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HAJO AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

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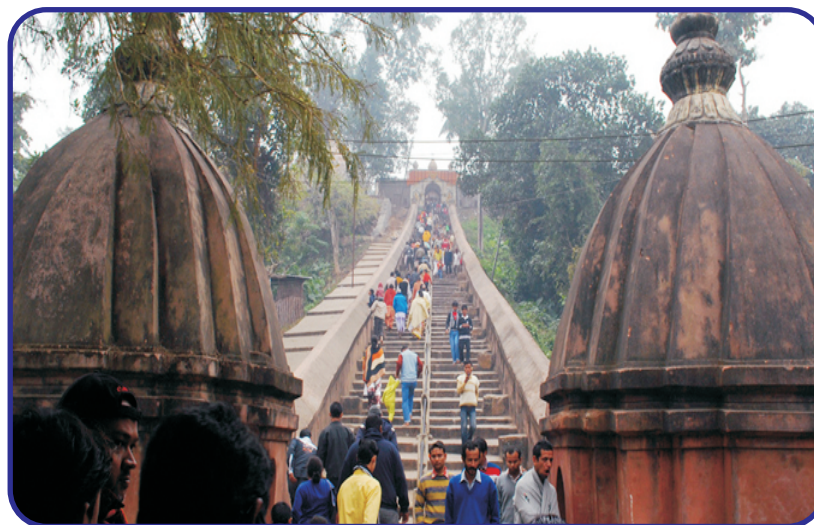
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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights Hajo as a tourist destination and its consequent impact on the industrial development of Assam. Hajo is situated in the Kamrup district of Assam and is located at a distance of about 32 km from Guwahati on the north bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. Hajo is an important centre for three religion namely Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. The age old harmonious confluence can still be observed here. The place has a number of temples among which Hayagriba Madhab is one of the most important. It also

highlights the tourism scenario as well as its development. The paper also gives an idea of tourism as industry. Finally the study suggests means, to develop tourism industry of Assam, such as reconstruction and beautifying of tourist spot. For attraction of tourists it must have proper infrastructural facilities, good means of communication facilities, hospitality, fooding and lodging facilities etc. Lastly tourism industry can also address the burning issues of unemployment.



KEY WORDS: Hajo, Hayagriba Madhab, tourism industry

INTRODUCTION :

Tourism industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors contributing to the global economic growth and development. Etymologically the word tour is

derived from the latin word tornare and the Greek word tornos meaning a circle; movement around a central point of axis. This meaning has however changed in modern English to represent 'one' s turn. The suffix 'ism' is defined as an action of moving in circle. Describing a circle it implies returning to one's starting point thus a tour is a round trip journey the act of leaving and ultimately returning to the original starting point. Rapid industrialization detachment of persons the countryside environment and increasing leisure time have caused a travel-boom all over the world. Tourism is an important and vital source of income for many countries. Its importance was recognized in the Manila Declaration on World tourism of 1980 as an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effect on the

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social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations. In 1994 the UN identified three forms of tourism in its recommendation on tourism statistics.

1. Domestic tourism involving residents of given country traveling only within this country.
2. Inbound tourism involving non-residents traveling in the given country.
3. Outbound country involving residents traveling in another country.

Objectives: Objectives of the Study.

1. To explore Hajo as a tourist site.
2. To explain the tourism as an industry and its impact upon economic, development.

Methodology:

The paper is based on doctrinal methodology. Information was gathered from secondary source data and information,

Hajo as tourist site

Assam situated in the north eastern corner of India is the gateway to the rest of the seven sisters. The state's main attraction is its natural beauty richly endowed with quality tourist spots. Located beside the Himalayan foothills, swept by the tempestuous Brahmaputra, the state is dotted with wild, attractive hills which rise up from gentle expanses of plain's curved by rivers. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of development of tourism in the state serve as valuable resources for the development of tourism in the state. Assam is famous for one horn Rhino, mighty Brahmaputra River, the world's largest river island, lush green forests, tea gardens, various historical sites and famous temples etc.

Hajo is considered to be Panchatirtha in the religious lexicon. It is important centre for three religion namely Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The place was known in different names in different phases of history, Hajo in Ancient Scriptures like Kalikapurana and Jogini Tantra was known as Apurnabhava and Manikuta in the 11th century. According to Yoginitantra it was known as Bishnupushkar in the 14th century. In the 18th century Hajo was known as Manikutgram as per Darrang Rajbonshabhasi by Surjyakhuri Daivajna. During the reign of the Mughals Hajo was known as Siyabad. However opinion differ with scholars regarding the name of Hajo. Some associate with Haj being derived from the famous pilgrimage of Muslim community to Mecca. While Banikanta Kakati opines that the name of Hajo is derived from the two Bodo words ha which means land and Gojou which means high. Both the words gave the name Hajo. The aforesaid analysis is dubious. But historians claim that there is circumstantial evidence that Hajo is named from the Mech king Haju who probably ruled in the 15th century CE. And this proves to be more acceptable.

Hayagriva Madhaba: The Hayagriva Madhaba or Horse-headed is the name of an incarnation of lord Vishnu. According to the Matsya Purana the Hayagriva incarnation preceded the Matsya Avatar of Vishnu. The temple is situated on the Manikuta hill. There are five images on the pedestal of the garbhagriha. They are—Bura-Madhava, Hayagriva-Madhava, Kanaya, Vasudeva and Garuda. Bura Madhava is perhaps the original image of the shrine. The image is always kept under cover of a cloth and a chaplet of flowers this chaplet is made specially for the deity and is called Jalmala. The next important idol is that Hayagriva-Madhava. It is also called Dvitiya-Madhava. The image is like of Bura Madhava, Hayagriva-Madhava is kept under cover of cloth. To the right of Bura-Madhava there is the idol of Kanaya. This image represents the main idol of Hayagriva-Madhava. It is taken out of the temple

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for ceremonial procession during occasions. So it is known as Calanta Madhava. Next to Kanaya, to its right side, there is idol, vasudeva. This is a four-armed image of Vishnu. The image is in the standing posture. The fifth image is installed to the left of Hayagriva-Madhava. It is called Gadura.

On the other hand the Buddhists considers that the temple contain a relic of Lord Buddha and further believe that it is the place where lord Buddha attain Nirvana. Hundreds of people belonging to the Bhutia community visit the shrine during the winter season.

The temple was destroyed by Kalaphar but it was rebuilt by the Koch king Raghudab in the year 1543. A small temple by Pramata Singha nearby where Doul is celebrated every year on a grand scale.

Vishnu Puskar Tank: The Vishnu Puskar Tank is situated in the foothill of the temple Hayagriva-Madhava. Different kinds of fish and tortoise are found there. The villagers neither catch nor eat the fish and tortoise. The tourists and local people supplied the food like Muri, Biscuit to them.

Poamecca: Poamecca, the holy shrine of the Muslims, stands on the top of the Garurachal hill. In the shrine there exists a tomb and a mosque (16th century AD). People believe that the mosque has some sanctify as that of Mecca. It is, hence, known as Poa (quarter) Mecca. Giasuddin Auliya, a Sufi Saint, made Hajo his base and disseminated the Sufi-ideals amongst the Muslims. Facing the shrine is the tomb of Ghyiasuddin Aulia. The tomb of Giasuddin Auliya is accompanied by a mosque built in the year 1657 AD by Sujauddin Mohammad Shah, the second son of Emperor Shahjahan. It is visited by thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the country and outside the country as well. A number of legends are connected with origin of the name of Poamecca. It is said that at the time of its foundation, Giasuddin Auliya discovered ninety images in the area. This number comes to one fourth of the total number of the three hundred and sixty images of Mecca. Therefore, the shrine is called Poamecca, i.e. one fourth of Mecca. Then second one is that, Peer Giasuddin carried one poa of soil from Mecca with him and added it here at the time of the foundation of the mosque so the shrine is known as Poamecca. Then third one is— a visit to this shrine confers one fourth Mecca itself. As such it is called Poamecca. “Urs” is the main festival of Poamecca.

Kedareswara Temple: The Kedareswara Temple is situated in the Madenachal Hillock. This temple is a Siva temple. The Kalika Purana and Yogini Tantra furnishes a more vivid description of the shape of the idol of Kedara. It seems to be a conventional Sastric description of Lord Siva. The main idol of the Kedareswara temple is a big Sivalinga. It is divided into three regions where the existence of Siva, Ganga and Parvati are shown. There is a second idol of five faced Siva sitting on a bull. It is called the Calanta Keder and used as the representative of the temple god. A Sakgramasila of Lakshman arayana is also placed on the altar of the temple and daily worship is offered to that Salagrama stone.

Kamaleswara: Kalika Purana and the Yogini Tantra mention the shrine of Kamaleswara. According to the Purana and Tantra, the shrine of Kamala Siva was not far from the shrine of Kedareswara on the Madanachala hill. The area where the shrine of Kamaleswara, the lotus-eyed Siva is situated was known as pauspaka nagara. But, today there is no puspak nagar, where the temple of Kamalakshe Siva described in the Yogini Tantra. Now we see the Kamaleswara temple is situated near the Apunarbhava-Kunda.

Kameswara: The “Kalika Purana” and the “Yogini Tantra” make special mention of the shrine. Though the history of the shrine begins at least from the time of the Kalika Purana, it is said that the temple of

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Kameswara was constructed by the King Pramatta Singha in the middle of the 18th century. It was situated a little bit away to the north-west of the present temple. In the great earthquake of 1897 AD the original temple was completely demolished and a new temple was constructed in the new site in the early part of this century. The temple possesses a Linga on its altar. There is another idol described as the calanta or movable. It is a five-faced Siva sitting on a bull. It represents the main deity in the ceremonial processions.

Varanashiyaka-Kunda: The Varanashiyaka-Kunda is situated at the foot of the Kameswara temple. The Yogini Tantra states that on the Kama-trayodash day of the month of Caitra one can be freed from all kinds of sin by taking a bath in the Varanashiyaka-Kunda.

Ganesha: At the foot of the Kameswara temple there is the temple of Ganesha on a giant elephant-shaped rock, the Ahom King Pramatta Singha constructed the temple in 1744 AD. The Ganesha temple possesses a big stone image of Ganesha. In fact, it is carved but on an elephant-shaped gigantic rock. There is no movable idol of the deity. Daily worship is performed and offerings are made at the temple.

Jai-Durga: In the Madana hill there is the shrine of Jai-Durga situated near the Kedara temple. The temple of Jai-Durga was founded by the Ahom King Lakshmi Singha in 1774 AD. The Jai-Durga temple possesses an idol of ten-armed Durga on.

Dhoparguri Satra: There also exists the famous Dhoparguri Satra at Hajo. Dhoparguri Satra was founded by Madhavadeva in 1588 AD. During the Saint's stay at Tantikuchi (Barpeta) of Kamrup a number of persons from Hajo used to visit him every day and take part in religious discussions. Madhavadeva directed his disciple Lakshmikanta Atoi to establish a Satra at Hajo. Accordingly, Lakshmikanta, with the cooperation of the Hajo local people of Hajo, constructed a building on the bank of the river Lakhitara near a dhop or banyan tree. After the building was completed, Madhavadeva came to inaugurate it, and stayed in the Satra for about six months. During the period his stay the play Rukminiharan was performed within the precinct of the Satra. When the Saint took leave from the place, Lakshmikanta placed a padasila (footprint) of the Saint in the Satra. Dhoparguri is the most influential Neo-Vaishnava religious institution of the area.

Pakhamela Gohai: Pakhamela is a name of the great bird Garuda (as called by the people of Hajo). An image of the bird made from wood has been placed in a community prayer hall known as the Pakhamela Gohaihar. It is a giant icon of Garuda with Krishna and Balarama on his shoulders. The local people daily offerings and prayers (nam-prasanga) held in the shrine of Pakhamela.

The worship of birds is very popular among the local people of Hajo. When someone valuable things are lost, or missing, people offer a special kind of garland made from basil leaves known as Kanthimala.

Apart from these, Hajo is also well known for Assamese bell metal and brass products prepared by local artisans. The place is popular among the local and domestic tourist. Promotion of a proper tourism atmosphere would help the cottage industry to grow and modernize. Hajo is also famous for floriculture. Local people are engaged in the cultivation of flower. There are various kinds of flowers.

Hajo has already earned a special name and fame as a place for exemplary communal harmony and inter-communal fraternity.

CONCLUSION

But compared to the potential, development of tourism has not yet taken place at Hajo. There are many reasons for this firstly there is a lack of proper infrastructure. Communication bottlenecks like roads, railways come in between the way of easy transit of tourists. Conditions of roads are not proper. Secondly there lacks standard accommodation, a tourist transport network and travel agencies. Tourists especially foreign tourists demand facilities that are at par with international standards. Insurgency has also vitiated the atmosphere so much necessary for the tourism necessary. Moreover unnecessary bandhs call by different organizations effects the time schedule and increasing the expenditure. A tourist's general perception is that he or she wants a tension free atmosphere while undertaking a tour. Absence of peaceful situation is the main hurdle which affects tourism industry. This trend over time have risen to glaring proportion. There also lacks the apathy of the government to repair the damages that have been observed in the Vishnu Pushkar tank where large number of fish have died due to various reasons. Moreover cracks have also been observed in the pillars of the Hayagriva Madhava built by Pramatta Singha where the department of archeology have not taken any concrete steps.

Tourism is primarily a state subject hence it is the responsibility of the government to develop infrastructure, disseminate information and coordinate sector activities for attracting substantial private sector investment in tourism sector. Publicity outside Assam about Hajo is a must. A master plan is also mandatory for linking the various locations of tourist interest in Hajo with proper infrastructural facilities. Governmental role is pivotal for the development of Hajo as a tourist spot which needs to be supplemented by positive help from the local people.

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