Chapter - 5

Critical Review of Tourism Performance of Uttar Pradesh
Chapter - 5

Critical Review of Tourism Performance of Uttar Pradesh

In this concluding Chapter on the evaluation of the performance of the Tourist Industry of Uttar Pradesh, no specific attempt has been made to comment on the statewise scenario and highlight which state has been more successful in promoting tourism in the country. The focus would be essentially on the manner in which Uttar Pradesh public sector in tandem with the private sector has carried tourism forward in the state.

The approach to tourism promotion in Uttar Pradesh is highly commendable and appropriate, publicity has been given the highest initial priority, as also a sustained one. This has been simultaneously followed up by the duly spruning up of existing centres of tourist interest, formulating special programmes to attract tourists and of course providing all essential facilities on an expanding scale to them, both foreign
and domestic, encompassing hotel accommodation, rail, road, air, water travel and protection and safety.

Let us take up publicity first. As a priority step, it was essential to first acquaint the prospective tourist of the fascinating natural endowments of the state, its unique and impressive historic monuments, its glorious spiritual and cultural heritage and their pervading character.

In the first instance publicity literature was made available and widely distributed locally and abroad. It is heartening to note that Uttar Pradesh has taken advantage of the latest techniques adopted for effective and widespread publicity. It has boldly entered the Internet Age by arranging website to communicate the latest factual information in addition to giving due publicity to Uttar Pradesh's potential embracing its abundant natural attractions, its famed historic monuments and its spiritual and cultural heritage.

Uttar Pradesh had made it a point to organize seminars at diverse places in India and abroad to give effective publicity projecting Uttar Pradesh as a magnetic region for tourism and a fruitful one for the Tourist Industry (private sector).

To give effective publicity Uttar Pradesh has from time to time organized special programmes, such as, International Yoga
Week (at Rishikesh), Ganga Water Rally (from Allahabad to Varanasi), Taj Mahotsava (Agra), Jhansi Mahotsava (Jhansi), Buddha Mahotsava (Sarnath/Kushinagar), Lucknow Mahotsava (Lucknow), Ganga Mahotsava (Varanasi), and Ayurveda Week (Hardware), etc.

To give publicity to places of Buddhist interest in the state, the Buddhist Mahotsava was organized in collaboration with the Central Government and the State of Bihar. Besides, an International Buddhist Seminar, attended by about 2000 foreign tourists, was successfully organized. A special feature was the Buddha Parikrama Tourist Train flagged off at Kolkata's Howrah Station and routed through Gorakhpur (Kushinagar), Varanasi (Sarnath), Rajgir and Bodh Gaya.

Uttar Pradesh's official policy approach has been re-defined and is a very apt and a healthy one. It has appropriately given priority to publicity. It has commendably reckoned and declared tourism as an Industry in keeping with that of the centre. Besides, it regards tourism as a cooperative venture between the Central Government and the State Government. In pursuance of the cooperative approach it has also sought the full cooperation of the private sector and extended financial assistance to it. Under the new policy it exempts all recognized
tourism units from a variety of taxes, such as trade tax, entertainment tax, luxury tax for five years from the date of commencement.

Hitherto government policy was to create tourism infrastructure through the public sector. With a liberalized business environment and changing economic scenario, participation of private sector in the development of the tourism sector had become imperative in the interest of optimum growth and the best utilization of tourism resources in the state.

Furthermore, the new tourism policy envisages an ambitious target of generating direct employment opportunities for five lakh persons and indirect employment to about 50 lakh persons in the next ten years. In the interest of strengthening the infrastructure and meeting the anticipated demand and the official target it is proposed to increase the number of approved hotels from 80 to 300 in the state and the number of available beds from 5000 to 15000. According to an estimate one foreign tourist from every three and one from every four domestic tourists visits Uttar Pradesh. It is anticipated that in the next ten years the number of foreign tourists will go up to 30 lakhs and domestic could number 10 crore. Similarly, travel facilities are to be significantly enhanced, whether by road, rail or air, even
river to meet the increasing demand and to improve the quality of the service, including provision for luxury travel for those who can afford it. It may be added that the same approach has been followed in respect of tourist accommodation. Luxury accommodation, average type accommodation and budget conscious accommodation would be simultaneously available to choose from. Due attention will also be paid to the provision of healthy surroundings, availability of potable drinking water, etc. Fixed tariffs schedules are to be strictly observed. Furthermore, appropriate institutional arrangement would be provided for the personal protection and safety of tourists to safeguard their exploitation by drug smugglers and touts by the formation of exclusive 'Tourist Police'. Special attention will be given to minimize bureaucratic procedure and red tapeism in respect of registration, money changing, railway booking, tour programming and guided tours.

Uttar Pradesh is a tourist paradise. The majestic Himalayas offer unique opportunities for eco-tourism, mountain climbing, trekking, skiing, etc. Its river system provides scope for manifold water sports and challenging surf riding. Its rich flora and fauna are nature's generous gift. Its ancient mausoleums, monuments and architecture are not merely of historic
importance but also unique as testified by the inimitable Taj Mahal. Its Hindu, Jain and Sikh religious centres, fairs and festivals attract the domestic tourist and pilgrims in thousands and present a fascinating an unbelievable spectacle to the foreign tourist.

It may be recalled that Uttar Pradesh is the birth place of the Hindu religion, venue of its famous sacred mythologies (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and ancient culture. The century long Muslim domination (suzerainty) of India has left behind indelible 'land marks' and to a much lesser extent of the British Raj. The pluralistic culture of the state takes the foreign tourist by surprise.

In order to rationalize its Tourist Development Programmes the Uttar Pradesh Administration has divided the region into nine Circuits. This has enabled regional development planning and functional planning of specific tourist interest. The Circuit wise tourist development features are spelt out in detail in the preceding chapter and do not justify repetition but attention may fruitfully be drawn to selected features. The Buddhist Circuit has received much attention presumably to attract tourists from Buddhist countries of East Asia. Also Buddha's teachings have aroused the
curiosity of the West. Buddhism sprang from Indian soil, but more pertinently from Uttar Pradesh. The remaining Circuits have also claimed the serious attention of the tourist development planners, namely Braj (Agra - Mathura) Circuit, Bundelkhand Circuit, Awadh Circuit and Vindhya Circuit, Jain and Sikhs Circuits which are of religious interest and/or natural attractions. The Eco-Tourism Circuit and Water Cruise Circuit are of interest mainly from the present day tourist angle.

Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh is in the fascinating Awadh Circuit. A city symbolizing art of gracious living, fabled monuments steeped in history, 'adab' (polite culture) and the legendary hospitality. Also 'Dum Pukht' - world renowned art of slow cooking. One is reminded of the long line of famous high living Awadh Nawabs and the renowned 'Lucknow Gharana' which has produced world acclaimed classical dancers, vocalists and musicians. It is also famous for its classical handicrafts and exquisite evenings. Lucknow is all this and more. Its bustling metropolis with modern hotels, ritzi shopping arcades and exhotic eating joints. Truly, there are many facets to this charming city which retains much of its old world charm. Attractions include the Residency, the numerous imposing Shia Imambaras, Picture Gallery, Chattar Manzil,
Kukrail Crocodile Farm, Nawab Ganj Bird Sanctuary and Bittor, Neemsar and Naimisheryanya.

In order to give training to students regarding tourism and travel trade, a Tourism Management Institute (TMI) has been recently established at Lucknow.

Braj (Agra-Mathura) Circuit is the abode of the world famed Taj Mahal, a memorial dedicated to true and eternal love. To the beholder, it is a paragon of beauty. A dream in marble. It is to be seen to be believed. View it in moon light, particularly full moon. It will be unforgettable.

The Taj Mahal is indeed the highlight of a visit to this historic city; even more so of Uttar Pradesh tourism and without question of a must in the tourist's itinerary of India. But Agra region offers, in addition to the Taj, other attractive features such as the Agra Fort, Itam-ud-Daulah's tomb, Maryam's tomb, Ram Bagh, Sikandara and of course Fatehpur Sikri; as also Lord Krishna's own Braj Bhoomi - Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, Gokul, Nandgaon and some others.

Because of the international importance of Agra, a Heritage Fund of nearly Rupees five crores has been set up for the preservation of the environment and the development of infrastructural facilities in the region. It has been decided to
re-open the Taj Mahal at night for the eager visitors, foreign and domestic. The "Passage to India" luxury train on the Mathura - Agra - Corbett - Lucknow route is in operation in conjunction with the Railway Ministry.

The Bundelkhand Circuit is steeped in history and fables, bravery and martyrdom, battles and religion. The entire region echoes with the legacies of a chequered past. The entire Bundelkhand region hides within its fold several destinations, each waiting to be discovered. Jhansi, a city immortalized by the bravery of the famous Queen (of Jhansi) and the birth place and playing ground of Dhyan Chand, the hockey wizard of world fame. Centres of religious import like Chitrakoot, Deogarh (with its ornate Jain temples), Mahoba, Rani Mahal and Kalinjar are of historical importance.

The Vindhya Circuit boasts of the Vindhyachal mountains which are amongst the oldest in the world. The region is famed for its rock cave paintings, tribals, the world famous Mirzapur carpets, various revered Shakti Shrines and string of forts which gave birth to the legends of the famed Chandrakanta.

An "Ayodhya Package" is under implementation. The project has set up an Ayodhya Nidhi Teerth Yatra Niwas Rain
Basera and envisages various other works relating to tourism development, beautification and public amenities.

Uttar Pradesh attracts pilgrims throughout the year. The summer months are suitable for visits to mountain shrines of Badrinath and Kedarnath in the Himalayas - one a Vaishnava Shrine and the other a Shiva Shrine. The two Himalayan temples close down for the winter in late November but the temples at Varanasi are open throughout the year. Ayodhya, in eastern Uttar Pradesh, is important as the supposed birth place of Shri Rama. In recent years it has suddenly gained in importance because of the fierce controversy over the disputed site of the now demolished Babri Masjid.

Allahabad, also known as Paryag, in the Vindhya Circuit is highly important to all religious Hindus, because a dip in the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna rivers is a dream of a life time and the immersion of ashes is a feature which all devoted sons and daughters like to perform. Allahabad is also notable because of the Kumbha fair and also the Ardha Kumbha fair. The Kumbha particularly attracts Hindus from all over India and elaborate arrangements are made by the government for the holy bath for the millions who wish to bathe in the confluence at the right astrological time. While the Kumbha is held once
every twelve year, the Ardhakumbha is held more often but the sight also varies and may also shift to Ujjain, ancient Avanti, in Madhya Pradesh. Allahabad also has several elegant churches.

The city which attracts tourists of all kinds, apart from the pilgrims of the Hindu faith, is the eternal city of Benares, also known as Varanasi. Here flows the mighty Ganga in the sacred waters of which Hindus make it a point to take a holy dip. Thousands do so and present an amazing sight. Along the river there are innumerable ghats among which the Dashashvamedh is specially important because it is nearest to the Kashivishvanath temple which every Hindu wants to visit and worship atleast once in his life time. Varanasi is also the home of much song and dance.

It is not only the religious significance of the city which makes it worth a visit but also the other attractions it offers like the ghats along its long water front which can be viewed best in a boat journey. If one also visits Ramnagar across the river it would be rewarding and incidentally gives the boatman some rest from continuous rowing. The city is also a venue of learning as examplified by the Benares Hindu University (BHU). Nearby is the historical city of Sarnath sacred to the followers of Buddhism.
The Jain Circuit is the ancient homeland of the Tirthankars (Jain religious preachers). It is the region where non-violence, peace, love enlightenment and truth had been acclaimed and practiced for thousands of years. Innumerable Jain shrines, associated with the lives and activities of the Jain Tirthankers, are spread all over Uttar Pradesh. It is claimed that the religious preaching of the Tirthankers have had their impact eversince and tended to mould the sentiments of millions of Indians who have accepted the message of peace, non-violence, love and enlightenment. There are over 3 million Jain devotees in India.

In the Sikh Panth Circuit the two major centers of interest are Ahrauli Govind Saheb and Hem Kund Saheb, a lake situated at a great height. They are associated with the lives of meditation and penance of Sikh Gurus and attract Sikh pilgrims in large numbers to fairs held annually.

The Water Cruise Circuit is of special interest to tourists, particularly foreign. While Uttar Pradesh is a landlocked state and can not provide sunny beaches and scope for ocean cruises and other kindred sports, its unique multi river system, which stretches all the way from the west to the east, offers immense potential for river rafting and scope for adventure tourism. The
river Ganges from Rishikesh to Rudrapryag provides an excellent flow for this sport. A boat ride on the Ganges to visit intriguing Varanasi, as described earlier, is a must for any tourist domestic, or foreign and it is indeed very popular. To promote adventure tourism and water transport facilities special official attention has been given to this sector. Boat clubs have come up at Lucknow and Allahabad and training in water sports is imparted there. Some cruise boats have already been acquired and cruises have been organized particularly to Varanasi.

Eco-Tourism is not altogether a new concept but is receiving special attention of late as it was not being strictly adhered to. It has two facets, namely (a) the sheer enjoyment of nature's glorious spectacles without tampering with it and (b) availing of some of nature's gifts by embarking on challenging tourist ventures, again refraining from despoiling them.

According to WTO eco-tourism "involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying nature and its wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural aspects (both of the past and the present), found in these areas". The concept of eco-tourism also extends to various activities termed as outdoor recreation, such as: trekking, hiking, mountaineering, mountain
cycling, kayaking, bird watching, boating, river rafting, skiing, biological explorations and visiting wild life sanctuaries. Most of these activities are a kin to 'adventure tourism' where the accent is on deriving thrill out of nature. In adventure tourism generally the young people participate, whereas as in eco tourism, in the sense of sheer enjoyment of nature, the older and mature tourists are involved along with the young.

Uttar Pradesh can generously cater to both facets of eco-tourism because of its rich natural endowments - mountains, forests and rivers. The Himalaya mountains are characterized by their awe-inspiring scenic beauty and a source of perennial attraction. Uttar Pradesh has an abundance of unique flora and fauna and its extensive river system covers the entire state and is navigable.

Uttar Pradesh is giving priority to conserving and developing its eco-tourism potential in its widest connotation and to spreading an eco-friendly culture to preserve its ecosystem. Its wild life and bird sanctuaries are turning into showpieces. Cooperation of tourists is essential which is not always forthcoming. Eco-tourism is a challenging Circuit. There is ample scope in Uttar Pradesh to attract tourists to enjoy the pristine beauty of its natural endowments and if they so wish to
avail of opportunities to indulge in outdoor activities akin to activities designated as adventure tourism.

Uttar Pradesh is one of the most, if not the most, glamorous tourist region in India. The state of Uttar Pradesh in collaboration with the private sector and assisted by the Central Government has steadily developed tourist attraction centres and corresponding facilities. But it still has to reach the pinnacle which will take time, money and dedication. The potential is there for sure and the state does not lack the enthusiasm or specialized technology. The way the tourism programme is being implemented it inspires optimism but nevertheless over confidence is not justified because there is still much ground to be covered by way of enhanced publicity of tourists centres and programmes and provision of adequate facilities to be reckoned as a flourishing and ideal tourist haven. As more and more appropriate facilities are offered to the foreign and domestic tourists, Uttar Pradesh will gain in popularity and attract more tourists. The challenge is to meet unabating and rising demand continuously and efficiently. The financial returns from tourism will go a long way to meet the financial implications.
The criticism that has been widely voiced is that the interest that is being exhibited in India in developing tourism, rather the tourist industry, is primarily motivated by financial considerations. The public sector is interested in augmenting foreign exchange earnings and its domestic revenues however much the industry is subsidized. The private sector is obviously motivated by securing progressively increasing and assured income. Infact the tourist drive has evoked keen competition between states to increase their relative share of financial gains and other benefits. There is also perceptible competition amongst the private entrepreneurs in enhancing their respective share of the spoils.

Nevertheless, it would not be fair to over emphasize the financial aspect. There are also other genuine considerations from the overall national or regional point of view. Tourism is certain to boost the economy, if it continues to pick up the way now discernable. There would be an all round increase in demand for Indian products, specially the output of its indigenous arts and crafts, which tourists, both foreign and domestic, would like to acquire as souvenirs. This will certainly give a fillip to the economy. Equally, if not more important, is its impact on the status of employment. Tourism is bound to
step up the scope for the lucrative employment of both the literate and illiterate sections in the employment market. The public sector, as also the private sector will need more hands to implement their tourist development programme (in the case of the public sector) and tourist business (in the private sector).

Apart from the obvious advantages to the economy, there is bound to emerge a growing pride in our natural wealth and age old heritage. It will, also give worldwide publicity to the outstanding physical and cultural features of India and Uttar Pradesh in particular.

All said and done, despite its outstanding natural, historical, religious and cultural assets, Uttar Pradesh continues to be one of the relatively economically backwards states of the Indian sub-continent. But one must not hesitate to simultaneously admit that India itself as a whole, is a relatively backward region compared to the developed countries of the West, and even in some respects in relation to some other backward sister countries of the Third World, for instance, in respect of tourism promotion.

Nevertheless, we may count on tourism to bring the many politically independent nations closer together through mutual appreciation of each others diverse flora and fauna, arts
architecture and cultures and strengthen the notion that our world is one big 'Global Village'.

Fortunately, the trend in respect of tourism to-day is to become global in the sense that a tourist, no matter to what country he or she belongs to, tends to include several foreign countries in his or her itinerary, rather than confining it to a particular destination. In many countries, if not most, tourism is being sponsored today. This is a welcome trend as it tends to bring people of diverse regions together and they, both foreigners and Indians, can not fail, over time, to realize that despite divergent features, the common traits and attitudes and aspirations are surprisingly fairly abundant to make one realize that all mankind abides, as stated earlier, in one big 'Global Village'. Today's tourists is not just a globe trotter but one who is in the making of a World Citizen.

In the drive to enhance tourism in the country, Uttar Pradesh has by no means lagged behind as the preceding chapters will testify. Nevertheless, the initiative taken has to be kept up and the attractions provided have not merely to be enhanced but maintained in top condition.
India as a whole is a tourist's precious mine of gems but Uttar Pradesh is a conglomeration of some of its rarest and brightest ones.

To recall and further elaborate the approach to tourism promotion in Uttar Pradesh is highly commendable and appropriate. Publicity has been rightfully given the highest initial priority. This was duly followed up by spruning up of centres of tourist interest and providing all essential facilities to tourists, both foreign and domestic. Particular attention was given to the latter objective. On arrival bureaucratic procedure of registration, etc. was simplified. Tourists were assisted to identify their areas of interest and in selecting appropriate tourist programmes and destinations. Appropriate transport facilities were arranged and in anticipation appropriate accommodation facilities were provided ranging from luxury accommodation and middle level to budget conscious ones. It was also appreciated that the demands of the conventional tourist, whether foreign or domestic, were different from those of Indian pilgrims who generally traveled on 'mass scale'. Due attention was given to providing safety and protection to tourists and pilgrims.
National considerations, aspirations and the spirit of cooperation between the Centre and the states inspired Uttar Pradesh's approach to tourism and also between the public and private sectors. The general public was also taken into confidence. Thus, it is very apparent that the overall approach of Uttar Pradesh was a highly rational and an appropriate one. In terms of tourist response the magnitude of the flow tended to significantly increase and Uttar Pradesh bagged the largest chunk. It may be added that the outlay on tourism development was also the highest. With its evident potential - natural, historical, religious and cultural - and successful exploitation thereof, it is no surprise that Uttar Pradesh had won, as early as 1997-98, the 'Best Performing Tourism State Award'.

Uttar Pradesh's tourist development programmes together aim at attracting tourists, whether foreign or domestic, in progressively increasing numbers and making tourism viable from the financial and employment angles. Success in these directions have indeed been noticeably achieved but there is as yet much to be achieved and is achievable. Assurance arises from Uttar Pradesh's abundant natural, historical and cultural potential. As also from the rational official policy approach and the joint efforts of the public and private sectors giving
concrete shape to them. While development programmes and schemes are of the familiar kind, Uttar Pradesh has not failed to be innovative. Attention may be specially drawn to the novel 'Visit Your Roots' Scheme described in the preceding chapter.

In the midst of all this glamour - natural and man made - one can not help noticing the abject poverty of the masses amidst plenty. Not that the foreign tourist is ignorant of its existence but becomes an eye witness. Uttar Pradesh unfortunately happens to be one of the economically poorer states of India. Notwithstanding the success of its tourism development plans, it has failed to eliminate the naked poverty of a large section of its inhabitants though it is otherwise a distinguished state of the Indian subcontinent.

This feature is not peculiar to Uttar Pradesh. It is part of an All - India panorama. Where has our politico-economic policy failed? It is a sixty four million dollar question. The relatively smaller number of the fabulously and not so rich sections exist side by side of the majority of the lower middle class and the overwhelming sections of those below the poverty line. Are we justified in publicizing our plus points and covering up our failures? The politico - socio order not merely of Uttar Pradesh but that of the whole sub-continent of India

286
calls for mind searching and effecting a radical change. It is not enough to boast of the natural beauty of the Indian landscape, including that of Uttar Pradesh, take a pride in our ancient religious belief and customs and our unique historical monuments and festivals. The issue that starkly confronts us is that how and when we shall evolve a genuine, equitable political, and economic order?

We may now conclude the present thesis with the following observations.

The foreign visitor/tourist is overwhelmed by India's manifold and rich natural resources, its ancient mausoleums, monuments, fine architecture, fascinating arts and crafts and its delectable cuisine. He is also equally impressed by its numerous intellectuals, technologists and scientists of world class, the fabulous wealth of Indian maharajas, landlords, businessmen, professionals and the growing number of the upper middle class and their life style, as also the spiritual fervour and piety of the people. He also cannot fail to notice the all round corruption, the inequitious caste system, the naked and brutal religious discrimination and violence, people dying despite abundant grain stocks, groups of uninhibited children, women and men of all ages defecating in the open spaces along
the railway tracks within the sight of railway passengers (One foreigner has described India as one big lavatory), stray cattle, plethora of touts and beggars and mass poverty. The foreign visitor/tourist thus returns home with the image of the 'Two Faces' of India.