultans in regional trade also led to sustenance of Silk Route concept. Iltutmish (1211-36) and Balban (1266-87) both made special efforts to restrain avid tribal groups who were obstructing business and trade movement along caravan route (Wink, 2001). In fact north-western trade route of India remained active during the early modern era as well. During 19th century Sir Aural Stein, the Hungarian- British archeologist made his remarks to the Silk Route history by conducting an expedition along Silk Route. He followed a converse route adopted by Huan-Tsang, from India to Central Asia and found a number of evidences and documented relics written on wood and paper in different scripts, including Aramaic.

On the other hand political discrepancies among the Central Asian countries like Great Britain, Russia and China led a drastic change to trade relations thus affecting the Silk Route travel in 19th century. Nevertheless the preset as well as the scrutiny of future projection for the Central Asian Regions and India will levied on some supposition about the global economy. In proposition to this India has also supported the Silk Route revival efforts by the Eurasian regions. India has also anticipated in the various development projects of Iran and Afghanistan to boost the economic resources of the Eurasian states as well the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea Region.

Policy makers and analysts of India consider the Central Asian region as an imperative part because of its strategic position, approximately (Tajikistan) 20 km. from greater Kashmir and its energy assets (Sachedeva, 2006). Also on 15 February 2006 India was officially invited to join the $5 billion pipeline project. Further, the India government
formally approved its involvement in gas pipeline project of TAPI which include Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India in May, 2006 (Govt. of India, 2006). India has also followed to develop the soft power by the historical linkages other than the Indo-Soviet Treaty of alliance to the Mughal era and Silk Route.

India has recently moved forward for utilizing energy resources available in Russia which is the second largest oil producers and leading gas producer in the world. It is also seeking to make investments in Sakhalin-3 projects, which has been anticipated to embrace 770 billion cubic meters of gas and 4.6 billion barrels of oil along with spending the shared Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in Caspian Sea (Bajpaee, 2005).

In many instances, India has tried to obtain energy resources from some of the most unbalanced divisions of the world, like Sudan where it devoted 11.5 billion dollars in July 2004 (Bajpaee, 2005). In fact the chase for energy resources on the global level is much more than a mechanism for cooperation and coordination as it can for variances and can be added as outsourcing criteria for the area of controversy between India and west.

In a recent summit meeting, the Petroleum Ministers of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar in Yangon, granted the construction of 900 km gas pipeline from Myanmar’s offshore territory to Kolkata, crossing through Arakan state of Myanmar, the Indian territories of Mizoram and Tripura and Bangladesh and in exchange to this Bangladesh is pushing for developing the trade corridor with Nepal and Bangladesh through India (Bajpaee, 2005).

With the availability of natural assets, strategic location, political scenario, and the backgrounds of the political influence, India is using possible conventional policies for economic transformation. On refining these trade or business settlements there emerges a new picture of India in Silk route trade and hence provide a contemporary approach to the Silk Route destination investments at the global level thus incorporating the cooperation and coordination among the various countries under the influence of new requirements of economic development. And if we talk about the tourism perspective there is a requirement for observing opportunities through crises. Nevertheless tourism has also widened its scope to business world and has referred a name to such opportunities business travel as i.e. MICE (Meeting, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism.
1.4 PRESENT STATUS OF SILK ROUTE DESTINATIONS IN INDIA

Various researches (like Thingo and Von der Heide 1998a & 1998 b; Von der Heide, 2006, 2010, 2011 & 2012) have revealed the significance of Silk Route especially since the 11th century that created Buddhist cultural landscapes especially around Central Asia, Kashmir, West Tibet and Northern India. In addition to this, Archeological survey of India has identified and enlisted twelve major sites to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) & World Heritage Centre in 2010 that shows connectivity between Silk Route and Indian subcontinent and all the destinations have been envisioned the destinations forming a stretch from the states of Jammu and Kashmir to Sikkim.

Considering the tourism potential of the Silk Route destination in India, it has a variety to offer to the tourists of every taste and choice. Starting from the Jammu and Kashmir that led a significant remark to the Silk Route connectivity, the destinations still need to be discovered and renewed at tourism point of view. For the nature and adventure lovers Nubra Valley that lies on the ancient Silk Route that connected the medieval city of Leh, the capital of Ladakh, to Central Asia, offers a great opportunity. Two rivers, the Nubra and the Shyok, bring life to the valley that is separated from the rest of the world by some of the world’s highest mountains. To visit here, tourists have to drive over Khardung La (located at an altitude of 18,380 ft) which is well-known as the world’s utmost motorable peak passage (Rommi, 2010). Moreover the route across Jelep-la was once historically utilized regularly for trade and the reopening this pass would provide a thrust to economic movement which further will lead the Kalimpong to attain its faded grandeur (Harris, 2008).

Additionally, Gurez valley is also one of the destinations of Silk Route that connected the valley of Kashmir to Gilgit, extending further towards Kashgar. Archaeology survey of India has found so many inscriptions in the north of Gurez Valley, particularly in Chilas that shows a close association with those discovered in Kharoshthi, Brahmi, Hebrew, and Tibetan. The other important archaeological site located in Gurez Valley includes Kanzilwan. It is believed that last council of Buddhism had held here.

Kashmir was the source of transmission of Buddhist disciples and traditions to Tibet and China. On contrary to this Silk Route network also intends to serve the tourists with its historical glory as temples, forts, sarais, etc. For example importance of the Silk
Route can also be discussed with the presence of Buddhist Sarai in Safa Kadal (Kashmir) that symbolizes India’s connections, with Central Asia through Silk Route. Looking into this decayed building of Safakadal at Shahr-e-Khaas one can scarcely imagine that the place once was a major international trade center for the central Asia till some six decades ago. The Mughal Emperors are supposed to have developed this place as a transit campsite for central Asian merchants on journey. Ultimately, the site developed as a business centre and attained significant value on international trade record (Ashraf, 2007). Also, the archeological site of Harwan has been identified by the Archaeological Survey of India in 2010 as a Silk Route destination as the ruins and evidences presents a close association to Shadarhadavana and is supposed to be the hub of the 4th Buddhist council held during the sovereignty of Kanishka. The most imperative characteristic of this place are its archaeological artifacts like terracotta titles, which have been used to embellish the Chaitya or Buddhist temple.

The district Baramulla (Kashmir region) remained a major hub for the Buddhism. Other than Harwan, the ancient sites of Hushkapur (present Ushkur) have its significance towards such religious and cultural transformation in the state as well as in India. Situated on the left bank of Jhelum River, the ancient site of Hushkapur is supposed to have been established by Huvishka, a sovereign from the renowned Kushana dynasty that ruled different parts of Afghanistan and India during the first three centuries AD. On entering the Kashmir, the Chinese traveler of 7th Century, Hieun Tsang stayed at Ushkur and expressed it as a prosperous Buddhist centre. Giving an overview of the unexcavated stupa, Archaeological Survey of India in their report describes that, the locality includes the relics of a Monastery called the 'Jayendra Vihar', and the formation was assigned by local tradition to one 'Praverasena' in A.D. 500. Terracota heads found at Ushkur (Baramulla) are similar to the terracota heads of Buddhistavas excavated at Adzhina-tepe or Hadda in Afganistan.

Parihaspora Buddhist Site is another archeological site in Kashmir that needs a due discussion in terms of development and inclusion in tourism map. This Buddhist sites was developed by renowned King Lalitadita (695-731 A.D.) & afterward he declared it his and Kashmir’s capital. Presently, Parihaspora is famous by the name of Kane Shahr, which stands for ‘city of stones’. The ancient remains can still be seen at four sites, which are known as Dewar Yekhmanpur, Govardhan karewa (Wudur), Teirgam and Budh
karewa. It was identified by experts of archaeology that the site of Parihaspora has remained home to many spiritual and mythological structures and castles. Turkish monk of the king, famous as Chuknan, had designed a Stupa in this town, remains of which still exist. Destruction of this beautiful town is supposed to be due to numerous conflicts between leaders and the last destruction of this town is attributed to Alexander (1379-1413 A.D.). However, the structure of Palaces and Wats (temples) are still in existence since the period of Sangram Raj (1003-28 A.D.). It is also assumed that during the era of Kushan (79-15 B.C.), a beautiful Bodh Vihar was built here. Researcher have also identified that the 3rd Budh Meeting of Kashmir was held here in 79 B.C.

In addition to all this Jammu division of J&K state also represents an insight to the Silk Route connectivity in reference to archaeological site at Ambaran in Aknoor region of Jammu. This 2,000 years old archaeological sites was explored by Archeological survey of India during 1990-2001. It is estimated that during the Ashoka’s sovereignty, Majjhantika on the way to came to this place before moving towards the Kashmir valley and introduced Buddhism in the lands known to Kalhana as Madradesh (present Jammu), the region between Chenab and Ravi.

Moving further towards Delhi province whose significant contribution to the Silk Route connectivity is inscribed in literature by the name of Indraprastha (Old Fort/Purana Quila). Until 12th century the village called as Indapat and derived from the title Indraprastha, lay in the premises of Purana Quila/ Old Fort until 12th century. It was in 1969 to 1973 that the site of Indraprastha (Purana Qila or old Fort) was excavated and thus yielded constant cultural progression from 4th century B.C. to late medieval period. However its significance was supposed to have been declined generally by the Gupta period and hence may be a reason that it has not been mentioned anywhere in Chinese traveler Huen Tsang’s travel account. Also the inscriptions found to the south of Srinivasapuri i.e. Aravallis shows an association to the other sites situated in the locality of Indraprasatha (Old Fort/Purana Quila) and Tilpat as they all are located on the banks of Yamuna River, thus presenting a layover to the presence of a freeway in the pre-Christian epoch. In fact the route through which Indraprastha was connected rest of the Country i.e. with the west, north-west, north and China added an approach to the define Silk-Route connectivity as it acted as a source through which the assets of the different divisions of the realm were traded regardless to its precincts.
The major center of power during the Kushanas’ rule, Mathura had a considerable contribution to the trade and cultural transformations in India. Giving a further linkage to Silk Route, the land of Mathura created its position as a hub of trade and convention spot for diverse cultures. The Buddhist monasteries that were constructed here, established significant patronage from King Ashoka. Mathura was also defined by Ptolemy, the Chinese travelers Fa’ Hien (who travelled India from 401 to 410 A.D.) and Xuan Zhang (634-762 A.D.) in their travel documents. It is pertinent to note that among the main branches of proto-Mahayanist schools or Buddhist schools has been located in the region of Mathura and the similar has also been located in Gandhāra (which now includes Afghanistan and some part of Punjab). It was a hub for Sarvastivadins who were having belief in the pictorial arts and may be responsible for the plenitude of depictions here, as they were at Amarāvatī and Kizil (Prebish, 2010). Various archaeological excavations, relics as well as Buddhist stupas confirmed Mathura as a linkage site to Silk Route however its significance has been lost or faded under the lesser known facts to the tourism world.

Renowned to the tourists for its Buddhist sites and attractions, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had also remained a part to Silk Route connectivity in India. Located 10 km from Varanasi, Sarnath is among the most imperative and venerated destinations of Buddhists. It is assumed that more than 2500 years ago, after attaining enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, Lord Buddha visited Sarnath to deliver his first sermon. After that, a number of stupas were constructed over here and among them most popular ones was built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century B.C. and the 11th century A.D. Chaukhandi Stupa, Dhamek Stupa, Mulagandha Kuti Vihar are among the major sites of Sarnath and some of them have been turned into ruins due to negligence by the authorities.

Once remained the center of primeval Kosala Mahajanapada, Sravasti is a main Buddhist pilgrimage destination in India. Saravasti was established by the legendary King Sravasta. Lord Buddha and his devotees came & sermonize here for over 24 years. This primeval destination witnesses ancient stupas, beautiful temples and monasteries among which the ruins of Sahet, Mahet Jain temple and monasteries near JetvanaVihara like Sri Lankan, Chinese, Myanmarese and Thai monasteries are available for the tourists.

Located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Kushinagar is renowned due to its linkage with Lord Buddha who is said to have achieved Maharparinivana (the highest stage of
salvation). It is also assumed that in 543 B.C. Lord Buddha have offered his last sermon at Kushinagar. The city was flourished till about 12th century A.D. However the extensive excavations started in 1861 at the place resulted in the reincarnation of some major stupas linked with Buddha in the city.

Another destination of great significance for Buddhists is the Sariska. Ruins of many ancient stupas and monasteries are located here. A temple devoted to Bisari Devi and the explored Ashokan elephant pillar are well-known to the tourists.

Bihar is one of the next major destinations in this linkage of Silk Route’s stretch in India. The destination of Gaya sets a remark to the Buddhists’ pilgrimage centre in Bihar. It was near this city, the Buddha attained Nirvana (enlightenment). The tree where Buddha took shelter became famous as ‘the Bodhi tree’ and the place as ‘Bodhgaya’. Nowadays, it has become a central place of pilgrimage. Bodhgaya also houses numerous monasteries, and among them several were established by Buddhists of Japan, Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka etc. Therefore, it is also a major pilgrimage centre for foreign travelers. Furthermore Vaishali is another place of religious importance as well as Silk Route connectivity. Buddha offered his sermon at this holy land. Vaishali was also considered to be among the most primitive states in the world (6th century B.C.). Being the native land of Lord Mahavira, Vaishali is also revered to Jains.

Many of the sites like Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Lumbini, Kushinagar has been developed by the ministry of Tourism in India as a major Buddhist pilgrimage circuit. The relic stupas of Piprahwa, Amaravati, Nagarjun konda etc. and the excavated stupas of Vaishali relatively depict a closer association to each other. Correspondingly, pillar at Vaishali with a cubic abacus is considered to be the most primitive one and is considered to be the only one which is un-inscribed. On comparing excavations of Sravasti with other Buddhist places like Vaishali & Bodhgaya of Bihar region, Kaushambi, Piprahwa, Sariska, Sarnath and Kushinagar of Uttar Pradesh, it depicts close association with relics found at all these sites hence depicting a major trials Lord Buddha’s life.

The various sites of Sikkim had variety of destinations contemplating the Silk Route history in Indian scenario. Zuluk is one of the major destinations of Silk Route in Sikkim. The less explored small rocky terrain is located in the lower Himalayas of the East Sikkim and was well-known in account of Silk Route’s connectivity. At present
Zuluk is attaining its place as the tourism attraction but still tourism is in its nascent stage. Lack of facilities and infrastructure allows at best a maximum of 50 tourists’ accommodation there and also a special permission is essential to visit Zuluk (or Jhuluk) and such authorization needs to be obtained from Rangoli.

Nathang Valley presents another remark to the Silk Route destination in the state of Sikkim and at 13500 ft above lies Ladakh of the eastern division of India. It serves as a base point for Padamchen, Genmochen, Thambi View Point, Kupup Lake, Tukla Valley, Baba Mandir and all other attractions in the Silk Route circuit. Furthermore Jelepla Pass is also an important destination that connects this India to rest of the world through Silk Route. Also pronounced as Jelep La, offers all weather passage to India and Tibet. The term Jelepla is derived from ‘Jelep’ means lonely and ‘La’ means pass in Tibetan. This pass and route connects Lhasa to India.

The significance of the state Sikkim cannot be completed without mentioning Nathula Pass which is located at the Indo-China Border. It joins the Sikkim to Tibet Autonomous Region in China. It was once a historical Silk Route linking Lhasa in Tibet and plains of Bengal. Due to the border restrictions special permission is required to visit this place.

Refining all previous discussed destinations may provide a range of resources as well as assets to the tourist and tourism industry thus offering the tourism from pilgrimage to adventure, from historical to nature tourism and in fact a lot more. But its ultimate connectivity to the early history of Silk Route needs a due evaluation and recognition. Furthermore the eventual crisis of 1947 in Jammu & Kashmir and the subsequent shutting of Silk Route brought an end to its beautiful era. The trade activities sustained to some level for two more years when the remarkable route was finally shut. Also as a consequence of 1962 war involving India and China, the other trade relations via Leh and Tibet were also closed. The efforts and contribution towards the Silk Route needs to be appreciated by the name of a renowned British explorer and Army officer, Sir Francis Edward Younghusband who started a successful operation to capture Lhasa via Nathu La pass in 1904. There are number of locations that are untapped and can be marketed as finest tourism destinations, consisting the complete natural as well as the cultural assets for attracting tourists as the procedure of negligence towards all these
destinations the central Asian trade links with India through Jammu and Kashmir towards Sikkim and other induced destinations has lost their identity.

1.5  PROBLEM STATEMENT

Changing scenario and emerging trends have also affected the tourist choice. If we consider the quality and quantity, customers tries to attain qualitative experiences either in tangible products or intangible products and of course they become or had became more concerned about brands. In extension to this Blackadder (2006) from the psychological point of view has added that individual purchases brands with the intension of inner fulfillment and happiness and that makes their selection process much easier. And so is in the case of Tourism products and brands as it relies on the amalgamation of destination resources that together creates an impact among tourists’ choices. Therefore, when the indigenous people have the ability to appreciate the interpretive and management of living traditional routes, it also enhances the experience of visitors in both tangible and intangible aspects (Chairatudomkul, 2008) and so is one of the requirement of Silk Route that needs to be understood at the tourism front in a more comprehensive manner. Also deriving and elaborating the concept of tourism along a route i.e. “Route Tourism”, Briedenhann and Wickens (2004), ECI Africa (2006) and Lourens (2006) added that route tourism is popular internationally and locally as the collective marketing products linked by a route as a single tourism destination, has been found to encourage sustainability for tourism development.

UNESCO sent an expert mission in August, 2003 and July, 2004 sponsored by the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust at World Heritage Centre, to the Chinese division of the Silk Roads for the purpose of examine and understanding of Cultural Routes, with a vision to its potential nomination and inclusion in the World Heritage List. Creating brand can help to insert a positive identity and illustration of a destination that links tourists to it sensitively (Cai, 2002; Gnoth et al., 2007). Developing tourism along the Silk Route stands on an idea to put collectively a range of activities and tourism assets under an integrated theme and hence encouraging industrial prospect with the growth of auxiliary products and related services (Greffe, 1994). As an addition to the same initiative, 6th UNWTO International Meeting on Silk Road Tourism focused towards increasing concentration in developing cultural routes related with the Silk Route and succeeded to elevate the profile of tourism across this exemplary route (UNWTO, 2013).
In addition to improving the, socio-cultural, economic as well as environmental sustenance of the communities along this contemporary route, tourism can also be utilized to reveal the national identity of such previously lesser known destinations (Harrison, 2001).

Tourism is one of the most imperative indicators of fiscal vitality with a lot of segments it has effected on directly or indirectly (Aksoy and Kıyıcı, 2011). According to UNWTO (2014) business interest in the Silk Route region has increased significantly over several years, through chronological associations between European region, the Middle East and Asia that is being revived and revitalized. Such estimation stands true particularly for the Asian section of the Silk Route, an area domicile of a large number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites which has witnessed about 248 million of international tourist in 2013 only (UNWTO, 2014). The concept of ancient Silk Road still may provide a set of multifaceted channels in which the countries can more strongly bound together. And thus may provide a provision in which the civilizations, arts and knowledge, the pieties and values, the worldviews and processes of logic may get betrothed each other like goods.

As investment and trade are yet once again transacts swiftly among Asia and other regions of the world, a contemporary or restored “Silk Road” is required to support Asia attain its required potential (Bhattacharyay and De, 2009). If we consider the UNWTO’s effort towards Silk Route restoration, the record is much more appreciable with the coverage of Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, DPR Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Italy, Japan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Turkey and Uzbekistan. And on putting a deeper insight to the defined list, India has still a place as it has remained significant part to the Silk Route connectivity.

Since records and much more information on the Silk Road represents abundant support prospects of tourism, but the requirement is the defining a vision and proper strategy significant to channelize its demand among tourists, with rearranging the available information and suggestions for an idea to support the research of a developmental consecutive nomination: a planned recommendation of a succession of groups associated by and representing the Silk Route (Feng, 2005). Such a concept initiates the enhancement of destination marketing by offering prospective tourists with
sufficient information before their visitation which further let them to recognize a
destination, distinguish it from other contenders, and construct outlook regarding the
possible holiday experience presented by the destination (Murphy et al., 2007).

Nevertheless it is a point to remember that its tourism potential has not been
counted or estimated in provision with Silk Route relations rather they are famous as
Buddhist destinations among the tourists. Yet the destinations are known to the tourism
world as Buddhist circuit but their significance and origin is still an undefined part to the
travel industry and thus needs a strategic destination brand approach. Same is applicable
to the other destinations of the Indian Silk Route like Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and
Sikkim that are contributing to the tourism economy but the induced destinations of
present states have not been highlighted to the tourism standards as Silk Route
destinations.

In few cases, newer destinations that are incapable to attract adequate number of
tourists frequently struggle to sustain among well developed or remarkable (i.e. well-
branded) destinations (Urry, 2002). Further it has been revealed that branding plays a
diagnostic role in determining the degree of visitation to any secluded site (Weiler and
Seidl, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Fredman, et al., 2007). If managed conscientiously, tourism
can be a driver for restoration of historical perspective of Silk Route destinations in more
innovative form and a thus may drive sustainable destination development. Latest studies
in Asia depicted that the nations with geographical variations could potentially attain
benefit from higher trade, only if infrastructure and business costs are enhanced
(Bhattacharyay, and De, 2009; De 2008a and 2008b; Brooks, 2008; Brooks and
Hummels, 2009). According to Kotler and Gertner (2004), branding destinations’ style
itself is strategic place marketing. It focuses practical image management in context to
improving a destination’s situation by:

- Knowing the environmental forces that influence its marketability;
- Examining the exterior atmosphere related to prospects and threats;
- Adding all related stakeholders together with administration, communities and
  industry to create a common image;
- Creating and offering enticement and organizing the factors that could influence
  purchase decision inclusive of image, assets, infrastructure and community.
  (Kotler and Gertner, 2004).
In reference to the above given statement the factual study could be assumed as that there is a need to understand the various factors/forces as environmental, cultural or various other transitional forces that affects the marketing policy and practices of Silk Route. Secondly, to understand and monitor the various opportunities and threats that is involved in developing such concept. Thirdly, the involvement of stakeholders as well as the community needs to increase the involvement of businessmen towards such destination as Silk Route.

According to UNWTO’s long-term forecasts (2014) on the performance of particular provinces, the Asian market will be rising at approximate 5% each year and further may achieve 535 million (approximately) of international tourist arrivals by 2030. On the whole the international market share will rise to 30%, strengthening the image of tourism sector for the province in context to financial steadiness, sustainable escalation and comprehensive improvement. Creation of Silk Route as a destination brand could possibly open up new markets and economic opportunities for the landlocked countries or destinations. However, incorporating all the activities and destination resources into an integrated route can stimulate the collaboration & partnership among communities and can work like a technique for fiscal expansion in trivial regions, both in the developing and developed world (Meyer, 2004). One of the difficulties, however, is to identify the customer and information sources to communicate and increase awareness about Silk Route significance in present scenario.

In tourism prospect the Silk Route elaborates a picturesque view of history in the form virtual museum and an encyclopedia of cultural transformation among India and Central Asia straddling an era of about two thousand years. It was tempted cultural vestiges of the Silk Route have fascinated many explorers and hence made them to explore its heritage in the twentieth century. To realize the prospective of vibrant complementarities associated with the emerging theories of development of Silk Route at present requires developing different types of service links. However, destinations offer a blend of tourism assets including products and services which can be utilized under a brand name of a destination (Buhalis, 2000). Initiating a shared approach for the Silk Road corridors development may help to:

- Retain a sustainable approach to Silk Route destination management
- Increase the tourism dispersal across the region
- Open up the investment opportunities in the region and intact destinations.
- To improve the national, regional as well as international relations.

According to authorities and official sources conceptually upgradation of maritime connectivity between India and Pacific and expanding it to East Africa and further on to Mediterranean which is in tune with India could offer a broader maritime economic vision (Sahgal, 2014). However it is the lack of transparency that raises questions about on “how and what” the countries like India is going to represent in lieu of Silk Route.

Brand means that a destination is recognized and thus easier to advertise as a tourism product (Krajnović et al., 2013). But the present Silk Route is not found to have been preserved in its perfect form, however the intangible heritage, such as the features of sustaining tribes surrounding the route and the minority tribes, their figures, the genes, languages, cultural properties, clothing, lifestyles, agricultural techniques, city organization, architectural modes, customs, traditions, political structure, beliefs, skills, commerce, arts, music, etc., are still continuing distinctly (Sugio, 2002). So if developed as a tourism destination brand, Silk Route may provide an opportunity to tourists to visit different destinations and to get an au fait with their ethnicity and contemporary life therefore attaining a lot more information and imitation than through a conventional trip.
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