

PREFACE

‘To know one’s Country, One must leave it’

Spatial analysis of recreation and tourism is a new phenomenon in the field of geography. The urge to explore new lands, curiosity to know the unknown and seek a change of environment and experiences have become today a subject-matter of geographical study. It is essential both for theoretical and policy implications. For this reason, geographers are now turning their attention to it. The present work is a humble effort in the same direction.

From my childhood I see a unique geographic personality of North Bengal. The diversity of landscapes and its aesthetic beauty, bracing climate, exotic flora and fauna, historic antiquities, water bodies and varied people and their folk cultures-all lured me. However, the realization of importance of tourism activity at the regional level and its relevance for the upliftment of socio-economic scenario in North Bengal, has stimulated me to carry out this research work. In fact tourism has greater relevance to society in this study area which holds greater potentialities and promise for the promotion of tourism. This economically backward region can be developed through the promotion of tourism and development of infrastructures. Tourism can generate employment opportunities, promote regional growth, encourage small scale industries (souvenirs, memento), help cultural exchange and friendship etc. Tourism being a lucrative economic activity based on the locally available natural raw materials, can do a lot of good to the society of North Bengal. Again the study area being unique in regional and cultural identities has failed to attract the attention of research community, particularly the geographers. There are much to search research, explore and to investigate in the study area since tourism in the region is a blooming industry. Considering these background I have decided to present a tourism profile of North Bengal.

The basic theme of the present work has been carried out under two broad units. Unit 'A' explores some concepts of tourism phenomenon within study area and its geographic personality. This part also engages with present scenario of tourism activity of the region. The Unit 'B' reflects some of the impacts and problems of tourism in the area. At the end of this part a picture of planning strategies and potential tourism nuclei has been drawn.

There are some limitations of the present study. Owing to inaccessibility in some tourist spots it was not possible to make more intensive survey of such a vast area. Most of the information of this work are mostly collected through field study and survey conducted by myself. Lack of proper literatures on tourism of the study area has also hindered me at times to carry out this work. So to establish tourism as an appropriate geographic study the present work has been dependent on the information collected from primary sources which followed a systematic methodology. Some efforts have been made to go through published literatures on tourism as geographic phenomenon. With all these limitations, the present work is a little effort to represent the present and future tourism scenario of North Bengal. The study makes a strong plea for an economically viable, socially responsible and environmentally sound tourism industry, benefiting the host and guest communities.

For preparing the present work '**Growth and prospects of Tourism in North Bengal**'. I have been greatly inspired and guided by Prof. Pranab kumar Chakraborty, Department of Geography and Applied Geography, North Bengal University. It is my proud privilege to express deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Chakraborty. As a guide he not only took scrupulous pains in rendering advice on concepts, contents and methodology of the entire work but also gave me continuous encouragement.

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Tourism development in mountain regions depends on many factors: attractiveness of the destination, safety, professionalism of local businesses and hospitality structures, availability of capital, etc. Often there is insufficient capital to create the infrastructure needed for reaching sites or accommodating visitors. For all the positive reasons, tourism development in mountain regions should certainly be encouraged, particularly in peripheral regions of the countries of the Global South. However, because this endeavour concerns natural environments and local societies that are often vulnerable and less resilient than elsewhere, it is all the more essential that tourism is introduced in ways that contribute to the sustainable development of the regions and the societies concerned. Tourism geography is the study of travel and tourism, as an industry and as a social and cultural activity. Tourism geography covers a wide range of interests including the environmental impact of tourism, the geographies of tourism and leisure economies, answering tourism industry and management concerns and the sociology of tourism and locations of tourism. Tourism geography is that branch of human geography that deals with the study of travel and its impact on places.