

Propelling Buddhist Tourism through Diamond Triangle in Odisha - A Developmental Perspective Analysis

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Abstract : Buddhism, as a religion, includes a variety of traditions and beliefs based on the philosophy and doctrines of Siddhartha Gautama, the Lord Buddha. Buddhism has spread extensively throughout India since a long time. Buddhism acts as a significant component in the religious history of Odisha. Buddhism had influenced the social and cultural life of Odisha since the Ashokan era. Odisha tourism has attracted tourists globally for its rich cultural heritage. The main purpose of the paper is to focus on the emerging role of Odisha tourism for promoting Buddhism in the global context. The research aims to investigate the link between ancient Odisha and Buddhist culture. The study further highlights the growth and development of the Buddhist tourist circuit of Odisha. The scope of the study is limited to the diamond-triangle of Odisha only. Based on the data collected through secondary sources, this paper makes an assessment of the extent of awareness and responsiveness of Odisha tourism sector for promoting Buddhism. In the concluding section, limitations of the study have been discussed and recommendations provided for undertaking more detailed investigations in the area.

Keywords: Buddhism, Diamond Triangle, Heritage, Spirituality

Introduction

These immortal statements of 'Triple Jewel' have miraculous power to enlighten and rejuvenate the mind, body and soul of an individual and carry one to the exotic world of relaxation, refreshment and enlightenment. Buddhism has marked its long journey of spiritual grandeur and humanistic services through cultural vibrancy across the globe. According to some religions, sin is the root cause of all the sufferings in life whereas, in Buddhism, the origin of suffering is ignorance. In general, Buddhism is a global religion which helps to develop serenity, happiness, self actualization and kindheartedness in the society. The ultimate aim of Buddhism is to help human beings to find peace and bring an end to the sufferings of individuals, and achieve nirvana through their doctrines, teaching and practices. As a religion, Buddhism has been adopted by 350 million people across the world, i.e. 7% of world's population and it is the fourth largest religion in terms of adherence. It has originated since 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gautama, acknowledged as

the Lord Buddha, was himself awakened and enlightened when he was 35 years old. Therefore, in the religious history of humanity, Buddhism constitutes one of the eminent chapters. In India, Buddhism emerged in the ancient Kingdom of Magadha, now Bihar, and reached all over the country through widespread awareness. Odisha is one state that has an establishment, equally competent with other places of the country having Buddhist significance. In the state of Odisha, Buddhism has flourished since the Ashokan era. The association between Buddhism and Odisha is very ancient as the religion influenced the social and cultural life of Odisha since the ancient times. Odisha always offers a huge range of tourism splendor to global travelers for all time. Odisha has been considered as tourist's paradise for its natural diversity, architectural marvel, spirituality, historical legacy and cultural ethnicity. Odisha tourism sector further plays a pivotal role to promote Buddhism through different Buddhist establishments and influx of foreign tourists. The spectacular diversity of Buddhist circuits of

Odisha encompasses the vibrancy of Kalingan architecture. Amongst all the places in Odisha of Buddhist relevance, Buddhist sites like Ratnagiri, Udaygiri and Lalitgiri, deemed as triratna, forms the 'Diamond Triangle.' Moreover these three vertices of the diamond triangle are now the high prioritized area of the Department of Tourism in Odisha. However, there is a need for appropriate marketing strategies to propagate Buddhism in the global context as one of the USP of Odisha tourism. There is an incredible growth rate in tourism as has been seen in the tourist inflow to Odisha since last few years. In 2017-18, the total number of tourists visiting the state increased to 1.43,64,541 with a positive growth rate of 8.90 per cent on an average per year. However, considering Odisha's natural bounty, this is not a great achievement at all. But gradually, the tourism sector has diversified to latest segments like Eco-tourism, Medical Tourism, Rural Tourism, Beach Tourism, Tribal Tourism, Buddhist Tourism and Spiritual Tourism, etc.

Objectives of Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- To focus on the emerging trend of Buddhist tourism in Odisha with special reference to the Diamond Triangle of the state
- To highlight the extent of awareness to propel Buddhist Tourism of Odisha in the global context
- To analyze various issues and challenges for the growth and development of Buddhist Tourism in Odisha

Research Methodology

This is a conceptual study that intends to make an assessment of the extent of awareness, innovativeness and responsiveness of Odisha tourism sector to propel Buddhist heritage of the state in the global context. The study is based on secondary data analysis. The data have been collected from the latest government reports, published statistics, journals, earlier research and websites.

Historical Legacy of Buddhism and Odisha

Though Buddhism has its own significance in

Nepal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Odisha has contributed in equal measure to make Buddhism a global religion. It was after the Battle of Kalinga in 261 B.C that Odisha became a major centre of Hindu and Buddhist culture. Astoundingly, the famous Battle of Kalinga brought a tremendous transformation in the great warrior and Mauryan emperor Ashoka. Eventually, from Chandashoka (Ashoka the Devil) he became Dharmashoka (Ashoka the Sage). He relinquished violence and played a pivotal role to the spread of Buddhism all over the world. After the Battle of Kalinga, Ashoka initiated a novel religious movement called the 'Dharma Vijaya' for the propagation of the Buddhist culture. He practically applied the principles of Buddhism in his kingdom and also introduced the principles of Buddhism in the neighboring countries through his offspring. During the period of the Ashokan dynasty, the Buddhist community segmented into two schools of thought, i.e. the Mahasa?ghika (the Great Congregation) and the Sthaviravada (the School of the Elders). These two branches further extended to different sub-sects across India. In modern times, there are two significant branches of Buddhism: the Theravada (the Teachings of the Elders) in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and the Mahayana (the great Vehicle) throughout the Himalayas and Asia. One more branch, i.e. Vajrayana (the Diamond or Thunderbolt Vehicle) originated in India and spread out in different parts of the world, chiefly in Tibet. Ashoka laid emphasis on the construction of monuments, shrines and rock carvings to promote the doctrines and values of Lord Buddha. Therefore, it was only due to Emperor Ashoka that the Buddhist culture flourished in India and also the maritime trade route of ancient Odisha played a monumental role to promote Buddhist culture worldwide. In 1972, as a tribute to the Battle of Kalinga, the legendary peace pagoda of Dhauili was constructed in collaboration with the Buddhist communities of Odisha and Japan. Many rock edicts of the Ashokan period were excavated from around Dhauiligiri.

Researchers and archeologists also explored the significance of Buddhist inheritance in different epochs of Mauryan, Sailodbhava, Bhaumakara

Somavamsi, Ganga and Gajapati, etc. in Odisha (Tripathy, 2011). However, according to some research, the connectivity between Kalinga and Buddhism started much before the Battle of Kalinga. As per Buddhist script 'Anguttara Nikaya,' Tapusa and Bhallika, two merchants were the earliest disciples of Lord Buddha from ancient Odisha. Afterwards, Lord Buddha blessed them with his strands of hair, which they later deposited in a monument in their native Utkal known as 'Kesa Stupa'. It is situated at Tarapur in Jajpur district of Odisha presumed to be the earliest Buddhist monument. After 200 years of the demise of Lord Buddha, the Battle of Kalinga became a turning point in the history of Odisha. The golden rule of Dharma (spirituality), Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth) became the tenets of Buddha. Subsequently, until the 12th century A.D., Buddhism predominantly became the religion of Odisha. Later on towards the 8th century A.D., Tantric Buddhism emerged which influenced the spiritual life of people all over the country, including Odisha. According to Tibetan literature, Odisha is considered to be the land of mysterious Tantric Buddhism practices in the form of Vajrayana, Kalachakrayana and Sahajayana. At the same time, Subhakar Simha, a person of royal origin from Odisha embraced Buddhism and travelled across China to propagate Tantric Buddhism. Followed by a Buddhist monk 'Prajna', the first cultural ambassador of Bhauma King of Odisha also presented his inscription "Gandavyuha" to the Chinese emperor. This tradition established an everlasting relationship between Kalinga and China. This encouraged eminent Chinese travelers Xuanzang and Fa-hien to explore and exchange the cultural legacy of India and Odisha as well. In 639 A.D., Xuanzang (Huien Tsang), a Buddhist monk, scholar and translator visited Odisha and discovered numerous Buddhist heritage. In his travelogue, 'Sie-yu-kie', he described Odisha as 'Wu-cha', considered as a Buddhist centre of learning. In Odisha, monasteries of Ratnagiri-Lalitgiri-Udayagiri circuit offer authentic masterpieces of Buddhist statuette that influenced contemporary

schools of Buddhist Art in South East Asia. The Buddhist Jataka tales also speak about the Kingdom of Kalinga and its capital Dantapura. Lord Buddha's most acclaimed relics were shifted to Sri Lanka from Dantapura at a later stage. Subsequently, ancient Odisha treasured its prosperous maritime socio-cultural influence with countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines. This illustrates the connectivity between Buddhism and Odisha. Though Lord Jagannath of Puri has universal identity, Buddhism has occupied a special status in His cult (Sahu,). Furthermore, after the plaster work was removed from the Jagannath Temple of Puri, it was found that Lord Buddha was regarded as the ninth incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Rath, 2005). Thus, Lord Jagannath has been declared as the manifestation of Lord Buddha (Patel 2003, Makbul 2011).

Emerging Trend in Buddhist Tourism in Odisha

The sublime beauty and cultural ethnicity of Odisha tourism attracts visitors from India as well as from overseas. The Archeological Department has discovered a considerable number of Buddhist destinations in different parts of Odisha. With abundant architectural glory of Buddhist significance, these places are one of the major tourist attractions of the state.

Some of the famous excavated Buddhist tourist sites are discussed below:

- **Dhauigiri:** The peace pagoda of Dhauigiri is a significant component of Golden Triangle, i.e. Puri-Bhubaneswar-Konark circuit in Odisha.
- **Tarapur:** Tarapur is located in the eastern part of Odisha. It consists of three monuments.
- **Langudi:** This is situated in Jajpur district of Odisha. With 36 rock-cut Buddhist monuments and several early medieval Buddhist shrines, it is a reservoir of all the major sects of Buddhism.
- **Naraj:** It was one of the important centres of Buddhist culture and learning in the ancient era.
- **Deuli:** The twin hills of Deuli have the biggest range of rock cut caves, edicts and pottery. The recent excavations spotted monuments

and pillars of the Ashokan period.

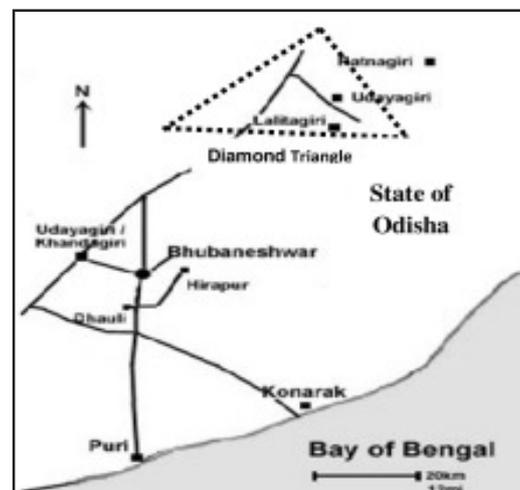
- **Jaugada :** Jaugada is an ancient historical fort of Odisha. It is the second place of Odisha that has Ashokan rock edicts with inscriptions addressed to Kalinga. The nearby Buddhakhol is also well-known for the images of the Buddhist pantheon.
- **Kayama:** This place has an elephant shaped rock recognized as the Kayama elephant.
- **Radhangar Fort:** The fort located in the ancient city of Radhanagar attracts tourists who visit the Buddhist Circuit. The city of Radhangar was the capital city of 'Toshali' during the reign of Ashoka.
- **Padmapur:** It is located in the tribal hills of Rayagada district. It has many Buddhist monasteries, shrines as well as inscriptions of three famous Buddhist philosophers, viz. Chandralekha, Bhaddhakhan and Dharmakirti.
- **Kupari:** Several Buddhist sculptures and monasteries have been discovered in and around Balasore district. They are mostly found in and around Kupari, Solampur, Khadipada and Soro.
- **Banpur :** A large number of bronze statues of Vajrayana sect Buddhism have been unearthed in Banpur in Khordha district.
- **Kuruma:** This ancient Buddhist destination is presumed to be mentioned by Xuanxang. Excavations found a statute of Lord Buddha along with the image of Heruka, Padmapani Avalokitesvara and Revanta considered as 'Yamadharma' by local residents.
- **Parimalagiri:** As described in the travelogue of Xuanxang, a monastery called 'Parimalagiri' is found in the Gandhamardan hills of Sambalpur District.
- **Biswanath Hill:** This hill housed the ancient monastery of the Buddhist logician and philosopher Dignag.
- **Chandragiri:** A place near Jirang in the Gajapati District of Odisha is considered to be a 'Little Tibet of Odisha'. Flourishing with Tibetan-Buddhism cult, this place acts as a link between Odisha's history and Buddhism. In the outskirts of Chandragiri, South Asia's

biggest monastery 'Rigon Thupton Mindoling' also known as Padmasambhava Mahavihar was inaugurated by Dalia Lama in 2010. A huge 21-foot golden statue is the centre of attraction of this tourist complex.

Propelling Buddhist Tourism through the Diamond Triangle in Odisha

In Odisha, the Diamond Triangle is the most emerging Buddhist heritage of the state to endorse Buddhism. Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitagiri are the three vertices of the triangle as shown in Fig-1, located in and around Jajpur district with close proximity to the twin city of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Figure-1 Diamond Triangle of Odisha



Source: <http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/india/ratna/udr02.html>

It has been determined by archeologists that these three locations have Buddhist origin since the 1st century A.D. placing them among the earliest Buddhist sites in the world (Sadual, 2012). The excavations that took place at this place brought into limelight the numerous sculptures whose origin dates back to the 6th century B.C. It is named as the Diamond Triangle because of its association with the Buddhism sect Vajyarajyan or the Diamond Vehicle. As mentioned by Xuanzang these places are the ruins of a university complex called Pushpagiri Mahavihar similar to Nalanda and Vikramshila University. Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri with Udayagiri constituted Puspagiri

University, a domicile to many spectacular sculptures having Buddhist significance. Therefore, many tourists make a visit to this famous Buddhist pilgrimage of Odisha every year. The details are discussed as under.

• **Ratnagiri**

Ratnagiri, the hill of gems, is one of the Buddhist occult centres famous for the rock edicts, monasteries and shrines. In 1984, excavations at this site discovered an incredible treasure of our ancient past. It was also found to be an ancient centre of learning. Ratnagiri Mahavihara was a centre of the Tantric form of Buddhism as per Tibetan literature. Here, the entire courtyard is bejeweled with antique objects from which 220-250 are displayed in the gallery of the Museum of Ratnagiri. It includes several Buddha heads of different size, numerous sculptures, images, terracota and stone tablets, coins and moreover a giant Buddha head resembling Indonesian and Sri Lankan art. In the premises of the sanctum a 12 ft high effigy of Lord Buddha is placed in the meditation posture along with tiny statues of Padmapani and Vajrapani. The unique part of Ratnagiri is the two stone guards at the main entrance. Thus, Ratnagiri in real sense is a treasure-trove enriched with many unique artifacts rarely found in any other place of the country.

• **Lalitgiri:**

Lalitgiri, the red hill, came in to picture in 1905 by a Sub Divisional Officer from Jajpur named M.M.Chakravarty. Subsequently in 1927-28, under the supervision of an archeologist R.P.Chanda from Indian Museum, Kolkatta, Lalitgiri was referred to in the Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India. And, in 1937, it was declared as a 'centrally protected' shrine. Then, in 1977, it was first excavated by Utkal University and later on by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1985-1991. Lalitgiri is considered to be the holiest of the three sites of Diamond Triangle, as the excavation yielded a casket containing a sacred bone relic, probably of Buddha himself. Furthermore, after Vaishali in Bihar, Lalitgiri is the only place which can boast

of a Buddha relic in the eastern zone. The core magnetism of Lalitgiri is the U-shaped shrines or Chaityagriha which holds the tooth relic. The inner sanctums are vacant and have a stunning lotus shaped staircase. A number of stone and terracotta slabs are also found with inscriptions in Kushana-Bramhi language. Lalitgiri also has a notable museum consisting of a rich set of Buddhist statues in different forms along with other deities. In addition a gigantic Buddha statue can also be found in one of monasteries which identifies the connectivity with Mahayana and Hinayana schools of Buddhism in Odisha. Therefore, this is the only place where we can witness the cultural chronology of Buddhism.

• **Udaygiri:**

Udaygiri, the hill of the rising sun, is the largest and most picturesque of the three vertices of Diamond Triangle situated on the slope of a hemispherical hill. This archeological wonder is classified into two segments, i.e. Udaygiri I and Udaygiri II. Udaygiri II, was discovered during the large excavation done from 1997 to 2000. Belonging to the Mahayana-Vajrayana cult of Buddhism, Udaygiri is a paramount treasure that lies on the top of a hill. A huge statue of Lord Buddha in extraterrestrial posture is also found under a roofless chamber adjacent to a huge sanctum surrounded with small monuments. There is also a stone pathway running towards some more votive monuments in Udaygiri. In the complex there is also a path filled with greenery that leads to an open space having figurines and sacred artifacts. Furthermore, the most amazing facet of Udaygiri is the presence of an astounding stone gate near a stone well. However, this is the least excavated site compared to the other two counterparts. In 1960, the excavation was started and still it is continuing.

Tourist Footfall to Buddhist Sites of the State

The growth rate of both domestic and foreign tourist arrival has increased at a considerable pace since the past few years. The Asian Athletic Meet and the World Hockey League held in November,

2017 had encouraged huge number of foreign tourists to Odisha which simultaneously also helped to give a boost to the tourism economy. According to the survey report of Odisha tourism, in 2017-18, out of 10.8 million foreign tourists that came to India, a total of 1,02,995 foreign tourists visited Odisha with a growth rate of 32 per cent. As reported by Odisha tourism department, out of 129.19 lakh of tourists, 76,361 foreign tourists visited Odisha in 2016-17, and most of them were from Buddhist dominant countries like Sri Lanka,

Japan, and South Asia.

Table-1 shows the scenario of the international visitors from selected Asian countries having large Buddhist population from 2011 to 2016. Odisha Statistical Survey Report 2016 revealed that the majority of the foreign travelers were from countries like Nepal and Japan, the countries with highest Buddhist population.

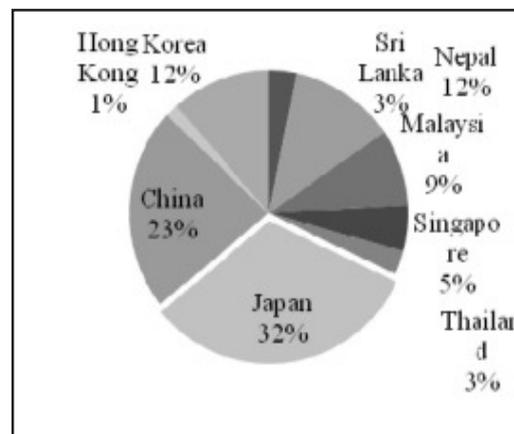
Source: Adapted from Odisha Statistical Survey, 2016

The Buddhist population is very less (only 2%) in India. However, other Asian countries like China, Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma

Country		No. of Tourists During the Year					
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
South Asian	Sri Lanka	256	231	250	488	611	514
	Nepal	473	326	631	904	1560	1978
South-East Asia	Malaysia	440	761	1096	922	1787	1421
	Singapore	242	470	441	515	644	853
	Thailand	453	482	388	416	387	441
East Asia	Japan	3670	3930	4852	4220	3641	5201
	China	3419	2343	3419	3789	3655	3756
	Hong Kong	62	70	72	77	68	231
	Korea	1384	1601	1438	1212	1591	1864

(Myanmar), Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Laos and Mongolia have substantial Buddhist population.

Fig-2 presents the growth trend of foreign tourists' footfall in Odisha specifically from the South Asian, East Asian and Southeast Asian countries from 2011 to 2016. Similarly, the percentage of Japanese and Chinese visitors increased to 32% and 23% respectively by the end of 2016. Moreover, it is also found that the highest percentage of visitors to the state in 2017 was from Asian countries likes Japan and China where Buddhism is widely accepted and followed by a majority of the population. Figure-2 Percentage of Visitors from Asian Countries in 2016



Source: Adapted from Odisha Statistical Survey, 2016

Though there are around 300 Buddhist sites and 405 Buddhist remains identified in

different parts of Odisha, the diamond triangle received the maximum tourist inflow in 2013. However, the percentage of foreign tourist footfall was not satisfactory. While Lalitgiri received 25,054 domestic tourists, the number of foreign tourists was only 305. Likewise, 35,644 domestic travellers visited Ratnagiri and Udaygiri while only 381 were foreign visitors. Similarly, the twin heritage hills of Khandagiri and Udaygiri received 5,42,990 tourists out of which only 2,991 were from abroad. The White Pagoda of Dhauli had also received an equal number of foreign tourists as above.

Issues and Challenges

There are many arguments and debates among researchers regarding the birth place of Lord Buddha. According to many historians, Lord Buddha was born in Nepal whereas according to other researchers he was born in India. On the other hand, several researchers in history and culture argue that the real birth place of Gautam Buddha was in Kapileswar, Odisha from where stone inscriptions and artefacts related to Buddhist culture have been discovered. Furthermore, a stone pillar unearthed claimed the birthplace of Buddha in Odisha. Until now, more than 300 Buddhist sites, scattered all across Odisha, were discovered through archaeological excavations. They confirm the prominence of Buddhism in Odisha. There are many ruins and relics discovered with the help of the travelogue of Xuanzang. But archaeologists are still unable to trace many places. The largest concentration of Buddhist excavations are on Ratnagiri-Udayagiri-Lalitgiri or the 'Diamond Triangle' which is the most important Buddhist site in Odisha. Unfortunately, it is least promoted by the government. Even though a large number of tourists from Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Nepal visit Bodh Gaya in Bihar where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, their footfall in Odisha is abysmal. According to a few historians and Buddhist connoisseurs, Buddhist potential of Odisha does not figure on national and international tourism maps. Lalitgiri, for example, is a unique place where rare Buddhist relics were discovered during excavations in the past, but few

people are aware of it. While these sites have no suitable accommodation facility, safety and security of tourists is also a major concern. Buddhist tourism in Odisha is yet to catch the fancy of international visitors despite its huge potential. Though Odisha has a lot to offer as far as Buddhist heritage is concerned, the number of international tourists to the sites has not been encouraging over the years. Both domestic and international tourists are still ignorant about the existence of the Diamond Triangle due to lack of effective promotional campaigning and publicity. Various factors like the nonexistence of regular international air connectivity, lack of proper transportation to remote areas, inadequate number of luxury and star hotels, and poor infrastructure at tourism sites are responsible for meager tourist inflow to Odisha. As the whole world is connecting with each other through social media and internet, Odisha Tourism also needs to encash upon this prospect. So far, Buddhist sites in Odisha have been in the shadow of the popular golden triangle of Puri-Bhubaneswar-Konark. Though Odisha has around 300 Buddhist sites and 405 remains scattered in different parts of the state, there are many spots yet to be discovered.

Similarly, despite the fact that some direct flights to Malaysia from Bhubaneswar have been initiated since 2017, introduction of frequent international air connectivity between Odisha and South Asia as well as South-East Asian countries is also highly essential to increase the inflow of foreign tourists. Moreover, the rising number of international flight services will increase the footfall of global travellers in Odisha.

Discussion

Buddhist tourism is one among the star attractions of Odisha that results in foreign tourist inflow to the state. For the development of existing tourist circuits, the Government of Odisha and the Department of Tourism initiate different programmes and upcoming projects included in five years planning. The Ministry of Tourism has strategized a master plan of Rs.100 crore to develop a mega temple-cum-meditation centre, a peace park and ropeway at Dhauli to catch the attention of national and international tourists. For

strengthening the tourism link between Odisha and Southeast Asian countries, the Government of Odisha has started air connectivity to Thailand since 2017. Since the last four years the tourism department of Odisha in collaboration with Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies and the Archaeological Survey of India has been regularly organizing Kalinga International Buddhist Conclave to publicize the Buddhist tourism potential of the state in the global forum. The primary focus of the conclave is the development of the Diamond Triangle along with other tourist hot spots. During 2013, Tourism department also conducted two road shows in South East Asian countries to highlight the Buddhist heritage of Odisha. Every year the state also organizes Dhauli-Kalinga festival at the foot hills of Dhauli to aggressively promote culture and tourism of the state. Accordingly, Indian Railways have initiated a special Buddhist Tourist train, Mahaparinirvan Express, which includes Odisha in its route. Presently, to boost Buddhist tourism in the country, the central government launched a project of Rs.450 lakh investing in the Buddhist Circuit in collaboration with the World Bank. The main focus of the scheme is to develop and promote all places connected with Lord Buddha and Buddhist heritage throughout the country. Hence, the Government of Odisha pitched for the inclusion of Odisha in the proposed Buddhist circuit. Recently, in the auspicious eve of the centenary of Lord Buddha, a new Buddhist site was inaugurated in Badamba by the Government of Odisha. In the Union Budget 2014-15, the Buddhist circuit of Odisha has been included in the annual theme based tourism project of the state. Accordingly, the City of Bhubaneswar has also been included in the scheme for the preservation and development of heritage sites of Odisha known as Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY). Furthermore, the Department of Tourism has proposed a project of Rs.100 crore for the development of the Buddhist circuit of Odisha under "Swadesh Darshan" scheme of the Government of India. To woo Buddhist tourists, resorts and hotels can also play a pivotal role through their service augmentation. To provide accommodation facility

to the travellers, the Toshali Group of Hotels and Resorts has established three different resorts at the Diamond Triangle. However, infrastructure facilities need to be created by the Odisha Government and Department of Tourism for providing more accommodation.

Conclusion, Findings and Suggestions

Undoubtedly, at the time of the Ashokan dynasty, Buddhism was widely endorsed and further considered as a global religion. However, with the end of the Ashokan dynasty, Buddhism in Odisha gradually declined due to the emergence of Jainism as well as dominance of Hinduism. Furthermore, Ashoka's successors only focused on socio-political development and expansion of their kingdom. Simultaneously, Pushpagiri also lost its glory and was ultimately deserted and obscured in the darkness of time. Fortunately, this place was rediscovered once again and Odisha got back a missing episode of its glorious past. In the present scenario, although Buddhism has a minor populace, yet there are many people in Odisha who still follow the religion in Badamba-Narsimhapur, Nuapatna and Tigiria. Buddhist tourist potential of Odisha has always influenced several countries where many of the people still believe Kalinga as their ancestral land. The remains of artefacts of architectural significance found in Odisha are at par with Nalanda and Bodhgaya. Therefore, there is a plethora of opportunities for the prosperity of Buddhist tourism in Odisha.

The Diamond Triangle is also known as the Buddhist Triangle and it has enormous potential to bring in heritage enthusiasts from different parts of the globe. However, due to lack of effective promotional campaigning, the Diamond Triangle, is yet to be positioned as a highly prioritized segment of Odisha tourism. Similarly, there is an essential need of effective marketing strategy to explore the unexplored potential of state tourism, especially the Buddhist circuit of Diamond Triangle. Branding of Buddhist sites from spiritual point of view should be the major goal of Odisha tourism department. The Diamond Triangle requires adequate publicity to attract more people. Protection and conservation of monuments are

urgently required to preserve the architectural glory of the state. There is also a huge requirement of infrastructure development, road connectivity, cleaner environment and toilet facilities. Awareness programmes and promotional campaigns through state government and PPP mode are also extremely important to promote this Buddhist facet of tourism. Thus, travellers while visiting the land of ancient Odisha famous for its cultural ethnicity can also pay homage to the place that rendered all its resources and efforts to promote Buddhist treasures across the globe. As a result, Odisha can successfully explore its immense potential to turn the state into a Buddhist tourism hub like Bodhgaya in Bihar and Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh.

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