ABSTRACT
The more we study the arena of tourism and culture, the more we are struck by the great opportunity that the travel and tourism industry, backed by healthy cultural values, provides for creating a new civilization in the 21st century. Few of us realise that the world has been undergoing a tourism revolution, particularly in the last four decades of the 20th century.

The National Policy put forward by the Government of India has been the development of tourism in the exotic North-East as the key to all economic and social development in the area. It accepts the concept that economic development of Manipur can be brought about only through robust tourism industry. The potentialities of the state for the development of tourism should be highlighted for popularization and marketing. The state abounds in natural scenic beauties like, alpine meadows, pristine forest, kaleidoscopic landscape, rugged mountains, fascinating landscapes, blue hills, dales, rapids, waterfalls, wetland formation on lofty hills, simmering lakes with colourful lilies, lotus, elegant islands, exotic orchards, wild orchids, salubrious climate etc. and mosaic of enchanting cultures manifests in the form of graceful dances, traditional songs, festivals, ritual functions, nuptial style, martial art, indigenous games etc. All these resources ensure that Manipur could generate huge foreign exchange and also bring cultural renaissance through robust tourism.

Keeping this in mind, this study, ‘Development of Tourism in Manipur’ was undertaken. In this thesis, an attempt has been made to focus attention on the fact that development could be generated through tourism in Manipur. This process would be a slow one but ultimately it will bring good results. When money will flow in, when people will get employment, insurgency will be gradually forgotten and political, social and economic stability will usher in.

The present study has certain specific research objectives. They are to assess the geographical personality of Manipur; to study the tourist movement in Manipur during the ancient, medieval, British and post Independence period; to assess tourist attractions of hilly area and central
valley of Manipur - natural factors, socio-cultural factors, religious and historical places and infrastructural facilities; to examine in detail the selected tourist spots of Manipur having different types of attractions - Loktak lake as a scenic site, Keibul Lamjao National park as wild life site, Dzuko valley as a biospheric conservation site, Govindajee temple as a religious place, Imphal as a capital town, Kangla fort as a historical place, Ukhrul as a hill station and Moreh as a site of commercial centre; to locate other places of tourist attractions around the selected sites in order to make a package tour of the sites; to assess the perception of tourists for further planning and development of tourist sites; to design and plan strategies for the development of tourism in Manipur. Before designing such strategies, the present status of tourism and problems in the way of development of tourism in Manipur will be examined.

The author has made extensive use of primary data. Assessment of the places of tourist attraction both in hilly and valley area was done with the help of field surveys. Eight tourist spots having different type of tourist attractions were selected for indepth study. Information regarding its historical background, natural scenic beauty and cultural wealth was gathered through comprehensive survey of these sites with the help of questionnaire interviews. Tourists, local people, government officials, workers, hoteliers, bus owners etc. were interviewed. Field work was conducted during the years 2001 and 2003. Other relevant information was also gathered through secondary sources.

The data was analysed to test the hypothesis that was set while undertaking this work. The hypothesis are – ‘Manipur is a Land of Promise’. It abounds in scenic beauty and cultural mosaic which can attract tourists not only from India but from all over the world. There are more problems than beauty in Manipur and the closed doors of Manipur should be opened and efforts should be made to present to the world the wonder that Manipur is. Wonder not only in terms of beauties and bounties of nature but also in terms of its culture, festivals, dances, martial art, nuptial style, sport, handicraft etc. Through tourism, development could be ushered in this state'.
The following general conclusions were drawn from the study:

Manipur (93°03' to 94°78' east longitude and 23°80' to 25°68' north latitude) is a tiny state located in north-eastern part of India. It lies in the extreme eastern border and is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the east by Myanmar, on the west by Assam and on the south by Mizoram and Myanmar. It is an isolated, hill girt having a distinct geographical entity. It consists of an oval shaped beautiful central valley which is surrounded on all sides by Manipur hills. About 91 per cent of the state is hilly and the rest is the plain valley area. The hill area is unique full of majestic natural scenic beauty, kaleidoscopic landscape, blue mountains, wall to wall carpeted meadows dotted with flowers, and wild animals. The tribal population comprising of Nagas, Kukis, Mizos, Maos, Thadou etc. each having their own distinctive culture and traditions which is expressed in their dance, music, festivals, handlooms and handicrafts. There are many cultural and historical places of attraction like the Kangkhui limestone caves, Kalamukhi caves, Tharon cave, Ukhurul town, Chandels, Tamenglong, Mao etc. These are all centres of tribal culture. Colourful handloom and handicraft products of the tribals are added attractions.

The Central valley is an almost plain area studded by small residual hills and decorated with innumerable lakes. The valley is surrounded by the blue hills of Manipur. The valley is mainly occupied by the Meiteis or the Manipuris. This valley is also known as the 'Valley of festivals'. In the festivals there is worshipping, offerings, merry making, dancing and music. Every household echoes with the sound of music and dance. Manipur dance forms part of the Indian classical dance. There are other dances also performed during festivals and rituals. Towns of historical and cultural importance worth visiting are Imphal, Moirang, Phubala, Kangla, Langthabal, Khongjom, Bishnupur, Loukoipat, Kaina, Kongjom etc. Every household echoes with the clutter of handlooms in which lovely designs are woven. Embroidary work, metalware, cane and bamboo work, ornaments, doll making of souvenir also very popular.

The study shows that there has been tourist movements in Manipur in the ancient, medieval, British and post Independence period. First the
travellers came to Manipur as invaders and traders and they reached the valley via the hill routes. Gradually, people started coming here as preachers and missionaries. Visit to holy places paved the way for pilgrimage tourism. With the development of roads. There was further increases in traders and travellers. Britishers developed picnic sites, shooting sites, game sites etc. After Independence, the Manipur government realised the importance of tourism in the state. So the work of discovering attractive tourist sites, constructing roads, tourist homes etc. began. Both domestic and foreign tourists started visiting Manipur.

Results of field survey conducted at the eight selected tourist spots show that;

(i) **Loktak lake** is one of the most important wetland in the world. It is the largest, beautiful, oval shaped freshwater wetland surrounded by exotic landscapes consisting of blue mountains which surrounds the lake and numerous floating lands (*phumdi*) of different shapes and sizes. These floating lands are covered by wild vegetation, floating huts, migratory birds, reptiles, pythons etc. The author had identified some places of tourist attractions like Moirang town, Thanga island, Karang island, Sendra island, the Indian National Army Museum Complex, Phubala, Thangjing temple, and Thangjing hill. Every place has added cultural attractions.

(ii) **Keibul Lamjao National park** is the only attractive floating national park in the world. This is the home of a rare species, *sangai* or the dancing deer. It is also the home of hog deer, wild boars, otter, golden cat, jungle cat, squirrel, musk, shrew, ermine, bamboo rat, flying fox, snakes like cobra, python, viper, krait.

(iii) **Dzuko valley** is a gift of nature to mankind. Such a valley on lofty mountainous region is a rare occurrence on the Earth. It is expressed as ‘green carpet striped with white icy surface of the rivers’ during the winter season and as ‘The Valley of Flowers’ during the summer. The valley is fully blooming with exotic flowers mainly the Dzuko lily, iris, rhododendron etc. Amidst these flowers songs of colourful fascinating
birds echoes in the valley. Elephants occasionally visit the valley. It is the home of Himalayan black bear, lesser cats, sambhar, deer, barking deer, wild dog, flying fox, hoolock gibbon, langoor, Himalayan barbet eagles, green pigeon etc.

(iv) **Govindajee temple** is a historical vaishnavite temple. The presiding deity in the centre is flanked by the Shrines of Lord Krishna and Balaram on other side and Jaganath on the other. Daily ritual programmes, day-night programmes with hymns and songs etc. are performed.

(v) **Imphal**, the capital city is situated in the centre of the beautiful oval shaped Manipur/central valley. It is the nerve of all cultural, commercial and administrative activities. The author has identified some places of tourist attractions so that package programmes could be made for the tourists to go around the town. The interesting places are Ima Keithel (unique market run by women), Kangla (old palace), Cemetery (dedicated to British and Indian soldiers), State Museum (displays tribal heritage also), Bir Trikandrajit Park, Nupi War Memorial Complex, Orchidarium, Sekta Kei Mounds, Sambal Lei Sekpil, Langthabal (old capital), Singdad dam, Kangchup (health resort), Zoo etc.

(vi) **Kangla Fort** is the centre of polity, religion and ritual functions. The author has identified some structures of tourist attractions like the ruins of Citadel, Uttra, two Kangla shas (mythical beasts), temple of old Shree Govindajee (Radha-Govinda), Bheithob, site of Rasmandal, temple of Brindabanchandra, Nunggoibi, Manglan, Nungjeng Pukhri etc. Added attractions are, the ritual functions and festivals performed here.

(vii) **Ukhrul Town** is one of the most beautiful, fascinating hill station located on the ridge of the hill. The environment is breathtaking and it would beckon many nature loving tourists. The town is surrounded by the magnificent blue hills, green meadows and thick forest. On the peak of Siroy hill blooms the Siroy lily during the summer months. Added attractions are the inhabitants of this area, the Tangkhul Nagas and their customary hospitality, fascinating life style, festivals, dances etc. The author has identified some places of tourist attractions like the Siroy lily
hill, Hundung, Kangkhui caves, Khayang water fall (biggest waterfall of state) etc.

(viii) Moreh town is a border town situated on the Indo-Myanmar border. On the Indian side is the commercial town of Moreh while on the Myanmar side is the counterpart trade town of Tamu. The twin towns complement each other in trading and other commercial activities between the two countries. The location of the area has fascinated the visitors. The author has identified places of tourist attractions like Kwatha villages, Kondong lairenbi (known for its lai haraoba festival), Yangoupokpi Lokchao wild life sanctuary, Buddhist temple and Tamu. A sight seeing tour to Myanmar is also organised from this place.

There are many problems than beauty in Manipur. Its isolation from the outside world, insurgency, political instability which is being witnessed even today, ruggedness of the topography, inaccessibility, lack of transport facilities, infrastructural facilities and tribal population (for whom tribal loyalties are more dominant) are some of the impediments in the way of development. There is lack of intermingling not only with the rest of the country but also among the different tribal groups. This has led to the lack of national consciousness. Modernization is not easy in this traditional bound illiterate tribal societies. But once they realise the benefits which they will reap from the development of tourism there will be no looking back. All care has to be taken in this sensitive area that modern development are gradually assimilated by the people for their advantage without loosing their identity. Only the local people if they want social and economic growth, should come forward, co-operate with the authorities and help in tackling all the problems. During field surveys opinions and feedbacks were gathered from government officials, policy makers, environmental activists, academicians, social workers, tribals, local people etc. They were of the opinion that something should be ushered in the state which will bring development and solve the existing problems.

The untapped potentials of Manipur should be fully utilized and than only the state will sell as an attractive natural and cultural destination. The
cultural angle will sell in the foreign markets while the natural beauty, salubrious climate and flora and fauna will attract both the domestic and international tourists.

Regarding this, a specific development strategy has to be evolved for the tourism industry of Manipur. The focus should be on – development of connectivity, development of infrastructural facilities like transport, accommodation, development of locale with its attraction and amenities, organization of daily cultural shows, development of package tours, development of adventure tourism, natural tourism, cultural tourism, sport tourism etc.

Providing all these will not be sufficient. Attempts should be made to upgrade the facilities already existing and of course, the publicity campaign has to be aggressive, whetting the appetite of even the most unwilling to travel.