

# Mass tourism, its challenges and sustainability: A study on Santiniketan.

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## Abstract:

*In the words of renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore "nil digante oi fuler agun laglo" which means during spring in the blue horizon of Santiniketan Palash flowers are look like flame. Santiniketan is always famous for Rabindranath Tagore, Viswa Bharati University and its great red soil along with its pleasant natural beauty. Santiniketan is always a center of attraction for the entire global villagers. Specially a huge number of people gathered during famous festival "Poush Mela" and "Vasanta Utsav". Santiniketan is one of best weekend destination among the adjacent urbans throughout the year but during these two festivals overtly people arrive in Santiniketan around the world.*

*The main objective of the study is to identify the harsh impact of mass tourism on Santiniketan during these two festivals. Along with this, the study also suggests the identification of current problems and future needs for maintaining the sustainability in Santiniketan's tourism. Through our study we want to draw attention of the local resident participation and cooperation which is necessary to make the tourism at Santiniketan more sustainable. Although because of mass tourism local economy, employment generation are boosting; hotel, travel agency and tour operator are flourishing but at the same time environment is devastating and deteriorating. It is an unfortunate truth that many visitors have little care for the beautiful landscapes of Santiniketan which is regularly devastated by vehicles, garbage and human waste, pollution and plastic waste. Santiniketan is also known for its great cultural value. While in mass tourism the cultural part suffers in various ways like consumption of alcohol, drugs and crime rates often goes up. The present article constitutes a review of the most important objective and tasks of tourism organisation to develop the proper sustainability in Santiniketan.*

**Key words:** Tourism, Mass tourism, Sustainability, Festivals, Economy, Environment, Socio-culture.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism as an industry really flourished after the industrial revolution and in true sense it became more and more significant after 1950s. People from different countries increased their journeys around the world after industrialization (Ayhan, 2011). In the mid of twentieth century very few destinations (mainly in Europe) were popular for tourist destination. But now the idea is completely changed. Many tourist destinations from different countries are coming to the forefront. (Amin, 2015).

According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) tourism's total contribution to the global economy was \$7.2 trillion, which was equivalent to 9.8 per cent of total global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015. This clearly indicates the importance of tourism as an industry worldwide. Tourism as an industry generate a considerable revenue for any country. It boosts up the country's economy by generating income. Tourism also creates employment and foreign exchange. When we take these three factors as consideration the concept of "Mass Tourism" always plays a vital role. Mass tourism can be defined as the act of visiting a leisure destination with large amounts of people at the same time and same place.

Mass tourism is very important for any country because it has direct impacts on economy, socio-culture and environment. So along with its constructive good impact Mass tourism has some bad destructive effects also.

According to Akis et. al. (1996), Tourism's unplanned growth and mass tourism destroyed and damaged culture and environment of many tourist spots. Those are very undesirable side effects concerning about preservation and conservation of natural resources and socio-economic culture of the concerned areas.

Here, the major aim of this study is to find out the adverse effects of mass tourism in Santiniketan.

Santiniketan is always famous for its rich culture, history, its unique nature and famous poet Rabindranath Tagore. But in this modernized society very few people are interested about the poet and his rich culture and history. Mass gathering are occurring today because of Santiniketan's 'Sonajhuri haat', Vasant Utsab and Poush Mela. Santiniketan's festivals and fiestas and festivals which normally attracts thousands of people from all over the world. Mass tourism is a special form of tourism that involves thousands of people going to the same place at the same time. Mass tourism is one of the forms of tourism that involves lots of people at a single point of time in same place. Mass tourism is mostly developed in a place which is easily available by all types of tourists. As because it is easily available so it become very popular among all types of tourists irrespective of caste, gender, community, economic condition etc. Tagore's Santiniketan which is already popular now developed as a famous tourist spot during Vasanta utsab and Poush Mela. Number of tourist arrival increases every year from 1 lakh to 2.5 lakh. During Poush mela more than 10,000 tourists arrives in every year, which is not at all good for maintaining sustainability in tourism in Santiniketan. Tourism is not a onetime goal; we have to preserve something for our future generation. Tourism is such a word which is always important toward economical condition of a particular place and entire country, which is highly depend on another word 'Environment' irrespective of its type. So we all including Government, NGO's, International Tourism Organisation and local people have to take a good care of our environment to maintain its sustainability. So destinations should be protected with a holistic approach to maintain their originality. The local people should get economic benefit which must be paired with environmental sustainability. Santiniketan is always symbolized for its wonderful nature and its own traditional rural people. Though in one hand people can enhance their communicative skill and make them independent specially the young folk of our country but on the other hand it is destroying the traditional culture of India. Though a huge economy is generating through these festivals but it is also creating an alarming environmental situation counting air and noise pollution due to lots of personalized and public vehicles. Dimitriou (2017) indicated many tourist destinations around the world are suffering from rapid and uncontrolled expansion of mass tourism with short term profit orientation. Russo (2001) worked on the notification of environmental degradation due to tourism development. Generally, tourists might leave a significantly larger ecological footprint than local people (Li and Yang, 2007)

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The main objective of the study is to identify and classify the impact of mass tourism on local and national economy along with the destruction of nature and natural resources. There are some other objectives which are as follows:

- 1) To study the consequence of Vasanta Utsab and Poush Mela in Santiniketan with a specialized focus on its societal, cultural and environmental impacts with both positive and negative manner.
- 2) To make tourist aware about role of unique specified landscape which mainly attract tourists.
- 3) To motivate local people for protection and conservation of nature and natural resources for future economic development from tourism perspective.
- 4) To develop a definite awareness among community people regarding the role of sustainability for future tourism and related economic benefit.
- 5) To aware the side effect of mass tourism throughout the world through different social media and other possible ways.
- 6) To promote our unique concept 'IF YOU LOVE NATURE THEN TAKE THAT AS IT IS INSTEAD OF CHANGING IT FOR YOU' among world tourists including the local people.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The research approach is qualitative. A moderate range of literature has been reviewed from different sources. The desk top method of research has been used for literature review. Authors have focused on interpretation rather than quantification. It is based on subjectivity rather than objectivity, on process orientation rather than results and on context since the behavior of the people involved and the situation are based on experience formation. Because of unavailability of sufficient data we are unable to adopt a particular data based methodology for analyzing the impact of mass tourism in Santiniketan. Some informal interview methods were also followed. Tourism industry's experts, the administrative officials and local people of Santiniketan area were the key personnel to discuss with.

#### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:**

After going through each and every pros and cons of mass tourism in Santiniketan we are able to identify the following which are enormously developing problems of santiniketan due to its heavy tourists arrival rate-

- 1) It is really very difficult to maintain law and order during mass tourism especially for Santiniketan during Poush Mela and Vasanta Utsab.

- 2) Though there are lots of restrictions and rules still tourists are becoming loud and offensive, high rate of alcohol consumption along with throwing the empty bottles here and there. Municipal solid waste (MSW) generation is one of the most important impacts of mass tourism (Holden, 2008).
- 3) For providing luxurious accommodation and modern facilities, nature and natural resources are getting destroyed for the sake of monetary benefit of few people.
- 4) For maintaining ancient 'babu culture' and show-off their status, some of the so called aristocrat urban people are influencing/ encouraging ecology destructing construction.
- 5) People are coming from same places with different personalized vehicle, so air pollution is increasing with the time because of huge carbon emission. During the years 2009 to 2013, in the world, carbon footprint increased from 3.9 to 4.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide only because of tourism and mainly mass tourism (Reiner, 2018). Tourism is responsible for almost one tenth (8%) of all the greenhouse gas. Annually, 2.173 million metric tons of carbon dioxide were emitted for Tourism transportation alone, whereas the figure for carbon dioxide emissions from goods were 534, and food and beverage 421 metric tons. So, emissions of transport are nearly as much as those of goods, food, agriculture, services, accommodation and construction combined. (Rathi, 2018). The level of carbon dioxide is estimated to increase by 45% and by nitrogen 43% by 2035 (Mikkonen, 2018) and it is estimated that by 2050 the emissions will be between 900 to 1800 million tons (Rutherford, 2018).
- 6) The quality of the surrounding environment has a direct effect on tourism. So the environment should be maintained and its sustainability should be taken care of. Sometimes Tourism is affecting the environment by its rapid growth of tourist activities in certain areas on a specific time. (Boers & Bosch, 1994). In Santiniketan, because of economic development during mass tourism often hotels are replaced by vacant green land which is really threatening for environment and causing environmental degradation.
- 7) Plastic waste also increasing every day because of tourists' behaviour and huge water requirement will lead towards scarcity of all natural resources.
- 8) There are some of the adverse effects of mass tourism on the environment. It changes the landscape as well as in flora and fauna. (Hemmi, 2005). In Santiniketan it is often found unauthorized selling and buying of Palash flowers and Santiniketan is missing its traditional flame of Palash flower during spring.
- 9) Because of colossal tourism it is difficult to conserve the critical endangered beauty of this place.
- 10) Cooper (2016) worked on the tourism on the member of local host society. The host society may be influenced by regularly dealing with tourism which can drive locals to change their behavior and living patterns.
- 11) Organized mass tourists demand their own amenities (Cooper, 2016).

#### **SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

After going through the study we can suggest the following which can help both in conservation of our national economy along with the protection of our traditional unique environment of Santiniketan-

- 1) Form the report of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) published in 2017, there is a clear indication about crowd management in tourist destinations. Actually overcrowding is not very new phenomenon. There is a high need to do something about many destinations those are reaching to the point (WTTC, 2017). Local authority with the help of Government should come one step forward to implement the rule during mass tourism.
- 2) Prevent people regarding plucking or selling of palash flowers which makes Santiniketan more unique with its flame like features under the blue sky.
- 3) Through different social media and other different sources local people and businessman should aware that tough mass tourism can generate an extra economic advantage, but we have to maintain mass tourism on a special emphasis of crowd management for protecting the environment for sustainability and future economic development.
- 4) Instead of personalized vehicle people should use public transport to minimize the carbon pollution.
- 5) Promoting UBUNTU (I am because we are) concept among all communities for more competitive, sustainable and greener Santiniketan.
- 6) Supporting the diversification of funding sources for sustainable development in tourism sector through capital market.
- 7) Developing a proper cycle or zero emission bike bay from different nearby places to Santiniketan so that youth can enjoy the tourism in a different way. Why we are suggesting different cycle bay because Santiniketan is very popular destination so roads are occupied by big vehicles, so separate cycle or zero emission bike bay will prevent the accident rate also.

## LIMITATIONS

The study has some limitations, we are able to identify the following:

- 1) Since the inception tourism is always like benevolent in nature, so it is very difficult to preclude people from going to a place in a single point of time.
- 2) Alertness among different class of people is very poor rather not acceptable from educated people.
- 3) Gradually because of this over tourism, Santiniketan is domed its own culture and taking the makeover of modernity.
- 4) It will be difficult to prevent people from using their private vehicles for reducing the pollution and maintaining the sustainability.
- 5) Poor possibility of using cycle bay by our young generation because they are accustomed in fast moving and they are not at all bothered about future environmental sustainability.
- 6) Government augmentation towards development of cycle bay is unexplored.

## CONCLUSION

In modernized West Bengal Santiniketan is a place of contemporary tourism, which became the symbol of intellectuals, rich and etc. Some people are buying house and flats within and outskirts of Santiniketan for proving their financial strength and social status. For fulfilling those mentioned people wish and for developing the construction people are ready to cut the trees without have a single thought about that place's natural uniqueness and environmental factor. Some people without nurturing the extant nature, natural resources and environmental pollution they are freely developing hotels and resorts with modern facilities. Again some of those facilities also destroying the soothing nature of our beloved Santiniketan. So many people are buying the agricultural land in outskirts of santiniketan and developing big hotels for capturing the mass tourist during Vasant Vtsav and Poush Mela along with weekend tourist. People like the beauty and uniqueness of Santiniketan but want the facilities like metropolitan cities. Every Saturday and Sunday huge number of people go to the Santiniketan in their personal car without considering the harmfulness of environmental pollution through huge carbon di oxide emission. So through our study we just want to develop an awareness among the local people and all others that Santiniketan is beautiful in its own way, so don't try to make it in as per your choice. Without destroying the ancient beauty of Santiniketan and developing tourism scenario instead of hotels homestay can be developed. West Bengal Government can implement the rule of public transport for all the people who want to visit Santiniketan. People can use a separate cycle or zero emission bike bay from nearest different places to Santiniketan through which pollution may be controlled along with a new dimension.

If we want see Tagore's Santiniketan with its unique natural and cultural features along with the fragrance of wet red soil, then first we have to nurture it with all extended possibilities.

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