



RESEARCH ARTICLE

RELIGION, TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper endeavors to explain the association between religion, tourism and development by presenting fourteen case studies of religious sites in India and around the world which showed the facts of increasing number of tourists in all religious places and the religious authorities, local government, state government and the national tourism ministry have done enough investment expenditure on religious place centric development which are sustainable in context of community development, preservation of socio cultural heritage, increasing communications, infrastructure, business and employment including regional development. Growth led religious tourism spread the religious education, spiritual upliftment, international cooperation and national integrity and increased government revenues.

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Introduction:-

It can be hypothesized that as religious tourism increases economic development gets faster while if development enhanced religious tourism will expand but not always. If religious activities through several institutions or organizations rise, tourism increase but it is not always happened because religious activities depend on the nature of religion in the society. But if tourism increases religious activities may not rise but it may happen on some determinants like objectives of tourism. Thus, religion, tourism and development are not causally associated. On the other hand, tourism, religion and development are not causally related and mutually exclusive. If religion and tourism is causally related then development is cointegrated with the causal relation. In general, in poor economies, religious development is high which depends on social religious status while more tourism in poor economies may not true or less tourism is not always true. On the contrary, developed economies led to higher religious development which depend on status of religion although there are many exceptions because there is question about which is dominant, religious tourism or non-religious tourism.

Religious tourism has superficial effect on community development in various dimensions of infrastructure development and investment opportunities (Nargotra, 2026). Religious tourism enhances economic growth through some indicators (Srivastava et al., 2024). In Nigeria, tourism and religion is mutually exclusive since religious sites such as Osun Osogbo, Ogun, Sango festival, Inde Oba festival, Udju festival, Iriji festival have contributed largely to the development of the country. Billions of tourists came here annually and enough government revenue from it have been expensed for development (ResearchClue.com, n.d.). As per ministry of Tourism, religious tourism in India increased to 1439 million US\$ in 2022 from 677 million US\$ in 2021. Government revenue rose to 16.2 billion US\$ in 2022 from 7.9 billion US\$ in 2021. It is expected that it will increase upto 59 billion US\$ by 2028 (IBEF, n.d.). In

this paper, how much the religious tourism affects the economic development under what circumstances will be discussed through fourteen case studies.

Literature Review:-

There are enough research findings on religious tourism and its implications, even the impacts of religious tourism on economic development and investment opportunities have been examined in many economic literatures. Some of the important researches are included here. Religious tourism offers a new knowledge map of religion and tourism, helped future research on the need for holistic conceptualization on the politicization of religion and the rise of identity politics through tourism (Noga Collins-Kreiner, 2020). Religious tourism has spiritual significance, offers unique blend of worship, cultural exploration, and employment generation and it is a catalyst for national development, cultural preservation, and foster peace and harmony (Kuntay, 2024). Religious tourism can improve community security, cultural resources, develop industries, stabilize price level, improve environment towards achievement of sustainable development (Linnet al., 2021).

Religious and spiritual tourism promotes sustainable development and impacted on environment creating socio-economic and ecological balance (Gambhir et al., 2021). Religious tourism has a significant positive correlation with various dimensions of local development such as local employment opportunities, local economies, the social and cultural well-being of host communities. Also, religious tourism improves in essential public infrastructure, and enhance the overall standard of living (Srivastava et al., 2024). Religious tourism in India has influenced to increase local livelihood income, development of infrastructure, and preservation of cultural heritage so that government policy should support to promote tourism especially in religious places of interest (Rakshit & Koley, 2024). Religious tourism has positive significant impact on local development which is sustainable in nature (Konstantinos & Maria, n.d.). Sustainable regional development has three principal determinants such as tourism, heritage and culture in which religious tourism enables to preserve values, art, monuments, temples, holy heritages from which revenues of government increased and religious education improved (Singh & Supina, 2023).

In ancient times, pilgrimage travel was popular in religious tourism, but now, people make tour in religious places throughout the world for peace and blessings keeping with faith and spiritual beliefs (Choe, 2025). Religious tourism in Ayodhya promoted socio-economic development and regional cultural development (Dhal & Singh, 2025). In 6 European countries namely Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Greece, and Italy by applying interviews (FGI) and expert interviews (IDI) method, the survey found that religious tourism expands tourism market, improves local sustainable development and preserves regional cultural heritage and religious assets (Nieżgoda, Markiewicz, & Kędzia, 2025). The religious tourism has positive impact on income, employment and traditional settlement which was empirically verified in Russia using regression analysis which showed that religious tourism is influenced by 0.77 on income, 0.66 on employment and 0.72 on traditional settlement in the economy significantly (Budovich, 2023). Religion and tourism in Mount E'mei (China) have influenced stakeholders significantly and Buddhist considered it positively on the development of sustainable tourism (Huang & Hu, 2019).

Pilgrimage travel and religious tourism drive sustainable development through social and economic growth of the religious sites in social sectors' cooperative and collaboration of community development programme improving organizational and managerial capabilities of stakeholders through value creation processes. The case study of The Camino de Santiago and Via Francigena proved the strategic approach of local development (Romanelli et al., 2021). The econometric model on the relationship between impact of cultural and religious tourism policies on local regional places taking data during 2001-2021 was built in which the result showed that the believer-led model of religious development is superior to the temple-led model because tourism policies have positive impact on Taoist temples and believers while Buddhism did not show similar result. This study was based on using Taiwan's Mazu Cultural Tourism Festival Policies in June 2010 (Liu & Lee, 2024).

Objectives of the paper:-

The paper tries to find out the relation between religion, tourism and economic development in the sense that religion has determining factors of promoting tourism which has many impacts on the social and economic development especially local development which is sustainable. The paper will focus on religious tourism which has direct impact on development which is verified by the help of some case studies in India and abroad.

Methodology and data:-

The fourteen case studies in India and international economies including some local areas in India on religious tourism have enlisted to clarify the association showing tourists inflows, nature of growth and development and the type of importance of religious sites, investment expenditure on religious site centric development with economic data which were collected from various sites and google searches.

Observations and results:-

Case study-1:St.Peter Church(Vatican City,Italy):-

St.Peter Basilica was established in 1626 having dimensions of 220mx150mx136.6m and its dome covers 0.34 acres of land.Michelangelo was the main architecture of the church.It is a catholic church in tradition.Its adjoining area is St.Peter Square beside west of the river Tiber.It is a holiest site where Peter is the head of the 12 Apostles of Jesus and St.Peter is ranked second after St.John.Pope holds the chair of St.Peter.It is a UNESCO heritage site.It is the spiritual and administrative heart of the Christianity and a global heritage.Anyone can visit here with a dress code without entry fee but can pay donation.Daily 40000-80000 visitors or pilgrimages came here or yearly 10 million tourists visited there.In 2025,33.4 million tourists visited here in which 45-55% are Christian and 1.3-1.5% global Christians visited here.The Vatican City is transformed into pilgrimage and demonstrated the temporal power of the Papacy.It was seen in 16th century under Pope Sixtus V.It is a catalyst for neighborhood growth.St.Peter Square is now highly developed.Private residential sites around the Church developed speedily and the Church supported millions of visitors and made religious monuments.The Church established hospitals,schools,hotels,cooperatives credits,and many others.In 2025,Jubilee project is running.Vatican City earned 300-700million Euros yearly in which 150million euros from the Museum whileEuropean Fund spends 3.7billion euros for investment for the Jubilee project.In 2025,government earned 60.4 billion euros from VAT where 237.4 billion euros was spent for the project in development including tourism and travel.Italy's tax payers pay 0.8% of their income to the Catholic Churches(11.6 million tax payer in 2021).St. Peter Church is the pivotal force in the growth and consolidation of Christianity through spirituality.

Case study-2:Mecca(Saudi Arabia):-

Mecca is the birth place of Mahammad.Muslims generally visited Mecca to perform Hajj,Umrah,Tawaf etc.The other holy places are Mecca gate,Kaaba,Black stone,Masjid-Al-Haram clock tower,Ajyad Fortress respectively in Mecca.In Mecca,the great mosque was visited by 10.8 million tourists in 2023.In Mecca,100% Muslim population live here in which 44.5% are local and the rest 55.5% are foreigners.No visitors except Muslim can entry into the Mosque.In 2023,10.8million international tourists visited in which 1.8 million performed Hajj.All visitors were Muslims.In 2026,11.9million Muslim performed Umrah and 57.5 million worshipped for prayer at Masjid.Mecca generates 12 billion dollar per year or 7% of GDP as tourists' income which will increase to 150 billion dollars by 2030.In 2024,tourism revenue of Saudi Arabia was 41 billion dollar.Average spending of visitors was approximately 135 dollar per day per person.In 2023,936000 jobs were created which will increase to 1.6million in 2030 and infrastructure investment was 50 billion dollars.

Mecca has the capacity of 770000 to 2.5 million worshippers and there are 16726 rest rooms,90000tons cooling system,increased hotel facilities,rail connected in Mecca since 2018,3.65 km pedestrian has improved.Now,8 billion dollars project has launched with a new policy for visitors.New development expenditure of 26.6 billion dollar for Mosque expansion was planned with additional 24000 hotels,13000 residential units,high speed railway,16 billion dollars metro project,new visa rule,with a new commercial city center.It was noticed that [i] Mecca promotes Islam,and the Mecca charter was created in 2019,[ii] to encounter extremism and security was planned,[iii]to combat radical group was permitted,[iv]Saudi Arabia emphasized on Salafi/Wahhabi ideas worldwide,[v]impact of Hajj is to increase tolerance,[vi]new religious policy was introduced in Mecca charter. Other religionsare not permitted to enter Mecca while permitted in Medina.So,development policy is absolutely related with Islamic motivation which is religious duty.Government uses Islamic faith and religious principles.

Case study-3:Janakpur Dham(Nepal):-

Janakpur Dham is a place of religious interest where Ramayan relating to Palace of Raja Janak of Mithila where Sita was born and wedded with Ram,the king of Ajodhya where Bibaha Panchami is celebrated.Other religious places in Janakpur are Ram mandir,Rajdevi Mandir,Jaleswar Temple,Ganga Sagar,Dhanush Sagar,Dhanush Dham,Ratna Sagar respectively. Ram had broken the bow at Dhanush Dham.All the places are related to Ramayan and its epic events where mythological interest of devotees are of great interest of tourism.In 2024,1.147 million international tourists visited here which is 37.5% of total tourists.In festival 5-6 lakhs pilgrimages visited here.In Janaki

Mahaotsav, 18-20 lakhs devotees came here to participate the occasion. Janakpur centric development is significant for Joy Nagar-Nepal link rail, IRCTC started Ramayan circuit train, Bus service between Ajodhya and Janakpur. In 2025-26, 46.58 billion Nepalese Rupee was placed for development of Janakpur and 30.26 billion NPR was decided for capital projects. 3.38 billion NPR will spend for railway project, 29.88 billion NPR for road expansion, 2.53 billion NPR for luxury tourism. Janakpur city development authority expensed 1.6 billion NPR for infrastructure development. Municipal income in 2023-24 was 4.47 billion NPR as tax revenue, custom revenue income was 509.4 million NPR in 2023-24 from tourism. Nepal earned 88.66 billion foreign exchanges in 2024-25. From the traffic, government earned 220 million NPR. Many religious interests are primary attractions for tourism at Janakpur. Dharmashala and hotels have increased quickly. There are around 200 hotels (60 luxury) where Nepal will build hotels by expensing 2.53 billion NPR urgently.

Case study -4: Pyramid(Egypt):-

Pharaohs' mummification was based on the belief that physical body will ensure the survival of the soul. In 3000BC, Pharaohs' mummy was protected for possessions for the next life to rise and join the Sun god and Ra in the heaven. Ancient Egyptian religion was a system of 70 days processes for mummification of polytheistic belief (which had 2000 gods and goddesses in which Ra, Aman Osiris, Iris are the key). After 30BC, Egypt began in converting Christianity in Roman empire. Noe, in Egypt, Sunni Islam consist 90%, Christianity 10%. Constitution recognized Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Generally, tourists came here for historical and architectural significance and also for religious or spiritual consciousness where Mommy is a symbol of integration of self and soul and pyramid calls for rebirth where God is the preserver and transformer. Annually 14.7 million tourists visited pyramid in which in 2024, 15.3 billion dollars were earned from tourism which set goal for earning 40.5 billion dollars in 2030.

Case Study 5- Borobudur,(Java,Indonesia):-

Borobudur is a Buddhist temple which was built in 9th century AD covering 2500 square meter. It is a World heritage site promoting Buddhist cultural heritage and regarded as Mahayana Buddhism. The temple symbolizes three realms of Buddhism, namely, Kamadhatu, Rupadhatu and Arupadhatu respectively. The various statues of Buddha under styles of Mudras are appreciable to religious attraction. In 2026, about 1200 tourists visited per day which is the quota of visitors. About 100 visitors see sunrise and sunset from here. In 1990s, 2.5 million visitors came to see the temple yearly, as against 4.0 million in 2019 in which 80-85% are tourists of Indonesia, 15-20% are from foreign countries. Buddhists tourists are 55% and 15-20% are Hindu, Christians and secular. The Buddhists generally came here for sacredness and rest of the religions visited for historical interest because Borobudur is a Global Buddhist Spiritual Tourism Center.

In the temple generally, rituals, meditation, chanting, offerings, annual ceremonies, holy processions, puja, Waisak festival, respectively are performed. Archaeological and historical research and heritage conservation are the mottoes of the temple. BHCO engaged in climate change research, digital preservation, visitor management, and for sustainable tourism. It focused on conservation, spirituality, education and tourism assisting Borobudur Spiritual Sanctuary, pilgrimage promotion and promoted 20 community-based tourism hubs, infrastructure development with 4 iconic gates, built Samudra Rakse Ship Museum, youth training programme, community training, managed 2600 relief pandals to teach Philosophy of Buddhism. They run community welfare and health programme, disaster management, run village economic centers and so on. It promoted cultural integration, spiritual tourism and increase awareness of Buddhism.

Indonesian government invested 1.2 billion dollars to development of temple in which 4-6 trillion dollars were spent for infrastructure and site improvement in 2025. One hundred million dollar was spent on local crafts development in 20 surrounding villages with community development. Government initiated to spend communication development in rail, road, aviation, electricity, hotels respectively. Ministry of public works spent 1.51 trillion dollars for infrastructure and ministry of tourism spent 2.254 trillion dollars for spiritual hub marketing. The temple committee earned 70-80 billion dollars in 2012 in comparison to that its expenditure were 1.7 billion dollars for village assistance, 12% spent for day-to-day operation, 40% for finance and costs and 24% for permanent employees of 250 people. Indonesian government earned 5.5% of GDP from Borobudur temple in which government spent 1.7 billion dollars on maintenance cost.

Case study 6 - Angkor Wat (Cambodia):-

Angkor Wat is the World's largest religious Buddhist monument which stays on 162.6 hectares of land and was set up in 12th century in Khmer Architecture and is renowned as UNESCO heritage site. It is a house of Vishnu.

Michaelangelo was the father of its architecture. It protects mixed culture of Buddhism and Hinduism. Indoor Galary was full of sculptures of Ramayan, Mahabharat and Purans but Angkor Wat preaches Buddhism. In Canbodia, 97.9% are Buddhists in which 96.5% domestic visitors came to Angkor Wat and 43% are foreigners from Thailand, Vietnam, and South Korea who are all Buddhists. In 2004, 561000 tourists visited here which increased to 4 million in 2023. The religious performances such as daily rituals, offerings, visual story-telling, major festivals, community gatherings were maintained on behalf of the temple. There is an Angkor hospital for the children including Monastic education, orphan education, women development center, religious education are important functions of the temple. It is a primary center of Theravada Buddhism and continuous religious practice center. The temple managed heritage preservation, visitor infrastructure and local community integration.

Japan invested 29 million dollars for development and China, Korea made their projects for the development of the temple. In 2026, 5 million dollars were invested for Artisans of Angkor Wat which earned 47.8 million dollars revenue from sale of tickets only as against 50 million dollars in 2024. Kantha Bopha Foundation donated 1.9 million dollars in 2025 for free medical care. In Angkor Wat, 4000 direct employees work there and 3000-4000 workers in 8 departments were run by APSARA National Authority. World Monument Fund employed 70 full time local specialists, and 11000 workers worked daily for hospitality and accommodation, thousand workers worked as guide, transport and vendors respectively. The Angkor Wat contributed 12.5% of GDP. The Cambodian Government spent 9.32 million dollars for transportation in 2025 and 3.3 million dollars as government projects. Cambodian government expensed 9.32 billion dollars for tourism in 2025 in which it stands 10.16 billion dollars in 2026 and infrastructure investment was 300 million dollars in 2025. The government gave visa incentives to promote tourism in which government earned 44.7 million dollars from tourism in 2025.

Case study 7- Saint Petersburg and St. Basilo Cathedral Church, Russia:-

The Saint Peterburg is a historical city having 4 famous museums, palaces, grand cascade, Kizhi Cathedral of the Christ, the Saviour Saint Isaac's Cathedral, Kremlin, Red square, Palace square, Volga River, Valley, lakes, mountains and many spectacular Mosques. It is called Venice of the North. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In each year, about 1 million people visited here as pilgrimages, 4 million people visited for religious purposes in holidays, in which 4.2 million are foreign tourists in 2024. Russia earned 6.3 billion dollars from religious visitors. In 2025-30, government allocated 5.4 billion dollars for tourism and hospitality in which 6.2 billion Ruble for regional infrastructure development in 2024. Tourism contributed 3% of GDP in Russia in 2025 where 23676140 tourists came in 2009 which increased to 32866265 in 2019. Government exempted transit VAT and taxes. In Saint Petersburg, generally 62-90 percent Christians, 5-10% of Muslims came to visit here in which orthodox Christians visited Churches as pilgrim. In 2019, 10 million Muslims tourists visited Russia from Middle East and South East Asia.

Case study-8: Buddha Gaya (Bihar, India):-

Buddha Gaya is a place where Siddhartha Gautam attained enlightenment as Buddha in 2500 years ago in Maurya period. It is a holy Buddhist pilgrimage site in the world and a UNESCO heritage. Monasteries of 12 countries are situated in Buddha Gaya in the Mahabodhi temple complex. But, there only 30883 persons live there in which 90.23% are Hindu, 8.85% are Muslim, 0.41% are Buddhists and 0.22% are Christians. Nearly, 2-4 million tourists came here yearly where 58985 are international tourists. In 2025, 1.1 million domestic tourists and 0.25 million foreign tourists visited Buddha Gaya. In Buddha Purnima, at least 15000 visitors came from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Bhutan respectively. During 2013-2020, at least 225% increase of tourists were recorded. Religious led development expenditure of the Bihar government is estimated as 65.5 crore to 275 crore rupees to enhance hospitality, macro entrepreneurship, job creation, removal of disparity and improvement of local handicrafts. Government approved Rs 166.44 crore for development of temple corridor, intercity connectivity, footfall increase from 40 lakh and international tourists to 2.5 lakhs including world class hotel facilities in the temple complex and monasteries' guest houses.

Government will spend 98.73 crore to improve artisans, MSME, job creation, and Swadesh Darshan government scheme. The government planned to improve Pan Buddhist unity, identity revival, improvement in global classrooms, revamp in Pali Cannon and text, meditation center, engaged Buddhism projects for education and health. It is claimed that improved tourism with noise has disturbed or diluted spirituality but temple centric development is huge including development of Buddhism. From the temple tourism, government earned 100 crores of rupees as tax in which temple earns from donations, entry fees, government grants etc. This Mahabodhi temple society tried to involve in meditation, chanting, circumambulation, offerings, annual events, prayer, festivals, Kalachakra

initiative, rituals activities, monastic education, (Buddhists led education), socially engaged schools, universal education, ethics, and in university education, Buddhists study and Pali, international Buddhists conference were executed. It has 16 schools, one IIM, and Magath University. It runs PHC, critical hubs in monasteries, specialized camps, para-medical colleges and hospitals.

Case study -9: Jain temple hub at Madhuban (Jharkhand, India):-

Madhuban is a hub of Jain temples and is the gateway of Jainism, threshold of salvation, a symbol of community unity. It is a temple city. Madhuban preserves the heritage of knowledge, revitalizes spiritualism, religious right and global awareness. The Twenty Tirthankaras attained Moksha here and Digambara and Shwetambar have united in this place. The Twenty-third Tirthankar in 8th century preached here. It is a place of moksha which has historical significance for the 20-24 Tirthankara where Digambar Jain temple is 2000 years old. Jain religious culture is the base of Shikharji Meditation center where preaching of Ahimsa is the central idea. Local Jain scholars and institutions preserve Jain religious culture. Ancient scripture, manuscript, curved statue of Jain tradition, Jain cosmology in Madhuban and Parasnath are the attractions of tourism where 30 Jain temples and 31 sacred tanks are the attractions in which Parasnath temple, Bhomiyaji temple, Digambar Jain temple, Jain Museum, Taleti Tirth Jain temple, Shikharji temple are the main attractions. Some tourists come here to learn about Jainism, some for personal spiritual devotion, some learn religious ancient teachings, manuscripts, and contributions to Indian culture.

In Madhuban, 35.24% are SC, 2.52% are ST in which 75.9% are Hindu, and 0.50% are Jain, all of which are dependent on agriculture but poor people here depend on tourism. In 2014, 3.36 million tourists visited here which increased to 35 million in 2023 where 95% tourists are Jain. Tourism centric development can be mentioned as hospitality and transport, railways, ropeway project, facility of palanquin bearers, solid waste management, job creation, artisan support, self-sufficient eco-system, eco-sensitive zone, community concern, environmental sustainability and eco-tourism regulations. There are many community services such as room facility, pilgrim-specific dining, basic comfort, CCTV surveillance, free parking, wheelchair entry, spiritual resort, Dharmashala and many others. Jain religious trust invested 500-800 crores of rupees each year for development and Jharkhand government allocated 500 crores for tourism in 2024 and 361.67 crore for tourism infrastructure. Ministry of Minority Affairs sanctioned 25 crores in 2024 to revitalize the temple complex hub and to facilitate tourism including removal of wide disparity in Madhuban.

Case study-10: TaraPith (Rampur Hat, West Bengal, India):-

TaraPith is a global center of Tantra. Tantric Bamakhapa worshipped Kali there in the funeral spot. Vashista Muni worshipped there. It was believed that the third eye of Goddess Sati fell after Lord Vishnu used Sudarshan chakra. It is also a samadhi place of Bamakhapa. Every year more than 7 million tourists or devotees come to worship ma Tara or 12000 devotees per day come for worshipping here for spiritual attraction. TaraPith Rampur Hat Development Authority during 15 years expensed over 150 crores of rupees for infrastructure development such as roads, transport, electricity, sanitation, renovated river front, modernize tourist centers, recycling waste, parking, accommodation, and temple management. Taramata Sebayat Sangha led by IAS, look over the development works. Government sanctioned 5.16 crores for cottage project, 2 crores for building replicas of 51 Satipith. Government earned as GST from the place which has increased by 35%. On the other hand, temple authority earned from entry fees, ritual fees, donations. Recently, Government spent 350 crores for Temple centric development.

Case study-11: Ajmer (Rajasthan, India):-

Ajmer is a historical and spiritual city in which Islamic religion is of great interest because Ajmer Sharif Darga, Akbari Mosque, Taragarh Fort, Akbar fort and Museum, Anna Sagar, Foy Sagar, Jhouptra Mosque, Puskar and Jain temple are the places of religious interest. It is a pilgrimage circuit. 10 million tourists visited here every year or 15000-20000 tourists visited per day. In 2024, 232.1 million tourists visited here in which 20.72 lakhs are international. Peak season is Urs festival. Among the visitors, 83.53% are Hindu, 11.58% are Muslim, and 2.5% are Jain. There is great impact of religious tourism in Ajmer in infrastructure, employment, business, heritage restoration, cultural renovation, improvement in environment respectively. The developmental expenditure is associated with religious interest. Government spends 310 crores for modernization of Ajmer station, 50 crore for bus stand, 215 crores for fly over, 34.95 crores for water projects. In 2022-23, Ajmer Municipality tax revenue was 159.29 crores in which 96.9% are non-tax revenue. Recently, 110.69 crore was allocated for improvement in Anna Sagar and Foy Sagar lakes. To build innovation hub and Planetarium, Ajmer Smart City allocated 4.04 crores including

Akbari fort and Museum. There is a plan to build seven wonders park, 6 lanes road, smart parking, and allocated 85 crores for sewerages, smart lighting and sound in Akbari fort.

Case study-12: Kumayun region (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, India):-

The actual tourist range of Kumaon region is very vast which contains numerous temples and mountains, falls, lakes and historical interests. Let us know about the tourist spots below. [1] Vim Tal, Naukuchia Tal, Kamal Tal, Sat Tal, and so on which are related with the epic Mahabharat, Draupadi's thrust, [2] Mukteshwar Mahadev temple, (Pancha Chulli temple), Veterinary Research Institute, [3] Katarmal Sun Temple (13th century), [4] Almora, Ramkrishna Mission, Dhanushwar temple, Chandika temple, Kuber temple (19-20th century), Dudh Ganga and Jate Ganga Sangam., [5] Jageshwar temple (7-14 century) and other temples, [6] Binsar, Baneshwar Mahadev temple, Duck Banglow, [7] Choukarvi, Ma Anandamayi Ashram, Sereghat, Sarayu river, Nandadevi Pahar, Birthi Falls, [8] Alpine resort, Pancha Chulli, Mahaprasthan of Pandav, [9] Kausani, Nandadevi temple, Bageshwar Shiv temple, Baijnath temple, Haraparbati temple, Ganesh temple, Baijnath Barrage, Anashakti Ashram and Museum. [10] Ranikhet, Kalika temple, Kumaon Museum, Valu dam, Jhoola Devi temple, [11] Nainital, Naini lake and Naini temple. Around 1.5 crores-2.5 crores visitors came to visit Kumaon region annually. There are significant tourists from Hindu religion visited here for spiritual attraction. Government of Uttarakhand expended 1000-2000 crores of rupees for tourism development. Nainital covers the maximum tourists.

Case study-13: The Golden temple (Amritsar, Punjab, India):-

Amritsar Golden temple is the spiritual and cultural heart of Sikhism and the house of worship i.e., Harmandir Sahib or Temple of God. It is the headquarters of the Shiromani Akali Dal or Gateway of Akal Takht. The Guru Granth Sahib is placed here. Temple is open to all with some disciplines. In Amritsar, 49.36% Hindu, 48.0% Sikh, 1.23% Christian and 0.51% Muslim lived here. Generally, 1-1.5 million tourists visit here in which 1 million visitors take free meals in the Langar arranged by the temple authority. Most of the visitors came here for spiritualism and 31% came for only tourism purpose. It was estimated that 26-30 million Sikhs around the world visit Golden temple annually. The temple is operated by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and its budget for 2026-27 is 1487.41 crores of rupees in which 1127.34 crore are allocated for management of Gurdwara. Generally, Sikh people donate 10% of their earnings to the temple. It expended Rs 66 crore for education. Ministry of tourism spent 1726.74 crores of rupees for Prasad scheme in 28 states. 3295.76 crores for capital investment in tourists' centers in 2025-26. In 2024, tourism development expenditure was 2450 crores. For Golden temple, in 2026-27, SGPC will spend 1487.41 crore for management and 6.41 crore for Prasad. Its development expenditure in surroundings' amenities include sanitation, water supply, lighting, interpretation centers respectively. Municipality will spend 995 crores for smart city mission and 460.0 crores for infrastructure development in 2025-26, Government of Punjab will spend 346.57 crores for infrastructure development around the temple and 460.0 crores for heritage management respectively. Thus, the development of temple centric religious motivation is clear and it is no doubt that the Golden temple has direct impact on the expansion of spirituality and Sikhism in India and abroad.

Case study-14: Rural religious tourism in Nadia (West Bengal, India):-

In Nadia, Mayapur and Nabadwip are famous for historical, educational, spiritual places where Chaitanya Dev was born. In Nabadwip, there are numerous temples belonging to Radhakrishna, and Chaitanya respectively. It is an ancient Sanskrit educational center and birth place of Chaitanya. Baisnab religion dominates here. ISKCON temple, Gour-Nitai temple, many Maths, Satsang Ashram, and birth place of Chaitanya are famous for tourism. Hindu and Vaishnav religions are the principal culture. In Mayapur, 72.15% are Hindu, 26.76% are Muslim, and 0.65% are Christian respectively. Here 50% are international residents. Over one million visitors came to Mayapur for spiritual interests including international tourists. About 16,000 to 20,000 foreigners visit for religious festivals each year. Nearly 90% visitors are Hindu. ISKCON provides enough hotel facilities and free meal, it runs schools, hospitals, gurukul ashram, Vedanta society which teaches the Vedas and Vedanta. It covers prayers, kirtan, Arati, festivals and rituals ceremony. It spreads Krishna consciousness and Hindu philosophy.

It has 700 acres of land, (value 300 million USDollar). In 2022, it spent 90.21 crores, Temple of the Vedic Planetarium planned to expense 60-70 million USDollar, and spend 5 million US dollar for monthly construction, The Government of India sanctioned ₹15.5 crore for ghat construction. Congregational Development Ministry will spend \$15,000 USD for outreach and training. West Bengal government exempted 50 crore stamp duty, waived registration fees about 6 million USDollar. In 2019, the state announced to sanction 10-15 crores for the Mayapur-Nabadwip area development. In Nabadwip, about 1 million visitors came here to visit Sonar Gouranga temple, Dwadash Shiv Mandir, Poramatala, Rash Yatra, Manipur Rajbari, and so on. Seventy percent Visitors are local in which 95% are

Hindu pilgrimages. The visitors of Mayapur generally visit at Nabadwip where many Sanskrit tolls educated ancient Sanskrit literature and philosophy and the writings of Sri Chaitanya. Rupees100 crores investment plan was sanctioned to boost tourism on the 232 km stretch from Nabadwip to Ganga Sagar, renovating 60 ghats and 24 jetties. Acruise services connecting Belur Math to Mayapur/Nabadwip was initiated. A dedicated tourist circuit covering Plassey, Nabadwip Dham, and Fulia was sanctioned with an initial budget of approximately Rupees 2.38 crores. Therefore, religious tourism has been promoting numerous development projects initiated by government as well as temples' trust bodies to enhance interest of spiritualism that are the indicators of sustainable development.

Discussions:-

After research investigations, it was found that religion is not separated from African development (Golo & Novieto, 2022), although it was noticed that the participation of religion in development created inter and intra religious conflicts (Omona & Kiriaghe, 2020). Pew Research Center (2006) reviewed and remarked that the World Bank assumed that there are many links between religion and development where communities may play significant roles. Religion is an input in dynamics of growth and development (Aldashev, & Platteau, 2014) and religion is a factor of cohesion and development (Por Carlos Cerdan Infantes, 2011). Faith-based religion through the agendas of Churches and Temples and other organizations showed clear ideas about the relationship. Sen (1999) has negative vision about religious development from the part of the government since he remarked that government promotion of religion as a positive social influence could mask larger social problems that constitute to poverty such as lack of access of education. Sen's approach of development and human freedom raises complex and debatable issues of religious freedom relating to poverty. Moreover, religion served the interests of ruling class bolstering the stability of the capitalist order (Emeka, 2024).

The direct relation between religion and tourism is complex because tour in religious sites or faith based religious tour or pilgrimages relating to tourism can be termed as religious tourism which directly affects development positively (Buter & Sontikul, 2018). Tour attracts natural sites, historical sites, scientific areas as well as motivate religious places in which government allocates expenditure on religious centric development including eco-tourism development. Therefore, religion, tourism and development are inter-related. Sri Lanka has been successful in boosting the relation between spiritual tourism and sustainable development (Samarathunga, Schänzel & Perera, 2024). My case studies about the nexus between religious tourism and economic development have no confusion about the link between religion and development whether it is religious or non-religious tourism in India and around the world.

Policy considerations:-

In the strategic sense, local authority, state government, central government as well as trust body of temples should frame such policies which are related to sustainable development that may obtain from the development expenditure on temple or religious promotion for tourism expansion where infrastructure investment plays key role followed by investment on communication and social security. Spiritual devotion of the visitors must be safe and free since maintaining religious freedom is the responsibility of the nation. The laws must be kept with honesty to pay taxes to government from the temple committee who should maintain audit cleanly per year. Religious tourism expansion in India is the key policy issue to attain sustainable development goals and even non-religious tourism is also primary determinant of sustainable development. Government should waive some rules and regulations for international tourists and maintain quick clearance for international monetary transactions and passport/visa facilities. Separate laws and regulations should be framed for spreading religious education and Indian culture. Policy transparency on behalf of temple committee in maintaining income-expenditure, religious customs and traditions in practice, devotees' roles must be properly maintained so that cultural deviation and corruptions may not be arisen. Finally, spectators' security is the ultimate goal that must be preserved by the authority of temple and by the government. Religious sites must be healthier, environment friendly, socially protected and accommodative to encourage pilgrimages and to enhance government revenues (Sharma, 2019).

Conclusions:-

India is a land of temples' cities in which Varanasi, Ajothya, Haridwar, Hrishikesh, Mathura, Vrindaban, Madurai, Ram eswaram, Kanyakumari, Puducherry, Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Khajuraho, Kurukshetra are of great importance to the Hindus. India's religious spirituality has been enhanced through the roles of these temples. On the other hand, Goa is the city of Churches and sea-shores where Christians pay devote to Jesus. Lucknow, Agra, Delhi are the cities of tombs, palaces, forts, Mosques, Samadhis of historical kings which have Islamic spirit to the Muslims till

today in India. India contains mixed cultural heritages of many religions which have historical importances and therefore, tourism of such sites intended to develop cultural education, spiritual upliftment, and progress and socio-economic development from the Vedic period to till today. India's rich religious cultural heritage has global impacts of integrity, non-violence, equity, peace, social justice and global development where India's leadership role is undebatable and praiseworthy. The paper earnestly verified the causality between religious tourism and development by examining the several case studies of religious sites of India and abroad and justified that tourism whether religious or non-religious enhance development if there are temple centric development expenditure happened. Thus, tourism development outlays should be the cornerstone of policy framework towards sustainable development.

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