

## RURAL TOURISM IN TRIPURA

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Abstract: The concept of Modern Tourism is not more than half a century old. The contemporary world has become small due to the inventions brought out by the science and technology. Travel and communication has become very easy and convenient. Tourism has become one of the most flourishing industries in the world. International tourism has grown steadily since 1950. The revenue from international tourism means a lot to the host country as it is contributed by foreign visitors in foreign exchange. This becomes very useful for the host country for its economic and infrastructure development. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) estimates that international tourist arrivals will exceed 160 crores by the year 2020. Tourism has become so important and competitive that about 150 countries have set up National Tourist Organisations to attract foreign tourists to their countries and also to encourage their own people to travel within their own country.

**Keywords:** *Agartala, Agricultural Sites, National, North-East, Tourism*

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**In India** with the establishment of **Tourism Development Council** after 1958 that greater synergy was obtained between various tourism providers, the State Governments, the national carrier, and the travel industry. The economic importance of tourism was formally recognized in the fourth five year plan with emphasis towards international tourism and creation of tourist infrastructure. The first attempt to formulate a '**National Tourism Policy**' was in the year 1982 when a paper on tourism policy was presented before the parliament, which set long-term direction and purpose to tourism development and promotion in India. The objectives of the Ministry of Tourism have been further refined in the national action plan for tourism 1992, within the overall framework of the policy keeping in mind the objectives of : Socio economic development of regions; increasing employment opportunities to double by the end of the century; developing and promoting domestic tourism; Preservation and enrichment of national heritage and environment; including support to arts and crafts; Development of international tourism; Diversification of the tourism product to incorporate leisure, adventure, convention tourism, while retaining the traditional image of cultural tourism; Increase India's share of world tourist. Over the years, the tourism policy has been evolving; the revenue growth from tourism has been increasing. The foreign exchange earnings from tourism went up from US \$ 3009 Million in 1999 to US \$ 3168 Million in 2000 (Source: RBI). Tourism today is among the largest earner of foreign exchange in India.<sup>1</sup>

India's **Northeast region** since ancient times, has been the meeting place of many communities, faiths and cultures. It is unique in lushness of its landscape, the range of

communities and geographical and ecological diversity. It is a place of magical beauty and bewildering diversity. The region's flora and fauna is unique. The terrain is mountainous and rugged. The rivers are mighty. The Northeast region includes eight states of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. The region has interesting international borders with Myanmar, China, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. It is unfortunate that due to socio-political and geographical reasons, entire Northeast India has remained neglected and backward. The concept of Tourism development is very recent in this region and is in its infancy. A few states like Sikkim and Assam have taken a few strides in developing tourism. The other states have also commenced their efforts during the last decade. The basic needs for tourism development of the region are efficient infrastructure, good connectivity between the states and peace in the region. The entry permit formality required for a few states for the both domestic and international tourists is a major deterrent for the region's tourist attraction. The region has tremendous and diverse potential for tourism development, which could attract international and national tourists.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of **Tripura**, which lies in the ecologically sensitive region of the Northeast India, the priority consideration for tourism development should be environmental, ecological and heritage conservation. It is a picturesque hilly region with a total area of only 10, 492 sq km. and is the second smallest state of India. It is located in the extreme Southwest corner of the Northeast Region which shares a common boundary with Assam and Mizoram on the northeast and is bounded by Bangladesh on the north, west, south and south east. A tourist can have the opportunity to view here the quaintness hilly serenity, pilgrimage spots with their historical importance, Sanctuaries, architectural sculptures with their historical importance, hill stations, beautiful lakes constructed by the Maharajas, palace situated at the centre of lake; hill stations with abandoned natural beauties and sight of Tripura's rich tradition of handloom and handicraft. In spite of development and urbanization, Tripura continues to be dominated by its vast, picturesque rural hinterland and lush hillscape. The greenery of the state's rural landscape dotted with paddy fields, natural lakes and serpentine rivers beckon any newcomer or tourist to Tripura.<sup>3</sup>

The following places may find recognition in the tourist map of the state.

## II

### 1. Old Agartala

Old Agartala (*Puran Agartala* or '*Puran Haveli*') was the capital of Tripura since the time of Maharaja Krishna Manikya who, ascending in 1830, shifted this capital to Old Agartala from Udaipur due to continued attacks by Samsher Gazi since 1748. Then during the reign of Maharana Kishore Manikya (1830 – 50) the capital was shifted again to the present Agartala. It has remained the seat of the state headquarters since then.

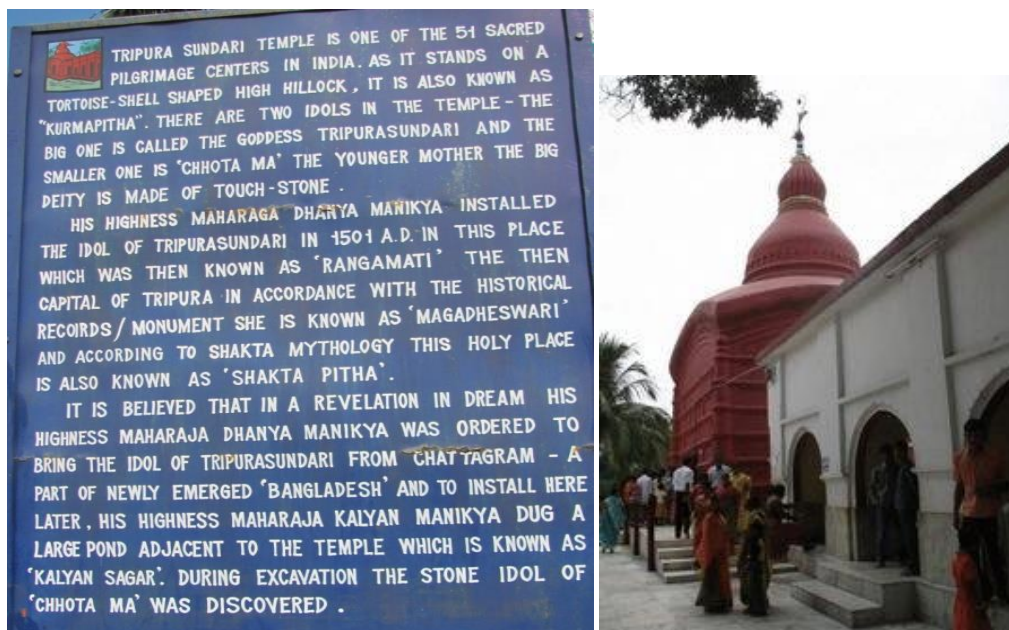
This place is specially popular as a pilgrims spot. as here stands the hindu temple of *Chaturdasa Davtas*, i.e., Fourteen Deities,<sup>4</sup> who are represented by images of heads only. During *Kharchi Puja* (a tribal festival) in July thousands of pilgrims (both tribals and non tribals) visit the temple.<sup>5</sup>

This temple features the Bengal dome patterned after the roofs of village huts in Bengal. The dome is surmounted by a stupa like structure which reveals traces of Buddhist influence.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Udaipur and Tripureswari Temple

Udaipur located in the South Tripura district was the first capital of erstwhile princely state of Tripura. Udaipur lost its glory of being the capital during the reign of Maharaja Krishna Manikya in 1760, when the capital was shifted to Old Agartala. However, the historical significance of Udaipur still remains very high. Many historical monuments of that era had faded away, however many evidences like ancient seals, stone inscriptions and documents still remain as a proof to once culturally vibrant region.<sup>7</sup>

The Main tourist attraction in Udaipur is the Tripura Sundari Temple , popularly known as *Matabari*, one of the 51 pithas of Hindu Purann, and is worshipped with tremendous devotion by all people irrespective of their region , sect, caste etc. It was built by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya in Saka 1423 (1501 AD). it stands atop a hill in Udaipur with a square type sanctum of the typical Bengali hut. A tank, called Kalyan Sagar, on its east adds to its beauty. The 450-year –old Temple is visited round the year, particularly during the Dewali festival (October-November) by thousands of devotees for whom it is a treat to see fishes and tortoises in the Kalyan Sagar Lake located in the temple.



Additionally, there are other ancient temples like Bhubaneshwari temple, Gunabati group of temples, Mahadev temple etc. There are many other ancient ruins including the old palace. However, the most significant character of this city is its large lakes and the Gumati River, the most holy river for Tripura. In fact, the city of Udaipur could be better known as a Lake City. Some of the famous and large lakes are Amar Sagar, Jagannath Dighi, Dhani Sagar, Mahadeb Dighi. There are several large tanks in the immediate surrounding region. Many of them are in a state of neglect and a few have vanished due to siltation. Gumati River itself is a wonderful feature of Udaipur, winding through small hills and green landscapes.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Kamalasagar Lake and Kali Temple

Kamalasagar is a huge artificial lake in Tripura, located in the west Tripura district on the border of India and Bangladesh about 27 kms from the capital city of Agartala. The huge lake here was excavated by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya Bahadur in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century while the Kali Temple atop the hillock dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The place is famous for its historical and religious importance for the last about 600 years.



Also Famous for the great fair held each year October, this place is equally popular with the picnickers. The lake enhances the serene beauty of the temple situated just beside the Bangladesh border.

The entire region has unexplored history and the historical evidences provide tremendous charm to the region. The adjoining region in Bangladesh which forms the Comilla District was earlier the part of princely state of Tripura. There are interesting excavations from this region, which show the evidence of Hindu and Buddhist influence. Tripura kings fought several battles in this region and the Maharaja Bijoy Manikya seems to have built a fort 'Kailargarh' here. Tripura Maharajas seem to have built several temples and also mosques in this region and gave many donations. The Comilla district and Kamalasagar region had been politically active during the British Rule and the records show that the first mutiny in 1857 against the British Rule has its vibrations felt in this region also. Even when the freedom movement became active, the Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad was very active in this region.

The existing tourist spot covering historical lake of Kamalasagar and the Kali temple on the hill is a picturesque location overlooking the lush green landscapes and whistling trains of Bangladesh.





There is also a typical character to the whole set up because of the adjoining ethnic villages. The DICAT already has a tourist lodge at Kamalasar and the expansion is proposed to include major tourist attractions like Health Resort, Herbal Garden, and Botanical Garden etc. Additional land has also been earmarked for this purpose behind the temple.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. Buddhist Pilgrim Centres, Pilak**

Pilak, 100 KM from Agartala, is the treasure house of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture. It dates back to 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. This site has a number of terracotta plaques, stupas, and stone images of Avolokitesvara, including some of Narasimhan, dating back, perhaps, to the Buddhist period, some of the sculptures from this site are displayed in the Agartala Museum.



The art forms have the influence of Palas and Guptas of Bengal. The moulded terra-cotta plaques bear close resemblance with the moulded plaques recovered from Paharpur and Mainamati. The historical evidences provide important link of Pilak to the regions of Comilla district in Bangladesh. The ASI has been carrying out a few excavations in this region and has a small office. The DICAT has a proposal to develop a Buddhist tourism circuit in this region. However, it is unfortunate that such an important archeological site is in a state of utter negligence. Many sculptures are lying all around in open at the mercy of local people. Many known important sculptures have been already vandalized. This site also needs immediate attention and care.<sup>10</sup> The images, terracotta plaques and sealing found here reflect survival of heterodox creeds and sects representing both Hinduism and Buddhism.

#### **5. Neer Mahal (Palace in Water) and Rudra Sagar**

“Rudrasagar is a deep and extensive lake situated about 53 kms from Agartala and about eight kms from Sonamura town. The scenic beauty of the lake was so attractive that Bir Bikram Kishore (1927-1947) the late Maharaja of Tripura built a spectacular edifice on an island in the Centre of the lake and named it Nirmahal or palace in the water. The palace was provided with electricity and had a small well laid garden at the courtyard. Nirmahal is no

doubt one of the finest beauty spots in Tripura. This magnificent lake palace was constructed as a summer resort in 1930 by late Maharaja Birbikram Kishore Manikya in the middle of a natural lake called Rudrasagar having an area of 5.35 Sq.Km. The spectacular edifice built in 1930 is representative of the good combination of assimilation between the Hindu and Muslim designs. The construction was undertaken by Martin & Burn Co. and it is the only lake palace in the entire eastern India. A good combination of Hindu and Mughal architecture is noticed on the domes of the palace. There are mainly two parts of the palace – one on the western side known as Ander Mahal which was used by the royal family and another on the eastern side which was used for the security personnel and servants. There are 15 rooms in the main Andar Mahal. There is a beautiful garden laid in the western side of the palace. In the garden there is an open stage where drama, theatre, etc. used to be organized.



Maharaja used to go by motor boat to the palace from Rajghat. There is a motor boat ghat inside the palace upto which the motor boat could go and there are two stairs at the motor boat ghat-one for Maharaja and another for the Maharani.

Flood lighting of the palace has been arranged in the evening. In addition water sports facilities are being extended. The palace is going to be renovated and a museum depicting the royal life style will be set up inside the palace. In addition Light & Sound show on the historical past and cultural heritage of Tripura will be organized in the palace. A number of migratory birds are found in the lake surrounding Neermahal especially in the winter.

It is reflective of the past glory, and continues to captivate the minds of the visitors even today. The well-laid gardens and flood lighting further enhance its charms Thousands of migratory birds visit the lake during the winters. The sight of thousands of sunset will be cherished by nature lovers for a long time.

Even while reaching the spot by boat a visitor can enjoy the pleasure of rowing for 30 minutes. There is a striking similarity of Neer Mahal with some of the lake palaces in the distant Rajasthan. Walk into the Neer Mahal corridors transports you to the glorious days of the Tripura royals.<sup>11</sup>

## 6. Jampui Hills

**Jampui hill is famous for** scenic beauty, orange and orchid.” The Jampui Hill Range is the highest in the hilly terrain of Tripura. The average height of this hill range is approx. 900 meters. It is 250 kms from the capital city Agartala. The summit of the Jampui Hills commands a breathtaking natural view of the towns nearby. The hill range runs in north-south direction and is flanked with two deep river valleys, Deo River on its west and Langal River on its east.(border of Tripura and Mizoram). Dharmanagr and Kumarghat are the nearest towns to approach Jampui hills via a winding road. This

road further connects to Mammit district of Mizoram and Aizawal, the capital city of Mizoram which is about 120 Kms. from the Jampui hills.

Orange plantations of Jampui Hills are very famous throughout India. The people here are predominantly Lushais and Reangs. The DICAT has also prepared a proposal to establish Eco-park at Jampui Hills and has created fairly good tourist infrastructure. Every year in November a unique Orange & Tourism Festival is organized by the department here.<sup>12</sup>

A large number of tourists, both domestic and foreign, participate and enjoy this festival. The most commendable feature of this festival is the involvement of local people in offering accommodation to the tourists in their house.

During rainy season the hill is covered with floating clouds at the bottom of the hill range and its gradual ascendance from the bottom to the top slowly engulfing the whole hill range in its mystic lap is an experience to treasure. The view of rising and setting sun from various viewpoints in Jampui hills is a wonderful sight for the tourists. Tourists visiting the Jampui hill cannot afford to miss the view of the sunset and sunrise. Various view points in the hill range provide excellent panoramic views of the valley and villages of Mizoram. From the watchtower at the highest peak, Betlingchhip (3200 feet high), the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Kanchanpur-Dasda valley other hill ranges of Tripura and Mizoram unfold an enigmatic scenic beauty.

The Jampui Hills were covered with rich natural forests, supported by good biodiversity with natural flora and fauna. Animals like Tiger, Leopard, Deer, Gibbon, Flying Squirrel variety of orchids is also a specialty of this region. Almost similar landscape and biodiversity extends on the eastern side of Jampui Hills in Mizoram. The Dampa Tiger Reserve, a large protected forest in Mizoram is contiguous to this region.<sup>13</sup>

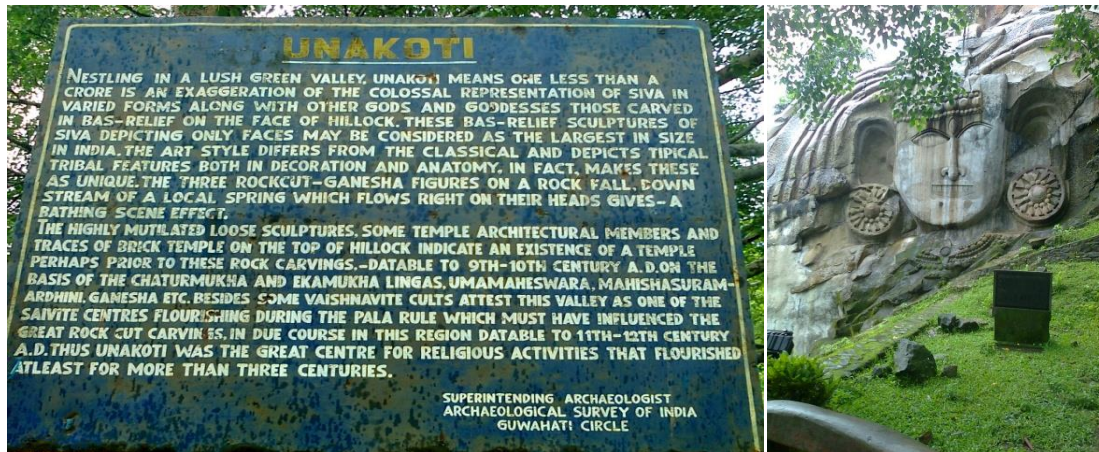
Tourist Department of Govt. of Tripura has constructed one very modern tourist lodge – Eden Tourist Lodge at Vanghmum village in the Jampui hills which has a capacity of 20 persons and is well equipped with all modern amenities. In addition, local hospitable Mizo people also extend “paying Guest” Accommodation facilities in their houses. Boating facility in the Sabual village of the hill range has been developed.<sup>14</sup>

### **International Heritage Centres at Unakoti & Pilak**

The most famous archaeological sites in Tripura are at Unakoti in North Tripura and at Pilak in South Tripura.

**Unakoti** is a pilgrimage and tourist spot as well. It is 171 kms from Agartala and is on a hillock, 45 mtr high. It is Shaiba pilgrimage and dates back to 7<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> centuries if not earlier. The hillock has colossal figures of the Hindu gods and goddesses cut out of rocks. It is a holy shrine reckoned as one of the most sacred pilgrimages to eastern India.<sup>17</sup>





The hilly tirtha, 8 KM from Kailashahar, stands frame against the grand panorama of picturesque hills in the background. The stone and rock-cut images on the hill slopes-of Lord Shiva , Rama , Hanuman, Ganapati and others-date back to the ancient Buddhist and Hindu periods of History; or as another scholar says, belong to 11<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rocky walls, the central Shiva head, and gigantic Ganesh figures, 30 ft high, deserve special mention. According to archaeological Report, cited in the District Gazetteer of India it is a Saiva pilgrimage at least from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier.<sup>15</sup> Unakoti means one less than a crore.<sup>16</sup> The images found at Unakoti are of two types namely rock carved figures and stone images. Among the rock cut carvings the central Shiva head known as 'Unakotiswara Kal Bhairava' is about 30 feet high including an embroidered head dress which itself is 10 feet high.



On each side of the head-dress of the central Shiva, there are two full size female figures – one of Durga standing on a lion and another female figure on the other side. In addition three enormous images of Nandi Bull are found half buried in the ground. There are various other stone as well as rock cut images at Unakoti. Every year a big fair popularly known as 'Ashokastami Mela' is held in the month of April which is visited by thousands of pilgrims.





Unakoti site has one more unique feature in its location itself. The site and the region are hilly, forested and interspersed with streams and waterfalls. The Manu River flowing through these hills has several historical stories in its precious basin. The region's indigenous natural flora and fauna provide a wonderful spiritual backdrop to the sacred sculptures. Unfortunately, this feature is also neglected and not much attention is given for its care and enhancement. Unakoti attracts a larger number of pilgrims twice a year at the time of Poush Sankranti Mela) and Ashokastami Mela (April).<sup>18</sup>

**7. Sipahijala Wildlife Sanctuary (WLF):**It is situated at a distance of 33 kms from Agartala and covers an area of 18.53 sq km. There are several reasons for the tourists to visit the place, such as: 150 species of resident birds, migratory birds, orchid garden, zoo, elephant joy rides and scenic beauty including rubber and coffee plantations. This WLS, NOW A National Park, is unique in the sense that the animals can be spotted in their natural habitat as well as in the Mini Zoo. The drive through the dense forest, a ride on the toy train , and pedal boating in the expansive lake add to its charms.<sup>19</sup>



It is really a green heaven in the earth away from the work of near shattering noise and speed.. Round the place a natural lake runs where half a dozen of paddle boats awaiting tourists step at the landing.



A dense forest all around gives pleasure to the eyes. It has been decorated with a deer park where deer move here and there. A mini zoological garden with pythons and peacocks is a great attraction to the tourists. The wooden bungalow with a beautiful view is a great attraction to the visitors for rest.<sup>20</sup>

### 8. Gumati Wildlife Sanctuary

This is the largest Sanctuary in Tripura located in the Dhalai district. This has been already included under the larger project along with Dumboor Lake. The Dumboor lake is a large and picturesque water body surrounded by the lush green hills. The large water spread at the back waters through the undulated land has given emergence to several small islands. In fact the entire edge of the lake is dotted with over 48 islands of different sizes. Once a part of the large landform covered with dense forest, these islands are not evolving into a different ecosystem of their own. The aquatic flora and fauna of the lake attracts a large number of migratory birds in winter in addition to the resident water birds. These Islands provide a roosting and nesting space for these birds. The lush green natural vegetation of surrounding region also attracts diverse fauna. The lake is rich with a variety of indigenous of the surrounding region also attracts diverse fauna. The lake is rich with variety of indigenous fish.

### 9. Handicraft / Agriculture Centre at Ambasa

Tripura's main economy is agriculture. Unfortunately, the forests have been degraded due to traditional practice of *jhoom* cultivation. However, the new thought has entered and new experiments are being introduced to the people. Tripura's pineapples have become world famous. Rubber plantations of Tripura have also achieved tremendous success in the country.



These plantations have become interesting demonstration and educational areas for local people. These demonstration areas can also become attractions for the farmers from the Northeast Region. This centre may organise various food and fruit festivals in different seasons. It will be of interest for general tourist if presented in an innovative package.

Tripura is also famous for its handicrafts made of Bamboo and Cane. This is a traditional art evolved from generation to generation. Some tribal artisans produce variety of objects from simple materials like clay, wood, palm leaf etc. Silk industry and handloom is also an age-old tradition, which is a dying art now in Tripura. The Tripura Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation Ltd. has taken up promotion and marketing of these handicrafts in



a big way. The handicrafts of Tripura have become popular all over India and they will be good ambassadors for Tripura Tourism.

A large Handicraft / Agriculture Village Centre should be developed an appropriate location on the National Highway near Ambasa. The tourists should be able to see the handicrafts being made by various artists. They can even place orders and purchase these items as souvenirs from Tripura. Similarly, they should be able to see agricultural / horticultural experiments of Tripura and purchase the products. This centre could be developed as a participatory experiment and local people should be directly involved in the activities and programmes. Women participation should be encouraged.

### **10. Defence Tourism**

The state of Tripura has a very long International border with Bangladesh. Due to this, there is significant presence of Army in this region. Some of the establishments are quite old like the one Agartala. These Cantonment areas have their own character and they evolve with unique identity. The major Cantonment Areas in the country have been declared as Heritage Sites due to their uniqueness the character and also the historical background that they carry. These Cantonment areas in Tripura need to be identified by the Tripura Tourism in collaboration with the Army. Some special program could be organised jointly in the Cantonments areas for the tourism could be a big attraction and would provide small opportunity to the armed forces to and contribution in the country's defence.



Defence is the subject of great passion of everyone and if Tripura Tourism could tap this existing potential quickly, it would advance considerably on the tourism map of the country.

### **11. Eco-Logical Park-Rawa Wild Life**

This small Sanctuary admeasuring about 1 Sq. Km. is situated in the North Tripura district along the National Highway. This sanctuary has some patches of large trees earlier protected by the local community. The low hilly terrain has developed into thick mixed vegetation after the protection. It shelters interesting bird life and is becoming popular as a bird sanctuary. This Sanctuary has unique location advantage being on the National Highway thus providing easy access. This region is in a better state as far as natural biodiversity is concerned. The population and urbanization pressures are also less. This Sanctuary should be developed as Eco Park. The basic theme will be to represent Tripura's indigenous flora and fauna along with innovative features' for the tourists. The park will also have educational component built into it in a form of Conservation Centre. This forest can be used by the educational institutions for nature education, natural trails botanical excursions etc. This can develop into an attractive tourist spot for local and domestic tourists.

## Trishna Sanctuary

Trishna WLS is another attractive spot for the wildlife enthusiasts. Besides the resident the migratory birds, bison is the main draw for the tourists here.<sup>21</sup>



Trisna Wild life Sanctuary is located about 100 Km. away from Agartala in Belonia Subdivision of South Tripura District. Bison is the main attraction in this sanctuary, in addition to the resident and migratory birds.

## IV

General Positive Factors for development of tourism in Tripura are the land of wonderful scenic natural beauty, Exciting topography of hill ranges, low valleys, flat river valley and water bodies . Moderate climate throughout the year, Unique geographical location within the transition zone of tropical and temperate eco systems, Closeness to the international boundary of Bangladesh, Ethnic and diverse culture with rich art forms and handicrafts, Grandeur of historic royal ambience and monuments, Historical sites with beautiful rock cut sculptures, Historical background of diverse religious co-existence, Clean and pollution free environment etc.

However there are some General negative factors for the development of tourism in Tripura such as - Subordinate status to tourism as a sub division of the Department of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism. No independent status, Degradation of forests / wildlife Jhum cultivation, and destruction of natural environment, Insurgency and limitations on free movement of people, poor connectivity to other Northeast states and mainland, poor infrastructure of road, rail and air, Loss of ethnic tribal culture due to outnumbering of tribals , Poor hygiene particularly at public places ,Indiscriminate animal sacrifice at major temples, No access to major historical royal palaces which have been converted into government offices, Health Hazard –mosquitoes, excessive smoking and chewing tobacco/*gutkha* etc. Land locked state with limited accessibility, limitation in availability of decent vegetarian food, General lethargy and lack of initiative amongst the people.

However, development of Pilgrimage Tourism should not be of much financial burden for Tripura Tourism since the publicity will be the major input. Basic tourist facilities and landscape improvement of the surrounding area need to be provided by the department. Hygiene and cleanliness, particularly at the time of festivals should be strictly ensured. As a part of publicity effort outside the state, Tripura Tourism should try to collaborate with



various Star Hotels in the major cities and organise Tripura Festivals in these hotels at different times. The festivals could include ethnic cultural programmes, handicraft exhibitions and special food. Such festivals could attract wide attention of tourists without much cost to the department. The department gets advantage of hotel infrastructure whereas hotel gets advantage of unique programme and special clientele. This could achieve excellent publicity for Tripura Tourism all over the country at a very minimum cost.

**Initiatives should also be taken for Cultural Tourism through integration at the International/ Interstate Tri-Junctions. In fact Tripura** has interesting advantage of its geographical location having large and peaceful international border with Bangladesh. And at three unique locations this provides opportunity for triangular cultural integration. These locations have potential to be developed into Large Cultural Centers, spread over these three diverse regions. The locations identified are as under: Junction of Bangladesh, Mizoram and Tripura: This is on the eastern side of Tripura at the southern tip of the North Tripura district. The exact location has to be identified which will be within the southern Jampui Hill range. The nearest village in Mizoram is Tuipuibari. Tripura Tourism should take initiative develop this Cultural Centre jointly with Mizoram State and Bangladesh.

The State of Tripura has its main economy dependent on agriculture and except for a few district HQs which are like small towns, the entire state has a rural character. However, the ethnic tribal population has been outnumbered due to migration from Bangladesh and the ethnic traditions are very rarely seen even in the villages. Under these circumstances, the concept of Rural Tourism plays a very major role. There are a few villages, which still maintain their ethnic traditions including the rural architecture. This rural lifestyle expresses the way people have been living sustainably using natural resources around them judiciously. Their traditional wisdom is reflected in many of their old practices like use of herbal medicines, understanding of natural elements to predict the climatic conditions, agricultural rituals and festivals etc. It is a social evolutionary process in which slowly these traditions will be transformed into modern lifestyle. Exactly for this very reason, it is important to conserve a few traditional villages. This life style is a subject of interest for many visitors and also sociologists. Their folk arts and handicrafts have a great artistic value and they need to be encouraged. The development of Tourism around these traditional villages is one way to give them respect that they deserve.

In Tripura, there are a few villages under the Tribal Autonomous district Councils, which present this character. Tripura Tourism should identify a few villages having ethnic identity and develop Rural Tourism around them. Tourist infrastructure should be created appropriate to the style of these villages and their ethnic identity through language, art forms, textiles, festivals, architecture etc. should be maintained.

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## END NOTES

1. *Government of India, Ministry of Tourism & Culture Dept. of Tourism market research Division 20 years perspective plan for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in the State of Tripura, January 2003, Pp30-35*
2. *Ibid, p. 35*
3. *Ibid, Pp36-38*

4. *Tribal names of the deities are Lampra, Akhatra, Bikhatra, Burasa, Thumnairok, Bonirok, Sangroma, Mwtaikotor, Twima, Songram, Noksumwtai, Bonirok, Sabgroma, , Noksumwtai, Mailuma, Khuluma and Swkalmwtai.*
5. Swapnali Borah, Deke Tourangbam, A.C. Meitei, *Encyclopaedic Studies of North-Eastern States of India , Tripura* , New Academic Publishers, New Delhi. 2010, Pp240
6. Ibid, Pp. 239-240
7. Government of India, *Ministry of Tourism & Culture Dept. of Tourism* , *Op.cit.*, P. 864
8. Ibid, p. 94
9. Ibid, p. 864
10. Ibid, p. 95
11. Ved Prakash Col, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India, Vol. V*, New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers, 2007, Pp. 2279- 2280
12. *Government of India, Ministry of Tourism & Culture Dept. of Tourism* , *Op.cit.*, P. 864
13. Ibid, P. 90
14. Swapnil Borah, *Op. Cit.* Pp.239-240
15. Ved Prakash Col, *Op. Cit.*, P.2280
16. *As per Hindu mythology, when Lord Shiva was going to Kashi along with one crore gods and goddesses he made a night halt at this location. He asked all the gods and goddesses to wake up before sun rise and proceed for kashi. It is said that in the morning, except Shiva himself, no one else could get up , so set up for kasha himself cursing the others to become stone images. As a result we have one less than a crore stone images and carvings at Unakoti. Theses carvings are located at the beautifully landscaped forest area with green vegetation all around which add to the beauty of the carvings.*
17. Swapnali Borah, *Op. cit.*, p 245
18. Government of India, *Ministry of Tourism*, *Op.cit.* P. 94
19. Ved Prakash Col, *Op. cit.*, P. 2277
20. Swapnali Borah, *Op.cit.* P. 245
21. Ibid., P. 247