“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

— Indira Gandhi
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Printed at :- Kalyan Enterprises, D-20, Sector B-3, Tronica City (Industrial Area), Loni, Gzb. kalyanenterprisest87@gmail.com
This is the third and the final Block pertaining to tourist sites promoting mainly products of indigenous culture and traditions. Thus pilgrimage, festivals, ethnic tourism, and crafts and folk art constitute the variety of themes discussed in detail in this Block.

The first of these, Unit-17 is on Pilgrimage. It takes into account the ancient Indian tradition of paying visits to holy places as an important generative factor for tourism. As a continuation of this tradition, the Unit includes four case studies, that of Vaishno Devi, Kamakhya, Tirupati and Ajmer Sharif.

The next, Unit-18, is on Festivals. You may have noticed that festivals as a topic occur at other places too. Here the focus, therefore, is on festivals that are of recent origin, are revived recently, or are contrived for promoting tourist activity.

Ethnic Tourism, is the subject of Unit-19. In our case ethnicity, i.e. the customs and culture of indigenous people, is a strong factor in tourism activities. We have provided you an understanding of ethnic tourism and have given you some idea of the impact it has had on our culture.

Lastly we have Unit-20 on Crafts and Folk Art where the discussion is mainly centred on the value of indigenous crafts and folk art as significant ingredients of tourism. The Unit also deals at length with the museums where folk crafts and art have been effortfully preserved.

We hope you will find substantive information in these Units and be able to use it professionally.

Acknowledgement : We are thankful to the Tourism Department, Govt. of India, Tourism Departments of Haryana, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Gujrat for their cooperation and photographs.
UNIT 17 PILGRIMAGE

Structure

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17.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will know about the:

- tradition of pilgrimage in India,
- changes brought about in the concept of pilgrimage tourism in India during recent times,
- socio-economic changes in a particular region brought by pilgrimage tourism, and
- various pilgrimage tourism spots, their importance, and facilities available there.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

The present Unit focusses upon the ancient concept of tirtha yatras — the pilgrimage. In earlier days the tirtha-yatras were related with 'geopiety'. However, now with more and more commercialisation and materialism creeping into our lives, the concept of pilgrimage tourism has also started changing. Today people want luxuries, pleasure and comforts on their pilgrimage trips. All this has drastically changed the very basis of the pilgrimage tourism and has resulted into some unforeseen but related developments. It now requires development of vast tertiary sector through which all comforts could be provided to a tourist. Such development means overhauling of the existing socio-economic structure of a particular area. It results in the rise of large towns and various crafts. At the same time it also means disturbing the ecological balance — polluting the environment. Peace of mind and solace through pilgrimage are also becoming things of the bygone days. It is in the midst of such a scene that this Unit also takes up some case studies of pilgrimage centres in India. You will find how pilgrimage tourism is fast developing in India and holds tremendous potential for domestic tourists.

17.2 PILGRIMAGE IN HISTORY

In this Section we will discuss the pilgrimage tourism in its historical perspective.

India has an age-old tradition of tourism. Since time immemorial Indians undertook tirtha
yatras in search of peace. Besides, history is also full of references of traders and
merchants roaming from place to place in connection with their trading activities.
Traditionally a Hindu was supposed to perform yatra to four dhams situated in four
corners of India — in the North, Badrinath (on the hills); in the East, Puri (on the sea
coast); in the West, Dwarika (on the sea shore), and in the South, Rameshwaram (again on
the sea coast). Tirtha yatras were mainly spread along the river bluffs and confluences.
The holy rivers, Ganges and Yamuna, have long been venerated and large number of
hymns were composed by the Aryans in praise of Ganga. Earlier, pilgrimage was
associated with ‘purity of thought’ and undertaken for expiation of sins or for salvation.
The concept of the pilgrimage was “the harder the journey the better the reward (phal)”.
Thus, the pilgrims needed minimum infrastructural facilities.

In sharp contrast to this traditional picture, modern day pilgrimage is ‘pleasure oriented’
and demands vast infrastructure in the tertiary sector. This has had deep impacts. In the
following Sections we shall examine pilgrimage tourism and its impact on society in
greater detail.

17.3 PILGRIMAGE AND TOURISM

The present Section explores the relationship between the tourism and pilgrimage; and its
impact on the overall development of tourism industry as such.

17.3.1 Interrelationship

Pilgrimage and tourism are closely related. Tourist industry fetches large number of ‘local
 toursts' mainly to pilgrim centres. Pilgrimage tourism helps greatly in travel promotion.
You will find that ever increasing demand for better travel facilities at pilgrim centres to
cater to the large number of pilgrim tourists has pressurised the state governments and
tourism departments to come up with concrete plans. Since this kind of tourism involves
large profits it has attracted a number of private tour-operators to involve with it. We may
cite the instance of Vaishno Devi. The journey in the past was quite hazardous. Recently,
however, the roads have got totally rebuilt, and the transport is easily available. Today
Jammu is connected with every part of India by rail and by air. Similarly, Tirupati, a small
town, now has an airport. Trains now reach as far as Rameshwaram. Dwarika is also well
connected by road. Even ship/cruise facilities are available to visit Dwarika. Ajmer, again
though a small town, owes its importance almost wholly to Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti’s
shrine. In the annual urs lakhs of people participate. Such travel promotion facilitates
pilgrimage in particular areas and at the same time it has socio-economic implications too.
Large number of devotees travelling to pilgrim centres generate handsome revenue and are
the source of livelihood to hundreds of those who depend on the tourists inflow.

There are many pilgrim centres which were earlier small places, but on account of their
religious importance have now emerged as big towns. Katra, a small town in Jammu, now
has a chain of small hotels. Similarly, Shirdi, a very small village, now on account of the
increasing popularity of Shirdi saint’s shrine is fast developing into a big town with a
number of luxury hotels coming up.

Pilgrimage centres also develop into big shopping spots. Dwarika specializes in cloth
paintings. Similarly, people buy dry fruits like akhrot in large quantities from Jammu
where it is quite cheap. Besides, these pilgrim centres are flooded with consumer
items — artificial jewellery, bangles, local handicrafts (of wood, jute, cane, stone-carvings
(images of gods and goddesses), and show-pieces, etc.

17.3.2 Specific Area Development

It is a debatable question whether pilgrimage tourism leads to the development of specific
area only i.e. whether on account of its ‘specific’ nature it has only a limited potential for
tourism development. There are certain centres which serve very specific purpose of
performing 'pilgrimage', e.g., Prayaga, Kashi, Haridwar, Triupati, Nagarkot, Shirdi, Ajmer
Sharif, Amritsar, Nanded and Old Goa, etc.
The scope of pilgrimage tourism can be called area specific in the sense that if one is the devotee of a particular sect/religion/shrine, he will visit repetitively those places where his worshipping deity resides. After sometime, owing to lack of ‘any other adventure’ he may lose some interest, unless otherwise motivated. This, no doubt, indicates a limited scope for the growth of pilgrimage tourism. On the contrary, adventure tourism has a field wide open right from the Himalayas down to Cape Coorin.

In spite of this limited scope, pilgrimage tourism has enough potential to develop domestic tourism. If one analyses the location of traditional pilgrimage tourist spots one finds that our forefathers had tremendous sense of geography in identifying pilgrimage centers. They have chosen the places or localities which are associated with rivers, streams, their confluences, coasts or hill tops. They associated pilgrimage with ‘geopiety’. Tirtha yatras provided them opportunity to break away from the cares and worries of the mundane world. The locations of these traditional pilgrimage centers are such that it can always serve dual purpose of pilgrimage and adventure. If one goes to Dwarka one can not resist the charm of seeing Porbanda coast; if you plan to visit Puri dham can you refrain from covering the ‘golden triangle’ (Puri, Bhubaneshwar and Konark). If you are visiting Rameshwaram, will you not like to admire the sea at Kanyakumari? A visit to Vaishno Devi’s shrine will certainly excite your urge to go for trekking. Similarly, while landing at Guwahati can you resist your visit to Kamakhya temple only? Will the serene calm of Brahamputra and char of Kaziranga forests not lure you? This clearly indicates that one can not restrict pilgrimage tourism to specific area boundaries. It has tremendous potential to develop domestic tourism. Similarly, this also shows that for a particular centre to become a tourist centre it need not be a pilgrimage centre first. It can happen other way also.

17.3.3 Important Pilgrim Centres

Pilgrim centres in India can well be divided into two categories: Firstly, there are certain centres which are already established centres of pilgrimage from ancient times e.g., Badrinath, Kedarnath, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi, etc. Second type of pilgrimage centres are those which on account of their geopolitical situation and availability of space and other amenities facilitated the development of a pilgrimage centre. Ajmer Sharif got patronage of the Mughal rulers for its being situated at a strategic point. Mughal rulers’ visits to Ajmer used to serve dual purpose of keeping in check Rajput rulers’ activities as well as keeping an eye over the Gujarat route. Similarly, in Maharashtra, Ganapatiphule (in Ratnagiri district) is the pilgrimage centre for the worship of Ganapat, but it is recorded in the gazetteer that it was just a hamlet and was not much reputed for its Ganapat shrine. In fact, it was a shift in the ‘political’ power from Vidarbha to Pune that provided enough impetus for it to develop into a leading pilgrimage centre.

Listed below are some prominent pilgrimage centres in India:

Northern Region: Amarnath, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Vaishno Devi, Rudra Prayag, Haridwar, Kashi, Benaras, Prayag, Nagarkot, Leh (Buddhist), Kurukshetra, Amritsar, Patna, Saheb, Ayodhya, Hemkund, Vindhyavasini, Hazrat Bal Shrine (Srinagar), Chari Sharif (Gulbarga), Chitrakut, etc.

Eastern Region: Kamakhya Devi temple, Jagannath temple (Puri), Sun temple (Konark) Belur Math, Dakshineshwar, Kali Ghat temple (Calcutta), and Bodh Gaya (Buddhist), etc.

Western Region: Somnath, Dwarka, Junagr (Jain temple), Goa (Churches), Dilwara (Jain) temples, Shirdi, Ajmer, Pushkar, Ujjain, Maheshwar, etc.

Southern Region: Madurai, Rameshwaram, Tirupati, Pondicherry (Aurobindo Ashram), Kanyakumari, Meenakshi temple, etc.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Analyse the changes in the concept of pilgrimage tourism in India from ancient to recent times.
2). Critically examine the future of pilgrim tourism in India.

17.4 PILGRIMAGE: CASE STUDIES

In this Section we have spotted few pilgrim centres and studied the tourist aspects related to them.

17.4.1 Vaishno Devi

It is one of the major centres of pilgrimage popular among the Hindus (people of other religions also go) where lakhs of devotees flock together to pay their respect to goddess Vaishno Devi. Popular belief is that whoever visits the shrine does not go back disappointed. Vaishno Devi shrine is situated on the Trikuta mountain, 67 kilometers north of Jammu.

To reach Vaishno Devi, one has to come to Jammu first. It is connected well by air, rail and road transport. There are daily Indian Airlines flight operating between Jammu and Srinagar and Jammu and Delhi. Besides, Chandigarh and Amritsar are also connected with Jammu by air. By rail Jammu is connected with the farthest points such as Kanyakumari. Moreover, a number of travel agencies run conducted tours from Delhi and other cities in northern and central India. Daily bus service from Taran Taran, Amritsar, Jullunder, Ludhiana, Patiala, Chandigarh, Jwalaji (via Dharmshala) and Srinagar is also available.

From Jammu, one has to leave for Katra, situated at a distance of 48 kilometres. There are frequent buses available for Katra. At every 10 minutes one gets a bus from the main bus stand of Jammu beginning 5.30 a.m. till about 8.30 in the evening. Taxi services are also available from Jammu to Katra from the Jammu Airport, Railway Station and Tourist Reception Centre, Jammu.

From Katra to Vaishno Devi shrine is a distance of 13 kilometres which one has to cover either on foot or by pony. Pitthu are available for carrying small children and luggage.

The route is now fully tiled and lighted with sodium bulbs. *Yatri niwas* and *Vishram Ghars* (managed by the Shrine Board), Tourist Dak Bungalow and Retiring Centres (managed by *J & K Tourism Development Corporation*) are available at reasonable princes at Katra. Here, *dharmashalas*, run by various organisations are also available for accommodation. Besides this, large number of small hotels are available to accommodate people at Katra. The Shrine Board provides free accommodation at *Adhikawari, Sanjichhat* and *Darbar* (where the shrine is situated).

**Climate**: In winters its too cold. Snow fall also takes place. In the winters heavy woollen clothes are needed. In the summers, however, light woollen clothes suffice.

**What to Hire (from Katra)**: One has to have canvas shoes, bamboo sticks, cotton bags, caps, torches and waterproofs for the trek. All items are available on hire at Katra.
Besides, those who can not travel on foot, pitthus, ponies and dandies (palkis) can be hired from Katra itself.

**Remember:** Before leaving for Vaishno Devi shrine from Katra one has to take a **Yatra Slip** from the Yatra Registration Centre, Katra Bus stand. Without the slip, no one is allowed to cross Banganga checkpost.

**What to see:** On your way to Vaishno Devi shrine are:
- Banganga: believed to be the place where the Goddess quenched her thirst,
- Adhkawari: place where Goddess is said to have meditated in the cave. Here there is a place called **Garbh Joon** where the Goddess blasted an opening at the other end of the cave with her trident according to popular belief,
- Darbar: where the shrine is located. It is said that here she assumed the form of Maha Kali and cut-off Bhairon Nath’s (a tantric demon God who wanted to behold her) head, and
- Bhairon Ghati: where Bhairon’s head fell.

**How, Where and What to shop for Puja:** Narial (coconuts), Bhaints (offerings) and other puja material are available at shops at Katra and Darbar. Shrine Board runs its own shop at Darbar where Narial and Bhaints can be bought at cheap rates.

**Food Facilities:** A large number of cafeterias are run between Katra and Darbar by the Shrine Board at very reasonable rates. Shrine Board’s Bhojanalayas, where hygienically prepared food is available are at Katra, Adhkawari, Sanjichhat and Darbar.

**Other Facilities:** Medical facilities are available at Katra, Banganga and Sanjichhat.

**How to get the Darshan:**
At first you have to take the **parchi** (slip) from the Parchi centre on which a group number will be allotted to you. When the group number will be announced you are supposed to stand in queue at gate number 2. While inside the cave you can have the **darshan** of the mother Goddess in her **pindi** form — Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi (Maha Vaishnavi) and Maha Saraswati. The holy water coming from the feet of the Mata can be collected near the exit gate.

**Important Tips:**

i) Take official receipts for all payments made to the shrine.

ii) Official rate lists for all services are available. Check them before making any payments.

iii) Avail the services of only registered pitthus, ponies and dandiwalas. You can keep his token for the period he is engaged.

iv) For locating missing persons, contact announcement centres of Shrine Board.

### 17.4.2 Kamakhya

Assam (ancient Pragjyotishpur, and Kamarupa), interestingly, has been associated with magic and witchcraft and has, perhaps the most famous of all the seats of Tantra in India, the shrine of **Kamakhya**. The term Kamarupa/Kamakhya symbolised a new cult, associated with magic and incantation. Prior to that Saivism was the presiding religion. Naraka, founder of an early kingdom in Assam, assumed for himself the role of being the custodian of Kamakhya, the Yoni Goddess, and in conformity to this changed the name of the kingdom from Pragjyotishpur to Kamarupa.

The Kamakhya Shrine is situated on the **Nilacala** (blue mountain), three miles from Guwahati. Mother Goddess Kamakhya is worshipped in three forms: i) as a primordial deity associated with and patronised by Vishnu, ii) as a virgin, and iii) as a spouse of Siva.

The temple is unique in the sense that it enshrines no image of the Goddess. Inside the temple there is a cave, in a corner of which is a block or stone over which a symbol of
Tirupati

The commonly known Tirupati temple belongs to Lord Venkatesvara. As pilgrim centre Tirupati needs no introduction. It has infact a chain of temple complexes and tirthas (waterfalls), both on the top of the hill as well as at the foot hills. In the south the deity is known as the Srinivas Perumal while in the north it is commonly called as Balaji. The main deity (Venkatesvar) is placed at the top of the Tirumala hills. While his consort is worshipped at Alemelu Mangapuram, at the foot of the hills.

Tirupati has a long history. As early as A.D. 966 we hear of the land grants and villages attached to the Tirupati shrine for its upkeep by the rulers and local merchants, etc. The temple was patronised by Pallava, Cholas, Pandyas, the Vijayanagar rulers, and later by the kings of Mysore.

The Tirumala temple is a masterpiece of Dravidian architecture with heavily carved gopurams (lofty gates) facing east. In all there are three gopurams. The entrance gate (mahadwar) is that of bronze, while the second one is of silver, the third one, facing the sanctum is of gold. Inside the sanctum resides the huge blackstone image of Lord Venkateswara. The idol has the attributes of both Vishnu and Siva — a happy compromise appealing to both Vaishnavites and Saivites.
What To See: Apart from the Venkatesvara temple Tirumala has many places of tourist interest. In all there are 108 tirthas (waterfalls) on the top of the hill as well as at the foot-hills. If one plans to see all the tirthas one needs at least three month's time to cover them. Papanasanam, Akasaganga, Jobjali, Shesha, Gaurarbhama, Kapila, Ramakrishna tirthas, etc. are among the famous ones. There is a natural arch around 10,000 years old (Shila Toranam) right behind the temple, on the hill. Besides, the main deity in and around Tirupati, is a chain of temples — Sri Govindarajaswami temple, Rama temple, Sir Kalāhasti temple (shrine of Vayu, 36 km. from Tirupati). The famous Chandragiri hills are just 11 kilometers away from the Tirupati town.

The shrine is administered by a Trust. It is an autonomous body. But few of its members are appointed by the state government. It has a big organisation and is administered on a huge scale. Its employees alone number 15,000. This Trust is responsible for all acts and for any enquiry or help one can contact the Trust's office.

How to perform Puja: Religious rites start as early as 3.30 a.m. The puja at that time is known as Suprabhatam. It is followed by Tomala Seva and Sahasrana Vacha. These rites are over by 6 a.m. During this period the deity is decorated with fresh flowers, etc. Between 6-7 a.m. food offerings to the deity are performed. At this time people are allowed to enter the sanctum and the entry is allowed as per the payment (ranging from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 200). After that the entry is opened for all. The temple is opened for the darshan of the deity up to 10-30 p.m. in the night. At 10.30 p.m. another seva is performed known as ekanta seva — i.e. the ceremony symbolising the period of rest for the God.

Tirupponakam (cooked food offerings; Prasadam) forms an important place among the religious rites performed at the temple. In A.D. 966 these food offerings consisted of only four nali (rice) of cooked food — a quantity barely sufficient for few persons who did service in the temple. The pilgrims have to purchase the prasadam from the temple servants. Pilgrims offer silk cloth to the deity. They donate valuable articles and jewellery as well.

Festivities: Temple celebrates Adi Brahmotsayam on large scale. Its history can be traced back to A.D. 966. Since it attracted the pilgrims in large number gradually the number of Brahmotsayams increased. In due course we hear of as many as 11 such Brahmotsayams. The number of days of the Brahmotsayams also rose from two to thirteen. In the earlier texts (upto A.D. 1464) we do not get any reference of Vahanams (vehicular sacred mounts on which the processional deity is placed). In A.D. 1476 we get the first reference of Vahanams use during the festivals. Besides, in the Tamil month of Margali Adhyayamotsavam, which continues for 21 days, is celebrated. Devotees recite the verses from Tamil Prabandham. Its first mention occurs in A.D. 1253. Vasantotsavam is celebrated at Sri Govindaraja temple in Tirupati for three days in Chittirai month. The earliest reference we get is that of A.D. 1494. Since A.D. 1522 at Tirupati we get the reference of the celebration of Tirupati Odai Tirunal, a floating festival in which after procession, the deity is taken to a tank amidst music and fireworks. Infact this festival formed continuation of Kodai Tirunal festival. The Ratha Saptami festival is also celebrated here but on a much grander scale at Tirumala hills where the main deity resides. At Tirumala hill from morning till evening religious entertainment programmes are projected on T.V. sets.

Transport: Tirupati is well connected by air, rail and road. Air routes connect it with Hyderabad, Madras, Vijaywada and Bangalore: while it is connected with almost all the major state capitals by rail. Road transport is also fairly well developed. Andhra Pradesh State Transport Corporation buses connect almost all the nearby districts. Within Tirupati autos, taxis, and buses are available at reasonable rates/fores. Bus service is quite fast. One can get buses for Tirumala every minute.

Accommodation: As many as three dharmashalas are established by the trust at Tirumala hills where free lodging is provided. Within the complex food is also distributed free of cost by the Trust. Besides, there are a number of cottages, guest houses, hotels and tourist rest houses for a comfortable stay. Andhra Pradesh Government's Tourist Information Officer sits at III Choultry, Trupati. Besides, Andhra Pradesh Government has information centres at Hyderabad, Goa, New Delhi, Vijayawada, Warrangal Vishakhapatnam and Nagarjuna Sagar from where information can be collected.
Shopping: Both at the Tirumala Hills as well as at Tirupati there are a number of shops from where various handicrafts of Andhra Pradesh can be bought. Andhra Pradesh is famous for its fine silk and cotton sarees. These are available at Andhra Pradesh Government authorised showrooms (Lepakshi, etc.).

17.4.4 Ajmer: Dargah of Muinuddin Chishti

Muinuddin Chishti was the founder of Chishti silsilah in India. He migrated to India as early as A.D. 1192.

He finally settled in Ajmer about A.D. 1206 and died in A.D. 1236. He won the respect of both Hindus and Muslims on account of his tolerant attitude towards non-Muslims. Muinuddin Chishti’s dargah was venerated as an important pilgrimage centre as early as the Sultanate period. We get the first recorded evidence of Sultan Muhammed bin Tughluq visiting the dargah. Since then the tradition of Turkish/Mughal Emperors paying visit regularly to the dargah continued unabated. Akbar’s is reported to have visited the dargah fourteen times. By 17th century the dargah was an impressive establishment with a full fledged staff financed by the endowments and offerings. There was already accommodation available for the staff and facilities for the pilgrims.

The mausoleum of Muinuddin was built by Husain Nagauri. Later, the entrance gate, Buland darwaza, was added by Sultan Ghayasuddin Khaliqi. Later on, many structures of repute were added by the Mughal Emperors (Akbar, Shah Jahan, Jahanara Begum). Inside the dargah there are two massive iron cooking pots (degs), the larger one has the capacity to cook seventy maunds of rice and in the smaller one twenty-eight maunds rice can be cooked. Besides, dargah administration distributes food to the destitute twice daily from the langarkhana. This cooked food is in fact not distributed but looted. This is a very old custom which still continues but now these looters sell the contents and keep the proceeds. In ordinary days people offer cash and jewellery as endowments into the degs.

The tomb complex also has the tomb of the water-carrier (bhishti), who had saved Humayun’s life.

Every year urs (anniversary of the Muinuddin’s death) is celebrated. At that time Ajmer is packed with the devotees from farflung places. Amidst the chanting of songs (sama) people pay homage to the sufi saint. Statistics show that in 1879 nearly 20000 pilgrims attended the urs while the figure touched one lakh mark in 1976. Pilgrims from South Africa, Canada, Yemen, England, Pakistan, etc. also visit the shrine at the time of the urs. Large number of Hindu devotees also visit the shrine.

The devotees bow and kiss the tomb. Prayers are offered. Devotees also tie the strings to the pierced-marble screens that surround the mausoleum in the belief that their desires will be fulfilled. These strings are removed when the prayers are answered. The devotees scatter rose petals over the tomb. Most of the devotees present a chadar at the mausoleum. They circumambulate the mausoleum. Men recite Quran inside the mausoleum while women perform at arhat-i Nur, a place adjacent to the mausoleum. Devotees also visit the chills (where he is believed to have lived before entering the city), a cell, where his khalifa Qutb-al-din used to perform his ascetic exercises; and a place where Muinuddin died (known as the khangah). Pilgrims also visit dargah of Muinuddin at the foot of Taragarh hill and chillah Abdul Qadir Jilani (though he never visited India but it is said that a faqir who visited Baghdad had brought two bricks from the mausoleum). Khuddam are the servants of the shrine whose duties are: i) To look after the ceremonial life of the mausoleum, and ii) look after the pilgrims. The spiritual leader among the khuddams is known as sajjada nashin. The holder of this office claims descent from the saint. The Dargah also patronises sufi music.

Administration of the affairs of the shrine also have an interesting history. In the earlier days khuddam and sajjada nashin were administering the affairs. During Akbar’s reign a mutawalli—a secular administrator—was appointed to administer the shrine. In 1955 Dargah Khwaja Sahib Act was passed and now Central Government appoints 5-9 members from within the Hanafi Muslims to administer the affairs of the shrine.

How to get there: The city of Ajmer stands amidst the Aravalli Hills. Ajmer is well connected with Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Udaipur, Abu Road, and Jodhpur by road and rail. The nearest airport is Jaipur, (about 140 kilometers).
Climate: Ajmer is quite hot in the summers, while it remains chilly cold in the winters.

Accommodation: Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation has its own Tourist Bungalow ‘Khadir Tourist Bungalow’ at Savitri Hills, Girls College Road. It has its counter at the Ajmer Railway Station. Besides, there are a number of hotels to accommodate tourists.

Shopping Complexes: Rose petal's it is the specialty of Ajmer. Besides, all types of cotton fabrics and crafts, produced all over Rajasthan can be bought here (Rajasthan bandhej, nagara shoes, blue pottery, lac bangles, etc.)

Check Your Progress-2

1) What advice would you like to give to your friend if he is planning to visit Vaishno Devi shrine regarding accommodation?

2) Write a note on the urs celebrations held at the dargah of Moinuddin Chishti.

17.5 LET US SUM UP

Our forefathers had tremendous sense of physical landscapes. They searched beautiful sights for the purpose of pilgrimage. Gradually, the ancient concept of getting solace and peace through hardships drastically changed and now people are searching for luxury and comforts in pilgrimage. This very need for “comforts” itself changed the overall concept of pilgrimage tourism. It led to the development of ‘tertiary’ sector in those areas. There are some pilgrim centres which are area specific but pilgrimage tourism, on account of the location of various centres, has sufficient space and potential to combine pleasure with piety.

17.6 KEYWORDS

Geopiety : It is related with the physical landscape helping in attaining piety.

Incantation : A formula of words said or sung for purposes of enchantment.

Urs : Anniversary celebrations at a dargah.
17.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1) See Sec. 17.2. Discuss the earlier pilgrimages were performed for 'peace of mind' and 'piety'. Now tourists seek pleasure and comforts in pilgrimage.

2) See Sec. 17.3 Discuss at in spite of the fact that pilgrim tourism is area specific it has enough potential to develop. Every tourist site in India is located in natural environment (either on the sea, forest or mountainous terrain) which can well be utilized for pilgrimage and pleasure.

Check Your Progress-2

1) See Sub-sec. 17.1.

2) See Sub-sec. 17.4.4.
UNIT 18 FESTIVALS

Structure

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18.1 Introduction
18.2 Seasonal Festivals
  18.2.1 Boat Race Festival
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18.4 Tribal Festivals
18.5 Festivals, Fairs and Tourism
18.6 Let Us Sun UP
18.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

18.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will know about:
- the nature of Indian festivals and fairs,
- some of the lesser known but equally popular and important festivals of India,
- the hidden treasure of the land of solitude — Ladakh,
- secular festivals of tourist importance,
- some of the newly created festivals under the aegis of tourism departments,
- tribal cultural traditions of India, and
- the role of the festivals and fairs in attracting the tourists as well as the role of the tourism departments in utilising festivals and fairs for the development of the tourism industry as such.

18.1 INTRODUCTION

If we talk about festivals one can immediately draw a long list of religious festivals associated with various gods and goddesses, regions and traditions like holi, diwali, christmas, id (ul-fitr; ul-zuha), Gur Purab, etc. One can argue as to what potential do these festivals have as far the development of tourism is concerned. India, a land of vast cultural and regional diversities, has multi-faceted festivals too. Since religion dominates the life of individuals religious festivals have to dominate the cultural life of the people. However, here our purpose is not to discuss the common religious festivals like holi, diwali, dashehra, id, etc. We will to touch upon only those festivals which are the chief centres of tourist attraction.

18.2 SEASONAL FESTIVALS

In India most of the festivals herald the beginning of a particular season and the new
harvest. Since India still lives in the villages and is predominantly an agricultural economy, most of the Indian customs, traditions and festivals have their roots in the agrarian society itself. India has a variety of seasons. Each season brings happiness and new crops which provide opportunity for celebrations. However, here, we are purposely omitting the most common traditional seasonal festivals. Instead, we will highlight few of the newly created seasonal festivals of tourist importance.

18.2.1 Boat Race Festival

In Kerala boat race is the chief attraction of the tourists. It is a part of rejoicings of the new paddy harvest celebrated in the form of Onam. It is organised at two places Alleppey (13-14 August) and Pulenkunna (27 August) in Kerala. On this day various boat race competitions are held. People assemble in large number to watch the feat. The boats are quite long and are put on sail by several scores of boatmen.

18.2.2 Mango Festival

Mango festival, a brain child of tourism department is a recent entry among the festivals. It helps not only in the promotion of 'mango' cultivation but also becomes a great centre of tourist attraction, both domestic and foreign. Now-a-days mango festival is celebrated in almost all the major mango producing states. However, mango fairs of Saharanpur (U.P.), Panipat (Haryana) and Delhi are gaining popularity. Generally the celebrations take place in early July (at Panipat 3-4 July; at Delhi 8-10 July). Haryana tourism department is playing a pioneer role in the development of this particular festival. In 1993 in the 'Mango Mela' of Panipat more than 450 varieties of mangoes were presented by the participants. However, the festival did not confine strictly to the display of mangoes, instead many innovative practices were introduced by Haryana Tourism Department to attract the attention of the tourists. It was accompanied by various painting and quiz contests (for the age group of 7-16 years) open to school children and visitors. At Delhi, in 1994, over 500 varieties of mango were displayed and it brought nearly 50,000 tourist visitors. Here mangoes from foreign countries like Costa Rica, Jamaica, Pakistan, Kenya, Zambia and Venezuela were also displayed. The largest mango Rajawaha weighed 1 kilogram while the smallest motidana was of 2 grams in weight. DTTDC organised mango eating competition that attracted a big crowd. Besides, colourful cultural evenings also formed the part of the mela. Mangoes as well as its plants were also sold that fetched commercial crowd as well.

18.2.3 Garden Festival

Another newly created festival which is gaining popularity is the garden festival organised at Delhi by the Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation. The festival is still in its infancy, as it is hardly seven years old, but gradually becoming popular among tourists. This year (1994) it registered as many as 2000 entries. This festival is organised every year in the month of February for three days. Competitions of the flowers/plants of various categories/seasonal flowers in potted plants, house plants, vegetables/fruits, cutflowers, foliage plants, etc. are held. The competition is open to individuals and organisations, (nurseries, horticulture departments, etc.) The trophies and attractive cash awards are presented by DTTDC. The festival aims primarily to highlight the importance of horticulture and at enhancing the knowledge of the visitors in this field as well as to expose the participants to the new discoveries in this field. It is not a garden show only but all materials pertaining to gardening can also be procured from various stalls — small instruments, rich decorative terracotta pots, and rich manure and seeds. DTTDC has started an on-the-spot painting competition for school children; flower arrangements for school children, cultural programmes, participation of nurseries, stalls of rare plants, amusement park, puppet and magic shows, tourism pavilion of different states of India, adventure park and martial art display. Even seminars are also organised to discuss the 'gardening' related problems, etc. With the efforts of DTTDC a mela atmosphere is created for the visitors to have fun. The festival is gradually assuming the status of a big carnival.

Similar to the garden festival at Delhi an international flower festival is organised in April at Gangtok (Sikkim).
18.2.4 Tea Festival

The tea festival is celebrated in the major tea producing states of India like Himachal Pradesh and Bengal. At Himachal Pradesh, Kangra Valley tea festival is organised in June while another important tea carnival is celebrated at Darjeeling. At Coonor (Tamil Nadu) in January tea and tourism festival is organised. This festival is mainly planned to benefit the tea planters as well as those related with this industry. However, tourists also gather in large numbers to watch this unique event. International planters as well as Indian planters are offered package tour to acquaint themselves with the condition in different regions; encourage the planters to grow varieties of other regions, thus making them learn the methods involved in these regions. The ideal season to visit a tea garden is early winter. Tea is grown in the hilly tracts. The tourist in search of cool, peaceful and green place is encouraged to visit the tea-plantation. In this way, emerges a symbolic relationship between tea and tourism.

Easy accessibility is a contributing factor to the popularity of the tea districts as tourist destinations. The Nilgiris is two hours drive from Coimbatore; similarly one can reach Kangra valley in less than an hour from Simla, and Darjeeling can well be approached from Siliguri. Toy train taking the visitors in the heart of Darjeeling is another attraction. These spots attract the visitors for their scenic beauty, sanctuaries, various sports as well as avenues for photography. A visit to Assam tea plantation can also take one to the famous Kaziranga sanctuary. At Darjeeling one can have a breath taking view of the magnificent snowcapped Kanchanjunga ranges. These tea festivals no doubt not only serve the commercial purpose but are also helpful in attracting tourists to plantation states which possess plentiful charms.

18.2.5 Kite Festival

Kite festival seems to be the very life of the city of Ahmedabad. At the time of makar sankranti (January 14) festival throughout Ahmedabad kite flying competitions are held. The history of kite flying can well be traced to medieval times and even today it is a very popular entertainment not only among the children but also among the elders. This festival is celebrated in Gujarat with kite flying, merry making and feasting. Throughout the day, young and old indulge in the joys of kite flying. This unique festival fills the skies with kites of different colours, shades, and shapes. With its increasing popularity International Kite Festival is celebrated every year at different venues (Ahmedabad, Jodhpur, etc.). In this festival not only people of different regions of India but also from Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Germany, Canada and USA participate. With the increasing popularity and creativity in the game, it is no longer confined to flimsy paper and bamboo creation of children. Now-a-days ‘kite experts’ produce kites in a variety of sizes, shapes and colours. Some of the kites have 300 to 600 tailed pieces. Kites are usually made of nylon sailcloth. The frames and tubing are of fiberglass or carbon graphite. Ahmedabad, the city of kites, has an International Kite Museum where kites of various sizes, colours and shape from all over the world are collected and displayed. On the kite flying day competitions are also held in three basic events — i) kite flying, ii) kite cutting, and iii) kite exhibition. Kite festival accompanies lots of festivities as well. At Ahmedabad various contemporary Indian handicrafts are displayed at the stalls. Exciting range of Gujarati food is also prepared. The speciality of Gujarat undhiyu and tal and papadi can also be had on this day. Cultural programmes of famous Gujarati folk dances like garba, are organised. Turkals or illuminated kites are flown at night, lighting up the skies.

Interestingly kite flying is a popular sport all over the world. The Malaysian Government actively encourages it and contests are held regularly. In Thailand a unique kite flying custom is prevalent. There are male kites flown only by men and ‘female’ kites flown likewise by women. “A battle of sexes rages in the sky”. In Japan they fly a kite weighing 2500 kg. made of 3000 pieces of paper. It takes 200 people to get it aloft and soaring.

With this increasing popularity of kite flying not only among the Indians but also outside India kite flying has succeeded in attracting huge crowds not only from various parts of India but is a chief centre of attraction for the foreign tourists as well. Gujarat Tourism Department is paying special attention to explore this popular event to attract and increase the tourist output but adding colours to it. As we have seen every year in India now an International Kite Festival is being celebrated where participants from all over the world join. It is accompanied by cultural programmes, craft and food fairs etc. to make the event a grand festivity.
18.3 CULTURAL FESTIVALS

In this Section we will discuss those festivals which highlight the cultural tradition of India. Among these we have chosen those festivals which reflect on the traditional art of India and its potential for the development of tourism industry. There are in addition certain festivals which are recently ‘created’ by various state tourism departments to highlight the peculiar culture and tradition of the region. These are now-a-days becoming chief centres of attraction among international tourists.

18.3.1 Elephant Festival

In 1990 the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) brought forth a novel idea to increase the number of foreign tourists i.e. the organisation of the Great Elephant March. Since then it is gaining in popularity and its strength has swelled. It is a four day extravaganza celebrated every year in January. The March starts at Trichur and ends at the heart of beaches — the Kovalam. It is led by 101 caparisoned elephants. Each elephant is adorned with gilted headgear and mahouts bear richly coloured parasols. The march begins with tantalising drum beats of chenda (a musical instrument) and the panchavadyam, a musical ensemble of five different instruments. Then follow the ceremonial feedings — here tourists are provided a chance to get close to these majestic users. This is followed by karagam and kaavadi, the traditional folkdances. Tuskers then march from Muduvara to Velangan Hills taking the tourists on a life-time trip. Enroute at Velangan Hills handicraft stalls and potters wheels provide a chance to shop. The second day backwater cruise in Kochi and Kathakali performances await the tourists. Third day at Allapuzha they are provided with charming chundan vallom (snake boats) for boating in Punnamada lake in Kuttanad and a Kerala style lunch is provided. Here boat racing is arranged. The fourth day the caravan reaches Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala. In the evening Gajagoshya Yatra is again organised. Elephants march through the main roads of the city. Here, tourists can again have the chance to feed the elephants. Marshal art (Kerala) shows are also organised followed by the fine display of fireworks.

Organisation of this festival has proved more than a success. It has a positive impact on the inflow of foreign tourists and also acquaints them with the local cultural heritage of Kerala.
18.3.2 Desert Festival of Rajasthan

Yet another creation of Tourism Department (RTDC) is the desert festival of Jaisalmer — a city of sand-dunes. Started in 1979, it has proved to be one of the great successes and the chief attraction for the foreign tourists. Every year, in February, the city comes alive with the brilliant colours, music and festivity. The desert festival coincides with the full moon in February. The desert throbs with life with rare rustic display of art and culture.

The pick of the festival is the desert folk music by the Langas and Manganiyars. The tribal Gari dances of Barmer and Jaisalmer districts are the highlights of the festival. Besides other Rajasthani dances — Dhap, Gangane, Ghormar, Moria, Charri and Teralital produce wonder in the desert.

Camel acrobatics, camel races, camel decor competition, polo, and tug-of-war are other adventures. To add to the excitement are held turban tying contests between Indians and foreigners, moustache contest and the grand finale with the selection of Maru-Shri — Mr. Desert. Camel Safaris are the main attractions at Jaisalmer for foreign and domestic tourists. However, foreign tourists require to take special permit from District Magistrate Jaisalmer to visit tourist places and villages which are located towards the Western side of National Highway No. 15 with the exception of Jaisalmer town, Ludarva, Amarsagar, Bada Bagh, Kuldhara, Akal Wood fossil park and Sam Sand Dunes.

Villagers participate in the festival with them in the best of their multi-coloured costumes. The handicrafts on sale include silver jewellery, handwoven wares, camel hide articles with intricate paintings in herbal dyes, colourful lack bandhej, Bandhej (tie & dye) cotton and silk fabrics, embroidered garments, camel hair blankets and rugs in ethnic designs.

Besides the festival site there is the golden fort built by Rawal Jaisal, the founder of the city A.D. 1156, Jain temples and Havelis of merchants rivalling the rulers places. Besides around Jaisalmer there are beautiful lakes — Amar Sagar (5 km), Mool Sagar (7 km), Bada Bagh (6 km). Around 40 km from Jaisalmer is Desert National park.

Jaisalmer is well connected by rail and road with major cities of India. Indian airlines operates regular flights up to Jodhpur and Vayudut up to Jaisalmer. RTDC runs a small tourist village in the Moornal Hotel Campus. It is situated on a plateau beneath the fort. To provide the tourist life time enjoyment RTDC not only provides hotel room accommodation but hut and tent facilities too. RTDC also provides package tours.

18.3.3 Music and Dance Festival

Needless to say that classical music and dance is at the heart of Indian culture. It speaks itself in these art forms. The Tourism Department is making efforts to exploit this vast potential of Indian culture to attract the tourists in large number in particular regions. Some of the more famous of these festivals are listed below:

Mahabalipuram Dance Festival: Mahabalipuram,
Pattadakal Dance and Bijapur Music Festivals: Bijapur
Khajuraho Festival: Khajuraho
Dhrupad Mela: Music festival at Varanasi
Sankat Mochan Music Festival: Varanasi
Tannetar Fair: Surendra Nagar, Gujarat
Surya Dance Festival: Trivandrum
Konark Dance Festival: Orissa
Tansen Festival: Gwalior

Konark, Khajuraho and Mahabalipuram dance festivals are the carnival of dances where the leading exponents of various dance forms give their dance performances in the perfect architectural setting of the temple complexes, inside the temple complexes, in an open space/mandap. Here Odissi (Orissa), Bharat Natyam (Tamil Nadu), Kuchipudy, Manipuri (Manipur), Balinese Dance (from Indonesia), Kathakali, Karagam (Tamil Nadu), Kathak (U.P.), and Kathakali (Kerala) are performed.
This unique idea of exploiting traditional Indian art and culture for tourism promotion fetched good results. These festivals are now becoming popular and large crowds visit to watch this cultural carnival. Not only the local tourists but foreign tourists flock in large number. Here they get on idea of the cultural tradition of India at one place in the perfect natural surroundings.

These festivals are generally accompanied by the craft melas where local and regional artists gather with their fineries. Besides, tourism departments provide attractive package tours at the time of the event to the tourists to visit the nearby areas of tourist importance.

Among the folk dance festivals Tarnetar fair of Gujarat (at Sunderanagar) possesses its uniqueness of style. It represents the fine synthesis of folk art, folk music and folk dance. It is an annual feature held at the temple of Trineteshwar at Gujarat from 4-6 of the month of Bhadrapad (September). It attracts a mammoth crowd. It is famous for Tarnetar Chhatris, umbrellas of beautiful intricate embroidery with mirror work and motifs of animals, birds, etc. It represents the creative drives of the region. It is also a place where the matrimonial alliances among the Bhawwad community are struck. Gujarat Tourism Department makes arrangements for guided tours of Tarnetar both from Ahmedabad and Vadodara. Here one can also enjoy Gujarat delicacies and typical Kuba huts and tent villages and the real rural and folk culture comes alive.

On similar lines music festivals are organised at various centres. At these festivals one can have the festive out burst of shehnai, exuberant notes of sitar, and soft strains of veena. Besides classical music concerts are also performed. Tansen festival on the anniversary of music maestro Tansen is held in the classic surrounding of Gwalior. Similarly Bijapur Music festival is held in the perfect Adil Shahi atmosphere. These festivals are gaining importance and are being provided all necessary help to make the event successful.

18.3.4 Religions Melas

Of the melas the Kumbh mela is the greatest and most important of India’s periodical fairs. It is celebrated once in every twelve years at Nasik, Ujjain, Prayag and Haridwar. It is also a meeting place for the main religious heads in the country to discuss and exchange ideas. Millions of pilgrims visit these melas. They now attract a large number of international tourists also.

The Magh mela held at Prayag, the Eclipse fair at Kurukshetra, Kartikai festival at Arunachala in South India, Kans-ka mela at Mathura, Ganga Sagar mela in Bengal and Pushkar mela held annually on the banks of the lake Pushkar near Ajmer in Rajasthan have immense potential for tourism, both international and domestic.

Rath Yatra of Puri

Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannatha and one of the four holy strinces (chaturdhamas) of India, is a place of colourful festivals — the most famous of which is the rath yatra festival of chariots. The ratha yatra has a special significance to pilgrims who throng Puri. The three deities Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are taken in three huge Chariots in a thundering procession to their summer temple for a week. In mid-April the famous chandan yatra at Puri is performed in which the chalanti pratima (moving images of the deities) have a ritual boat ride after a refreshing bath in the sandalwood scented water. This is followed by snana yatra (festival of bath) in which the main images are installed on their bathing platform and given a ceremonial bath. Then comes the annual sojourn of the three deities riding their grand chariots to their garden house. The deities there take new attires (vesha) every day and after a lapse of eight days they return to the main temple riding their chariots drawn by devotees.

This festival is an experience of a lifetime. The event is internationally known. At the time of the yatra large number of foreign tourists assemble, apart from millions of Hindu devotees. In Puri, tourists, both domestic and foreign, have added attraction to watch the architectural marvels of the temples as well as the vast virgin seacoast.

18.3.5 The Hermit City: Ladakh

Ladakh is the land of monasteries. Here nearly fifty per cent of the population is Buddhist. One can see even today many ancient Buddhist carvings and main-walls intact. The oldest
Festivals of this unique land are also unique in every sense. The festival of 'Losar' marks the beginning of New Year. It is the most popular Buddhist festival celebrated in the eleventh month of the Buddhist calendar. The celebrations are believed to have begun in the 15th century when Ladakhi King Jamyang Namgyal decided to have celebrations before the battle with the neighbouring king Skardu. He was afraid that only few would survive the battle. He won the battle but the practice of these celebrations since then became a regular practice and can be equated with the diwali festival of the rest of India. The whole city is illuminated and prayers chanted. A great fire is lit to shut out the evils of the ending year followed by a great Ladakhi dinner — gothak. The festival rejoicings continue for three days. Processions, horse shows and banquets mark the rejoicings.

Another major festival is held to mark the anniversaries of the individual monasteries (gompas). Most of these are held in winter — Mothos in January, Chimre in September, Thiksey and Satì in December. The solitary celebration is of Hemis (the Gompa of Gompas). It is held in June (summer) and it attracts many tourists to watch this spectacular celebration. On this occasion Lamas dance in slow languorous movements to the accompaniment of Cymbals, drums and weird looking pipes. They dance with grotesque marks and elaborate costumes. Chang (a locally brewed alcoholic drink) is drunk. The dance portrays the battle and victory of good over evil.

These Ladakhi festivals are chief attractions to foreign tourists. Every year large number of foreign tourists flock in the city of serene calm. However, these peculiar and unique Buddhist festivals have yet to gain the required attention of the domestic tourists. Since the city has tremendous potentials of a good tourist spot for its snowy peaks, green valleys, mountainous terrain and ‘unique’ cultural tradition the Tourism Department has to work hard to highlight the importance of the great ‘Hermit City’.

18.4 TRIBAL FESTIVALS

Every year Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) organises a tribal festival in Gavilgarh fort of Vidarbha, at Chikhaldara. It is the only coffee producing area in Maharashtra and known for its wild life. It has a tribal museum and a botanical garden. It has the legendary Bheema kund where Bheema is said to have washed his hands after slaying the Keechaka. Here lives the Korku (the Austric people), Gavalis, Basodes, Gonds, Madias, Kolams, etc. One gets charmed with their talents in crafting unusual musical instruments, their simplicity and their innocent smiles. In the tribal festival various tribal dances are performed. Korkus perform Bihawoo which is the marriage dance of Melghat. It is participated by both men and women who dance to the tune of dhots (drums) and sundri (short shehnai). Another Korku dance, pola, is performed in worship of the bullocks. It is performed with the accompaniment of the tasha (a percussion) instrument. Holi dance is also performed (for 7 days) following the harvest.

Banjara dance of the nomads is performed amidst bright costumes ornaments, scarves and vocal music.

Dances of Gonds are another spectacle of the festival. Gonds dance ghorpad. They make time markings on their body, put peacock feathered crown on their head and ghungaroo (belled anklets) on their feet. Two male dancers imitate the movements of the ghorpad, a member of the septik family. Another Gond dance performed is dhemsa. It is a stick dance performed both by men and women, decorated with animal skins, leaves, teak wood and flowers. Konakan Adivasi dance, dongardev, is performed by holding tribal torches. Young boys play duff, a percussion instrument known as duff vadan. Acrobatics form a part of the dance.

The pioneer attempt of MTDC to encourage the tribal cultural tradition is not only path breaking but also a step towards the development of tourism in the area and to revive and
keep alive the traditional art forms of India. MTDC, provides proper accommodation and restaurant facilities to make the stay comfortable.

A similar tribal festival **Adavasi mela** is also held annually at Chotanagpur (in Ranchi, Bihar) every year where tribal culture art and tradition are exhibited. In Gujarat one can visit Dang, Saputara, to watch the tribal dances, drama and music. **Saputara Summer Festival** organised by **Gujarat Tourism** highlights the rich tribal culture of the Dangi adivasis.

### 18.5 Festivals, Fairs and Tourism

Let us now analyse the significance of festivals and fairs for the development of tourism. We have already seen how the tourism department, capitalising on the rich cultural tradition of India, has worked for the promotion of the tourism prospects of the country. Pilgrim flows account for a very large percent of domestic tourism as well as foreign tourists. Fairs and festivals not only reflect the vast cultural heritage of India but have over the years become big attractions for tourists. Tourist departments attempt to tick up with the zonal cultural centres for making arrangements at important tourist destinations to organise cultural evenings, light and sound shows, craft bazaars, food plazas and fairs. Fairs and festivals all round the year have borne fruits. These tourist promotion activities not only provide enjoyment to the tourists and exposes them to the vast cultural tradition of India but also create employment, earn valuable foreign exchange and help in the socio-economic development of the area as well as in the preservation of national heritage and environment.

**Check Your Progress-3**

1) If a person is interested in visiting Ladakh, as a tourist guide what would you like him to see and explain. Discuss in 60 words.

2) In what way has MTDC succeeded in developing culture and tradition of the tribals of the region

3) How can one link festivals with tourism promotion? Discuss.
18.6 LET US SUM UP

In the present Unit we have discussed various seasonal and cultural festivals of India. This analysis omits a discussion on the common and well known festivals and fairs of India. Here a greater emphasis has been put on some of the more peculiar festivals from regions not well exposed as well as those newly created festivals which are gaining popularity on account of their peculiar nature. A write-up is given on tribal traditions of India (tribal festivals), life at desert (desert festival of Rajasthan) and a special section is devoted on the city of Ladakh. However, in general almost all the festivals and fairs of India are closely related to the Indian village society. With them rural India comes alive. One can also clearly point out the importance of ‘seasons’ and ‘monsoons’ hidden in the very life of India.

The Unit also reflected the efforts of Tourism Department to make these festival and fairs more attractive, to add colour to them so that more and more tourists can be attracted, both domestic and international. The Unit also emphasised the importance of close linkages between the tourism and the traditional Indian festivals and fairs of India.

18.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1) See Sub-sec. 18.2.4.
2) See Sub-sec. 18.2.5.

Check Your Progress-2

1) See Sub-sec. 18.3.1.
2) See Sub-sec. 18.3.3.

Check Your Progress-3

1) See Sub-sec. 18.3.5.
2) See Sub-sec. 18.3.4.
3) See Sub-sec. 18.3.5.
UNIT 19 ETHNIC TOURISM

Structure
19.0 Objectives
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19.2 Concept of Ethnic Tourism
19.2.1 Meaning of Ethnic Tourism
19.2.2 Differences between Ethnic and Cultural Tourism
19.3 Positive Effects
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19.4.1 Commoditisation of Ethnic and Cultural Products
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19.7 Let Us Sum Up
19.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

19.0 OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this Unit is to focus on one form of special interest tourism known as Ethnic Tourism and the products related to it. After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- describe what Ethnic Tourism is,
- differentiate between Ethnic Tourism and Cultural Tourism,
- understand the positive and negative impacts of Ethnic Tourism and the role of the middlemen, and
- know about some places of Ethnic Tourists' interests in India along with the efforts made for their promotion.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Ethnic tourism has now arrived on the tourist map of many a countries. Policy-makers and planners, in many instances, have turned many traditional festivals and fairs into places of interest for the Ethnic tourists. The later strive to have a closer contact and understanding with the lifestyles, dresses, foods etc. of the people they visit.

This Unit takes into account the various aspects related to ethnicity in tourism. As a case study it discusses the Pushkar fair (near Ajmer) along with mentioning certain other such 'products'. However, certain aspects related to Crafts and Folk art are discussed in Unit 20.

19.2 CONCEPT OF ETHNIC TOURISM

It will be useful to understand the prevailing meaning of Ethnic Tourism right at the outset. This will help to explain how this form of tourism is different from other forms and what role a tourist guide and policy-makers and planners are expected to play under these circumstances.
19.2.1 Meaning of Ethnic Tourism

The term “Ethnic” was originally coined to refer to all those groups which were not Jewish. By mid-15th Century all non-Jewish and Non-Christian groups were termed “Ethnic”. By the late 19th and early 20th Century, “Ethnicity” was placed between the ideas of race and those of culture.

Ethnic Tourism signifies the tourists’ interests in the customs of the indigenous and exotic peoples. It is a form of special interest tourism as different from general tourism which focuses directly on the local people. It involves intimate contacts with the “authentic” indigenous culture. In this form of tourism, the tourist visits the homes of the local people, observes and participates in their festivals, dances, rituals and other forms of cultural expressions. Human contacts with the indigenous people become very important in this form of tourism and it involves a study and purchase of local products as well.

19.2.2 Differences Between Ethnic and Cultural Tourism

To many people, these two forms of tourism may appear similar. But they are different in content. It is, therefore, necessary to emphasize the differences between them so as to make you aware that the tourist’s interests in both cases may be at variance with each other.

In Ethnic Tourism the tourist is interested to have a direct contact with the local people. He/She wants a first-hand experience with the way of life and cultural artifacts of the people who are being visited.

In Cultural Tourism, however, the contact with people is indirect. The tourists’s main interest is not direct exposure to and involvement with the traditional cultural practices of the locals. It is viewing the culture, not experiencing it.

Thus, while in Ethnic Tourism, the tourist seeks more “intimate” and “authentic” contact. In Cultural Tourism, the contact with the indigenous people is not so direct.

Check Your Progress-1

1) Discuss the meaning of ethnic tourism in five lines.

2) What is the difference between ethnic tourism and cultural tourism?

19.3 POSITIVE EFFECTS

It is worth while to understand the positive as well as negative effects of Ethnic Tourism. These are often ignored by the travel trade and policy-makers. However this ignorance can ultimately affect the attraction of the very destination they promote as ethnic.
In this Section we discuss the economic benefits and cultural revitalization.

i) **Economic Benefits**: Economic benefit accruing to the inhabitants, middlemen and the country as a whole is the same as happens in other forms of tourism. More employment, higher income, improved standard of living etc. are some of the benefits. However, most of these benefits go to the people who are outside the ethnic groups visited by the tourists.

ii) **Cultural Revitalization**: In many instances Ethnic Tourism helps revive the local people's interest and pride in their cultural traditions and values. The homogenising influence of mass media and the hegemonic culture generally tend to push the local folk traditions into oblivion. The onslaught of western culture through films, videos, audios and newspapers force the diverse cultural patterns on to the backstage where they survive merely as occasional ritual expressions.

In Ethnic Tourism, however, the emphasis is directly on the traditional cultural forms. The tourists seek to observe/participates in the local festivals and other celebrations. The stress is on the peculiarities of local culture as opposed to the imposing dominance of the homogenising culture. All this revives the interest of local people in their own cultural traditions. This stimulation occurs mainly due to the outsiders' interests in their tradition. Thus the uniqueness and importance of their folk traditions are brought to the fore and lead to ethnic pride and ethnic solidarity. Ethnic and cultural revitalisation is, therefore, a result of this process.

This awareness is further developed by a conscious attempt by more advanced members of the local community to re-educate and re-establish pride in traditional skills and values. There occurs a general revival of interest in traditional festivals and fairs, in religious ceremonies, art forms and craft modulation. The Ethnic Tourism also contributes towards strengthening ethnic and political identities.

### 19.4 NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Till now we have mainly described to you the benefits which Ethnic Tourism brings in its wake. But unless care is taken and caution is practised, the manifestations of its negative sides also become obvious. The researchers, policy-makers, tourist guides and the members of the local communities should watch the phenomenon very carefully lest it does not go out of control.

#### 19.4.1 Commoditisation of Ethnic and Cultural Products

The emphasis of Ethnic Tourism on local culture has already been described in the earlier sections. It was also stressed that as a form of *special interest tourism*, Ethnic Tourism has folk traditions as its basis. But the problem starts when the local culture itself is treated as a commodity.

Commoditisation, i.e., the treatment of things in marketable terms, is a general feature of the tourism industry. The travel agents and tour operators, in order to draw more and more tourists, try to turn all the products of local culture into marketable commodities. Local dresses, toys, potteries, architecture, idols, religious rituals, cultural festivals and feasts are all conceived as saleable things. Advertisements and brochures are issued drawing the tourists' attention to the placing of these cultural artefacts on the counter for sale. The local people are paid to perform and enact for the tourists. The tourists and the local people are turned into buyers and sellers respectively in a competitive cultural market. Even the nuances of life-style are appropriated in tourism packages for sale to the tourists. If this kind of cultural denigration goes on unchecked, it can prove destructive to the local culture and people. The treatment of culture as commodity over which the tourists can claim rights negates the right of the people to their own culture.

#### 19.4.2 The Natives Assume Artificial Behaviour

The Ethnic tourist searches, for "authentic" manifestations of local culture since social and cultural changes are always occurring. But what the tourist is looking for may not be
actually available. The local traditions popularised among the tourists by brochures and travelogues may actually have undergone some changes. In that case there exists a hiatus between the tourist's desire and real situation.

In Ethnic Tourism, the local people do not simply serve the tourists. Instead the hosts themselves are “on show”. The tourists desire that the locals be presented to them in their ethnic dresses and costumes, perform their ethnic dances, indulge in their ceremonies and organise their festivals for the tourists who can then observe them, photograph and tape-record them, and even participate in local functions.

The tourist’s desire to find the “authentic” and “original”, the role of the local people as “living spectacle” and the modernising and homogenising influence of the tourists on the locals create a peculiar situation in which the more is the tourist’s demand for the “authentic”, the more he gets is the staged.

Let us put it a little differently and elaborately. The tourists want to see “unspoiled natives”. But the tourists themselves belong to more modern culture. Their dress and their affluence tempt the locals to be like them. Gradually, the local people start imitating the tourists’ dress, their manner of speech etc. This makes them less exotic and less interesting in tourists’ eyes. This may lead to a loss in locals’ income. It, therefore, forces them to act as performers, to show what is attractive to the tourists. They wear their traditional dresses, perform their traditional dances, play their traditional music and so on only at the time of their interaction with the tourists, only to satisfy the tourists’ demand for “authenticity”. At other times, however, they wear the same dress as that of the tourists. Thus the local people turn into actors for the satisfaction of the tourist-spectators. The staged authentic ultimately deprives it of its real meaning thereby defeating the purpose of Ethnic Tourism.

19.5 ROLE OF THE MIDDLEMEN

The Ethnic Tourism is based on two contradictory tendencies: the homogenising influence of the modern culture represented both by the mass media and the tourists as opposed to the preservation and presentation of local culture as an authentic product. As we saw in the preceding section, these contradictory pulls tend to destroy the entire fabric of Ethnic Tourism.

The role of the middlemen such as travel agents, tour operators, tourist guides etc. assumes a special significance in this context. Normally these people act purely for their personal gains without giving any thought to the seriousness of the problem. Some researchers have bitterly criticised their role:

“The middleman is the broker in ethnic exoticism who mediates and profits by the interaction of tourist and touree, and who, in the process, very frequently manipulates ethnicity for gain, stages ‘authenticity’, peddles cultural values, and thus becomes an active agent in modifying the situation in which and from which he lives”.


The middlemen, however, can play a positive role by protecting the tourists from unfamiliar circumstances and by facilitating genuine interaction between the tourists and the local people. They can also make the tourists aware of the particular social, economic, political and environmental issues related to travel in a particular area among particular people. More significantly, they can use their sense of discrimination and tell the tourists that the latter can expect this much from the local people and nothing beyond that. Everyone related to the process of Ethnic Tourism must realise that going to the extremes will kill the goose that lay the golden eggs.
Check Your Progress-2

1) Discuss the positive and negative effect of Ethnic Tourism.


2) Describe the role played by middlemen in Ethnic Tourism.


19.6 ETHNIC TOURISM IN INDIA

Special Interest Tourism such as cultural tourism, ethnic tourism, health tourism, sports tourism, environment tourism is now the order of the day. Most of the modern tourists do not want merely a sunbathe on a beach and room around in a market place. The emphasis is now on action, adventure, education, fantasy and exotic experiences. Many countries are, therefore, developing their facilities for special interest tourism.

In India, many regions, especially Rajasthan, are of special interest for Ethnic Tourism. Rajasthan, with its variety of colourful dresses, folk music and dances, forts and diverse tribal cultures, is of special importance. The rituals, music, dresses and dances find their fullest expressions in the festivals and fairs in different parts of Rajasthan. Some of these are described below:

Pushkar Fair

It is one of the biggest fairs not only in Rajasthan but the whole of India. Pushkar is situated in Ajmer District, about seven miles north of Ajmer. It is the site of a huge cattle fair with massive participation by locals.

Pushkar is an old town. In Devipurana Pushkar is considered to be one among the nine sacred forests. The mythological origins of Pushkar is given in Padmapurana. According to this, Brahma, "the creator of the world", was in search of a place for performing yajna. The lotus, situated on his head fell down and struck the earth at three places, water gushed from these spots and they were termed Jyesth (elder), the Madhya (central) and the Kanishtha (younger) Pushkar.

During the Buddhist times, Pushkar was a flourishing town and an important centre of Buddhist faith. The discovery of the earliest Indian punchmarked coins at Pushkar and the 2nd Century B.C. stone inscriptions at Sanchi mentioning the charitable donations made by some Pushkar residents proves that Pushkar was a holy place and populous town.

The discovery of Bactrian, Greek, and Gupta coins shows the continuing importance of Pushkar even during the Post-Buddhist phase.

At present, Pushkar is a very important Hindu pilgrimage centre. There are five main temples dedicated to Brahma, Savitri Badri Narayan, Varaha and Shiva Atmishwar.
Every year the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation establishes a temporary "tourist village" which is situated in a huge area and is basically meant for the foreign tourists. From a room to a private cottage is available there on differing rents. During the fair this village is full of tourists.

Near the village sales of various ethnic items ranging from silk goods to leather goods are organised. The fair starts with the tune of Shehnai which is followed by a variety of Rajasthani music and dances. Variety of sweets and other eatables are available in the fair.

A seven day "horse-safari is also organised by the Rajasthan Tourism development Corporation. It is an expensive affair and is meant mainly for the foreigners. It includes a seven-day horse-riding journey with stoppages at nights in the hotels. Camel-rides are also organised.

Bikaner Festival

Ethnic music, dances and performance by folk artists are the main features of this festival.

Gangaur Festival

This festival commences on Holi and is dedicated to Goddess Parvati. It is a celebration of marital love and continues for 18 days. Finally Parvati leaves for her husband's place escorted by her husband Lord Shiva. A grand procession with the idol of Parvati in a palanquin, camels, elephants, horses and people goes through the streets of the city of Jaipur.

Braj Festivals

Held at Bharatpur on the eve of Holi, this festival is marked by the celebration of Raslila involving Krishna and Gopis.

Nagaur Fair

Held in the months of January and February at Nagaur (135 Km. from Jodhpur), it is one of the largest cattle fairs in the country. Thousands of camels, horses and bullocks are on sale. The sporting events are the camel races and tug-of-war. The evenings are enlivened by the excited melodies of the ballad-singers.

Rajasthan is full of such festivals and fairs, only some of which could find mention here.

19.7 LET US SUM UP

Ethnic Tourism can be differentiated from other forms of tourism by the direct involvement of tourists with the people whom they are visiting. Not only this, the tourists also want to experience the authentic manifestations of the local culture. They also closely observe and participate in the local rituals and festivities; they like to see and photograph the locals in their ethnic costumes; they wish to hear and tape-record the ethnic music.

This direct interest of the tourists in the local people can have two opposing results. On the one hand, it can revive the pride and interest of the local people in their own ethnic traditions and culture. It can also make them to introduce certain innovations in their ethnic celebrations. To this extent it is a positive thing. But, on the other hand, if a balance is not maintained and an unchecked marketing of the local culture and its products goes on, it can lead to the destruction of that culture. The locals may assume the role of an actor to please the tourists and their artificiality may ultimately rob the ethnic culture of its meaning.
19.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1) Ethnic tourism signifies the tourists’ interest in the customs of the indigenous people. See Sub-sec. 19.2.2.

2) See Sub-sec. 19.2.3.

Check Your Progress-2

1) Economic benefits and cultural revitalization are the two main positive effects. Commoditization of culture and assumption of artificial behaviour by natives are the major negative efforts. See Sec. 19.3.

2) See sec. 19.5.
UNIT 20  CRAFTS AND FOLK ART

Structure

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20.0  OBJECTIVES

We shall explore the world of folk arts and crafts to enhance our understanding of what India has to offer tourists and how to project and display it so that the culture and its uniqueness can be protected. You will thus find in this Unit:

- details about crafts and folk art as two basic ingredients of tourism,
- details of the museums where specimens of folk art and craft have been collected, preserved and also put on display, and
- information pertaining to folk festivals and craft fairs from the tourism point of view.

20.1  INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism in India is being viewed as an industry and as a major foreign exchange earner. The temptation would be to create overnight the kind of infrastructure that is presumed to bring in earnings from travellers who demand the comforts available in economically powerful western countries. In a fast changing cultural landscape the cosmopolitan cities of India present a face of India that has adapted to an international culture. Language, dress, consumer goods and commercial entertainment are a mix of India and an amorphous cultural context. "Indianess" thus is a mix of the regional ethos blended with the occasional influence of Bombay films, "Punjabi" dress, "Mughlai" food, Chinese restaurants and video pop music. Shops selling fancy goods, advertised by fancy means is the language of cosmopolitan folklore. In the midst of this there are historical buildings and monuments, cultural centres for traditional and contemporary arts, handicrafts and textile shops and large number of 'local' restaurants serving regional food to serve the local palette. There are always religious festivals taking place that give rise to heightened activity, whether commercial or cultural.

In rural areas the rhythm and pace of life is very different. The hub of activity is cultivation. The soil water, forests, animals, climate, custom and folk tradition are unselfconsciously linked. This is the India that the tourist visualizes. This is also the India that does not have the kind of facilities the tourists expect. The development of tourism and the approach of those who are connected with it must be sensitive to the maintenance of India's essence. In the creation of infrastructure if the Indianess is either made false or is destroyed, what is offered to the tourist will be an "untruth."

The area of folk art and craft, emerging out of the social systems of communities, is caught between the need to be preserved for tourism development, and yet is in the process of getting effaced as a result of other forms of development taking over. How
much is preserved, salvaged, revived, protected or nurtured is a matter for analysis for those concerned with both tourism and the preservation of culture. This Unit discusses:

- Folk art and Craft as ingredients for tourism,
- Improvements and Revival of dying traditions through tourism,
- Tourist visits to folk art and craft Museums and Shilpgrams, and
- Folk festivals and crafts.

## 20.2 CRAFT AND FOLK ART AS TOURISM INGREDIENTS

Genuine folk art and crafts in their natural surroundings are not easily found by tourist. The more untouched, and rich the local culture the less likely that it is a tourist spot in the modern sense. A seventh of the world’s population lives in the villages of India, and it is mostly the traditions and customs of these people that constitute the rich cultural heritage of folk arts and crafts. All these are a direct reflection of the local cultures. The origins of these arts and crafts are seeped in folklore, history, myth, superstition, science, religion or pure and simple practicality and utilitarian meaning. While these may appear strange to the foreign tourists’ eye, they are deeply entrenched facets of village life. The “commercializing” of them by making them objects to view as in a museum or as curiosities will be the first step towards destroying those very life styles. The most crucial question is to retain a balance so that visitors understand Indian culture, perceive its manifestation in diverse forms, and respect its sanctity without imposing their distant and alien culture and invading the privacy of the other. The policy maker and tourist guide must both reflect this approach.

### 20.2.1 The Languishing Crafts

Taken outside their natural surroundings, folk arts and crafts are found in a), the marketplace and b) in specialized Museums. In both these areas, three categories of arts and crafts will be found. First the “living” crafts which, as the word signifies, include all those objects which are still being made both for local and personal use as well as for sale by traditional crafts people in their respective regions.

The onslaught of modern life with its mechanization and mass media culture has set into decline other arts and crafts which are today termed as “languishing crafts”. These include those skills and art forms that are still known and are practiced but are fast losing their relevance and popularity amongst the public. Revival or regeneration requires special design, technical or marketing inputs which is happening in some cases. No craftsmanship, or skill can be considered as totally extinct as long as the traditional knowledge is still with the artisan community. Many objects however, have gone out of use, and many skills are set aside because of the high level of effort or cost involved in making them. Such objects are to be found in our National Museum at Delhi and in state museums, private museums and specialized Crafts Museums in different parts of the country. These museums will be described in a later section of this Unit. Therefore in the “extinct” or museum category of art and craft, we must remember that manufacture and design may be extinct but not necessarily the skill, since artisan communities maintain traditional knowledge and often pass it on orally.

In each of these categories a very important aspect of the lifestyle of the people is revealed. Hence, the tourist can study the identities of different societies as reflected in their dress, household ornamentation, agricultural and hunting implements, musical instruments, baskets, furniture, cooking vessels, toys and votive offerings.

### 20.2.2 Folk Art as House Decoration

The walls of village homes are often decorated with white rice paste designs in the form of flowers and animals. These are done to invoke the blessings of gods and goddesses at weddings, births, the harvest season or on religious festival days. The act of painting itself is ritualistic. The areas which would be especially rich for the tourist to see and study would be the Warli paintings of the tribals in Thane district of Maharashtra, the Pithora paintings of the Rathwa tribe in Chota Udepur, Gujarat, the Mithila paintings on
buildings and doorways, depicting epics and heroic Rajput tales in cities. Another type of wall decoration known as mud-mirror work is done by the Rabaris in Gujarat. Mud houses in villages in Kutch sparkle with mirrors set into relief designs of geometric and floral patterns on inner walls.

Floor decoration is also a ritualistic folk art carried out by women to celebrate special occasions or merely sanctify the home. These are known as Kolam in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Alpana in Bengal and Assam, Mandana in Rajasthan, Rangoli in Gujarat and Maharashtra and Chowkpurana in Uttar Pradesh.

Palm leaf paintings in Orissa, scroll paintings known as Phad and Patachitra telling stories from Rajasthan and Bengal, Ganjifa, playing cards from Orissa and Karnataka are all part of the idiom of folk art.

20.2.3 Crafts in Natural Habitat

As an ingredient for tourism, it is best exemplified in Rajasthan, Gujarat, parts of Orissa, the North Eastern States and in Jammu and Kashmir. In the villages and sections of the smaller towns the habitat, dress and artifacts of everyday use are still made by the people themselves or by local artisans. There may be an entire village of weavers or potters or toy makers. Tourists form a vast metropolis in one of the economically advanced nations or from the many similar towns of Western Suburbia imagine that the entire length and breadth of India is made up of villages and pictured in the photographs or travel posters of desert areas in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The fact is that while rapid change is taking place, India’s five hundred thousands villages still mirror the past in all its diversity.

One typical natural habitat where traditional folk art and craft are still much a way of life is the Banni area in Kutch district. A semi-arid desert off the main highway to the north of its capital town, Bhuj, it is one of the more accessible yet rugged, unspoiled yet worldly-wise areas where the beauty of the people, their resplendent traditional dresses and the uniqueness of their village homes each vie for the visitor’s attention. There are buses and taxis which can take tourists to this area within 1 and 1/2 hours to visit villages such as Hadka, Ghorewali, Dhordo and Birindara. Women will not come out and reveal their faces before the menfolk, but if the visitor is a woman it is easy to strike up a pleasant exchange of greetings and ask for a look at the various embroidery pieces stored away for trousseaus or for sale. Except for a few modern additions like a transistor, a tiled roof, a headcloth of synthetic fabric, the items of daily use surrounding them are wooden ladles, brass pots, earthen cooking pots and the most brilliant and intricate embroideries done on brightly coloured fabric for blouses, skirt borders, headcloth and quilts. Without being set out for tourists, with all the conveniences supposedly required by them, this area in the remote north-western part of an industrialized, and modern Gujarat is a repository of folk culture so loved by tourists.

20.3 CRAFTS AND FOLK ART: PROPAGATION AND PRESERVATION

In the last quarter of the 20th century many private and public institutions have been set up to collect, nurture and display artefacts from different sections of our living cultures. There are museums that also have live displays and demonstrations of folk skills, and cultural centres that house museum like displays amongst programmes for theatre arts, workshops, study centres and music performances. They also serve the purpose of organising temporary festivals and fairs in order to bring together various cross cultural elements in a presentation of unity in diversity, the essence of India’s cultural image.

20.3.1 Zonal Cultural Centres

The government of India established the Zonal Cultural Centres with the prime objective of preserving and propagating Indian cultural values and culturally integrate the states and union territories as part of a programme of national integration and to establish cultural linkages cutting across time, space and territories. All regions have their own artistic creations, folk and classical art and crafts, sculptures, paintings and textiles. They also have historic temples, mosques, churches, palaces and pilgrimage spots, apart from
locations of fine scenic worth, all these areas attract many foreign and Indian tourists. Thus these cultural centres serve many purposes, namely:

- to bring people nearer to one another they help increasing knowledge about Indian culture, heritage and tradition in order to equip them to combat cultural invasion from alien us,
- to make special efforts to encourage folk and tribal arts and to frame special programmes for the preservation and strengthening of the vanishing art forms,
- to encourage youth to involve themselves in creative cultural communications through the process of seminars, exchanges and workshop, and
- to attract tourists to India’s cultural heritage through a selective multi-dimensional presentation.

Shilpgram, West Zone Cultural Centre, Udaipur, Rajasthan

We discuss this as an example of an institutional cultural centre for the propagation of folk arts and crafts, and offered as a tourist attraction.

Shilpgram is a model of traditional village life which is to a considerable extent self contained with the farmer, the potter, the carpenter, the blacksmith and weaver living in harmony and mutual interdependence. To vest Shilpgram with this internal dynamism, the huts in the village are constructed around an interlocking occupational theme. In adopting this cellular approach, each individual hut remains at once an organic entity within itself while at the same time becoming an intrinsic part of the totality of Shilpgram.

In this integrated pattern are five huts from Rajasthan. Representing the weaver community from Marwar, the desert region of western Rajasthan, are two huts named after the two sand bound villages of Rama and Sum. From the hilly region of Mewar, is a potter’s hut form the village of Dhal, 70 kms west of Udaipur. Two huts represent the tribal agriculturist communities of the Beelo (Udaipur) and the Sahariyas (Kota) of the southern regions of Rajasthan.

There are seven representative huts from Gujarat. A cluster of six huts from the Banni area and one from Bhujodi, a weaver’s village in Kutch. The Banni cluster consists of two huts each of the Rabari, Harijan and Maldhar, communities famous for their weaving, embroidery, and bead work. Equally well known for its votive horses, Lambadia village near Poshina in north Gujarat is represented with a potter’s hut.

There is a weaver’s hut from Vasedi village in Chota Udepur area in western Gujarat and two huts representing the Dang and Rathwa tribal agricultural communities of south Gujarat. In addition to these is an ornately carved wooden house from Pethapur near Gandhinagar.

From Maharashtra is a koli hut from a seashore village in Raigadh district. A leather craftsman’s home from Kolhapur, and a Warli tribal hut with wall paintings from Thane district in north Maharashtra.

Goa residences with the traditional artisanal activities of the state are represented by a potter’s hut from Bicholim, a tribal agricultural hut of the Khumba and fisherman’s hut from the Mandovi riverside.

An important feature of the Shilpgram is the Shilp Bazar, organised periodically on the lines of the traditional haat. Craftsmen are invited to demonstrate their skills and sell crafts to visitors at Shilpgram.

Shilpgram attempts to be an example of a living ethnological museum for tourists and students alike, along with an open gallery and a museum facility for exhibiting the not so common works of folk and tribal arts and crafts. Huge teracotta items, a vast variety of textiles and costumes, exquisite embroidery, masks, ornate wood and metal work are all on display. In addition, dotting the Shilpgram landscape are sanctuaries, folk shrines, tribal totems etc., recreated with authenticity. Other institutions include the Bharat Bhavan at Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh and Zonal Cultural Centres in North at Allahabad, Eastern Centre at Calcutta and Southern Centre at Hyderabad. These centres arrange periodical programmes at different places and participate in fair and festivals organised by state tourism bodies.
20.3.2 The Museums

Most tourists are inclined to visit local museums to absorb the history and culture of a country. In India all museums are not equally well maintained and many treasures are unfortunately tucked away in badly lit and undusted corners of state museums. There are some very distinctive and distinguished exceptions and are well worth a special effort on a tourists itinerary.

A few of the more well maintained museums that lay emphasis on folk arts and crafts are listed below:

1. National Crafts Museum, Rural India Complex, New Delhi.
10. State Museum, Trichur, Kerala.

We shall discuss some of them from the point of view of crafts and arts.

The Crafts Museum (The National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum)

This museum was built in homage to the artists and crafts persons who have kept alive the artistic traditions of India through the centuries. The museum is unique for many reasons. Its collection deals exclusively with Indian crafts in a variety of media — clay, wood, textiles, basket work, cane and bamboo, metal, and a host of others. The museum is set within New Delhi’s main exhibition grounds (Pragati Maidan), next to the impressive fortress of Purana Qila. Following an exhibition on Rural India in 1972, the museum took over the running of the village complex which had been built to display exhibits. This complex has miniature or small-scale replicas of village houses from different parts of India, including Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Bengal, and Rajasthan. All the houses have been built with authentic materials, by artisans from the respective regions. Within the houses are some items of daily use, commonly found in the states of their origin. The Kulu hut of Himachal Pradesh has been made of wood and stone, slate tiles on the roof, and carved balconies. The houses of Gujarat are in mud brick, decorated with wall paintings.

Wall Paintings in Indian villages differ from place to place. Often, powdered white lime (which also serves as a disinfectant) was sprayed and painted over the freshly laid mud wall so that they are also used for painting. These were obtained from minerals. The were re-done, and for the celebration of festivals and marriages, or to announce the birth of a child as in Madhubani mural paintings, named after the district of Madhuban in the state of Bihar, where the women paint the outer walls to express the artist’s concerns. Apart from paintings, the mud/clay walls were often modelled into reliefs, and objects like shells (even bottle caps and glass pieces) were attached to enhance the beauty of the walls. For the busy tourist unable to visit rural India, the Village Complex of the Crafts Museum provides a unique glimpse into the more beautiful site of the “Real India”. It is a lovely walk through the houses and courtyards on a winter’s morning.

Another interesting section of the museum is the Crafts Demonstration area. Here, in a small courtyard which has been formed by a quadrangle of mud huts is the work area for...
demonstrations. The Crafts Museum organizes special theme-based demonstrations by artists from different parts of India. Embroideries of India, clay work, metal crafts, pottery and toy-making are some of the themes of such activities. Artists, both man and women, work in this area and are also permitted to sell their wares. Most interesting is to actually sit and watch the artists working, to process, and to even talk with them. It is through demonstrations such as these that one comes to understand the diversity and richness of the Indian crafts tradition. In a commonly used medium such as clay, artists from different states in India have their own technique and procedure, almost unique to their region. There is also great variety in the things they make out of clay, from religious objects to playthings of children, household objects, pots and plates and even storage cabinets.

Exhibitions in this museum are announced throughout the year in the Delhi newspapers. The museum also holds exhibitions of craft objects and has a significant collection which is soon to be housed in its new buildings.

The Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Culture

This museum, named after a great educationalist Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, was set up in 1937. It was originally located at the back of the university, in the Senate House which was unfortunately demolished in 1961 to be replaced by a huge structure on the floor of which the museum is now housed.

The museum has sculptures from Bengal donated by scholars and collections obtained from archaeological excavations in Bengal. Apart from art objects from the past, the museum also holds an exemplary collection of craft items, some of which are still produced and used in Bengal. However, either through lack of funds or from lack of genuine interest on the part of the university, the museum has a dismal look of disuse.

The museum has a collection of sculptures of the Pala and Sena periods. The territories of the Pala and Sena rulers extended over parts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa between the eighth and twelfth centuries. Through trade and commercial contact the influence of these rulers extended far beyond India's shores to the east—to Java, Sumatra and Tibet.

If any one thing make a visit to this museum especially worthwhile, it is the collection of craft products displayed in a gallery on the first floor. There are ritual objects, toys and dolls the most popular one being the painted owl.

Along the walls are painted scrolls, patachitra, once used by story-tellers. India has a very ancient oral tradition; the story-teller roamed from village to village, charming children and elders alike with his narration, music, poetry and his scroll of illustrations. The story-teller would arrive in a village and announce his programme. Then, seated under a tree, in the village square or in the courtyard of a patron's house, he would pull out his scroll of paintings and narrate the story. The scroll, divided like a vertical cartoon strip with each frame depicting an episode of the narrative, would be unrolled for viewing to match the progress of the story. The legends were well known to villagers, but the art of the story-teller kept the audience listening avidly, into the small hours of the morning.

A small collection of hand-painted circular playing cards brings up the question of where this game was invented. Some say that card playing was invented in India and was taken to other parts of the world by Gypsies and Arab traders. The cards, some of them hardly five centimeters (two inches) in diameter; have decorative numbers and figures corresponding to their suit and value, each one individually painted.

The Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad

This is one of India's finest specialized museums. It presents a tasteful display of Indian textiles, in well-kept galleries. It was founded in 1949 and is the brainchild of Ms. Gira Sarabhai who initiated the collection of rare, exquisite fabrics from different parts of India. Through their foresight and vision at a time when Indian textiles were losing their traditional excellence and popularity, such pioneers were instrumental in reviving interest in India's rich textile heritage and showing the need to preserve and extend it. Today, thanks to the efforts of both government and private enterprise, the Indian textile industry, especially its handlooms section is second to none in the world.
The museum has some exquisite samples of printed fabrics, especially those from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Wood blocks carved by hand were used to imprint the design on the cloth. Each block carried only one colour. Extraordinary skill was involved in the creation of one tiny motif, using as many as three or four different colours.

Painting on cloth, called Kalamkari (pen work) was another popular art and there are examples of temple hangings and canopies from Gujarat and South India.

Amongst the woollen fabrics, the most highly prized wools are Pashmina and Shatush, which, though very light and fine when woven, are extremely warm. The Indian shawl, of great variety in weave and design, was one item of male and female costume that captured the imagination of the artist. The shawl is worn loosely over the body and head, and can be worn in many ways. The most complex woven shawl is the jamayar (jama: robe, yar: yardage). To prepare this shawl, a process not unlike that used in making tapestry is used, with hundreds of tiny shuttles, each loaded with coloured threads, being moved along to link the weft threads of the fabric. Though all Indian textiles use an amazing range and combination of colours, it is in these shawls that a new dimension is added to the art of colour combination. It is said that some 300 tints of vegetable dyes were once used in shawl weaving.

The Utensils Museum, Ahmedabad

The credit for this unusual museum goes entirely to the genius of its founder, Surendra Patel. It is a new museum, barely 13 years old, and is exclusively concerned with Indian utensils. In a pretty little village complex with simple, elegant huts around a courtyard and pond, the display is both indoors and outdoors. Patel, once he conceived the idea, went on an all-India hunt for metal utensils for the museum and has managed to assemble more than 10,000 exhibits.

From the shape of the pots, it is easy to identify their functions. Those with long narrow necks and small openings were for precious items like oil, while larger ones were for the storage of grain. There are boxes with lids that can be locked for storing money and other valuables. In the average village house, there was a minimum of furniture, and storage containers for clothes, money and food were highly treasured items.

The enormous variety of shapes is staggering. Equally interesting is the vast range of techniques used to make and decorate these household items. There are pots made of two or more metals such as brass and copper; there are examples of repousse work and enamel and ware. Among the latter are some beautiful specimens of Bidri ware, where the base metal — usually bell metal — has been engraved with designs and the pattern filled with silver, and even gold, though rarely, as in the case of a gold-inlaid nutcracker. There are collections of spoons, rolling pins, tiffin carriers and a wide range of cooking vessels.

Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum, Pune

There are few museums in India that are as inspired as the Kelkar Museum. The museum contains the collection of a dedicated lover of Indian art, the late Dinkar Kelkar. He has spent almost 60 untiring years travelling and purchasing objects from the remotest villages and towns of India. Kelkar's passion and sense of humor are reflected in every item of the collection, and his contribution to the study and preservation of art has already become a legend.

The Kelkar museum confines its collections to the arts of everyday life — pots, lamps, containers, nutcrackers, pen stands and the life — objects that one would find in the homes of village landlord, the farmer, the merchant and the shopkeeper.

The Kelkar museum is fitted with some splendid wooden doors and windows from Rajasthan, Gujarat and South India. The entrance or doorway, to a house or to the inner sanctum of a temple has a significance not only in India but everywhere in the world. It is the door that welcome, the door that opens into the home, the door that the public encounters and hence its special significance. The horizontal beam above the door, under which you pass, often carries the figure of a deity, the most auspicious being Ganesh the elephant-headed god, and Lakshmi the goddess of wealth, who brings prosperity and blessings of those who pass through the portals.
Tourist Sites: Products and Operations-3

The range of metalware — from locks, to ink pots, ritual bowls, hooka stands (bubble pipes), nutcrackers and lamps is quite remarkable.

Lamps in India can be broadly divided into two categories — those used for ritual purposes ('arti' is worship with light') and those used purely functionally to provide illumination in the home. Light in India has a very powerful religious and philosophical significance. Light is the dispelled of darkness and ignorance, and all lamps, even the simple ones of clay, have some motif or figure that sanctifies the object that is brighter of light. The lamps are usually small open containers, often made very shallow to contain the oil or ghee and the wick that was made from rolled cotton. The light of a flickering lamp playing on other objects, casting agile shadows, adds to its beauty. Sacred emblems like the peacock, the goddess Lakshmi, elephants and birds are the most common decorations. There are also hanging lamps that were suspended on heavy (often ornate) brass chains, and standing lamps, used in the temple and the home.

The collection of locks includes some humorous, rather playful locks in the form of dogs, horses and even a scorpion. These locks were used on doors and trunks and had ingenious locking mechanisms and keys. It was as if the artist was striving to make each object more endearing to the owner, however mundane the function of the item may have been. There are also couples, goddesses, riders on horse back and many other designs — some quite bizarre, others quite elegant. With the traditional customs of betel nut chewing and pan (betel leaf) eating came the boxes and intricately designed containers for these leafy digestives. Perforated boxes (to keep the leaf fresh) gave the craftsmen scope for unlimited experimentation in form and embellishment, and a good sample of these boxes is on view at this museum.

Dinkar Kelkar had many dreams. One of them was to add a representative sample of Indian textiles, puppets and musical instruments to the museum collection. He started the collection with household objects and through his efforts has given us a sense of pride in things that in India were always taken for granted: the simple elegance of articles to be found in the traditional Indian home which today is being inundated with mass-produced industrial goods.

20.4 FOLK FESTIVALS AND CRAFT FAIRS

Festivals in India are closely related to the production and use of crafts, objects are made by women as part of a ritual and a form of their personal expression and emotion. There are artifacts made by traditional craftsmen for use in rituals without which no ceremony is complete. There are also crafts which are made only on the occasion of a particular festival such as kites for Makarsankranti, cloth and god thread bracelets for Raksha Bhandan, lamps, toys, fire works and clay toys for Diwali, etc.

Today tourism policy has taken note of these festivals and has also created specialized tourist festivals near places of scenic, religious or historic interest. These should be clearly differentiated and the advantages and disadvantages of “tourism festivals” analysed.

Which are the “real” festivals?

Some of the ‘real’ festivals which attract huge crowds of devotees and local onlookers are the famous Rath Festival at Jagannath temple, Puri, Orissa and the Pooram Festival in Trissur and the Hemiz Monastery Festival in Leh, Ladakh. These are centered around a particular religious spot. Other festivals are seasonal, i.e. related to the position of the moon or the harvest season or to a mythological event. These are Rakshbandan, Baisakhi, Diwali, Ganesh Chathurthi, Christmas, Id, Pongal, Onam and many others. It is at this time that the folk crafts get a boost. Thousands of stalls, pavement shops, hand carts and mobile sales people spring to life to serve the public who come to attend these festivals. Devotion and commerce, pilgrimages and celebration are a naturally integrated whole. It presents the true face of Indian culture in all its colour creativity and diversity, and its participants are there for their own needs and pleasures. There is an unselfconscious and genuine aura which portrays the real India.

“Tourism festivals” if centred around these events should merge with the abeyance rather
than create an antiseptic, sterile and synthetic section to which tourists can retreat to indulge in pursuits unconnected with or antithetical to the local culture. This is a danger that should be avoided. You have read about festivals also in Unit 18.

A new style of “tourism festival” is emerging, which is completely superimposed and alienates the local population. The alienation can be in various ways, namely, a) by creating a distance through use of alien languages b) by making local communities with their customs dress and crafts into exhibits or curiosities to be stared at or photographed c) by being patronizing towards our own people in front of foreigners d) by imposing alien cultural values such as cabarets, alcohol, casinos etc. e) by conveying that development of infrastructure for tourism has greater priority than the genuine needs of the local population.

A Crafts Mela for the benefit of tourism and crafts has been evolved as the Surajkund Crafts Mela held every year at the Haryana government tourist spot at Surajkund, a few kilometres out of Delhi.

Traditional meals or fairs have encouraged tourism development agencies to recreate the same atmosphere at state sponsored fairs which are related to attracting visitors on the tourist circuit. These are not connected with religious festivals or places, but focus on adjoining historical monuments, scenic landscape or modern entertainment and sports facilities.

The Surajkund Crafts Mela in Haryana adjoining the border of New Delhi is the best known of these modern-day fairs. It was established in 1987 and runs from the 1st to 15th February every year. Its primary focus is on the handicrafts and handlooms of India which are projected statewise every year with food, music, dance and other folk entertainment of the selected state to add to the particular cultural atmosphere.

The craftspeople who are invited to sell their wares are largely selected from amongst those who have been honoured with National or State awards in recognition of their skills.

Surajkund, the Pool of the Sun, is one of the region’s oldest and most stepped swimming pool, with the ruins of a Sun Temple on a raised platform, Surajkund dates back to the 10th Century and is attributed to Suraj Pal, Chief of the Tomar Rajput clan. Around this is a newly built hotel and golf course with many facilities for weekend relaxation.

The Crafts Mela brings the entire area alive and is a highly publicized event both nationally and abroad, through travel agents and tourist offices, embassies, schools and the media are particularly sought after to pay attention to the vast potential of the Mela to promote Indian Culture through its craft skills.

Some of the states already highlighted are Kerala, Orissa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. Each year a different state demonstrates a new cultural facet of the country.

Since crafts demonstrations and sales are carried out by over 250 craftspeople there is a wide variety of products from large wood carvings to fine miniature paintings on silk, Manipur pottery and Baster metal work, Sambalpuri handloom saris to Naga shawls, Kashmiri paper machie and Gujarat embroideries. Each year different products and people offer the best of handicrafts to the citizens of Delhi, and tourists who come to enjoy the cool sunny winter of India when the flowers and skies give Delhi a special aura.

The Surajkund Mela is run by the Haryana Tourism Development Corporation with assistance from the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation and the Development Commissioner of Handlooms and Handicrafts. Travel and daily allowances are paid to craftspeople and an entrance fee is charged from the public. There are no middlemen involved in the sales of the crafts and while many may compare the quality and prices with those of the state emporia at Delhi and find them fairly similar, the excitement and vitality of a fair for two weeks has its added advantages.

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**Check Your Progress**

1) **What do you understand by “languishing crafts”? How can these be promoted?**
2) Describe any three forms of house decorating folk art?

3) Why were Zonal Cultural Centres set up by the Government?

4) Write ten lines one each of the following:
   a) The Crafts Museum.
   b) The Utensils Museum.
20.5 LET US SUM UP

We gave you details on India’s craft and folk art tradition in the Unit. The essence of tourism is to create just the right ambience to make the natural and original characteristics more pleasant or comfortable to experience. The local people, traditional dress, ethnic foods and beverages, locally produced artefacts that are used by the people and the preserved art and cultural forms, in which the local people still participate are the essential ingredients for tourism. However, tourism has to take into account their preservation rather than distorting or destroying them.

20.6 KEYWORDS

Ladle : large spoon with up shaped bowl and long handle
Languish : fall behind
Toteurs : natural object as emblem of clan or kinship
Trousseau : bride’s outfit of clothes etc.
Votive : offered in fulfillment of a vow

20.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress

1) Languishing crafts are those crafts which have gradually fallen out of practice though their skill still survives. See Sub-sec. 20.2.1.

2) Warli paintings of the tribals in Thane district, Maharashtra, Mithila paintings of Madhubani district Bihar; Mud-mirror work in Kutch, Gujarat. See Sub-sec. 20.2.2.

3) For preserving and propagating Indian cultural values as part of a programme of natural integration. See Sub-sec. 20.3.1.

4) a) See Sub-sec. 20.3.2.

See Sub-sec. 20.3.2.
Tourist Sites: Products and Operations 3
SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Dharamraj and Seth, *Tourism in India*, New Delhi, 1913.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BLOCK

**Activity-1**

Prepare a brief note (about 250 words) on the nearest pilgrim centre to your city/town keeping the following points in view:

a) The Religious Importance of the place
b) The history of the place
c) Accessibility and Amenities

**Activity-2**

For a group of ten pilgrims of your city/town wanting to visit the Vaishno Devi Shrine, chart out a detailed tour programme giving the following information:

a) Time of departure and arrival at different places
b) Different modes of travel
c) Accommodation at various places, if needed
d) Food arrangements

**Activity-3**

Make a chart of all the important festivals from your city/town giving:

a) the time of the year they are held,
b) a brief history,
c) details of the festivities.

**Activity-4**

Write a note on the crafts of your region highlighting:

a) the tradition of such crafts
b) the native places of craftsmen practicing the crafts
c) the places where the craft procedure in generally sold
d) the economic condition of the craftsman

**Activity-5**

Make a list of the different forms of folk art that are seen in your city/town, and record in writing the surviving traditions in each case, if any.